

What is the nature of affections such as joy, compassion, sorrow, and shame and what role do they play in politics? While political experience is replete with affectivity, the affective dimension of political experience has typically been under-conceptualised in political theory. Joshua Hordern argues that Christian political theology and contemporary theory of emotions have resources to respond to this challenge and, in so doing, to offer diagnoses and remedies for the political alienation and democratic deficit which trouble contemporary political life. Hordern contends that affections have a cognitive aptitude whereby they become enduring features of shared political reasoning. In conversation with Martha Nussbaum, Jurgen Habermas, Roger Scruton, Oliver O'Donovan and other political thinkers both classical and contemporary, his argument interrelates affections with memory, moral order, death, suffering, virtue, neuroscience, familial life and national identity. In contrast to dualisms which would separate reason from affection and theology from politics, Hordern describes the way that affections role in politics is shaped by the eschatological commitments of political thought. Through close attention to Deuteronomy, Luke and Acts, Hordern considers the role of affections in institutions of political representation, law and healthcare. Over against post-national visions which underplay locality in human identity, the account of political affectivity which emerges suggests that civic participation, critical patriotic loyalties, social trust and international concern will be primarily galvanised by the renewal of local affections through effective political representation. Moreover, churches, shaped by the affective vision of their Scriptures, are to embody the joyful, hopeful affective life of the Kingdom of God and thereby offer renewal to social and political experience at local, national and international levels.

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