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Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

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Introduction

Master's Dissertation

In his great history of Christian doctrine Jaroslav Pelikan placed a decisive break in Christian thought not at the sixteenth-century Reformation but at the beginning of the eighteenth century.[1] As Pelikan's division suggests Protestants and Catholics of the sixteenth century shared more assumptions than enlightenment thinkers would with their predecessors in either camp.

Born in 1703 Jonathan Edwards stands at the head of this division. A man who embodies the end of the Puritan tradition in America and the start of the those who sought to restate their faith in the new language of enlightenment thought. At this time tension between those who wished to embrace the new learning and those who wished to retain the old is seen in the formation of Yale College[2], the college which Edwards would attend. The purpose of the college was to provide a traditional Puritan education founded by those who felt that Harvard's contemporary curriculum had slipped from traditional standards. Edwards entered Yale in 1716 only for the whole college to be disbanded for a period of three years during which time he was tutored by Elisha Williams, a congregational minister. When the college came back together in 1719 it had as its rector a Harvard graduate Timothy Cutler. The significance of this fact is that Yale college became increasingly open to the thought of Locke, Malebranche, Newton, et al. Returning to Yale as a tutor between 1724-1726 gave Edwards plenty of opportunity to explore the library and to digest contemporary thought. It was this mixture of a conservative Puritan upbringing alongside exposure to new thought that Edwards' brought together in his thinking. George Marsden summarises: "Much ink has been spilled on whether Edwards was essentially a medieval or a modern. The answer is that he was both…Caught between two eras and determinedly and sometimes brilliantly trying to reconcile the two"[3]

It is precisely in this grappling with two worlds that Edwards can provide stimulus for our thinking today. As a theologian of his times Edwards' rejected the mechanistic rationalism of the deists. But in so doing he didn't retreat to old formulae, rather, he took his tradition and expounded it in a way that spoke within the intellectual milieu of his time whilst upholding traditional doctrine. In his vehement opposition to the mechanistic scheme of deism Edwards expounded an idealist metaphysic in which he saw everything as relying directly, second by second, upon God. God could not be seen as a distant creator who set things in motion, he must be imminent. In fact, for Edwards God's immanence was such that everything that existed must, in order to exist, exist inside God (*panentheism*). Going so far as to define God as the only "true" cause since he is the only being ever present who necessitates what he wills, and is sufficient to produce his willed effects. This leads him to his well-known doctrine of continuous creation:

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[1] Jaroslav Pelikan. *The Christian Tradition: Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)* (University of Chicago Press, 1991)

[2] The following paragraph relies on Norman Fiering *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill, 1981) pp. 28ff.

[3] George M. Marsden *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (Yale University Press, 2003) pg. 213

"All dependent existence whatsoever is in a constant flux, ever passing and returning; renewed every moment, as the colors of bodies are every moment renewed by the light that shines upon them; and all is constantly proceeding from God, as light from the sun"[4]

Edwards view of reality is more than simple speculation. It was a complete metaphysical reformulation which left no room for deism. This view of causes provided a defence of the traditional doctrine of providence but in a way that set in on new terms that met the needs of his times.

In this essay we are not looking to explore Edwards opposition to deism but what it means to be human though, as an occasional theologian, much of his work is a response to particular issues. We are going to draw on his corpus, both constructive and polemical, asking him to speak to a question he never specifically addressed. His metaphysics, which provided the grounding for his apologetic work, is fundamental for all he has to say concerning the human person.

Edwards' panentheism for example, that is his desire to see everything as radically dependent on God moment by moment, led to the idea that the whole of creation was part of God's self-communication. In his notebooks he wrote, "The great and universal end of God's creating the world was to communicate himself. God is a communicative being".[5] Grounded in what seems to be abstract metaphysical speculation Edwards finds a doctrine with profound implications in the practical realm of ethics. For it means that the great purpose of all of creation, the meaning of life itself, is God's self-communication. Further, this means that creation reflects the God it communicates or else it would not be able to communicate anything at all.

Moving from his metaphysical grounding through to God's end of self-communication in creation. Edwards developed his understanding of typology. Typology is a way of reading the Bible in which a story is understood to set for an example, or 'type', of what was to come. Edwards used typology both in this traditional sense but extended its application to produce a typology of nature in which the very fabric of the universe spoke of its creator. His inherited reformed tradition had always understood typology, that is the first type, not only to be valid but a key part of Old Testament exegesis. Type antitype relationships between types of the Messiah and their true antitype in Christ for example. In Edwards hands, however, the scheme took on significance far beyond a simple exegetical tool. He didn't limit himself to seeing types and antitypes only in the Scriptures but in the realm of nature. He realises that he is going beyond his tradition and in writing a defence of his own position in a notebook entitled *Types* declares:

"I am not ashamed to own that I believe that the whole universe, heaven and earth, air and seas, and the divine constitution and history of the holy Scriptures, be full of images of divine things, as full as a language is of words; and that the multitude of those things that I have mentioned are but a very small part of what is really intended to be signified and typified by those things; but that there is room for persons to be learning more and more of this

[4] *Works of Jonathan Edwards* 26 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957-2008). Hereafter abbreviated as: WJE followed by volume and page number. WJE 3.404

[5] WJE 13.410.

language and seeing more and more of that which is declared in it to the end of the world without discovering all"[6]

The analogy of typology to language which Edwards makes here is important in two respects: First, it provides a defence against the assertion that typological interpretation is a purely subjective experience leading to uncontrolled flights of fancy. If we don't learn the language properly "we shall use many barbarous expressions that fail entirely of the proper beauty of the language"[7]. This "language" is learnt in Scripture and applied to all creation. Second, and most important for our purposes, is that the analogy of "language" confirms that Edwards saw communication as the end of creation. He speaks above of "that which is declared" which is God. And more specifically it is the trinitarian God. Creation doesn't communicate generic truths about "god in general" as the Deists thought, to speak that way is a "barbarous expression". No, creation reflects the trinitarian God it was made to communicate. It is this trinitarian God in whose image humankind is made. As such one can only understand what it means to be human with reference to God's trinitarian nature and humanity's place in his plan.

This introductory example shows the cohesion of Edwards' thought. We have been able to trace lines of thinking that span metaphysics, theology, and biblical exegesis. In Edwards' mind these are not separate disciplines but all serve God's grand design of communicating himself to the creation. Shortly before his death Edwards' planned to finish a "great work" entitled "A History of the Work of Redemption", which was to be a "body of divinity in an entire new method, being thrown into the form of an history".[8] We will now move again through Edwards' corpus following his example in tracing the course of history from God in himself through creation and God's engagement with his people. In so doing we will draw out Edwards' insights into the nature of humanity.

It must finally be noted, by way of introduction, that I approach Edwards not primarily as an historian but as a student of systematic theology and ethics. As such, though I seek at all points to understand him in his own context my interest in his thought ultimately lies not in expounding his context but in placing him in dialogue with the broader Christian theology as well as contemporary ethics and psychology.

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[6] WJE 11.152

[7] WJE 11.151

[8] *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* eds. John Smith, Harry Stout, and Kenneth Minkema (London: Yale University Press, 1995) pgs. 322-323

Chapter 1
God Ad Intra

In the true spirit of Jonathan Edwards, we must turn first to God *ad intra*, God in himself. For, as we have already seen, creation is, for Edwards, a function of God's self-communication. An expansion of himself, an overflow which reflects his inner trinitarian being.

Idealism

In order to discuss Edwards' understanding of who God is we must first get a handle on his metaphysics. Much that seems radical in Edwards' thought finds its root in this area which, as has already been noted, he developed in opposition to the mechanistic views of reality held by the Deists.[9] During the enlightenment old metaphysical assumptions were being challenged but without any consensus as to a way forward. The trajectory of thought which Edwards found particularly disconcerting and undertook to combat in particular was the type of materialism found in the work of Thomas Hobbes.[10] In Hobbesian thinking theology and philosophy are to be radically separated[11] with the result that although Hobbes "does not say that there is no God; he says that God is not the subject matter of philosophy"[12]. Hobbes equated philosophy with reasoning an activity which cannot, held Hobbes, lead to knowledge of God. In practise this leads to the idea that belief in God is by definition an irrational activity. Edwards was unable to accept that theology was fundamentally irrational. Edwards was not alone in using idealism to oppose materialism Edwards was not alone. There are certain striking similarities between him and Bishop George Berkeley. Though any evidence of a direct connection between them remains elusive.[13]

Hobbes' materialism stemmed from his separation of observed phenomena from any invisible underpinnings. That is, he argued, our senses are our only way we have to knowledge. Anything that goes beyond sense perception is not rational but simply speculation. This empiricism differ from Aristotelian empiricism in that Aristotle was happy to move from the observation of accidents (observed phenomena) to an explanation of underlying substances which one cannot directly observe. In fact, Edwards and Hobbes both wanted to reject what they saw as the arbitrary category of an underlying (unobservable) substance underlying observed accidents. Edwards, however, saw that Hobbes epistemology, in which sense perception was the only way to knowledge, excised God from the equation. For God, as Spirit, cannot be discerned immediately through sense perception. Edwards, who also rejected an Aristotelian epistemology, argued the complete opposite to Hobbes. Sense perception, says Edwards, could not come to knowledge since God is that which is ultimately real. Indeed, God is the only real substance, natural senses perceiving mere

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[9] "He consciously undertook to develop a metaphysics that would be a conclusive answer to materialism" WJE 6.54

[10] It should be noted that Edwards explicitly claims never to have read Hobbes, WJE 1.374.

[11] Frederick Copleston *A History of Philosophy: British Philosophy, Hobbes to Hume* (Bloomsbury, 2003) p. 5

[12] ibid.

[13] Sebastian Rehnman "Towards a Solution to the "Perennially Intriguing Problem" of the Sources of Jonathan Edwards' Idealism", *Jonathan Edwards Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2015), pp. 138-155; See also *n.*5

shadows. 'There is' says Edwards 'neither real substance nor property belonging to bodies; but all that is real, it is immediately in the first being.'[14] For Edwards the epistemological question then becomes, 'How is one able to discern God if unable to rely on the natural senses alone'? Edwards returns to this question frequently resulting in his doctrine of the 'spiritual sense' in which God can be perceived directly. He used the taste of honey as an example arguing that as it is impossible to describe the taste of honey to someone who's never had it, so we need to 'sense' God directly to know him. Christians, Edwards believed, had a 'spiritual sense' which provided this 'direct' knowledge.[15] For now we simply note that Edwards moved forward with a rejection of Aristotelian categories whilst seeking to maintain the possibility of speaking truth about God.

Edwards also perceived that the threat of materialism was not only that it explained the material world purely mechanistically, but that even morality was understood the same way. Hobbes' insistence that matter is the only real substance, thus disposing of any idea of the spiritual or incorporeal, led ultimately to atheism. This disposal of the spiritual meant that everything, including moral actions, could be explained causally. Hobbes' materialistic determinism was followed by a moral determinism in which one's actions are simply the product of prior causes thus doing away with moral responsibility. As a Calvinist Edwards' theological determinism has been understood as being in line with Hobbesian thinking at this point, indeed Edwards himself acknowledged a certain similarity.[16] Edwards, however, placed great emphasis on the reality of man's moral responsibility a topic that we shall treat in some depth later.

Against materialism Edwards made a radical move. He did not simply argue that material things weren't the *only* substances, rather, he took the step of arguing that matter wasn't a substance at all.[17] Edwards believed that 'that there should be nothing at all is absolutely impossible',[18] for there truly to be nothing is an absurdity because it is impossible to imagine.[19] That being the case and given that it is possible for material things not exist, on the grounds that it is possible to imagine them not to be, material substance cannot be the fundamental substance of the universe. He took it further however noting in an early miscellanies entry that,

> "We know there was being from eternity, and this being must be intelligent. For how doth one's mind refuse to believe, that there should be being from all eternity without its being conscious to itself that it was... For in what respect has anything had a being, when there is nothing conscious of its being?...supposing a room in which none is, none sees the things in

[14] WJE 6.238

[15] WJE 17:414

[16] WJE 1.374

[17] This move was made also by Bishop Berkeley. In addition to Rehnman cited in n. 3 see also: Norman Fiering *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and its British Context* (University of North Carolina Press, 1981) pg. 39; Richard Hall "Did Berkeley Influence Edwards? Their Common Critique of the Moral Sense Theory" *Jonathan Edwards Writings* ed. Stephen Stein (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996)

[18] WJE 6:202

[19] "Of Being", WJE 6.206f.

the room, no created intelligence: the things in the room have no being any other way than only as God is conscious [of them]"[20]

So, with the understanding that being itself is necessary, that is it cannot not be. And that this being cannot be material, since we can imagine material objects not being. What then does its existence mean for the perceived material universe?

"The secret lies here: that which truly is the substance of all bodies is the infinitely exact and precise and perfectly stable idea in God's mind, together with his stable will that the same shall gradually be communicated to us, and to other minds, according to certain fixed and exact established methods and laws; or in somewhat different language, the infinitely exact and precise divine idea, together with an answerable, perfectly exact, precise and stable will with respect to correspondent communications to created minds, and effects on their minds"[21]

Edwards then responded to his contemporary intellectual culture by revoicing traditional teaching. Where the traditional view had been that God and creation both had their own substances, and the materialist view that only that which is perceived can truly be called substance. Edwards turned everything on its head arguing that in fact God is the only true substance and that material, in that it could not be, is that which is not as real. Thus, the very reality of our own human existence depends not on our own perception but on God's constant thinking of us.

Excellency

We have already seen in his metaphysics that Edwards didn't oppose the new ways of thinking for the sake of argument. He engaged with them and appropriated them thought for his own ends. He was committed to scientific enquiry. In an early writing we find Edwards writing up his observations of a flying spider to the Royal Society.[22] Even at this early stage he notes his scientific observations whilst drawing out the implications of God's providence, arguing that God had ordained the movement of flying spiders towards the sea in order that the land not be overridden with them. He saw, and continued to see, no threat in science. Indeed, his observations concerning the providential ordering of spiders would be drawn out later in his doctrine of "excellence".

Excellence is fundamental to Edwardsian thought. Indeed the notion of excellency is so important for Edwards that Norman Fiering has suggested that he "perhaps…intended to rank [it] with the classical transcendental attributes of being".[23] Early in his career Edwards explored what 'excellency' was in a series of entries in his notebook "The Mind".[24] Important

[20] "Miscellany" no. pp; WJE 13.188

[21] "The Mind" no. 13, WJE 6.344

[22] WJE 6.163-169; Richard Hall "Jonathan Edwards on the "Flying" Spider: A Model of Ecological Thought in Microcosm" *Jonathan Edwards Studies*, 5.1 (2015), 3-19

[23] Norman Fiering *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and its British Context* (University of North Carolina Press, 1981) pg. 74

[24] The notebook is published in WJE 6.

though the concept may be he notes at the outset that "there has nothing been more without a definition than excellency".[25] And so, he undertook to define it.

Excellency, said Edwards, consists in one thing in harmony with another. A single dot on a page, for example, isn't excellent. If we take two dots, they have a relationship with each other. They might be separated by 2 inches for example. However, we only really begin to see full excellency, however, if we add a third dot for if the third dot is placed 2 inches after the second the series as a whole is in proportion. If, on the other hand, the third dot were placed at a random unproportioned distance then the whole is not in harmony and, therefore, not excellent. At this point in his explanation Edwards insists that there is a bigger view one must take. For if the third dot were placed at four inches from the second it may initially seem to be inharmonious. However, a view of the whole might reveal a fourth dot placed at eight inches distant which would reveal an overall scheme wherein each individual dot is in proper proportion. The simplicity of this explanation belies the complexity of excellency within nature, let alone the godhead. Indeed, the ability to perceive excellency is directly related to the capacity of the creature:

> "We see that the narrower the capacity, the more simple must be the beauty to please. Thus in the proportion of sounds, the birds and brute creatures are most delighted with simple music, and in the proportion confined to a few notes"[26]

A view of the whole is required truly to perceive excellency. Thus, the more one understands and has a view of the whole (that is, the more of God's knowledge has been communicated to the creature) the greater the perception of overall proportion and true excellence.

It's important for us to see that although Edwards saw the need to provide a definition for excellency, he did not create the idea *ex nihilo*. Rather, he is again expressing his inherited tradition in contemporary forms. His Puritan heritage contained a strong stream of understanding beauty in harmony. The early Puritan Richard Sibbes, for example, in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 1 says:[27]

> "The sweetness of music ariseth from many instruments, and from the concord of all the strings in every instrument. When every instrument hath many strings, and all are in tune, it makes sweet harmony, it makes sweet concord. So, when many give God thanks, and every one hath a good heart set in tune, when they are good Christians all, it is wondrous acceptable music to God, it is sweet incense; more acceptable to God than any sweet savour and odour can be to us"[28]

This passage is notable because not only does Sibbes' view the beauty of harmony in music as an image of the beauty in spiritual harmony in the church. He even says that God finds spiritual harmony more beautiful than the beauty we finite creatures are able to experience.

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[25] WJE 6.332

[26] "Miscellany" no. 182, WJE 13.329

[27] Though I am not aware if Edwards knew of or had read this particular work he certainly knew of Richard Sibbes for in his *Catalogue of Books* Edwards makes a note of Sibbes' *The Bruised Reede and the Smoking Flax* (WJE 26.337). A work Edwards read for he quotes it in *Religious Affections*, WJE 2.433.

[28] *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes: Volume III* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1861) pg. 194

A very similar point to that which Edwards makes in the quotation above. The important move that Edwards makes is to place excellency at the centre of his metaphysics and, therefore, his theology. It particularly important for us to note that the concept stands at the basis of his ethics as well, which we shall explore in some detail later.

It isn't only that one must perceive the whole in order to have a true view of excellency. It's also important to note that excellency is not something found first in the created order. Rather, true excellency is found first in God and is reflectively in creation. In "The Mind" no. 45 Edwards reasons that "as to God's excellence, it is evident it consists in the love of himself. For he was as excellent before he created the universe as he is now". As has been noted already, Edwards' idealism meant that God is the most real substance. God is the mind which is fundamental to the existence of everything else as ideas in that mind. For God to be excellent he must be trinity. For God to be excellent means that he "exerts himself towards himself no other way than in infinitely loving and delighting in himself, in the mutual love of the Father and the Son".[29] "One alone, without reference to any more, cannot be excellent; for in such a case there can be no manner of relation no way, and therefore no such thing as consent".[30]

This leads to the simple logic that (A) one alone cannot be excellent, (B) God is excellent. Therefore (C) God is irreducibly plural. This plurality and excellency is not an attribute but is *essential*, it is part of the basic ontology of an essence. Stephen Daniel puts it this way: Edwards "does not…begin with the assumption of the ontological independence of the thing; it is not a thing first and only afterwards designated as beautiful".[31] Daniel uses the term beauty to encompass excellency since beauty is found in a subject's proportion and consent of one being with another. Daniel's point then is that Edward's understood excellency to be part of the very fabric of being. And, therefore, God is irreducibly plural.

Trinity

Edwards, then, was a thoroughly trinitarian theologian as his doctrine of irreducible plurality shows. Irreducible plurality does, however, pose certain questions if he is also to hold to the traditional doctrine of divine simplicity. We need first to see first why irreducible plurality was so important for Edwards before turning to consider his views on simplicity. As in many areas of his thought Edwards' in his trinitarian theology, was creative and his ideas have enjoyed a varied reception.[32] In *Discourse on the Trinity* Edwards describes the second person of the Trinity as, "the (1) eternal, (2) necessary, (3) perfect, (4) substantial and (5) personal idea which God hath of himself"[33]. These five attributes must all be understood as essential to Edwards' conception of God's trinitarian nature.

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[29] WJE 6.364

[30] WJE 6.337. 'Consent' in Edwardsian terminology is the acceptance of position between one being and another. One who loves another and seeks their well-being, for example, 'consents' to them (WJE 6:336)

[31] Stephen H. Daniel *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards* (Indiana: University Press, 1994) pg. 182

[32] Michael McClymond & Gerald McDermott *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (OUP, 2012) pg. 193*n*.1

[33] WJE 21.117, numbers added.

First, the Son is eternal. Though generated, being the image and idea of the Father, there was never a time when he was not. For when could there have been a time when God 'directly considered' was without an idea of himself? Second, unlike creation the Son is necessary. There is no possibility that he could not be. An argument we have already seen Edwards use to argue for God's being *true* substance. Third, he is perfect. That is, as the perfect image of the Father he is what the Father is. Fourth, he is substantial, as already noted this for Edwards is related to his being necessary. Edwards held that God's omnipotence meant that his idea is substantial because he himself, of whom the idea is, is substantial. The idea a creature has of something isn't substantial, because it cannot have the perfect idea of a thing. When we think or imagine something our idea is less than the reality. God's idea, however, is substantial because as a perfect idea it is a true reflection of the original, an original which was itself substantial.

Fifth, Edwards defends the use of the term "person" in his *Treatise on Grace* where he writes, "though the word "person" be rarely used in the Scriptures, yet I believe that we have no word in the English language that does so naturally represent what the Scripture reveals of the distinction of the eternal three-Father, Son and Holy Ghost-as to say they are one God but three persons".[34] Here we see that Edwards accepts the word "person", not on the grounds of tradition, but because it accords with the Scriptures. He couches his doctrine in these terms because the "basic challenge to the old way of thinking about things did not escape Jonathan Edwards. He attempted to renew the original spirit of trinitarian doctrine without ignoring the urgent philosophical issues of the Enlightenment"[35]. Indeed, with his idealist metaphysic he was able to state boldly concerning the Trinity that, "reason is sufficient to tell us that there must be these distinctions in the Deity".[36]

The two major aspects of his thought discussed above, namely his idealism and his understanding of excellence play major parts in his doctrine of God. We have seen Edwards' idealism underwriting much of his argument in the five statements concerning God in general and the second person of the Trinity in particular. His understanding that being is constituted by a perfect idea, in a perfect mind, and perfectly willed leads him to say that "the knowledge God has of himself must necessarily be conceived to be something distinct from his mere direct existence…And I do suppose the Deity to be truly and properly repeated by God's thus having an idea of himself; and that this idea of God is a substantial idea and the very essence of God, is truly God, to all intents and purposes, and that by this means the Godhead is really generated and repeated".[37] God's idea really exists because God's idea is a perfect idea, not a mere shadow as are our ideas. This idea is ontologically real and really distinct. At this point Edwards' thinking is on a track which can be found as far back as Origen[38] who argued that since the second person of the Trinity is God's Wisdom, he must be eternally generated or else there would have to have been a time when God was without Wisdom. Since it is unthinkable for God to be without his own Wisdom, Wisdom must be

[34] WJE 21.181

[35] Sang Hyun Lee "Introduction" in WJE 21.5

[36] WJE 21.131; see also 132 line 5

[37] WJE 21.114

[38] Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.2.2

generated *from eternity*.[39] Edwards' thinking is, however, placed on a different metaphysical foundation from most Christian thinkers prior to him.

Edwards' lack of traditional language does little to disguise the fact that for Edwards the Son is the perfect image of the Father, eternally generated and of one being. In his language Edwards expresses it that the perfect idea of a thing is exactly the thing itself in every way and yet a distinct idea. Yet, as we have seen, this is a traditional explanation which Edwards has translated for his contemporary discussion.

Simplicity

Edwards' doctrine of excellency, leading as it does to his understanding of irreducible plurality within the godhead, leads us to question how Edwards stood in relation to the doctrine of Divine Simplicity. Thomas Aquinas (followed by the Reformed Orthodox whom Edwards studied at Yale) defined God's simplicity in the following way:

> "There is neither composition of quantitative parts in God, since he is not a body; nor composition of form and matter; nor does his nature differ from his *suppositum*; nor his essence from his existence; neither is there in him composition of genus and difference, nor of subject and accident. Therefore, it is clear that God is nowise composite, but is altogether simple"[40]

The reformed orthodox subscribed to this account wherein God is known as *actus purissimus et simplicissimus*. Amandus Polanus (1561-1610) wrote that, "God's essential attributes are *really his very essence*...whatever there is in God is one. Moreover, there ought to be absent from the prime unity all difference and all number whatsoever".[41] Yet Edwards wrote,

> "It is a maxim amongst divines that everything that is in God is God...If a man should tell me that the immutability of God is God, or that the omnipresence of God and authority of God [is God], I should not be able to think of any rational meaning of what is said"[42]

The above statement, alongside his insistence that "one alone...cannot be excellent" seems to oppose his received tradition which states that simplicity means that in God there is no "number whatsoever". Indeed, it is a cause for much debate in the secondary literature.[43] We cannot settle this question here, but we must note that, however he worked it out, Edwards' certainly seems to privilege God's excellency and diversity over his unity. Or, if that is too

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[39] Lewis Ayres *Nicaea and its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) pgs. 43-52

[40] *Summa Theologiae* 1.3.7

[41] Heinrich Heppe *Reformed Dogmatics* trans. G. T. Thomson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1950) pg. 57-58.

[42] *Discourse on the Trinity*, WJE 21.132

[43] Wallace Anderson "Editor's Introduction" in WJE 6 pg. 84; Amy Plantinga Pauw "'One alone cannot be excellent': Jonathan Edwards on Divine Simplicity." in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian* eds. Paul Helm and Oliver Crisp (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003) 115 & 119; Michael McClymond "Hearing the Symphony: A Critique of Some Critics of Sang Lee's and Amy Pauw's Accounts of Jonathan Edwards' View of God" in *Jonathan Edwards as Contemporary: Essays in Honor of Sang Lee* ed. Don Schweitzer (New York: Peter Lang, 2010) pg. 74.

strong, we can say that, however he worked it out, both Edwards' biblical exegesis and philosophical insights led him to insist that God is irreducibly plural. That at the bottom of reality there is relationship. That the Bible's claim that "God is Love" (1 John 4.8, 16) "shows", says Edwards, "that there are more persons than one in the Deity"[44]. The impact of this privileging of plurality over simplicity will become clear as we move on for as creation is made in such a way that reflects a God in whom there is diversity there is not a single way to be perfect. The perfection of a being is not simply becoming more like a single monadic being. Rather, perfection involves a being taking its place in the scheme. Diversity and difference are not indicative of flaws but of excellency.

Conclusion

Our discussion so far has concentrated primarily on Edwards' philosophical underpinnings. Indeed, much of Edwards studies, and much historical theology in general, has been done without a sufficient appreciation for the control Scripture placed on a given thinkers thought. Writing about the fourth century Lewis Ayres has argued that to understand the fourth century debates we must understand contemporary exegetical practices.[45] The same is true for Edwards' thought. Only recently has there been sustained investigation into Edwards' exegesis.[46] Edwards, like the Church Fathers, sought to exegete the Scriptures within a philosophical framework that adhered to those same Scriptures. It is this continuity of Scripture alongside the discontinuity of his metaphysics that accounts for the occasional strangeness of Edwards' thought.

It is also worthy of note that much of what Edwards wrote on philosophy, and that we have drawn from here, was from the early part of his life. The notebook "The Mind", to which we have referred on several occasions, was written sometime after 1723, by which time he had already developed his basic metaphysical framework.[47] Yet despite this, and given the fact that the more explicitly theological works to which we shall turn later were written in the 1750s Edwards never moved from the basic framework he developed whilst tutor at Yale. That is to say that despite the fact that Edwards metaphysical notebooks and his developed ethical treatises were separated by around 30 years the former still provided the framework for the latter. This unity of Edwards' thought across time is also found across subjects. Sang Hyun Lee puts it this way:

> "What is striking about Jonathan Edwards' writings on the Trinity is that there is none of this bifurcation between the doctrine of the Trinity and the Christian life of faith and practice. Everything Edwards wrote about the Trinity expresses the intertwining connectedness of the Trinity and the Christian's experience of God as the Creator, Savior, and Sanctifier, and thus between the immanent and the economic Trinity"[48]

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[44] WJE 21.113

[45] Ibid. pg. 31-40

[46] Robert Brown *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible* (Indiana State University Press, 2002); Douglas Sweeney "The Biblical World of Jonathan Edwards" *Jonathan Edwards Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2013), 221-268; ibid. *Edwards the Exegete* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

[47] Wallace Anderson "Introduction" in WJE 6.33

[48] WJE 21.3

It is clear even now that with Edwards' metaphysical understanding any account of what it means to be human has to be grounded in the being of the God, the only real substance. That the existence of all material creation, humanity not excluded, is carried on by God's stable idea and will will have profound implications for Edwards explication of Christian ethics in the *Nature of True Virtue*. Next, we turn to consider creation in general as God's work *ad extra*.

Chapter 2

Trinity Ad Extra

So far our primary material has been drawn from Edwards' early philosophical notebooks from his days at Yale. In his later years Edwards turned to a systematic defence of Reformed, or Calvinistic, doctrine.[49] In 1754 he completed and published *Freedom of the Will* and at the time of his death had *Original Sin* ready for the publisher, published posthumously in 1758. Along with his *Two Dissertations* these represent his mature work. *Freedom of the Will* and *Original Sin* are defences against specific opponents whereas the *Two Dissertations* sought more broadly to undermine the foundations of where contemporary thought had gone wrong.[50] The *Two Dissertations* (though to be seen as one work) are known separately as *The End for Which God Created the World* and *The Nature of True Virtue*. We will come to the latter work shortly turning first to *The End for Which Created the World*.

The Problem

The Reformations of the sixteenth century primarily concerned the questions of justification, the nature of the sacraments, and authority.[51] In the following century the Reformed Scholastics, from whom Edwards inherited his theology, set out to provide complete protestant theologies. This required them to address the doctrine of God in a way the reformers hadn't needed to and they turned to traditional Aristotelian language and method as found in their scholastic predecessors of the medieval period. In our discussion of God *ad intra* we noted a tension between God's plurality and divine simplicity. In the doctrine of creation, God *ad extra*, there is also a theological tension, this time between God's *aseity*, that is God's total self-reliance, and the fact of creation. The question is, "Why, if God is complete in himself, does creation exist?" Zacharias Ursinus, one of the writers of the Heidelberg Catechism, states that:

> "God created the world not by an absolute necessity but by the one which is termed *consequentiae*, or *ex hypothesi, sc. suae voluntatis*, although by His eternal and immutable, yet utterly free decree"[52]

Ursinus highlights the two key points which the theologian must maintain. First, God mustn't be understood to have created through any necessity but from his 'utterly free decree'. To say otherwise would posit something outside of God exerting an influence on him which would mean he wasn't *a se*, entirely sufficient in and of himself. Second, and on the other hand, creation has been eternally and immutably decreed. It did not enter God's mind at some point since that would posit a change in his knowledge which was and is always complete. So, creation can neither be thought to have any existence outside of God, nor can it be an idea that came to God since both would lead to the same conclusion: that God is somehow dependent on something outside himself. These two points lead to the obvious

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[49] The term Reformed is to be preferred though often termed 'calvinism'. See Alistair McGrath *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 3rd edition (Blackwell, 1999) pg. 8

[50] George Marsden *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (London: Yale University Press, 2003) pg. 459

[51] Alistair McGrath *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 3rd edition (Blackwell, 1999)

[52] "Loci Theologici" in Heinrich Heppe *Reformed Dogmatics* trans. G. T. Thomson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1950) pg. 192

question as to why God created at all and why he created when he did rather than at another time.

Edwards' Reformed predecessors answered that there was a difference between the *idea* of creation and creation actualised in its material state. William Ames writes that:

> "Before the creation, creatures had no real being (*esse reale*) either in existence or essence, although they had being known (*esse cognitum*) from eternity in the knowledge of God. Creation then produces out of nothing, that is, out of matter which had no preexistence"[53]

In this way Ames can defend the temporal reality of creation as things having *esse reale* at the same time as safeguarding God's infinite knowledge of creation stretching back into eternity. Edwards' idealism, however, doesn't allow for this explanation. Holding that being is a matter of being perceived in a mind means that Ames' distinction between *esse cognitum* and *esse reale* cannot be truly distinguished.

It will be instructive to take Edwards' argument in *On the Trinity* as an example which highlights this difficulty. As we saw in chapter one, and as he argues again in this unpublished notebook, Edwards says that "in perfectly beholding and infinitely loving, and rejoicing in, his own essence and perfections. And accordingly it must be supposed that God perpetually and eternally has a most perfect idea of himself".[54] Furthermore his idealism leads him to state: "I do suppose the Deity to be truly and properly repeated by God's thus having an idea of himself; and that this idea of God is a substantial idea and has the very essence of God, is truly God, to all intents and purposes, and that by this means the Godhead is really generated and repeated.".[55] God's perception of himself involves having an idea of himself. Moreover, perfect perception results in a perfect idea. A perfect image, he will argue a little later, is the same as the original.

An issue arises when we come to consider that if God's perfect knowledge of himself results in a perfect 'substantial' idea, wherein lies the difference between the second person of the trinity and the created order? For surely God's perfect knowledge of creation substantiates creation placing them on the same plain. Edwards' answer is, again, God's self-communication. The creation is differentiated from God's eternal idea in that it becomes a partaker of God's own knowledge.

Edwards addressed the more basic question of why God created at all in *End of Creation* and in so doing utilises arguments developed in *Freedom of the Will*. Arguments which Sang Hyun Lee has described as Edwards' 'dispositional ontology'.[56] Keeping our purposes in mind namely, what Edwards taught it means to be human, we will see important implications in his answer. His dispositional ontology becomes key not only for his theology proper but also for his understanding of the created order in general and humanity in particular.

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[53] *The Marrow of Theology*, VIII.8

[54] WJE 21.113

[55] WJE 21.114

[56] Sang Hyun Lee *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton University Press, 2000)

Edward's Solution

As in all his work Edward's fundamental convictions in *End of Creation* were based upon Scripture. At the start of the work he states that "it would be relying too much on reason to determine the affair of God's last end in the creation of the world, relying only by our own reason, or without being herein principally guided by divine revelation"[57]. Writing this at the start of the first half of the work titled "Wherein Is Considered What Reason Teaches Concerning This Affair" Edwards has an important place for reason, but it is reason "principally guided" by revelation. This is worth our remembering because, like Augustine and Anselm before him, the exploration of theology through the use of reason is not something which can be detached from revelation.

Edwards is careful at the beginning of *End of Creation* to define his terms. There are several uses of 'end' which need to be clear to the mind in order to follow his thread. First, a *chief end* is any end which is sought for its own sake. Second, a *subordinate end* is sought in order to achieve a *chief end*. Third, an *ultimate end* is a being's primary chief end (allowing at this point that there could be more than one *ultimate end*). That is to say, the end that is most important. Perhaps the most significant distinction comes in his subdivision of *ultimate ends* into two. An *ultimate end* may be either *absolute* or *consequential*. The former is an end which a being has with nothing else considered, the latter is an end with present circumstances considered. Edwards gives the example of a man who wants a family. His desire for a family is an *absolute ultimate end* because it is contingent on any particulars. Once he has a family the well-being of that family becomes a *consequential ultimate end* because its existence as an end depends on the existence of the family whereas his desire for family in general, absolutely considered, does not.

Edwards' relentless logic means that the with these definitions in place the outcome is clear. To explore the question why God made the world is to explore specifically his *absolute ultimate end*. For creation, made in time, cannot be a factor, or else God becomes dependent on creation. His care for creation, including the work of redemption, if considered an *ultimate end*, must be considered a *consequential ultimate end*. That is to say, since it is necessary for the existence of creation to precede the end of its redemption, God's redeeming of creation cannot account for the basic existence of creation in the first place. We must, therefore, look for God's *absolute ultimate end* in himself without reference to creation.

The argument that Edwards' gives at this point will be key for his understanding of the nature of the created order and for his ethics. The very question that he seeks here to answer, namely: "Why does anything exist?" leads to further questions about what is good, what ends are worth choosing? Thus "metaphysics" is "tied into ethics".[58]

Considering God's *absolute ultimate end* means considering that which was worthy to be valued by him prior to creation which leads inexorably to the conclusion that "he had respect to *himself* as his last and highest end in this work; because he is worthy in himself to be so, being infinitely the greatest and best of beings"[59]. Edwards defends this thesis in a remarkable passage in which he utilises a hypothetical 'Supreme Arbiter'. Suppose there

[57] WJE 8.419

[58] Michael McClymond and Gerald McDermott *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) pg. 208

[59] WJE 8.421

were a completely impartial observer of the universe, says Edwards, what would that observer view as most valuable and worthy? Well if he were to judge impartially he would know "that the *degree of regard* should always be in a proportion *compounded* of the proportion of existence and proportion of excellence"[60]. It is clear that God is:

> "Over all, to whom all are properly subordinate, and on whom all depend, worthy to reign as supreme head with absolute and universal dominion; so it is fit that he should be regarded by all and in all proceedings and effects through the whole system: that this universality of things in their whole compass and series should look to him and respect him in such a manner as that respect to him should reign over all respect to other things, and that regard to creatures should universally be subordinate and subject"[61]

God, "himself possessed of…perfect discernment and rectitude"[62], is the supreme arbiter and knows that it is fitting that he himself is to be valued above all else.

So why creation? If God is *a se*, complete and perfect in himself, totally without need of creation, why did he create? It is in answering this question that Edwards' makes an original contribution. Edwards is keen to uphold God's aseity but he can also say that, "In some sense it can be truly said that God has the more delight and pleasure for[63] the holiness and happiness of his creatures"[64]. In his doctrine of God, we saw Edwards privilege God's plurality over his simplicity. Here we see him privilege God's love and involvement for creation over his impassibility. That is not to say that he makes God in any way dependent on creation. Rather he is able to hold them together because, as he had stated earlier in the treatise, "a disposition in God, as an original property of his nature, to an emanation of his own infinite fullness, was what excited him to create the world"[65].

God, absolutely considered, prior to creation, was predisposed to emanate his own fullness. That is, to exercise his attributes of power and wisdom. The exercise of this disposition doesn't make him complete in any way that he wasn't before, but he also "would be less happy, if he were less good, or if he had not that perfection of nature which consist in a propensity of nature to diffuse of his own fullness"[66]. To get at what Edwards is arguing here we must look to *Freedom of the Will*.

In *Freedom of the Will* Edwards' explored the nature of necessity asking what it really means. Noting that it usually implies something from outside compelling an action against the agent's will. This observation led him to make a distinction between *natural necessity*

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[60] WJE 8.423

[61] WJE 8.424

[62] WJE 8.425

[63] 'because of, on account of' ("for, prep. and conj.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/72761?rskey=WQCD0N&result=2&isAdvanced=false (accessed September 29, 2017))

[64] WJE 8.447

[65] WJE 8.433

[66] WJE 8.447

and *moral necessity*. The former concerns necessity as understood in everyday life, an outside force which compels or prohibits a particular course of action, an action not willed by the agent. The latter refers to the necessity by which our habits and dispositions direct our actions. We may not be 'forced' by anything outside ourselves, but neither are we able to do otherwise because we don't want to. This *moral necessity* is not forced in any way but is also necessary in that it could not be otherwise. Edwards holds that actions can be both necessary and totally free since freedom is doing what we will.[67] If an agent is free, that is without external limiting factors, then doing what he or she wills is a necessary outcome. It could not be otherwise. This argument is worked out in the realm of human action but towards the end of the work Edwards states that "if these things are true, it will follow, that not only the will of created minds, but the will of God *himself* is necessary in all its determinations"[68]. These determinations in God are made "by what he sees to be *fittest* and *best*"[69].

Thus, creation is caused by God's predisposition to self-emanation. Not compelled by any external force but by his own regard to himself, to his own glory. God's happiness, though not completed or fulfilled by creation, would be curtailed if he hadn't exercised his disposition to create. Indeed, for God not to create would require an external force compelling him to act in a way out of line with his nature. In this way Edwards' sees God as *a se* as well as providing a rationale for the created order.

The Nature of Creation

We have already noted creation's nature as divine emanation. And as such it is an 'image' of the divine. This is true of the whole of the created order. Edwards taught that God created for his own glory but insisted that this end is not opposed to the end of the creature's happiness. Jonathan Edwards Jr. wrote that his father was "the first, who clearly showed that they are really only one end, and that they are really one and the same thing"[70].

As he did in the area of metaphysics, so he brought together his tradition framed in a way that spoke to his contemporary situation. Norman Fiering has observed that,

> "Moral philosophers had begun the process of converting into secular and naturalistic terms crucial parts of the Christian heritage. Edwards in a sense reversed the ongoing process by assimilating the moral philosophy of his time and converting it back into the language of religious thought and experience".[71]

Thomas Hobbes argued in *Leviathan* (1651) that right and wrong were subjective terms which simply described what an individual liked or disliked.[72] Though he was not largely

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[67] WJE 1.141-148

[68] WJE 1.375

[69] WJE 1.377 emphasis original

[70] Jonathan Edwards Jr. quoted in Michael McClymond and Gerald McDermott *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) pg. 214

[71] Norman Fiering *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and its British Context* (University of North Carolina Press, 1981) pgs. 60-61

[72] Michael McClymond and Gerald McDermott *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) pg. 215

followed at the time (Moral Relativism was to become a prominent position in the 20th century)[73] Hobbes does represent increasingly egoistic interpretations of morality of the enlightenment. The "moral sense" philosophers Lord Shaftesbury and Francis Hutcheson taught that humans inherently knew what was right and wrong, all they needed to do was to turn to their internal moral compass. Whether a thoroughgoing moral relativism as in the case with Hobbes or inherent knowledge of right and wrong as with the "moral sense" philosophers, these subjective approaches to morality take a completely different understanding of the nature of creation.

Edwards' understanding that creation was necessarily created because of God's disposition to self-emanation allied with his understanding that creation is God's sharing of himself with his creatures means that he is able to hold (objectively) that God is primary. He is the chief good and, therefore, his own highest end. Whilst at the same time holding that humanity's happiness is not subservient to God's happiness because humanity's happiness itself consists in sharing in God's glory.

[73] https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-relativism/ (accessed 20/09/2017)

Chapter 3

Sin and the Work of Redemption

We have had cause, so far, to discuss firstly who God is in himself and secondly his works. This God-centred approach is foundational for all Edwards' theological thinking, not least his ethical thought. Edwards was a theological objectivist, that is he affirmed "the absolute primacy of deity, metaphysically, morally, and spiritually".[74] For Edwards God must be considered first and absolutely, that is without reference to anything or anyone else. Edwards saw that for "God to be God by definition [he] not only possesses moral perfection, but also establishes the norms of righteousness".[75] In order to understand what it truly means to be human, one must start and end with God rather than the human person (theological subjectivism), or the human need (theological utilitarianism). In exploring Edwards' ethical thinking we will find an account that isn't simply voluntaristic, that is one in which God makes arbitrary decisions and they're good decision simply because God made them, though it is that. Edwards also insisted on the human capacity to see goodness as a standard that can be understood by (sanctified) reason. In so doing he develops an account of ethics that is able to maintain the primacy of God and the inherent goodness of all his decisions without making those decisions arbitrary and robbing human agents of accountability.

We have seen that Edwards explained the purpose of creation as being for God's glory. And that "as all things are from God as their first cause and fountain; so, all things tend to him, and in their progress come nearer and nearer to him through all eternity"[76]. Indeed, he makes the remarkable claim that "the nearer anything comes to infinite, the nearer it comes to identity with God"[77]. It is because God is that which is most worthy that his own glory is the end of creation. Similarly, just as it is fitting that God should make himself his own end, it is also fitting that he also be the end of the created order.

Before we can come to a fuller account of Edwards' ethical thought we must first understand what Edwards understood concerning what went wrong in God's external work, that is: sin. What the effects of sin are, and how God seeks to rectify the issue.

Sin

For us to understand what sin meant for Edwards we must understand his theological anthropology, born out of the first great awakening. In 1737 Edwards' *Faithful Narrative* was published in London. The work gave an account of a revival in Edwards' hometown of Northampton beginning in 1733.[78] The account provides a very positive picture of what has come to be known as the Valley Revival. By the time of publication, however, Edwards noted (in a final message dated 1736) that a recent controversy had "tended to put a stop to the glorious work here, and to prejudice the country against it, and hinder the propagation of

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[74] Clyde A. Holbrook. *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards* (University of Michigan, 1973) pg. 3

[75] Clyde A. Holbrook. *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards* (University of Michigan, 1973) pg. 13

[76] WJE 8.444

[77] WJE 8.459

[78] WJE 4.147

it".[79] The revival and its abrupt end set Edwards on a course of thinking about the nature of man which would culminate in *Religious Affections* (1746).[80] In this work Edwards drew together his philosophical training as well as his pastoral experience. He sought, primarily, to explain the role of affections within the life of the soul. We speak here of 'affections' as that is the term that Edwards used in the work under discussion, it is worth noting however that one's affections and dispositions are synonymous. Edwards discussed various 'signs' which one can expect to be displayed in the life of the truly regenerate person and in so doing developed a detailed analysis of human psychology, particularly as it consists in the affections.

The soul, says Edwards, consists of two faculties: (1) the understanding which "views and judges of things", and (2) the inclination or will which "does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way inclined with respect to the things it views or considers".[81] Edwards always argued for the unity of the human person. Indeed, Gerald McDermott and Michael McClymond note that, "even the twofold distinction of understanding and inclination tends to break down in the course of Edwards' discussion in *Religious Affections*. What one calls mind or understanding is the human self in one mode of operation, while inclination is another mode".[82] The human person, then, endowed with understanding and inclination, makes decisions based on what he or she loves and what he or she loves is that which is perceived as the greatest good. It is clear that in order for the person to be inclined, or to will, that which is willed must be perceived. As Edwards puts it, "there must be light in the understanding, as well as an affected fervent heart".[83]

Edwards states that "the affections are not essentially distinct from the will, nor do they differ from the mere actings of the will and inclination of the soul".[84] So Edwards believed in a unified human person who acts according to his or her affections (which are determined by understanding and inclination). The importance of Edwards' understanding of the will for his theology in general, and his ethics in particular, would be hard to exaggerate for it is in the will that the effects of sin can be found. Indeed, when in Stockbridge he turned to work on his magnum opus he turned first to the question of the will in *Freedom of the Will* (1754) which laid the groundwork for *Original Sin* (1758), *End of Creation* (1765), and *True Virtue* (1765).

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[79] WJE 4.211

[80] Ava Chamberlain ("Brides of Christ and Signs of Grace: Edwards's Sermon Series on the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins" in *Jonathan Edwards' Writings: Text, Context, Interpretation*, ed. Stephen Stein (Indiana University Press, 1996) pgs. 3-18) has argued that Edwards' thought in *Religious Affections* can be traced back to before the revivals and thus that the traditional account (given here) is "inadequate". However, the fact that he was concerned with signs of regeneration prior to the revival, as we would expect of one in the Puritan tradition, doesn't negate the fact that the debates concerning the revival sharpened and gave fresh impetus to his thinking.

[81] WJE 2:96

[82]Michael McClymond and Gerald McDermott. *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) pg. 314

[83] WJE 2:120

[84] WJE 2:97

In *Freedom of the Will* Edwards taught that the will is "that by which the mind chooses anything"[85] and is as "the greatest apparent good".[86] As has already been noted, the human person must perceive and that which it perceives as the greatest good *is* that which the person chooses. Edwards opponents' primary objection was to the necessity in this model. For if the person necessarily chooses that which they perceive as the greatest good wherein is their freedom? And if there is no freedom, how can they be accountable for their actions? How can actions be accounted sinful? This particular question of accountability was in fact the very question addressed by *Freedom of the Will,* rather than the freedom of the will generally. The original title being, *A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of the Will which is Supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame.*

In answering this question of praiseworthiness and blameworthiness Edwards sought first to define his terms and one term that we have already seen he felt needed clarification was necessity. He sees that the reason people objected to the term necessity in determinations of the will was that it implied coercion. The understanding that if something is necessary then it doesn't matter what you do it will still be the same outcome. As noted already Edwards said that the problem is that in its philosophical use it shouldn't carry the force of assumed opposition. Rather necessity is simply something that is definite. In this sense there is no opposition between freedom and necessity. For Edwards defines freedom as "that power and opportunity" for a person "to do and conduct as he will, or according to his choice".[87] So a person can be free to exercise the will and the outcome still to be necessary. For instance, if someone were to be given the choice between a large sum of money or a large amount of pain they are free to choose either option, there will not to suffer pain, however, makes the outcome necessary in the sense that it is simply definite They would choose the money. This necessity in doing what one wills was true for God in himself and it's true also for humanity as created moral agents. It doesn't require any coercion from outside the situation for it to result in the same outcome no matter how many times the scenario where replayed. There is simultaneously freedom and necessity.

Edwards' theological objectivism led him to move from God's praiseworthiness to humanities blameworthiness. He titled section 3.1 of *Freedom of the Will*, "God's Moral Excellency Necessary, Yet Virtuous and Praiseworthy".[88] Edwards argues here that since God is necessarily good and worthy of praise, and is the "fountain of all agency of virtue", so man's actions, though necessary, are praiseworthy or blameworthy. We saw that in *End of Creation* Edwards said that God made creation for his own glory because he saw himself as the greatest good. Indeed, it is necessary for God to make himself his own end for he knows himself to be the greatest good and therefore wills his own glory. No outside force is required or implied by saying that God's making himself his own end is necessary it is simply to say that he is free to choose what he wills and he wills what he wills and so the outcome is necessary.

The inclination of the will, therefore, is the important question, and it is in the will that the effect of sin is found. Edwards argues that the *imago Dei*, the image of God, consists, "in

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[85] WJE 1:137

[86] WJE 1:142

[87] WJE 1:164

[88] WJE 1:277

those faculties and principles of nature, whereby he is capable of moral agency".[89] This is a profound statement for Edwards' understanding of what it means to be human. God made humanity in his image: as a moral agent worthy of praise or blame. In order, therefore, to be human in the fullest and most original sense one must make right moral judgements.

Freedom of will means, "that power and opportunity for one to do and conduct as he will, or according to his choice".[90] Sin means that the individual moral agent wills, not that which is in accord with the greatest good, namely God, for the fallen person is unable to know God, but the greatest *perceived* good. And in the fallen state that means oneself. Sin involves a lack of perception of what is truly excellent.

Redemption

We have seen that at the same time as Northampton's reputation was growing Edwards saw signs that "many of his parishioners were returning to their old ways of greed and infighting"[91]. In response to this cooling of the fires of revival in his town Edwards preached three sermon series:[92] Firstly, *True and False Christians*.[93] Secondly, *Charity and its Fruits*.[94] Thirdly, A *History of the Work of Redemption*.[95] These three series explore the very themes, and in the very same order, that we have been tracing. In *True and False Christians* Edwards teaches, "That the visible church of Christ is made up of true and false christians"[96] and that "Those two sorts of Christians do in many things agree, and yet in many other things do greatly differ"[97]. In expounding this doctrine, he explores the ways in which true and false Christians agree and differ in order to ascertain counterfeit signs of conversion. The arguments Edwards uses here were to find their fullest expression in *Religious Affections*. In the second sermon, *Charity and its Fruits*, Edwards goes on from counterfeit signs to think about what true signs of regeneration are (many arguments here are developed in a more academic setting in *True Virtue*). The series culminates in the sermon *Heaven is a World of Love* in which Edwards expresses the view that love is the basic principle from which godly affections arise. This love, says Edwards, is a reflection of the self-giving love that is found in the trinitarian godhead:

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[89] WJE 1:166

[90] WJE 1:164

[91] George Marsden. *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (London: Yale University Press, 2003) pg. 189

[92] Properly speaking *History of the Work of Redemption* is one 'sermon' in several 'preaching units'. This is because in *Charity and its Fruits*, for example, Edwards moves through texts (sometimes involving more than one preaching unit). *History of the Work of Redemption* is structured as one sermon in the Puritan style with one text arranged text, doctrine, application. See Wilson Kimnach "Editors Introduction" in *Works* vol. 10, pgs. 27-36 for the background to Edwards' sermon for.

[93] Kenneth Minkema (ed.) *Sermons by Jonathan Edwards on the Matthean Parables, vol. 1* (Cascade Books, 2012)

[94] WJE 8

[95] WJE 9

[96] Kenneth Minkema, Adriaan C. Neele, and Bryan McCarthy (eds.). *Sermons by Jonathan Edwards on the Matthean Parables, Volume 1: True and False Christians (On the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins)* (Cascade, 2012) pg. 64

[97] ibid.

"There in heaven this fountain of love, this eternal three in one, is set open without any obstacle to hinder access to it. There this glorious God is manifested and shines forth in full glory, in beams of love; there the fountain overflows in streams and rivers of love and delight, enough for all to drink at, and to swim in, yea, so as to overflow the world as it were with a deluge of love"[98]

Edwards, having observed that there are a great many things in which true and false Christians agree and having located the true change wrought in regeneration in the will, turns to *The History of the Work of Redemption*. In this sermon series Edwards explores the whole history of the world, tracing the way in which God has dealt with sin and brought a people back into fellowship with himself. He travels from creation through the fall, which entails the narrowing of love to being in general (his term for a love which 'sees the whole' in their true excellence, properly ordered) to self-love. Through to redemption, which entails the broadening of one's horizons to love to being in general. This observation relates back to his doctrine of excellency in that one's inability to see the whole means that beauty is not fully and rightly perceived. This skewed perception of what is good is sin. Throughout *The History of the Work of Redemption* Edwards is concerned with what redemption means and how it is achieved and applied. The doctrine[99] for the sermon is that, "*The Work of Redemption is a work that God carries on from the fall of man to the end of the world*"[100]

As a Reformed theologian Edwards ordered his thinking about the *scopus* of Scripture, and therefore history, covenantally. He accepted the view that there were three major covenants that may be distinguished. Namely: the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, and the covenant of redemption. Our interest lies primarily in the covenant of redemption which Edwards describes as being, "All that Christ does in this great affair [redemption]…And not only what Christ the mediator has done, but also what the Father and the Holy Ghost have done as united or confederated in this design of redeeming sinful mean; or in one word, all that is wrought in execution of the eternal covenant of redemption".[101]

Any account of Edwards' thought risks treating only a small portion of the man. He was, as we have already seen, a metaphysician, a theologian, and a revivalist (distinctions that would have been alien to him). The history of Edwards studies reveals that few have sought, or been able, to hold the whole man together. We have sought to root his thinking in his life in order to show the integral link in Edwards thought between metaphysics and his pastoral charge. We have already seed that he wasn't speculative for the sake of speculation, rather, he sought to understand the very essence of the universe in order to grasp God's purposes. We find these threads drawn together beautifully in *History of the Work of Redemption* and his understanding of history.

As Edwards looked back on history he saw that revivals were part of God's providential plan to draw people's affections to himself. Edwards finds the first signs of revival in Genesis 4.26, "then began men to call upon the name of the Lord". He argues that since prayer is "a duty of

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[98] WJE 8:370

[99] For an overview of the structure of Edwards' sermons see: Wilson Kimnach. "Editors Introduction" in WJE 10:27-36

[100] WJE 9.116

[101] WJE 9.118

natural religion"[102] it can't mean that people didn't pray before, rather, it must mean that "it was carried far beyond whatever it had been before, which must be the consequence of a remarkable pouring out of the Spirit of God".[103] Commenting on the later history of Israel Edwards notes that "God was pleased several times after great degeneracy" to grant "blessed revivals by remarkable outpourings of his Spirit".[104] Edwards continued to expound history after the biblical period, seeing the reformation was a time of revival for example.[105] Continuing on he finally arrives at the Valley Revival,[106] seeing it as a continuation of the outpourings of the Spirit through which God had typically worked to turn hearts back to himself. Edwards had already noted this observation at the beginning of *History of the Work of Redemption* when he argued that "from the fall of man to this day wherein we live the Work of Redemption in its effect has mainly been carried on by remarkable pourings out of the Spirit of God"[107]. God has worked in this way throughout history because it is the only way that man can be turned from self-love to love to being in general.

Conclusion

If sin then is the disordering of one's affections. Redemption is their reordering. This reordering of loves is not the ultimate purpose of creation. For as we saw in chapter 3, God's *absolute ultimate end* in creation was his own glory. The work of redemption that God carries on from the fall of man to the end of the world is an end subordinate to that of his own glory. Certainly, God is glorified in the work of redemption, but the work is *consequential*, it relies on the existence of creation in order to be an end. As a pastor Edwards was always practical and his ethics, to which we will turn next, are no exception. This practical element to his thought means that he is always dealing with man as sinner, though we must remember that that is not all that a person is and ultimately doesn't define who they are. Christian ethics are always seeking to recapture humanity as God originally intended it.

[102] WJE 9.141

[103] WJE 9.142

[104] WJE 9.233

[105] WJE 9.422

[106] WJE 9.436

[107] WJE 9.143

Chapter 4
Trinitarian Ethics

"No reasonable creature can be happy, we find, without society and communion, not only because he finds something in others that is not in himself, but because he delights to communicate himself to another. This cannot be because of our imperfection, but because we are made in the image of God; for the more perfect any creature is, the more strong this inclination. So that we may conclude, that Jehovah's happiness consists in communion, as well as the creature's."[108]

As we come to discuss Edwards' ethical thought we begin to draw the threads together which we have traced throughout his life and work. His ethics in particular no less than his theology as a whole are theologically objective. We have covered much ground in Edwards' thought, through metaphysics, theology proper, creation, fall, and redemption. Study of all these areas has set the foundation for all that Edwards has to say concerning what it means to be truly human. His ethical thought is more than simply an idea about how civilization may or may not be run. It's more than a theory which could be substituted for another. Edwards' ethics is about how human beings *should* behave. That is not to say *should* in a sense which seeks to control and manipulate. Rather it's to say that to behave in any other way would be somehow to behave in a subhuman way.

Edwards doctrine of God, though expounded in a novel idealist framework, is in many ways a conservative trinitarian one. Edwards noted that God's being trinitarian is essential to his nature as love. To love requires an object and in God the Father's object of love is his Son, his perfect image and likeness. When it comes to the image of God in man it is imperative that this be borne in mind. For to be truly human means to grow in the likeness of the image of God. This means growing in outward love. Love to an object other than oneself. We have seen that *Charity and its Fruits* Edwards ends with the sermon *Heaven is a World of Love* in which he sets forth his vision of perfect love in heaven where he describes the overflowing fountain of love which flows from the "eternal three in one".[109] God's inner trinitarian self-giving love is the model for perfect human love.

In creation we find that God's loving disposition leads him to share himself with the created order. Creation is a result of God's "overflowing" with love in which humankind participates. For humankind to fulfil its true nature as God's image bearers it partakes in God's outward looking love.

The nature of sin is such that humanity's disposition to love another is turned in on itself. Sin is the result of corrupt inclinations in act. Original sin means that humankind wants to sin. Freedom of the will means doing what one wants and what sinful humanity wants is rooted in self-love. The nature of redemption, therefore, is a profound change from a disposition of self-love to an outward God mirroring love. A love that glories in God's glory as the one most worthy of honour.

It's true that Edwards does allow that there may be good acts performed by someone who isn't regenerate though it is rather the result of common grace acting from *outside* the agent who is ultimately motivated by sinful dispositions than the *inward* change which the Holy

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[108] "Miscellany" no. 96, WJE 13.264

[109] WJE 8.370

Spirit brings. Conversion is the planting of the new principle in the person who from then on performs ethical acts not through self-love, but through 'love to being on general'.

We may note that Edwards' ethics are closely tied to the major concern in his pastoral life: conversion. Edwards and the other preachers of the Great Awakening were driven by the belief that people needed God's Holy Spirit to implant in them the new disposition that would restore them in the image of God lost at the fall. This conversion was essential to participating in God's life and purposes for humanity. His works, whether his major treatises or his sermons, were dedicated to exposing hypocrisy and bringing the sinner to understand the need for regeneration. Conversion meant far more than simply 'getting to heaven'. Edwards liked to point out that mere assent to propositional truth was shared as much by the demons as it was by the Christian. The demon may even declare that Jesus is Lord. The difference between the two lies not simply in knowledge but in disposition. The demons hate God and Christ and consider their lordship with hatred. The redeemed sinner welcomes the lordship of Christ over the all areas of their life.

In short: Edwards' ethics are built on love or as he puts it in the doctrine of the first sermon in *Charity and its Fruits*, "All that virtue which is saving, and distinguishing of true Christians from others, is summed up in Christian or divine love".[110] We must explore now what this "Christian love" is in the light of who God is and what it is for him to love. The rest of his ethics are corollaries of this locus. *Charity and its Fruits* discusses humility, patience, kindness, and long-suffering as virtues born of Christian love.

What is Love?

Edwards defines love as "that disposition or affection by which one is dear to another".[111] Edwards distinguishes the *love of benevolence* and *love of complacence*. The former "respects the good enjoyed or to be enjoyed *by* the beloved", the latter "good to be enjoyed *in* the beloved".[112] *Love of benevolence* is the key part of *Christian love* since it is the love exercised in the grace of God. For Edwards *Christian love* may be synonymous with *divine love*, a term he uses in two ways: First it may refer first to the love which God extends. Second it refers to God's love as "poured into" the believer's heart (Romans 5:5), the love which influences and governs[113] the regenerate person to act[114] but is alien to an unbeliever such as Pharaoh during the time of the Exodus.[115] For this reason God's love is paradigmatic for true love in a human agent.

The challenge to this love comes in the form of sin which is, according to Edwards, a disordering of loves. Self-love is not opposed to *Christian love*. For if self-love is defined simply as a person's "love of his own pleasure and happiness, and hatred of his own

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[110] WJE 8:131

[111] WJE 8:129

[112] WJE 8:212-213

[113] WJE 3:142

[114] WJE 2:150

[115] WJE 2:17

misery"[116] there is no opposition. *Christian love* does seek its own happiness, the difference is that the happiness sought by *Christian love* is found in a broad consideration of 'being in general' an ordering of loves to that which is most worthy and excellent. Edwards makes the point that self-love, rightly understood, and *christian love* are not opposed very strongly when he argues that a sinner doesn't have enough self-love since they are not living with the knowledge that God is their greatest happiness. It is rather selfishness, or self-love narrowly considered that is the foundation of sin.[117]

The Spirit of God plants a new principle in the Christian who then loves as God loves. This Christian love is participation in the divine nature (2 Peter 1.4).

Types of Virtue

All virtues are, for Edwards, outworkings of this true virtue, charity, or love. Sermon twelve of *Charity and its Fruits* teaches that 'There is a concatenation of the graces of Christianity'.[118] That is that they 'are all linked together or united one to another and within one another, as the links of a chain; one does, as it were, hang on another from one end of the chain to the other, so that if one link be broken, all falls'.[119] This close relationship must be remembered when separating out discussion of virtues.

With this caveat we will take up distinctions in Edwards thought on the virtues put forward by Elizabeth Cochran.[120] She divides Edwards discussion into several parts but the most important distinction she notes is that between virtues that reflect a virtue in God (Edwards also calls these 'true virtues') and those that don't because they presuppose sin (also called 'moral excellences'). It should not by now come as a surprise that Edwards sees human virtue as reflecting divine virtue. What's interesting is to see how he deals with virtues that seem inherently impossible to find their exemplar in God for even here he applies a traditional Christology to ground even these most human of virtues in God. We will take an example of each of these in order to apply all that we have seen of Edwards' approach and to explore how he deals with all these questions.

Charity

We have defined love in general and turn now to love in the human agent in particular. As we have already noted, in Edwardsian ethics love, or charity is not a virtue that can be understood as one amongst many. The very first sermon of *Charity and Its Fruits* puts it this way, 'All that virtue which is saving…is summed up in Christian or divine love'.[121] Charity is the virtue of virtues, the virtue from which all other virtues flow. Charity is the image of God's inner trinitarian love in humanity. God's eternal disposition to love reproduced in creatures. 'Truly Christian love cannot be distinguished in its principles. All Christian love is

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[116] WJE 18:73

[117] WJE 20:342

[118] WJE 8.327

[119] WJE 8.327-328

[120] Elizabeth Agnew Cochran. *Receptive human virtues: A New Reading of Jonathan Edwards's Ethics* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2011)

[121] WJE 8.131

one as to its principle'.[122] Edwards uses the word 'principle' in its original sense as 'that from which something originates or is derived'.[123]

This principle from which all good actions derive is the Spirit of God. God the Father loves God the Son and it is this Spirit which is implanted in the believer and from which flows all other virtues. In the *Discourse on the Trinity* Edwards states that 'The Holy Spirit is the love of the Father and Son for each other'.[124] So when a believer receives the Spirit of love for their own they are participating in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). The creature then loves with the very same love that God has for creation. As such, says Edwards, 'When God and man are loved with a truly Christian love, they are both loved from the same motives'.[125] The very same motives which God has for loving creation. As such other people are loved either because of their likeness to God (as made in the *imago Dei*) or because they are his children, the very reasons which God has for loving his creatures.

We now turn to look at one of the outworkings of charity in the believer's life. Humility. Edwards defines it this way:

'A sense of our own comparative meanness, with a disposition to a behaviour answerable thereto'[126]

This definition is from Edwards' sermon on humility in *Charity and its Fruits* where he also notes that humility concerns the 'tendency of charity with respect to good possessed by others'.[127] We note humility's relationship to charity, or love. It may be distinguished from, but is not ultimately different to, love. An important part of the distinction between love in general and love as expressed in humility is that humility is an outworking of love that 'is no attribute of the divine nature'.[128] It is this claim, that 'humility is no attribute of the divine nature', that makes it such an interesting test case in Edwardsian ethics. For how can ethics remain thoroughly grounded in God (in order to be absolute and objective) when some virtues cannot be attributed to him? Edwards answer is Christological. Humility may not truly be attributed to God in his divine nature but it may still be predicated of Christ. For being fully man, he was humble before God (Philippians 2:8). In Christ Edwards is able to find a divine exemplar even for a virtue that cannot be predicated of the divine nature but is truly human.

Even so Edwards further distinguishes two ways in which the understanding of 'comparative meanness' which characterises humility is to be understood. The first is 'natural meanness' or 'littleness' in which the subject sees how far below God he or she is ontologically. How

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[122] WJE 8.132

[123] "principle, n.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/151459?rskey=igznc2&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed September 29, 2017).

[124] WJE 21.110

[125] WJE 8.133

[126] WJE 8

[127] WJE 8.232

[128] WJE 8.234

little his or her knowledge and strength etc. The second is 'moral meanness' or 'sinfulness' wherein the subject sees God's perfect goodness and his or her own wickedness. Even with a two nature Christology we can only find the first kind of meanness since though he became man, thus becoming ontologically 'mean' before God the Father, he was without sin (Hebrews 4:15), and was, therefore, not morally 'mean'. Thus, there is still a tension here (There is still something uniquely human in its acknowledgment of 'moral meanness') though Christ provides, for Edwards, a divine exemplar for what is a thoroughly 'human' virtue.

We noted above that Edwards taught that Humility relates to 'good possessed by others'. As such humility is not, for Edwards opposed to pride *per se* in the sense of being honoured by something since one can take pride in what God has done for them (1 Corinthians 1:31). The pride that is opposed to humility is 'an excessively high, opinion of one's own worth or importance which gives rise to a feeling or attitude of superiority over others'[129] Edwards uses pride in this sense as an antonymous term to humility. The pride that is wrong in human beings is the pride of comparison. In Edwardsian terms sin is a narrow view on life. It is unable to see the excellency of the whole which leads people to compare themselves with others within their own limited sphere. This comparison will say something like, "At least I'm not as bad as that person" or "I'm quite good compared with x". This narrow view produces a self-deluded view of the severity of sin. In terms of physical health if a person were dying no one would claim they were fine simply on the basis that there was someone else in the world who was worse off. The pride that comes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18) hides from the person the seriousness of their sin because they cannot see themselves within the big picture. Edwards wants values to be grounded in God absolutely rather than in self-centred comparison which is, inevitably, relative.

Christian humility for Edwards then starts when a comparison is made not between one agent and another but between the agent and God. He tells us that 'there is no true humility without a sense of their meanness before God'. Even Christ displayed humility before the majesty of God in heaven. How much more fallen humanity?

Humility thus grounded in one's understanding of his or her 'meanness before God' is inextricably linked to our behaviour towards others. In *Charity and its Fruits* Edwards lists seven effects which our meanness before God has on our relationships with other people: contentment with one's lot; prevents ostentation; prevents 'assuming' behaviour; prevents scornful behaviour; prevents wilful behaviour; willingness to give superiors their due (prevents 'leveling' behaviour); and it prevents self-justification. One cannot help, says Edwards, but treat people appropriately when one has a right view of oneself.

We can see then how charity (love, or true virtue) plays the central role in all virtue as it broadens one's horizons to place God at the centre. God knows that he is the being of ultimate worth. That he deserves glory. A view of the excellency of the whole which is communicated to the regenerate person allows them to share in this view. With God's glory as central one is then able to place oneself in correct perspective. To accept one's place within the created order which in turn leads to an adjustment in one's view of one's relationship with other people.

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[129] "pride, n.1". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/151185?rskey=GAr7G4&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed September 29, 2017).

Conclusion

Master's Dissertation

Edwards for Today

At the start of our work we placed Edwards in his enlightenment context. A context which, we noted, represents a break more decisive and more profound than even the great break in Western Christendom of two centuries before, the Reformation. The enlightenment saw the struggle for intellectuals to wrest themselves free from what they saw as archaic metaphysical assumptions which were holding them back. Advances in scientific method were leading to breakthroughs which gave the age a spirit of optimism for what the individual was able to achieve.[130] The same optimism could also be found in the realm of moral thought.[131] In the American context in particular, increasing focus on the self was changing the social atmosphere away from the Puritan way of thinking in terms of God's covenant with communities and more towards the individualistic thought representative of American thought after the War of Independence.

Standing as he did at the head of these crossroads, Edwards in many ways shows us an untraveled road. Doubtless much of what he wrote and taught have continued, but in many ways, he provides a glimpse into what could have been. In this, and whether or not we agree with him in all or any particular, he provides a useful resource for today. C. S. Lewis once commented that for every new book one reads, one should read an old book, since it is the old books that challenge unacknowledged assumptions.[132] Their errors, says Lewis, are not to be feared for they are all too clear, and therefore pose no threat. Edwards can stand in this role for us today. Our society has moved on in the three hundred years since he worked, but human nature hasn't. We cannot help but be shaped by all that has gone on in the intervening time. By going back to listen to old voices which hold different assumptions and make different mistakes can only deepen our understanding about who we are as human beings. Even if we believe we took the right path we will better understand why.

After putting Edwards in dialogue with modern philosophy, the Reformed tradition, the revival tradition and Orthodox and Catholic traditions, Michael McClymond and Gerald McDermott conclude that Edwards may provide a 'theological bridge' in contemporary ecumenical discussions.[133] They boldly claim that 'his thought may have more linkages and more points of reference to various constituencies within Christianity than any other modern Christian theologian'[134] and, therefore, that 'If one had to choose one modern thinker-and only one-to function as a point of reference for theological interchange and dialogue' it would be Edwards.[135] Be that as it may I wish to conclude by seeking to bring Edwards into dialogue on the question of the nature of humanity, not only within Christianity, but with the prevailing western culture as a whole. I acknowledge that this rather broad claim is wrought

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[130] See a comparison between Edwards and Franklin.

[131] Though what about the Civil War with regard to English thinkers?

[132] C. S. Lewis. "Preface" in Saint Athanasius. *On the Incarnation*. trans. John Behr. (SVS Press, 2011)

[133] Michael McClymond and Gerald McDermott. *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) Ch. 45

[134] Ibid. pg. 727

[135] Ibid. pg. 728

with difficulty in that western culture is not a monolithic entity. I seek primarily to place him within the 'prevailing' or popular perception of the nature of humanity. In so doing I will reference popular literature rather than academic. This is entirely appropriate for Edwards since his whole life was at the service of 'ordinary' people and the majority of even his most highbrow writing was at the service of that great form of popular literature: the sermon.

In the 21st century notions of self-identity, self-love, and self-esteem are central ethical questions. Western society is increasingly hostile to any notion of being defined by anything or anyone other than ourselves. An article in the Huffington Post put it this way: 'the new definition of freedom today is self-determination'.[136] That is that one can do whatever one chooses irrespective of those around them. Confusion arises, however, in both secular and theological literature, through a lack of definition concerning basic terms.[137] Edwards' scholasticism taught him careful definition of terms. We can imagine that his first question to the 'freedom' of self-determination would be, 'Why do you *want* to do that?'

Much Christian teaching today may be defined as theologically subjective, that is it asks, 'What God can do 'for me'?' To an Edwardsian way of thinking this centring of the human subject at the heart of theological reflection leads to shallow thinking. Since it takes the human desire as the foundation upon which theology is built, theological subjectivism fails to penetrate behind those desires into the 'why' of our very desires themselves. Edwards assertion that the will is free from coercion led him deeper still, to question the will itself. The 'self-determination' touted as freedom is, for Edwards, the very bondage of sin. Edwards urges us to ask, 'Why?' Why do I want what I want? He then prompts us further to ask if there is any objective canon outside ourselves by which our very desires themselves might be judged. Could it be, Edwards' thought invites us to ask, that the very things I want could be wrong?

Edwards, of course, goes far beyond posing questions. A thoroughgoing Edwardsian objectivism provides a solution. An alternative view of the self which grounds identity, and ultimately self-worth, not in the self but in God. Much of contemporary psychology, and indeed theology, directs people to look within themselves and to strive harder to achieve their goals. These ideas ultimately place the success or failure (whatever they might ultimately mean) in the individual. The individual becomes judge, jury, and executioner in his or her own life. The answer to psychological questions is to accept oneself as one is. Not to allow any outsider to pass a value judgement on your choices, or the way you are. Edwardsian ethics invites us to value the creature, human or otherwise, not because of any internal value but simply because of their ontological status as creature. Rather than stand as an oppressive force compelling people to fit a mould does this not rather provide freedom from the judgement which results from failure to live up to one's own ideas of what one should be?

One recent article claimed that in 1980 4% of Americans suffered from anxiety related mental health problems. Today the figure stands closer to 50%.[138] Even allowing for error

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[136] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-hope-bryant/the-new-21st-century-defi_b_3552556.html (accessed 10:09 26/09/2017)

[137] See: John Hewitt. *The Myth of Self Esteem* (Palgrave MacMillan, 1998); Paul Brownback. *The Danger of Self-Love*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982)

[138] https://www.theguardian.com/global/commentisfree/2016/may/07/mental-health-policy-anxiety-natasha-devon-young-people (accessed 26/09/2017)

there is a mental health epidemic in western society. The Mental Health Foundation claim that 'two in three adults face mental health problems'.[139] Edwards' personal struggle with 'melancholy'[140] means that he provides a window into a life lived and not just theology abstractly considered.

A further extension of this line of Edwardsian thought into today's ethical debates is on the question as to whether we are born predisposed to certain behaviours, habits or even sexual preferences, or whether these attributes of our self are choices we make. This debate would be, for Edwards, a moot point. Our choices are because of what we want and are made because of what we perceive the greatest good to be. He would challenge us not to make too firm a distinction between the way we are and what we want.

Edwards challenges the way of thinking that what one needs is to love oneself more arguing that in fact that is sin as it's based on love of self and not love to God (WJE 2.249-250). We know from our own experience that if we find someone as claiming to love us for no other reason than to gain something then we question whether in fact they love us at all. It is the same for God. This utilitarian understanding of love leads to the rejection of aspects of God which don't serve us such as his wrath and anger against sin (WJE 2.244).

At the beginning of this work we set out out explore Edwards understanding of the human person and to put him in dialogue with broader cultural trends. It has become clear to me that Edwards provides stimuli for reflection for the modern person. At the heart of the human experience is the interplay of our relationships, our inheritance, and our personal desires. Perhaps the question may be boiled down to whether we allow our internal experiences to interpret our world (subjectivism) or whether we interpret our internal experiences by our worldview (objectivism). Are we to find direction and value from within or without ourselves.

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[139] https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/news/two-three-adults-face-mental-health-problems (accessed 26/09/2017)

[140] George Marsden. *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (London: Yale University Press, 2003) pgs. 103-110; 127-128 see also further references in the index under 'depression'.

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