

# On Religious Emotions and Their Theological Value

How to Understand the Positive Significance of Christian Affections for Doctrine and Practice?

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to give a constructive proposal on how to understand the role of Christian affections in theological reflection and work with systematic theology. Recent decades have seen an increased interest within different academic disciplines, including theology, in the topics of emotions, feelings, and affections and their significance for human rationality. In a Norwegian theological context, the question of the significance of Christian affections is accentuated by the 250th anniversary of the revivalist and social reformer Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771–1824). Within Pentecostal theology, a consensus has emerged that Christian affections are necessary for right doctrine and right practice to be sustained coherently. However, more work is needed to spell out their relationship in detail. In the first part of the article, I will present a theological understanding of Christian affections based on the work of Steven Land and Simeon Zahl, exemplified and illuminated by the historical testimonies of Hans Nielsen Hauge and Thomas Ball Barratt. In the second part, I will give my constructive proposal, employing Antonio Damasio's somatic marker hypothesis to explain how Christian affections and their positive significance for theological reflection can be understood, in that the bodily conditioned emotional markings of mental images function more properly, which enables the theologian to make more rational choices in his or her theological work.

**Keywords:** Christian affections, Emotions, Hans Nielsen Hauge, Thomas Ball Barratt, Pentecostal systematic theology, Somatic marker hypothesis

## INTRODUCTION

Alas! You blessed Love! The soul that is filled with this heavenly feeling, he knows its value. He cannot with his reason explain this glory, but he knows that it is a glory of the only begotten Son from the Father, full of grace and truth; for all good gifts follow from it. (Hauge, 1952, p. 112)

Recent decades have seen an increased interest within different academic disciplines in the topic of emotions,<sup>1</sup> including their importance for human rationality and behaviour, which is also visible within several theological disciplines (Coulter, 2016, p. 1; Dixon, 2011; Scarantino & de Sousa, 2021). Despite much disagreement and different philosophical and scientific theories about emotions, a general contemporary consensus still exists in some areas.<sup>2</sup> First, there is agreement that emotions and reason do not directly oppose each other, as has been the dominant view in modern times.<sup>3</sup> There is also agreement that emotions are directed towards an object, i.e., *something* or *someone*, and that emotions represent something – for instance, signals about oneself, others, what is important, valuable, etc. (Nussbaum, 2001). There is also a widespread understanding that emotions – which can be categorized in different ways (e.g., into 12 main categories: love, interest, joy, fear, anger, sadness, guilt, shame, disgust, contempt, jealousy, envy<sup>4</sup>) – can vary greatly in strength and intensity. There is also consensus that one's emotions correlate with motivational change and can function as important driving forces behind one's actions.<sup>5</sup> A specific example of an increased theological interest in emotions is the new and emerging field of renewal studies, which is particularly concerned with the historical and theological significance of *the affections* across the Christian tradition – including for central figures such as Augustine, Luther, Wesley, and Jonathan Edwards (Coulter & Yong, 2016).

In a Norwegian theological context, the question of the historical and theological significance of the affections is relevant because of the 250th anniversary of Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771–1824), often referred to as the individual with the greatest influence on Norwegian church life after the Reformation (Molland & Bloch-Hoell, 2021). The quote above which praises the «blessed Love» as a «heavenly feeling» is taken from

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, I distinguish between *emotions*, *religious emotions*, *affections*, and *Christian affections*. «Emotions» is a broad term that includes everything from superficial and occasional feelings to «affections», which is a narrower term that refers to deep feelings and can be related to the will. «Religious emotions» are often defined broadly from a humanistic/sociological perspective, for example as feelings associated with experiences that are understood religiously (Taves, 2009). Such a broad understanding of religious emotions is not identical to how I in this article understand «Christian affections», which can rather be labeled a specific subgroup of religious emotions. In the article, I attempt to clarify how Christian affections should be understood since I am interested in exploring their significance for theological reflections and work with systematic theology.

<sup>2</sup> See summary in Scarantino & de Sousa, 2021, sec. 11 from which the following points are taken.

<sup>3</sup> For a historical overview of views on emotions, passions and affections, see Dixon, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> For such a categorization, which is also partly socially and culturally conditioned, see Normann-Eide, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> For a strong emphasis on emotions as important driving forces behind our actions and moral reasoning (cf. the well-known philosophical discussion between David Hume and Immanuel Kant), see Haidt, 2008.

Hauge's book *Om Religiøse Følelser og deres Værd* (On religious emotions and their value), which also inspired the title of this article. Church historian Bernt Oftestad writes in connection with the 250th anniversary that it is difficult to fully explain Hauge's understanding of Christianity and his remarkable activities as a revivalist preacher and entrepreneur without taking Hauge's mysticism and the affective aspects of his theology seriously (Oftestad, 2021).

Within academic Pentecostal theology, which is the tradition I am affiliated with, there is a widespread view of *Christian* or *right affections* (orthopathy) as being necessary for *right doctrine* (orthodoxy) and *right practice* (orthopraxy) to be correlated and sustained in a coherent way (Andersen et al., 2019; Castelo, 2020; Sæther & Tangen, 2015; Simmons, 2020; Smith, 2010; Stephenson, 2020; Vondey, 2018, pp. 9–12; Wilkinson, 2020). Pentecostal theologian Steven J. Land's book *Pentecostal Spirituality* has paved the way for this view, which assumes that affections, doctrines, and practices are connected and mutually influence each other (Castelo, 2020, p. 32; Wilkinson, 2020, p. 119).

At the same time, much is unclear in this Pentecostal view regarding how the relationship between affections, doctrines, and practices should be understood at a more detailed level. How are Christian affections (orthopathy) necessary for sustaining right doctrine and right practice? What role do affections play in general in theological reflection? How can Christian affections have a positive influence on work with systematic theology? Implicit in these questions is also a need to clarify what affections are, how Christian affections should be understood, and how such feelings can be related to (scientific and interdisciplinary research on) emotions in general. Theological work with these questions seems important, not least in terms of justifying the theological and normative emphasis on Christian affections.

Pentecostal theologians often only refer to Land's book when it comes to why Christian affections should play a significant role for Pentecostal spirituality, including doctrine and practice.<sup>6</sup> However, Land himself is remarkably vague about what specific impact, if any, Christian affections can have with regard to development of doctrines or systematic theology.<sup>7</sup> Land first and foremost refers to Church history to justify the central role of Christian affections, pointing to the first decade of the Pentecostal revival, which was characterized by a Wesleyan understanding of sanctification due to the Pentecostal movement's deep roots in revival movements in America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Land, 2010, pp. 1, 36). Land gives no detailed explanation of the connection between Christian affections, doctrine, and practice. The same problem is also present in the philosopher James K. Smith's much appreciated work on Pentecostal epistemology where he largely refers to, and builds on, what Land writes about affections (Smith,

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<sup>6</sup> See references above.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the questions asked by American theologian Harvey Cox in his review article (1994), where Land answers: «Affections do not ground theology. Rather, beliefs and actions are integrated in the affections whose source and goal is God. The concern for affections is a pastoral one and represents nothing more high-flown than a recognition that without love all we do or think profits us nothing (1 Cor. 13)» (Land, 1994, p. 13).

2010). Smith has, for instance, been criticized for not being sufficiently clear about the normative role that affections should have for knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

Hence, more research on the significance of the affections for Pentecostal systematic theology seems needed. In this article, I want to make a constructive theological contribution to Pentecostal theology by answering the following overall question: How should the (positive) significance of Christian affections for theological reflection and work with (Pentecostal) systematic theology be understood?<sup>9</sup> Obviously, an article cannot address all aspects of this question, so the focus will be on some specific functions that are established in discussion with Steven Land, Simeon Zahl, and Antonio Damasio in particular, according to the following plan:

In Part 1, I will take Land's Pentecostal understanding of Christian affections as a starting point, which I first present and summarise, and then exemplify with what I consider to be two relevant historical testimonies (H.N. Hauge and T.B. Barratt) from a Norwegian Pentecostal perspective. The purpose of the testimonies is not simply to give examples but to obtain a better understanding and more realistic insight into what Christian affections are or can be (considered as a phenomenon), and how such emotions can be felt and experienced. To get the clearest possible insight into the emotions and experiences of Hauge and Barratt, I prefer to cite the primary sources instead of giving my own summary and becoming an (additional) intermediary in the presentation of their emotions.

Next, I will build on and expand the theological understanding of Christian affections in dialogue with Anglican theologian and Church historian Simeon Zahl to clarify how a Pentecostal understanding of Christian affections can be related to other scientific research on emotions in general. Zahl is an interesting dialogue partner because he has received important impulses from Pentecostal theology and wants to help establish «conditions for a more fruitful engagement between Pentecostal and charismatic theologies and mainstream academic theology» (Zahl, 2020, pp. 5–6).<sup>10</sup> I apply what I consider to be Zahl's most valuable contribution: he relates the salvific work(s) of the Holy Spirit to the affections and the body in a way that can bridge the gap between a Pentecostal understanding of affections and other scientific disciplines' research on emotions and human rationality.

With the help of Zahl, I have established the basis for my own constructive contribution in Part 2, where I use Antonio Damasio's somatic marker hypothesis (SMH), one of the most influential theories about emotions in recent years, as an explanatory model for understanding the role and positive significance of Christian

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<sup>8</sup> Klaas Bom, who raises this criticism, suggests that the French mathematician and philosopher Pascal perhaps can be used to clarify the ambiguities of Smith (Bom, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> By Pentecostal I mean that my contribution is situated within the Pentecostal tradition and a Pentecostal theological discussion. At the same time, my Pentecostal answer to the question also applies to systematic theology in general (and should not only be conceived as relevant to Pentecostals), since Pentecostals believe that the affections are important for all theology. Although I start from a Pentecostal understanding of Christian affections, the perspective is broadened in dialogue with other (academic) traditions. Whether my contribution can be characterized as Pentecostal, which I believe, must be evaluated by others.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. also the review article in the Pentecostal journal *Pneuma* (Harris, 2021), which particularly emphasizes how Zahl's focus on the Holy Spirit makes the book especially interesting for Pentecostals.

affections in theological reflection and work with systematic theology. I will first present SMH, not only to show what the theory says about how human emotions are an integral part of cognitive work and reflection processes, but also to take a closer look at some implications for systematic theology. My usage of SMH builds on and is dependent on the theological understanding of Christian affections that I establish in Part 1. SMH seems to be able to explain in more detail how Christian affections can be understood to have an indirect but positive influence on systematic theology in that the work and reflection processes function more properly. More specifically, it is about bodily conditioned emotional markings of mental images (especially the image of God) functioning more properly or optimally so that the theologian with his or her emotions, is able to make more constructive and rational choices in the work and reflection process that results in systematic theology.

A result of this study may be an enhanced understanding of the significance of Christian affections for doctrine and practice, which is relevant for church life and ministry, in addition to a potentially stronger justification for theological assumptions about a close connection between affections, doctrine, and practice.<sup>11</sup>

## PART 1: HOW TO UNDERSTAND CHRISTIAN AFFECTIONS?

### A Pentecostal Theological Starting Point

In Part 1, I start with Land's well-known Pentecostal understanding of Christian affections, which I present and summarise. I then present two historical testimonies by Hauge and Barratt before expanding the perspective in dialogue with Zahl.

From a Pentecostal theological perspective, Christian affections can be understood as attitudes and feelings that should characterize a Christian and motivate the believer's way of life from within (Land, 2010, p. 33). Hence, affections do not refer to superficial and occasional feelings, but to deep attitudes that can be related to, and are a part of, the person's will.<sup>12</sup> Some specific examples Land gives are «gratitude as praise-thanksgiving, compassion as love-longing, and courage as confidence-hope» (Land, 2010, p. 46). As already mentioned, Steven Land has paved the way for a Pentecostal understanding of Christian affections. Land is affiliated with the Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee, and represents a Pentecostal Holiness movement

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<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that several assumptions in this article have been discussed elsewhere. Presuppositions about the possibility of experiencing the triune God, belief in the Bible as God's authoritative word – in addition to my theological usage of SMH as an explanatory model for how to understand the significance of Christian affections for human and theological rationality – can, in my view, receive philosophical support from Alvin Plantinga's epistemological work on *warrant* (Plantinga, 1993, 2000), where Plantinga argues that our ability to acquire true knowledge, including theological knowledge of God, depends on well-functioning cognitive processes and properties (proper function).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. how Land describes «affections which motivates the heart» (p. 33) and how John Wesley understood the human will in such a way that it includes the various affections understood as «the responsive motivating inclinations behind all human action» (Maddox, 2001, p. 14). In a similar vein, Plantinga suggests that the human will should be understood to include the ability to make choices («the executive function of will»), as well as emotions such as love and hate («the affective function of will») (Plantinga, 2000, p. 204, note 6).

influenced by Wesleyan thinking, which also characterized the Methodist priest Thomas Ball Barratt, who brought the Pentecostal revival to Norway and Europe (Barratt, 2005). It is therefore not surprising that Land agrees with the Methodist Theodore Runyon who emphasized that Christian affections are feelings that are experienced and come from personal experience of real change (transformation), where God is both the origin and object (*telos*) of the emotions (Coulter, 2016, p. 5; Land, 2010, pp. 31–33). In other words, Christian affections can be understood as deep feelings and attitudes towards God, which God awakens or intensifies in the context of genuine experiences of God. According to Land, Christian affections can be awakened (by God) and expressed in Christian beliefs and Christian practices (Land, 2010, pp. 1, 128), for example, through preaching, prayer, etc. For Land, the *Christian* characterisation means that the affections correspond with what the Bible describes as morally right feelings and attitudes (Land, 2010, p. 33). A Pentecostal understanding of Christian affections can therefore be said to presuppose that the attitudes towards God and the world, which the emotions represent, in fact *are* Christian, and that they also, theologically speaking, can be *qualified* as such.<sup>13</sup> The term «Christian» is thus a prescriptive and normative description of the affections. For Land, right Christian affections (orthopathy) are a central aspect not only of Pentecostal spirituality, but of all Christian religion, and hence something that applies to all Christians (Cox, 1994, p. 4).

Christian affections should thus be understood as a synonym for holy and right affections (Land, 2010, pp. 1, 31, 183) and not as an empirical description of what people necessarily feel. Here I would like to add that what is considered «Christian» from a traditional Pentecostal perspective must be seen in the light of the view of Scripture that sees the Bible as the Word of God and the supreme norm.<sup>14</sup> This means, among other things, that the object or content of the affections become decisive in an external assessment of whether the affections are Christian.

Since I stand in a Norwegian Pentecostal tradition, I will start from Land's Pentecostal understanding of Christian affections, as I have presented and summarised it above. In practice, this means that it is my own interpretation and reconstruction of Land's understanding that I build on and expand on in this article. I will now present what I consider to be two relevant historical testimonies about experiences that I understand as the phenomenon of Christian affections.

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<sup>13</sup> Philosopher William Alston reminds us that it is atypical within religious and Christian traditions to claim that experiences of God cannot be tested by external theological criteria (Alston, 1993, pp. 209–210). A good example of test criteria of affections is *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* by Jonathan Edwards.

<sup>14</sup> See Andersen, 2015; Andersen et al., 2019, pp. 4–7. As Pentecostal theologian Peter Neumann emphasizes: «Pentecostal experience of the Spirit is hardly of a vacuous sort. Put another way, experience of the Spirit would not be understood by Pentecostals simply to be a generic “religious experience.” Rather, Pentecostal experience of the Spirit is quite tied to the Jesus of Christian Scripture, which enables Pentecostals to clearly identify the Spirit being experienced» (Neumann, 2012, pp. 331–332).

## Two Historical Testimonies

To tell personal testimonies is and has always been important for the development of Pentecostal theology. Testimonies should therefore be recognized as an integral part of a Pentecostal theological working method (Archer, 2007; Land, 2010). Testimonies about experiences can aid theology, for example, in the interpretation of biblical texts (Anderson, n.d.; Stronstad, n.d.). A narrative testimony also seems to have the potential to communicate more of what can be characterized as personal and relational knowledge – because the narrative genre is, in a way, capable of recreating emotional moments and personal experiences for the reader in a manner that propositional literature and statements cannot, at least not to the same extent (Stump, 2001). The purpose of presenting the testimonies in this article is to provide a better understanding of Christian affections before discussing their significance. The testimonies can function as examples of such feelings, but also potentially give a more realistic insight into what (the phenomenon of) Christian affections are. I present these testimonies because I believe they demonstrate what Christian affections are like and how they are linked closely to a Christian context and Christian understanding and therefore should not be confused with a broader humanistic/sociological understanding of religious emotions, which (often) includes other religious traditions and does not take a position on the content or object of the emotions.<sup>15</sup> It can be argued that taking a theological perspective on emotions and experiences is fundamental (and thus justified), granted that no limited reality can be understood properly or in depth without references to God as the creator of the world (McGrath, 2002, p. 228; Pannenberg, 1991, p. 9).

I will now present the testimonies of Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771–1824) and Thomas Ball Barratt (1862–1940). Both testimonies tell of very strong emotional and life-changing experiences and are, in my view, relevant from a Norwegian Pentecostal perspective. As mentioned, Hauge is relevant because of the 250th anniversary of his birth, and he is the individual who perhaps influenced Norwegian church life the most after the Reformation. Barratt is relevant as the man who brought the Pentecostal revival to Norway and is often called «the apostle of Pentecostalism to Europe» because of his central role in the Pentecostal movements of several countries (Alegre, 2019, p. 1; Synan, 1997, pp. 130–132).

### Hans Nielsen Hauge

Hans Nielsen Hauge describes his own feelings in connection with his special experience on April 5, 1796, which marks the start of the movement that is named after him and came into existence in Hauge's most active years between 1796 and 1804. Hauge tells about this experience in two books – *Beskrivelse over det aandelige Livets Løb og Strid* (A description of the race and battle of the spiritual life) and *Om Religiøse Følelser og deres Værd* (On religious emotions and their value), the former written in Hokksund prison in 1804 and the latter in 1817. Hauge describes himself as a quiet and anxious man until this day:

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<sup>15</sup> See the first footnote of the article and how Ann Taves prefers to speak of religious experience as «experiences deemed religious» in order to inquire why it is that certain experiences are understood as religious at all (Taves, 2009, p. xiii).

I was from childhood, yes, and since I become an adult, despised by my like-minded friends and held as a fool, stupid or reserved and sad. Yes, I also considered myself very low [...] And I had a particular desire for plays and games, was anxious in my heart thereof, and was often afraid in my conscious, when I heard about pestilence and war with all its danger, and I especially feared death. (Hauge, 1953, pp. 3–4, my translation)

Hauge tells that he could feel revived when he sang Christian hymns but felt at the same time an inner struggle with «earthly wishes, a desire to shoot, of card games [...] leisure activity; likewise, to do business, which led my soul into turmoil» (Hauge, 1952, p. 124, my translation). However, after he began to spend more time in prayer and reading the Bible and other Christian books, he got a greater desire to do the will of God wholeheartedly and abhorred all sins (Hauge, 1952, p. 125). He writes:

I called upon my blessed God that he would reveal his Son's love in me, give me his Holy Spirit, who could let me see my own misery and powerlessness, and teach me how I should walk in order to follow in Christ's footsteps. (Hauge, 1952, p. 126, my translation)

On April 5, 1796, Hauge had a life-changing experience. When he sang the hymn *Jesus din søde Forening at smage* (Jesus, to taste your sweet union) – a prayer for strength and peace for the soul expressing a longing for the power of the Spirit and for Jesus to rule as Lord in the soul – he felt his mind so lifted up to God that he could not sense himself (Hauge, 1952, p. 126). He writes:

That my soul felt something supernatural, divine, and joyful, and that it was a glory that no tongue can express, that I remember to this day as clearly as if it had happened a few days ago, even if it is now 20 years since God's love so exceedingly visited me. Nor can anyone convince me otherwise, for I know of all the good things that followed in my spirit from this moment, especially the sincere and burning love for God and my neighbour, that I had a truly changed mind, a sorrow for all sins, a desire that people should partake with me in the same grace; a special desire to read in the Holy Scriptures, especially Jesus' own teaching, as well as new light to understand it, and connect all teachings of God's men for this sole purpose: that Christ has come as our Saviour, that we by his Spirit should be born again, repent, be more and more sanctified according to God's attributes in order to serve the triune God alone, and to purify and prepare our souls for the eternal glory. (Hauge, 1952, pp. 126–127, my translation)

Hauge then describes several lasting and emotional changes that followed from the experience:

When I saw the perishable, which I had previously loved and longed for, it grieved me, so I could not even look upon it. I later discovered that in everything I had a transformed mind and new gifts of grace and wisdom in God's Word, which I really wanted to contemplate. I burned with an exceeding love and sorrow for other people, to make them run after the heavenly treasure, or Holiness, and wanted to convince them of the love of the world and its



miserable consequences, or loss of happiness, which the smallest sin causes. (Hauge, 1953, p. 5, my translation)

Hauge's experience in 1796 was the start of his extensive activities as an entrepreneur and revivalist preacher. Regarding the underlying motivation, Hauge states, «Above all, I have had and have a sincere desire to use the pounds God has entrusted me with and carry love to the repentance, happiness, and eternal glory of men» (Hauge, 1953, p. 10, my translation).

### Thomas Ball Barratt

Thomas Ball Barratt describes in detail his feelings and experiences of sanctification and Spirit baptism in New York on October 7 and November 15, 1906. This was just before the Pentecostal revival in Norway broke out in December of the same year, when Barratt returned home. Barratt recounts his experiences in two letters that he sent shortly after the events took place. The letters have been published several times, including in his biography and in the book *Pinseild* (Pentecostal fire).

Hallelujah! It took place yesterday, Sunday October 7, between five and six p.m. Praise the Lord, my heart is burning! It seems to me that I am the happiest man in the world; everything has become new, I am filled with peace and joy and love to God and man. Yes, indeed the Lord's ways are truly unfathomable. (Barratt, 1985, Chapter IX)

Barratt writes that for all these years he had been preoccupied with the topic of sanctification without having this experience himself, despite many occasions when he had «been so full of God that it has overflowed» (Barratt, 1992, p. 58, my translation). He then describes the unsuccessful fundraising for his big project, the building Haakonsborg, and how he eventually concluded that he had to lay his own plans aside:

I had prayed by the hour for help towards «Haakonsborg», until I became quite dumb and was obliged to lay all down at His feet. Then the Spirit took hold of me in a new way and searched through my whole being. Not for a moment did I doubt that I was a child of God, had I done so, I should have gone into despair. [...] Oh! how abominable I was in my own sight, as I saw myself in the light of His Holiness! Over and over again I was humbled to the dust as I saw my own ambition, selfishness, and wilfulness, Oh! My Lord! How grieved His Spirit must have been! (Barratt, 1985, Chapter IX)

During this period, Barratt was encouraged by the life story of the revivalist preacher Charles Finney (1792–1875). His curiosity was also awakened by hearing about the Pentecostal revival in Los Angeles. Barratt sent them a letter and asked for intercession, «*that my heart might be filled with the Spirit of God*. However, what I first needed was to be cleansed in the Blood of Jesus (sic), so that I could *believe* I was purified from all my sins» (Barratt, 1985, Chapter IX). Eight days before he wrote the letter about his first experience, after long struggles in prayer, he read 1 John 5:14–15 and «I grasped the full cleansing through the blood of my precious Saviour. I laughed and cried at the same time for a long time. Oh, how happy I was!» (Barratt, 1992, p. 61, my translation).

Then Barratt received a letter from Los Angeles saying that «we are praying the full pentecostal baptism upon you!» and that «[a]fter you have fully consecrated, and know God has cleansed your heart, then fast, and wait upon God» (Barratt, 1985, Chapter IX). Barratt decided to do this but remembered so much of his previous life that he became very sad (Barratt, 1992, p. 63). Once again, he laid everything in God's hands: «Everything was sacrificed and laid upon the altar» (Barratt, 1992, p. 65, my translation). But he experienced this as a battle: «It was God's Spirit that fought with me to get complete victory in my heart and life» (Barratt, 1985, Chapter IX). After attending a few church services, he was alone in his room.

I had noticed, at times on Sunday, a remarkable warmth in my breast, but it left me. Whilst weeping Sunday afternoon, a little before 5 P. M., the fire came back to my breast. [...] I could not help it; I was seized by the Holy Power of God throughout my whole being, and it swept through my whole body as well. [...] Then my whole body shook under the great workings of the Spirit. (Barratt, 1985, Chapter IX)

Barratt describes that after this, «my whole soul was filled with the wonderful peace of God [...] the holy fire of God burned in my chest all the time. Everything was new – everything! [...] I could not sleep for a long time that night. The Spirit spoke, prayed, and rejoiced within me» (Barratt, 1992, pp. 68–69, my translation).

Barratt began to testify boldly and evangelise on the street about what he had experienced. But he did not yet speak in tongues. Through correspondence with Los Angeles, he was encouraged to wait more upon God in prayer. Barratt therefore began to pray and seek after the full pentecostal baptism with tongues (*den fulle pinsedåp med tungetale*), which he writes that he later experienced on November 15 (Barratt, 1992, pp. 73–74).

[I]t appears to me, that when I spoke in tongues, it was in connection with a power which was far beyond all that I had experienced before, that my former experience was a *glorious introduction* to the *Baptism in the Holy Ghost and Fire*, which I received on the 15th of November, 1906. (Barratt, 1985, Chapter X)

At an evening service where Barratt received intercession, someone apparently saw a «crown of fire» and a light above him, and at the «very same moment, my being was filled with light and an indescribable power, and I began to speak *in a foreign language* as loudly as I could. For a long time I was lying upon my back on the floor, speaking» (Barratt, 1985, Chapter X). This, he tells, continued until 4 a.m. with elements of thanksgiving, shouts of joy, speaking in several languages, singing in tongues, and intense moments of intercessory prayer for Scandinavia and Europe in particular (Barratt, 1992, pp. 76–77). Barratt writes that during this whole experience, «my mind was restful and satisfied; such waves of God's love swept over me, that I wept, and sang in the Spirit» (Barratt, 1985, Chapter X).

Barratt's second letter ends with a strong appeal which expresses some of Barratt's own understanding of the meaning of his experience of Spirit baptism:

Dear reader, seek God now and get your soul filled with the Pentecostal power [...] You may get it in quite a different way than I, more quietly perhaps [...]

Oh, you need the whole fullness of this love – for the baptism of Pentecost is a divine baptism of love which enables you to love your enemies and bless those who curse you. (Barratt, 1992, pp. 78–79, my translation)

We have now seen how Hauge and Barratt tell about their feelings, how they came about, and some of the meaning they attribute to them. The descriptions of their feelings can, in my view, largely be reconciled with the theological understanding of Christian affections as deep feelings and attitudes that should characterise a Christian and motivate the believer's way of life from within, as presented above. Both Hauge and Barratt write about how their (new) feelings became an internal driving force for Christian living, even though the feelings, from an external perspective, came about in quite different historical contexts. However, common to both of them seems to be a strong experience of God's love, with similar descriptions of «the sincere and burning love for God and my neighbour» (Hauge), «a divine baptism of love which enables you to love your enemies», and how «my heart is burning [and] I am filled with peace and joy and love to God and man» (Barratt). At the same time, their testimonies show different affections and categories of emotions, such as sadness and disgust (for sin), as well as joy, peace, and interest (to do God's will).

The testimonies can also illustrate how God is understood as the one who awakens or intensifies Christian affections, and that it often happens in connection with Christian doctrine and Christian practice. Both testimonies leave the impression that Christian literature in the form of books and letters, Bible reading, prayer, church services, and the singing of hymns played a role during and prior to the experiences. God's intervention was at the same time understood to be decisive. Although God's intervention is presented as overwhelming and surprising, certain doctrinal knowledge was clearly present beforehand.<sup>16</sup> Both write that they sought God in prayer about what they eventually experienced. The testimonies also demonstrate a clear understanding of God as the origin of the permanent emotional changes and their changed Christian lives. The testimonies also tell of certain feelings directed towards God, especially love. This can illuminate the theological understanding of Christian affections as feelings (and experiences) that are rooted in the Christian faith and cannot easily be detached from a Christian context and the Bible's normative guidance.

I will now look more closely at how the Pentecostal theological understanding can be related to other scientific disciplines' theories of emotions. Here, Anglican theologian and church historian Simeon Zahl has made an important contribution that retains Pentecostal concerns but at the same time seems to build a bridge between different academic disciplines and thus contributes to an expanded theological perspective on Christian affections.

### **An Expanded Pneumatological and Bodily Perspective**

In the book *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience*, Zahl takes what can be characterised as a pneumatological and bodily perspective on regeneration and sanctification. I think the views of Zahl and Land coincide in several areas, for instance in the understanding

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Hauge's prayer and hymn singing and Barratt's correspondence with Azusa Street.

that it is God through the Holy Spirit who awakens or intensifies right (Christian) affections and that this can be experienced. At the same time, Zahl contributes to a more bodily perspective on the affections, which I believe can build a bridge to other disciplines' research on emotions in general. With reference to Melancthon and Augustine, Zahl argues that (Christian) affections caused by the Holy Spirit do not necessarily or primarily need to be understood as new categories of emotions (e.g. love, sadness, disgust, joy) – or a new set of supernatural qualities and unnatural emotions detached from the body – but that the most important thing is that the content or object of the emotions has been changed. Zahl also demonstrates how the Spirit's influence on affections can occur in seemingly quite natural ways with regard to the physical and social context.

Now, it is not something new to claim that the most special thing about religious emotions is their content or object (Roberts, 2021). What is new and valuable, however, from a Pentecostal perspective is Zahl's explicit and tight integration of a pneumatological and humanistic/sociological perspective, where the theological perspective remains fundamental because the Spirit's salvific works are understood as the primary and most important cause of the emotional changes in the body. As Zahl writes, desires and emotions in this earthly life always take place «in the context of a physical body» (Zahl, 2020, p. 233). At the same time, a central argument in Zahl's book is that if the Holy Spirit actually works in the world and in people, in line with a traditional Christian understanding, then we should expect to see «practically recognizable» effects of the Spirit's activity, including in regeneration and sanctification (Zahl, 2020, pp. 232–233, 236). Thus, the Spirit's activity can be located in time and space and in human bodies.

Zahl focuses mostly on affections and emotional experiences in his book, which is relevant for the research question of this article. Zahl points out that a number of texts in the Bible and from church history link the work of the Spirit not only to dramatic one-time events but also to «longer term affective-dispositional change» as when the apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, describes the fruit of the Spirit (Zahl, 2020, p. 53). Zahl therefore criticises several religious studies for over-focusing on the most extreme external manifestations of various kinds of religious experiences while overlooking the less visible emotional changes (Zahl, 2020, pp. 49–53). Zahl criticises, at the same time, purely abstract theological approaches that either avoid or are unable to answer the question of how the Spirit's activity in for example, regeneration and sanctification can actually be experienced (Zahl, 2020, pp. 69–75, 95–108).

Zahl's pneumatological and bodily perspective on regeneration and sanctification draws ideas from, among others, the early Melancthon and the late Augustine. According to Zahl, Melancthon originally claimed that the work of the Spirit in regeneration in a person who comes to faith will be experienced as a genuinely felt change, which in turn results in a new way of life. Zahl cites Melancthon, who wrote that «[b]ecause faith truly brings the Holy Spirit and produces a new life in our hearts, it must also produce spiritual impulses in our hearts» (Zahl, 2020, p. 129). Regarding the sanctifying work of the Spirit, Zahl thinks that the emotional change should be understood as the primary recognisable practical effect of the Spirit's activity for the person. In other words, Christian affections are one of several aspects of sanctification.

Here Zahl builds on Augustine's understanding of sanctification and how longings and desires are oriented differently than before, so that the desire to sin is overcome by the desire to love God and do his will (Zahl, 2020, pp. 189–193).

When Augustine wrote against Pelagius's view on man's free will, he used texts such as Galatians 5:16–26, where it is written that «the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh» (Gal 5:17 NIV). Another central scripture for Augustine is found in Romans, where it says that «God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us» (Rom 5:5 NIV). Augustine supposedly understood «God's love» in this verse to mean not that man is given some kind of mystical ontological implantation that involves new human abilities, but rather that the Spirit acts in such a way that man now loves God instead of sin. The Latin terms *delectatio* and *delactare* (delight) are important in understanding Augustine's view. According to him, love has to do with longing and desire, because we love what we enjoy and find our deepest joy in. For Augustine, the sinner's problem is distorted desires. The sinner's deepest joy lies only in created things and not in God. God therefore tries, through a number of circumstances, to draw and attract sinners so that they turn to him. After a person receives the Holy Spirit, the will is assisted to accomplish what is good and do what is right because the mind is now oriented in such a way that the desire and the enjoyment are in God. Zahl writes that sanctification, for Augustine, therefore consists in liberation from sin to a right way of living because man now has «the object of one's desires and delights reordered to the one in whom alone creation can find its 'well-being'» (Zahl, 2020, p. 191). Augustine perceived genuine holiness in such a way that good works also must be motivated by the love of God (Zahl, 2020, pp. 193–194). Holiness therefore depends on the Holy Spirit and his salvific activity, which involves genuinely felt changes related to the affections.

In my view, Zahl contributes to an enhanced understanding of why it is necessary that the Spirit is the ultimate cause of Christian affections (in, for instance, regeneration and sanctification) while they apparently can arise in a quite natural way. On the basis of *affect theory*,<sup>17</sup> which indicates the difficulty of actually changing deep feelings, Zahl argues that people need the salvific work of the Holy Spirit. More than human effort and willpower is required. Zahl therefore claims that it is too simplistic to say, like George Lindbeck does, that doctrines create experiences, because our affections are able to provide «powerful resistance to efforts to alter them through changes of language and cultural practice» (Zahl, 2020, p. 150, 2020, Chapter 4).

Deep emotional changes can nevertheless occur in seemingly natural ways. As an example, Zahl uses Augustine's commentary and fine-grained explanation of Peter's conversion, which occurred after Peter had denied Jesus three times, as Jesus had told him beforehand. At the moment Peter remembers Jesus' words, it is just like Jesus is looking at him (Luke 22:61). However, Peter also remembers Jesus' words: «But I have prayed for you... that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers» (Luke 22:32 NIV). Peter then feels sorrow for his sin but

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<sup>17</sup> By «affect theory» Zahl refers to theories originating from gender research and queer theory in the 1990s and which today has great influence within the *humaniora* (Zahl, 2020, p. 148).

experiences at the same time God's goodness and grace, and the result is a tearful and genuinely felt repentance (Zahl, 2020, pp. 205–207).

Zahl's work sheds light on how Christian affections can be linked both to the salvific activity of the Spirit and the body. It contributes, in my opinion, to an expanded theological understanding of Christian affections and can function as a bridge between Pentecostal theology and other scientific research on emotions. In what follows, I will give a concrete and constructive proposal where I apply the somatic marker hypothesis as an explanatory model to try to understand the significance of Christian affections, as presented in Part 1, for work with systematic theology.

## PART 2: A CONSTRUCTIVE CONTRIBUTION: HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN AFFECTIONS FOR (PENTECOSTAL) SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGICAL WORK?

### The Somatic Marker Hypothesis

Here in Part 2, I will first present the somatic marker hypothesis (SMH),<sup>18</sup> based on Antonio Damasio's ground-breaking work, before I look more closely at some implications for systematic theology. Damasio is a professor of neuroscience, and his research on emotions and feelings has contributed significantly in recent decades to the understanding of how they play a positive and important role in human rationality.

SMH simply says that the body marks mental images with emotions and feelings. This marking seems particularly important for us to be able to make rational decisions, understood as our ability to plan and make good personal and social choices that are in the best interests of ourselves and others. According to Damasio, human functioning involves thinking visually in images (Damasio, 2005, pp. 105–107). The body sends important signals about these visual images via emotions and feelings. The Greek word for body is *soma*, and the term «somatic marker» therefore means bodily marking (Damasio, 2005, p. 172). Damasio explains how the whole body, not just the brain, is involved in the marking of these images that occur via emotions. The markings can happen consciously or unconsciously. Emotions refer both to unconscious physical activity, such as neural subprocesses in the body, and to conscious emotional *feelings* that we can be aware of (Damasio, 2008). The body's marking of mental images is therefore understood as a complicated biologically conditioned process that involves the whole body (and not just some parts of the brain) and includes conscious experiences of emotions.

The background of SMH and its positive view of the relation between emotional (conscious) feelings and rationality were studies of patients with brain damage (especially to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, vmPFC). These patients had previously had what can be described as normal social behaviour but now made irrational choices that were neither in their own best interests nor in the interests of those closest

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<sup>18</sup> See Damasio, 2005, 2008. The next paragraphs are based on my reading of these texts, and where the chapter in Neuroeconomics is a shorter summary of SMH. For a critical assessment of SMH which calls for more empirical data, see Dunn et al., 2006.

to them. When made aware of their irrational behaviour, they were unable to see how they could have chosen differently in the situations. What was remarkable about the patients was that their intellect seemed to be preserved intact. Cognitive tests<sup>19</sup> could not detect memory loss, impaired ability to absorb new knowledge, or poorer ability to carry out logical reasoning. Their language abilities and perception were also in order (Damasio, 2008). SMH is a hypothesis that can, among other things, explain this.

SMH explains how emotions and conscious feelings help people direct their attention to what is most important and are thus integral parts of human rationality. The markings of mental images are, in a way, the body's memory, or «a memory trace» understood as a *learned* marking (Damasio, 2005, pp. 170–172, 2008). Hence, the markings function as the body's memory based on previous experiences. The emotional markings are therefore understood as a result of experience; they are acquired in childhood as well as in adulthood, intricately developed and fine-tuned by a range of biological and socio-cultural factors – which can explain why the body's markings in certain cases do not function properly if the brain is damaged or if someone grows up in poor socio-cultural circumstances (Damasio, 2005, pp. 177–179).

Since emotional markings are understood as the body's memory, Damasio describes intuition, or so-called *gut feeling*, as «rapid cognition with the required knowledge partially swept under the carpet, all courtesy of emotion and much past practice» (Damasio, 2005, p. xiii). When a person faces situations similar to previous situations, this emotional marking takes place and can be of great help:

For example, emotion may increase the saliency of a premise and, in so doing, bias the conclusion in favor of the premise. Emotion also assists with the process of holding in mind the multiple facts that must be considered in order to reach a decision. (Damasio, 2005, p. xii).

Thus, the body's emotional markings can help people orient themselves in the world in a quick and efficient way. However, this does not mean that logical reflection is unnecessary. Professional chess players and their intuition, or gut feeling, may illustrate the interaction between emotions and logical reasoning. The chess player does not reason like a computer, which calculates every conceivable move. The chess player has neither the time nor the ability to calculate the countless possibilities and think many moves ahead. Nevertheless, professional chess players play impressively fast and well based on their gut feeling, for instance, in blitz or speed chess, which has a very fast time control. The chess player's intuition does not seem like a coincidence and illustrates therefore Damasio's view on how our intuition or gut feeling represents acquired knowledge and skills. Instead of thinking about all possible moves, the chess player instinctively feels which moves seem most important and chooses to concentrate on them. This shows how the player feels before actively thinking and uses logical reasoning to calculate the next move. Sometimes the chess player makes a move quickly based

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<sup>19</sup> Damasio points out that the problem was the theoretical tests and that they were cut off from real life. Hence they did not detect what kind of dysfunction it was that affected the patients' rationality (Damasio, 2005, p. 39).

on a gut feeling. At other times, the player may feel the need to stop and calculate some specific alternative moves that feel particularly important.

The purpose of my chess illustration is to clarify how emotions and conscious feelings play an important role in human rationality and how emotions are involved as an essential part of work and reflection processes. As Damasio points out, we do not have sufficient time or enough pencils to calculate all theoretical possibilities or all conceivable future scenarios in real life (Damasio, 2005, p. 172). Emotions assist a person, for instance, by reducing the number of choices from the beginning, but also along the way when one constantly needs to make new choices out of practical necessity. This also applies in theoretical work, where a researcher has to make a number of choices (e.g., what to research, which books to read, which alternatives to explore, which arguments seem most important, how much time to spend on various tasks, etc.). Damasio's research does not pit emotions against logical thinking but explains how they are intricately connected in work and reflection processes. Emotional markings assist logical thinking in a kind of dialogue where the emotions contribute cognitive information (Damasio, 2005, p. xiii).

According to Damasio, emotions have such an important and crucial function for human rationality that «[w]hen emotion is entirely left out of the reasoning picture, as happens in certain neurological conditions, reason turns out to be even more flawed than when emotion plays bad tricks on our decisions» (Damasio, 2005, p. xii). This is because the whole complex cognitive reflection process becomes different when emotional markings fail and do not function as normal. In such cases, the person may not be able to make rational choices or even able to realise what is irrational about his or her behaviour, even if someone points it out (Damasio, 2008). This is different from situations where a person has the wrong gut feeling because of misunderstandings or wrong associations, for instance because of incorrect information or insufficient knowledge (Damasio, 2005, p. 161). In such cases, new and correct information may be enough to solve the problem (so that the person feels as he should and does not make wrong associations), in contrast to those cases where the problem is that the somatic marker does not function normally.

Our need for mental images to be marked in the right way by emotions can be illustrated with some specific examples. One of Damasio's patients with brain damage, Elliot, was an intelligent and knowledgeable man who did well on IQ tests. Yet, after his brain injury, he was unable to hold a job, make good financial decisions, or take responsibility for his family. He could read and understand complicated texts excellently. But he was very quickly distracted and so hung up on various details that he was unable to complete his tasks at work. Despite strong warnings from people around him, he took financial risks that resulted in bankruptcy. He also got divorced several times. It seemed like his (un)social behaviour could not be improved. The problem was his brain damage, which made him no longer able to feel. He no longer reacted emotionally to things that he previously reacted to with strong feelings (Damasio, 2005, Chapter 3). A second example is another patient of Damasio's with brain damage. Damasio gave him a choice between two dates for their next appointment, but the patient spent half an hour reflecting and was still unable to decide, so eventually Damasio had to choose the date for him (Damasio, 2005, p. 193). As already mentioned,



there can be several complex reasons for emotional failure or dysfunction that affect human rationality. Sociopathy and psychopathy, which are characterised by insensitivity or lack of empathy and the ability to feel normally, are perhaps some concrete examples (Damasio, 2005, pp. 177–179). If the bodily and emotional marking is something acquired through life and intricately developed and fine-tuned by a number of biological and socio-cultural factors, then brain damage, as in cases of patients with damage to the vmPFC, or what can be characterised as a «sick culture», as in the case of Germany in the 1930s (Damasio, 2005, p. 178), makes the rationality itself different because the person is not able to feel in the right way. Hence, there are different types of damages with different results, but the point, and what these cases have in common, is that emotions are relevant for making rational choices.

SMH shows how mental images are marked by bodily conditioned feelings that can contain much cognitive information. The emotional markings are important for the ability to make rational personal and social choices, as well as for the ability to focus and make long-term plans. The emotional markings can, among other things, help us act quickly and efficiently by focusing on the most important thing, an argument, a certain conclusion, etc. I will now apply the somatic marker hypothesis as an explanatory model for how Christian affections are important for work with systematic theology.

### Implications for (Pentecostal) Theology and Church Life

In my view, SMH can be used both to explain how Christian affections can be understood as an integral part of theological reflection and work with systematic theology, and to show their potential to have a large influence on teaching, practices, and church life in general. Christian affections, as understood theologically and presented in Part 1, can, in light of SMH, also be understood as bodily conditioned emotional markings of mental images that function more optimally or as they should. The decisive factor here is how the somatic marker – or the bodily conditioned emotional markings of mental images (for instance, of God) – work with regard to the theologian's ability to make constructive and more rational choices in the work and reflection process, which results in systematic theology and doctrinal statements.

It is important to point out that systematic theology is always the result of previous theological work and reflection processes which involve one or more people. Systematic theology can therefore also be understood as an expression of practice and not just as doctrine.<sup>20</sup> Several factors have an impact on the theological work and reflection process, not least prior knowledge and various types of logical reasoning. The impact of Christian affections on systematic theology is thus indirect because there are other factors that also influence the work and reflection process. At the same time, systematic theology or doctrines can never be completely detached from the theologian and his or her feelings. The theologian who feels must make a number of choices in the work and reflection process in terms of planning, prioritization, and so on. In

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. how Jan-Olav Henriksen describes theology as a second-order and reason-giving practice, which justifies, explains and legitimizes religious beliefs and practices (Henriksen, 2016, p. 40).

the processes, Christian affections seem to play a significant and positive role if they entail that the somatic marker functions more properly.

The reason why Christian affections in light of SMH can be understood to play a positive role for systematic theological work is related to the theological and normative understanding of Christian affections as right oriented emotions and feelings (in line with God's will/Word) which at the same time are considered natural human emotions that can be linked to bodily conditioned processes.<sup>21</sup> Right affections can thus be understood as the body's emotional markings of mental images functioning in a good and right way. In other words, *the somatic marker* functions properly. Regarding theological work and reflection processes, the emotions and feelings towards God in particular – that is, the bodily conditioned emotional markings of the mental image of God – seem to be of great significance when considering SMH.

From a theological perspective, there is reason to think that a person's feelings towards God are important for all areas of life, including work with systematic theology, since God is the «all-determining reality» (Pannenberg, 1972) and everything in the world stands in some form of relationship to God (Pannenberg, 1991, p. 9). Thus, there is reason to think that the emotional marking of the inner psychological representation of God – which both believers and non-believers can have (Shaygani, 2020) – can have a great influence on rationality in general, in terms of both personal and social choices and long-term planning. Hauge and Barratt may serve as examples of this since their intense experiences of love for God apparently had a great impact on their lives and the choices they subsequently made. It should not be surprising that such feelings towards God can also influence theological work and reflections that result in systematic theology and doctrines. However, I would like to note that the visual mental image of God can be distinguished from the emotions that mark the image of God. An image of God is necessarily dependent on some prior knowledge, since it would otherwise be difficult to imagine God. At the same time, it seems entirely possible – not least considering what I take to be many people's expressed experiences – that a person could have a correct visual image of God due to orthodox teaching about God as good and all-powerful, etc., but the emotions do not signalise love and trust by marking the image of God with positive feelings.

If a person has positive feelings such as love for God – where the person's deepest joy and desire is God, as Augustine described it – it seems reasonable to assume that the emotional markings can contribute to helping the person focus on the most important thing, namely God and his will (which includes to love one's neighbour, etc.). Christian affections can in this way be understood to enable the person to make better choices, both personally and theoretically, in a long-term perspective (of eternity) rather than having a short-term focus because of «worries, riches and pleasures» (Luke 8:14 NIV).<sup>22</sup> It is possible that missions, generosity, stewardship, the return of Jesus, and questions about heaven or hell become more important for a theologian who is capable of adopting a more long-term perspective.

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<sup>21</sup> This does not mean, however, that Christian affections must be reduced to physical processes. See my final comment.

<sup>22</sup> Jesus says here (in the parable of the sower) that if the heart is full of such things, then the word of God can be choked so that it does not bear fruit.

If for some reason a person finds greater joy in created things than in God, or lacks feelings and is indifferent<sup>23</sup> towards God, or has completely different feelings such as shame or disgust towards God, it seems theologically correct to say that the person's affections are not right. In light of SMH, this can be understood as the emotional markings of the mental image of God not working optimally or according to their purpose. A number of central biblical texts address our feelings and attitudes towards God. In Matthew 22:37-38 we find Jesus' words that to «[l]ove the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... is the first and greatest commandment» (NIV).<sup>24</sup> If God is the point of reference for absolutely all things as the creator of the world and thus the all-determining reality, then the entire emotional marking system somehow is imbalanced or out of order when a person does not love God above all things.<sup>25</sup> In other words, there is something wrong with *the somatic marker* since the mental image of God is not marked in an optimal way for the person, for instance, if the person's image of God is not marked with any particular emotions and feelings, or is marked with positive emotions only to a small extent, or is marked with negative emotions. This does not mean that the body or brain functions themselves must be damaged (although the emotional markings correlate with and depend on bodily functions). The point is that when a person does not love God above all things, then it is theologically justified to say that something is wrong with how the person relates to God and everything else that can be related to God. Such an affective failure can be theologically understood as sin, and I suggest this can be related to some form of failure with the somatic marker, for example when a person emotionally prefers (against better judgment, knowledge, or other cognitive abilities) to act, do, and think in a wrong way because of distorted desires, which Augustine held were the sinner's problem.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Heb 3,15: «As has just been said: 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion'» (NIV).

<sup>24</sup> See also Jesus' three questions to Peter in John 21, where the first is «do you love me more than these?» (v. 15 NIV) and the message to the church in Ephesus: «I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first» (Rev 2,4 NIV).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the explanation of the first (of the ten) commandments that we should have no other gods, in Luther's Small Catechism, which speaks about fearing and loving God above all things and that we should put all our trust in him (Luther, 2000, p. 281).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. also philosopher Alvin Plantinga's understanding of sin or original sin as «perhaps primarily an *affective* disorder or malfunction. Our affections are skewed, directed to the wrong objects; we love and hate the wrong things. Instead of seeking first the kingdom of God, I am inclined to seek first my own personal glorification and aggrandizement [...] Much of this hatred and hostility springs from pride, that aboriginal sin [...] The defect here is affective, not intellectual. Our affections are disordered; they no longer work as in God's original design plan for human beings. There is a failure of proper function, an affective disorder, a sort of madness of the will. In this condition, we know (in some way and to some degree) what is to be loved (what is objectively lovable), but we nevertheless perversely turn away from what ought to be loved and instead love something else. (As the popular song has it: 'My heart has a mind of its own.') We know (at some level) what is right, but find ourselves drawn to what is wrong; we know that we should love God and our neighbor, but we nonetheless prefer not to. Of course this raises an ancient question, one going back to Socrates: can a person really do what she knows or believes is wrong? If she sees what is right, how can she still do what is wrong? The answer is simple enough: she sees what is right, but prefers what is wrong. Socrates fails to see the possibility of affective disorder, as opposed to intellectual deficiency or ignorance» (Plantinga, 2000, pp. 208–210).

Now, the degree or seriousness of the problem will likely vary depending on whether it is a weak love for God, a totally indifferent attitude (with lack of feelings), or shame or disgust. It is difficult to predict the consequences of these different categories of emotions with varying strength and what kind of irrational choices they may result in. However, in light of SMH, it is not inconceivable that they can result in what could be characterized as unsocial behaviour towards God that is not even in the person's own best interests – such as specific sinful actions (e.g., Gal 5:19-21) or writing (theologically) in a way that is not for the common good and does not serve God's purposes.<sup>27</sup>

That affective failure can involve a short-term perspective with less focus on eternity is also not inconceivable, such as in Pascal's famous wager. If the theologian's joy and desires are not directed toward God, he or she will perhaps intuitively favour erroneous conclusions and premises since the positive emotional markings are primarily directed towards created things (the creation) and not the creator. Theological work will always, out of practical necessity, require a series of quick decisions when faced with all the options that one has in the work and reflection process, since one does not have sufficient time to examine all theoretical possibilities. Thus, a failure in the emotional marking of the image of God can cause the theologian to overlook something important, and this can result in more misunderstandings or wrong associations, which perhaps otherwise would have been avoided. Just the lack of feelings can have serious consequences for one's personal and social behaviour towards God, in light of SMH, as seen in the case of Damasio's patient towards his own family. And a weak love for God may result in theological uncertainty and the inability to take a stand on theological issues, like how Damasio's patient was unable to decide on the date of his next appointment.

In their theological work, as elsewhere in life, theologians make a series of choices where their feelings help them plan and concentrate on what is most important. What should be prioritised first? What are the most relevant future scenarios? Which books should be read? Which premises and conclusions feel intuitively most important? Considering SMH, Christian affections, which of course can also vary in strength and intensity, seem to better facilitate rational choices in work with systematic theology as well as other choices in life *if* Christian affections actually involve a more optimally or properly functioning somatic marker. At the same time, it seems entirely possible that a theologian with distorted desires or affections can write something true and well-reasoned about God, and a theologian who loves God can make erroneous theological conclusions. My focus is on the working and reflection processes of the theologian, and here, it seems, there is good reason to believe that a better process improves the conditions for a better theological result, where right affections increase the likelihood of right theories.

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Psalm 53,1: «The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, and their ways are vile; there is no one who does good» (NIV). A friend of mine, Johannes Kjærviik, gave an apt comment on this verse by pointing out that this verse is probably not speaking of an atheist who does not believe that God exists, but rather addresses a form of practical atheism where someone lives as if God does not exist.

In this way, SMH can be applied as an explanatory model for how Christian affections can be understood to have a real positive significance for theological reflection and work with systematic theology. However, in light of SMH, Christian affections will have a positive significance not only for work with doctrines but for general behaviour and human practice as well. SMH can therefore be used to explain Land's widespread Pentecostal view of a positive connection between right affections (orthopathy), right doctrine (orthodoxy), and right practice (orthopraxy). Thus, the implications of SMH seem just as relevant for teaching and practices in the church, or church life in general, as for systematic theology.

At the same time, I want to emphasise again that Christian affections will not be the only decisive factor for theological rationality and that the influence on systematic theology is indirect. Lack of knowledge, false associations, and flaws in logical reasoning can still occur, with potentially unfortunate and serious doctrinal and practical consequences. Feelings are not necessarily a good enough reason in themselves to hold on to a position (Darwall, 2003), although it may be a good reason why one feels the way one does. However, in light of SMH, the potentially positive significance of Christian affections should not be underestimated. A major problem for human rationality in general, including theological thinking, is whether there is some kind of persistent failure of a person's bodily conditioned emotional markings (the somatic marker). For example, in cases of continuous lack of Christian affections such as trust and love towards God.

In conclusion, I would also like to emphasise that my theological application of the somatic marker hypothesis does not imply that Christian affections must be reduced to emotions and bodily processes, even if I argue for a close connection between them. The philosopher J.P. Moreland makes a good point when he says that the fact that we have much more knowledge today about how the soul depends on the human body (which is the separation Damasio calls «Descartes' error» in Damasio, 2005, p. 249) does not imply that we do not have a soul (Moreland, 2014, Chapter 4). Just as people have always known that we need an eye to be able to see, we know a little more today about how we need a body and brain to be able to feel. It does not mean that it is literally the eye that sees or the body that feels. It is *I* who see and feel with the help of my eyes and body. Thus, I see no good reason why we cannot distinguish qualitatively between different emotions such as the conscience, superficial and occasional feelings, strong passions or affections linked to the human will, and experiences of the Holy Spirit making emotional impressions or his inner witness, etc. The awakening of Christian affections such as love and trust towards God does not need to be reduced to a new orientation of desires and enjoyment, but can also be understood as a kind of new creation where the spiritual life and abilities of the soul are brought to life – which at the same time happens in and with the body, where the feelings are not independent of physical processes in the body and the brain.

Now, Damasio did not leave his brain-damaged patients whose emotional markings failed much hope for recovery. About his patient Elliot, he writes that the irrational behaviour seemed «beyond redemption» (Damasio, 2005, p. 38). However, a theological perspective may enrich our understanding of reality and the possibility of redemption with regard to the affections. As Zahl pointed out, affective

transformation in a person seems easier said than done. But this was used in his argument for the need for the Spirit's salvific work in regeneration and sanctification, which at the same time may happen via quite natural means, as Augustine's fine-grained explanation of Peter's conversion illustrated. Land also stated that Christian affections can be awakened in the context of Christian doctrine and practice, as we saw was the case with Hauge and Barratt. This means that Christian affections do not necessarily appear suddenly like lightning from the sky, even if the Spirit's work of salvation is decisive. One way to look at it is that right knowledge (the gospel/God's Word) in a complicated interaction with the Holy Spirit and his work of salvation can evoke Christian affections and cause changes in the emotional marking of the mental image of God. Though deep feelings and longings are difficult to change on our own, it can be argued that being held morally responsible gives us new options in life (Søvik, 2016). In this way, the good news of God's grace in Jesus Christ can become «the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes» (Rom 1:16 NIV).

## CONCLUSION

In this article, I have given a constructive contribution on how to understand the positive significance of Christian affections for theological reflection and work with systematic theology. In Part 1, I established, based on the work of Land, a theological understanding of Christian affections as normatively right feelings and attitudes that motivate the believer from within to live a Christian life. I then used the testimonies of Hauge and Barratt to exemplify and give better insight into how this phenomenon can be experienced and felt. Christian affections can, at the same time, be linked to the Spirit's work of salvation and the body, as Zahl argues. In Part 2, I employed Damasio's somatic marker hypothesis to try to explain how the positive significance of Christian affections for theological reflection and work with systematic theology can be understood, in that the bodily conditioned emotional markings of mental images – especially the image of God – function more optimally and properly, which improves conditions and enables the theologian to make more rational choices in the work with systematic theology. The positive significance that Christian affections can have for human rationality seems just as relevant for church life in terms of teaching and practices in the church as for systematic theology.

## LITERATURE

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Selected publications:

- Andersen, J. D. L., Smidsrød, Å.-M., & Tangen, K. I. (2019). Kvinnelige ledere i kirken. Et pentekostalt perspektiv. *Scandinavian Journal for Leadership & Theology*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.53311/sjlt.v6.40>
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