JONATHAN EDWARDS ON THE TRINITY: ITS PLACE AND ITS RICH BUT CONTROVERSIAL FACETS

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Abstract: *In this summative article on the state of scholarship on the Trinity in the theology of Jonathan Edwards, the author notes the increasingly central place of the Trinity in Edwards's mature theology, as well as five explicit facets of his doctrine of the Trinity, how they have been located within the Tradition, and received in sometimes controversial ways within recent scholarship. These include the following: (1) The model: does Edwards simply follow the typical western Augustinian model of the Trinity or is his a cobbled mix of Eastern and Western influences? (2) Novelty: did Edwards, in accordance with his desire, in fact contribute something new in the tradition? (3) Ontology: did Edwards reflect a dispositional ontology in his way of understanding the Godhead? (4) Revelation: how does Edwards see the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity? (5) Pneumatology: does Edwards espouse a new emphasis on pneumatology within the Reformed-Puritan tradition?*

Key Words: *Jonathan Edwards, Trinity, economic Trinity, immanent Trinity, perichoresis, agency, mutuality, psychological analogy, social analogy, Karl Barth, pneumatology, Christology, beatific delight*

Exploring Trinitarian reality is always a dialectical exercise. Edwards, would, I think, have agreed with Hans Urs von Balthasar's assertion that truth concerning the Trinity "can only be developed in two opposite lines of being and thought that point to each other."[1] My interest in Edwards has focused on the three great unions of his Trinitarian theology: the union of the three persons of the Trinity, the incarnational union of the divine and human natures of Christ, and the remarkable union of human believers and the church with God. This is the gospel. We focus here mainly on the first, the Trinity, but perhaps with an occasional eye towards the incarnation, and especially towards union of the triune God with the saints, or participation in the divine life. That is, on how Edwards was Trinitarian.

A pastoral concern undergirds this theology, namely that the enculturated church might recover the pursuit of affectional, relational, ethical, and vocational holiness which seems today to be in short supply. In that regard, it most needs to recover a sense of who God is. Going to Jonathan Edwards for this may be a good place to start. His theology is just that, a theology. That is, the center of his thought is God. Michael McClymond states this clearly: "Everyone seems to agree on one point regarding Jonathan Edwards. His theology was God-centred. . . . He was

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[1] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 3: *The Dramatis Personae: The Person in Christ* (trans. G. Harrison; San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 525.

God-preoccupied and even God-intoxicated."[2] What is more, his is an integrated theology, for as Sang Lee states in his introduction to volume 21 of the Yale *Works*, "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."[3] Let us speak first of the place of the Trinity in Edwards's theology.

I. THE PLACE OF THE TRINITY IN EDWARDS'S THEOLOGY

Building on the seminal work of Robert Jenson, I, among many other authors, have sought to retrieve the specifically Trinitarian emphasis in Edwards's theology. Edwards does not, like Barth, make the Trinity the center, the circumference, and the architectonic of his theology, but he is on that trajectory, and who knows where he might have gone had he not died so young at 55. Here is some evidence of the trajectory. In one of his notebook entries titled Miscellany 181, Edwards speaks about his change of mind with respect to the relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity in regard to theology, spiritual life, and ethical living. "I used to think sometimes with myself, if such doctrines as those of the Trinity" are "true, yet what need was there of revealing them in the gospel? What good do they do towards the advancing of holiness?" But "now I don't wonder at all at their being revealed, for such doctrines as these are glorious inlets into the knowledge and view of the spiritual world, and the contemplation of supreme things; the knowledge of which I have experienced how much contributes to the betterment of the heart" (*YE* 13:328). Later, in entry 343, he states that "the revelation we now have of the Trinity," which he considers to be the chief doctrine of the faith, makes "a vast alteration with respect to the reason and obligations to many amiable and exalted duties, so that they are as it were new" (*YE* 13:416). In 1740, he wrote retrospectively of his conversion, by which he gained a "new sense" of "the glory of the divine being" as specifically involving the Trinity: "God has appeared more glorious to me, on account of the Trinity . . . it has made me have more exalting thoughts of God, that he subsists as three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" (*YE* 16:800).

William Danaher expresses most eloquently the place that the Trinity occupies in Edwards's entire theological account when he draws attention to the short resolution Edwards made as he drafted an outline for a proposed treatise of philosophical theology entitled "A Rational Account of the Main Doctrines of the Christian Religion." This is the resolution: "to explain the doctrine of the Trinity before I begin to treat of the work of redemption; and of their equality, their equal honour in their manner of subsisting and acting, and virtue. But to speak of their equal honour in their concern in the affair of redemption afterwards, after I have done

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[2] Michael J. McClymond, "Hearing the Symphony: A Critique of Some Critics of Sang Lee's and Amy Pauw's Account of Jonathan Edwards," in *Jonathan Edwards as Contemporary: Essays in Honour of Sang Hyun Lee* (ed. Don Schweitzer; New York: Lang, 2010), 77, 79.

[3] Sang Hyun Lee, "Editor's Introduction," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 21: *Writings on the Trinity, Faith, and Grace* (ed. Sang Hyun Lee; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 3. In the remainder of this essay, references to the Yale *Works of Jonathan Edwards* (*YE* hereafter) will be parenthetically noted.

with all the doctrines relating to man's redemption" (*YE* 6:396). Danaher comments that although

> Edwards never completed the treatise, the place he assigned to explaining the doctrine of the Trinity is striking. Not only does the Trinity precede all discussion of the work of redemption, which in "Miscellanies" entry 702 Edwards describes as the "great end and drift of all God's works and dispensations" [*YE* 18:284], but all reflection on the work of redemption culminates in a reconsideration of the Trinity. In short, Edwards envisioned the doctrine of the Trinity as the alpha and omega of the "Rational Account."[4]

There is a real sense, then, in which Edwards's theological corpus is implicitly Trinitarian. Some examples are in his explications of God's own self-glorification, and also in his understanding of beauty which reflects a relational conception of being, the idea of three persons in supreme harmony. His Western understanding of participation in God is also grounded in the Trinity understood in a psychological way which earned him a "Godded with God" accusation. Second, we consider five facets of Edwards's doctrine of the Trinity.

II. FIVE EXPLICIT FACETS OF EDWARDS'S DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY: HOW THEY HAVE BEEN LOCATED WITHIN THE TRADITION AND RECEIVED IN SOMETIMES CONTROVERSIAL WAYS IN RECENT SCHOLARSHIP

We here summarize Edwards's main writings on this topic which are as follows: his provisional notes called *Miscellanies*, especially 94, 181, 308, 702, 1062; his manuscript "On the Equality of the Persons of the Trinity"[5]; and his "Essay"[6] or "Discourse on the Trinity."[7] The first explicit aspect of Edwards's Trinity has to do with his model.

1. *Model.* Does Edwards simply follow the typical Western Augustinian model of the Trinity or is his a cobbled mix of Eastern and Western influences? Much care must be taken in even embarking on such a discussion. First, with respect to language, I note for clarity's sake that I will not adopt the nomenclature suggested recently in Gundry and Sexton's *Two Views of the Doctrine of the Trinity*.[8] To suggest that the social view is not the classical view seems presumptuous, and to call the social view "relational" is downright confusing because God is profoundly relational in both views, be it persons in relation, or relations as persons. Care must be taken in another respect. It has been common to contrast Augustine and the Cap-

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4 William J. Danaher, *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards* (Columbia Series in Reformed Theology; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 5.

5 *YE* 21:145–48.

6 Jonathan Edwards, "An Essay on the Trinity," in *Treatise on Grace and Other Posthumously Published Writings* (ed. Paul Helm; Cambridge, UK: James Clarke, 1971), 99–131 (hereafter referred to as "Essay"). The Essay and the Discourse refer to the same work.

7 *YE* 21:109–44.

8 Paul S. Fiddes, Stephen R. Holmes, Thomas H. McCall, and Paul D. Molnar (contributors), *Two Views of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (ed. Jason S. Sexton; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

padocians and suggest the former is the psychological model of the Trinity emphasizing oneness, and the latter is the social model of the Trinity, emphasizing threeness. Along with this basic assumption came an understanding that the danger to avoid in the Augustinian model was modalism, and the danger of the Cappadocian approach, tritheism. It seems that current scholarship will not allow these simplistic distinctions anymore.[9] Augustine inherited the Cappadocian discoveries and believed them. As an inheritor of the Cappadocian Trinity, Augustine's use of analogies seems to have been for pastoral education purposes. Having said this, I am prepared to stick my neck out just a little and say that his particular psychological analogy of the Mind as self, intellect, and will/love—which Edwards is fond of— came to influence the Western tradition more than Augustine intended, leading to an under-emphasis on the Trinity in Western theology, and an over-emphasis on the oneness of the Godhead. Coupled with this has been a Western emphasis on simplicity. As Sang Lee has stated, the primary issue which defeated Arius at Nicea was the co-divinity (*homoousios*) and equality of the Son with the Father, not the issue of unity.[10] Yet, under the influence of the Greek philosophical concepts of perfection, unity and then simplicity became emphatic concerns in the West, culminating in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 which asserted that "each of the persons is that reality, namely the divine substance, essence or nature."[11] This is a perichoresis of essence. As a result of all this, the Trinity had much less influence on theology in the West until the advent of Karl Barth. The East, by contrast, favored a more generic understanding of unity, which consists in three divine persons being three particular instances of the one common divine nature, in a perichoresis of essence and persons. On the one hand, Edwards does make reference to simplicity even if it is not a major theme in his Trinitarian writings, and he most definitely emphasizes the unity of the Godhead by way of his primarily psychological approach to the Trinity. However, Edwards does employ what looks like an Eastern perichoretic approach which Sang Lee finds to be "profoundly different from the Western church's traditional tendency to see God's unity in the singularity of divine substance." "For Edwards," Lee writes, "to see God's unity consists in 'wonderful union' between the persons of the Trinity and a 'communion in one another.'"[12]

Thus clearly, a controversy has arisen in the renaissance of the study of the Trinity in Edwards as to which model Edwards actually followed. There has been the proposal that Edwards's model of the Trinity is a cobbled mix of psychological and social Trinities, of Western and Eastern Trinities (even though it is clear Augustine was Cappadocian).

Amy Plantinga Pauw, following Lee, proposed precisely that Edwards's view of the Trinity was a cobbled mix of psychological and social in her work *The Su-*

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[9] See, e.g., Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3–4.
[10] *YE* 21:22.
[11] Jesuit Fathers of St. Mary's College, *The Church Teachers: Documents of the Church in English Translation* (trans. John F. Clarkson et al.; St. Louis: B. Herder, 1955), 133, cited in *YE* 21:22.
[12] *YE* 21:27

preme Harmony of All.[13] Reacting to her cobbled view, Steve Studebaker took her on, insisting that Edwards's Trinity was well within the mutual love of the Father and the Son psychological model. Their controversy spilled over into articles that make for entertaining reading.[14] Edwards *does* use the language of the social Trinity, and indeed even sounds tri-theistic at times. For example, the Trinity is spoken of as "the society and family of the three" in his "Essay."[15] So I am sympathetic with Amy Plantinga Pauw, and also with Patricia Wilson-Kastener who does see the Cappadocian social Trinity in Edwards.[16] On the other hand, however, Studebaker insisted that all the social aspects of the life of the Trinity are understood within the particular Augustinian model he proposed. The trouble here is that if Augustine did indeed inherit the Cappadocian Trinity, then this discussion is somewhat moot.

Despite the occasional social allusions in Edwards, I believe William Danaher to be correct when he says that actually Edwards's Trinity is so much psychological that his is not merely a psychological *analogy* but a psychological *account* of the Trinity, built on the Idealism of Locke and Malebranche. As Danaher points out, this model may account for *mutuality* of the persons of the Trinity, but not *agency*.[17] More of Danaher shortly. Kyle Strobel has suggested that perichoresis must be assumed in Edwards's account and that this resolves the issue and accounts for the agency. This may be so, but a question arises as to which version of perichoresis Edwards uses. Irrespective, there is something very rich about the particular way in which Strobel employs Edwards's psychological model to speak of it as the "personal beatific delight model." This is what he means: the Father gazes upon the Son with beatific delight, and the Son gazes back at the Father with beatific delight, and the Spirit *is* that delight. As Strobel states, "the Trinity is religious affection in pure act. Personal beatific-delight is simply a way to highlight the key features of religious affection as the very life of God."[18] This is a beautifully integrative way of expressing Edwards's whole theology, which includes God, Christ, humanity, and creation.[19] It certainly pulls together Edwards's theology and his ethics in an elegant manner.

Danaher also concedes—rightly, in my opinion—that the psychological analogy has limitations, even with Malebrancheian adaptation, precisely at the point of vindicating the personhood of the *Spirit*. Edwards's conception of the persons,

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[13] Amy Plantinga Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

[14] See Steve Studebaker, "Jonathan Edwards's Social Augustinian Trinitarianism: An Alternative to a Recent Trend," *SJT* 56 (2003): 268–85. See also Steve Studebaker, "Supreme Harmony or Supreme Disharmony? An Analysis of Amy Plantinga Pauw's '*The Supreme Harmony of All*': *The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards*." *SJT* 57 (2004): 479–85.

[15] "Essay," 122.

[16] Patricia Wilson-Kastner, "God's Infinity and His Relation to Creation," *Foundations* 21 (Oct. 1, 1978), 317.

[17] Danaher, *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards*, 63–65.

[18] Kyle Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards's Theology: A Reinterpretation* (T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology 19; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 90–91.

[19] Ibid., 70, 124. Strobel is convinced that personal perichoresis is the dominant idea in Edwards's Trinity, but this beatific delight seems more in harmony with the psychological model.

including that of the Spirit, does not yet reveal how the Three function as persons. They are still intra-personal, and capable of becoming persons, one might say, but they are not yet inter-personal in such a *schema*. The psychological analogy also does not do justice to the "account of the order and manifestations of God's triune creation and redemption of the world through the missions of the Son and Spirit."[20] Danaher therefore, like Pauw, sees a prominent social analogy in Edwards's Trinitarian theology, one that is also crucial to the theme of *personhood* which Danaher perceives to be so foundational for Edwards. Again, the psychological analogy can by speaking of understanding and will/love provide the basis for *agency* of persons, but it cannot supply the concept of *mutuality and self-donation in community* that the social dimension of Trinitarian persons reflect in the biblical account, and that humans in his image reflect. Thus he sees in Edwards the use of a social analogy which "provides an essential aspect of personhood."[21] Danaher's summation is that when describing the immanent Trinity (God *in se*), Edwards consistently uses the psychological analogy, but when describing the economic Trinity (God *ad extra* or *pro nobis*), he speaks of it as a society of persons. "Where the psychological analogy conceives of the Trinity in terms of self-consciousness," says Danaher, "the social analogy conceives of the love of God in terms of self-donation, mutuality, and inclusion. Love is transposed from a governing 'disposition' within the mind of the Deity into an interpersonal relation that is diffusive and overflowing—a love that seeks the welfare of, and communion with, others."[22] Danaher attributes this social analogy in Edwards to the influences of Augustine, Richard of St. Victor, Bonaventure, and Aquinas, that is, the West. This is the model by which Edwards describes the premundane counsels of God and the action of the Son. This is the model by which Edwards refers to God as the "society of the three persons," a society into which all believers are welcomed at conversion as a result of the work of the cross which leads to the goal of the indwelling of the saints by the Spirit. *How* Edwards's invokes this social analogy remains somewhat mysterious.

2. *Novelty.* Did Edwards, in accordance with his desire, in fact contribute something new in the tradition, to say something beyond what had been said about the Trinity, though in keeping with the tradition, and certainly in agreement with biblical revelation?

In both areas of possible novelty in Edwards's account of the Trinity, he reflects his location within the dawning Enlightenment or the early modern period. Edwards believed he contributed something in the realm of an apologetic for the Trinity. First, he believed he could prove the Trinity philosophically, and not just because theologians needed the Trinity to account for the atonement. The reasoning that Edwards employs in determining the logical necessity of the ontological Trinity can be found in his early work Miscellany 94, the later Miscellany 308, as well as his posthumously published "Essay on the Trinity" and *End of Creation*. The

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[20] Danaher, *Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards*, 67.

[21] Ibid., 7.

[22] Ibid., 68.

thought processes that gave way to these works are, however, already evident in his first entry in "The Mind," titled "Excellency" (*YE* 6:332). In this, Edwards was out of step with the tradition and stands in contrast also to Karl Barth, for whom the Trinity was articulated *a posteriori*, in response to historical revelation of the Son and the Spirit.

Edwards's new contribution relates mainly, however, to how he employed philosophical principles of his own time, to move from use of the psychological *analogy* and in fact make it into a psychological *account* of the Trinity (see Danaher). His presupposition in this is the univocity of the being of divine and human minds; his primary source is the Idealism of John Locke and Nicolas Malebranche, particularly Locke, even though he probably considered himself to be providing a fresh contextualization of the Augustinian tradition. Edwards's debt to Locke has been noted by Lee,[23] but Helm, in particular, has shown that Edwards's Lockeanism in the "Essay" is "much more pervasive than has so far been appreciated."[24] The power the psychological analogy ends up having in his theology of human conversion is significant.

This is how it unfolds: the Father is the memory, the Son is the intellect, and the Spirit is the love of the Godhead. By a perichoresis of these attributes, the whole Godhead is one subject, and each person has all three. As noted, Kyle Strobel suggests that perichoresis underlies the later Miscellanies on the Trinity and the "Essay" ("Discourse"). The question is: What kind of perichoresis? It seems to be a *perichoresis of these natural attributes of God*, fashioned after the mind analogy. Thus the Father is the memory, but the Son and Spirit have memory as persons by perichoresis with the Father; and the Son is the intellect, but the Father and the Spirit have intellect because each is in the Son and the Son in each; and the Spirit is the love of God, but the Father and the Son have love and are persons thereby, because each is interpenetrated in the other. But there is ultimately one Person or Subject, with one memory, one intellect, and one will/love. Thus God is one subject and we have three persons in a oneness of essence and communion who contribute the totality of the personal attributes. This way of using perichoresis is in contrast to the Eastern tradition in which the three persons are three subjects, and each has memory, intellect, and will and yet there is one subject, with memory, intellect, and will by virtue of a *perichoresis of persons* who interpenetrate each other and submit to each other.

It is my opinion that to do justice to the salvation history from which knowledge of the Trinity is actually acquired one must conceive the Trinitarian persons as subjects, persons with irreducible identity. God's external works are not to be attributed to the one undifferentiated divine essence, but rather proceed from the divine persons. Accordingly, personhood cannot be conceived as pure relation, any more than relation can be conceived merely as a manifestation of personhood.

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[23] Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (exp. ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 185.

[24] Paul Helm, "The Human Self and the Divine Trinity," in *Jonathan Edwards as Contemporary: Essays in Honor of Sang Hyun Lee* (ed. Don Schweitzer; New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 93.

Rather, person and relation emerge simultaneously and mutually presuppose one another. Jürgen Moltmann is helpful at least in this regard. He states: "Here there are no persons without relations; but there are no relations without persons either. Person and relation are complementary."[25] The divine persons are constituted through *generatio* and *spiratio* as subjects who, though different, are mutually related from the outset and are inconceivable without these relations; furthermore, they manifest their own personhood and affirm that of other persons through their mutual relations of giving and receiving.

The concept of *personhood* is a vital and often missing emphasis in Trinitarian theology, especially of a Western kind. Danaher's observation—that in Edwards's Trinity, mutuality or interpenetration is explicable from the psychological model but not agency—provides an illustration that Western Trinitarian theology can tend to be modalist; the Eastern tradition reflected in the social Trinity is often accused of tritheism. But this is averted surely when personhood is informed by perichoresis. Persons and relations are, as Miroslav Volf has said, "equiprimal."[26] The only question is: what kind of perichoresis?

In sum, there seem to be at least four meanings to the term "perichoresis" and at times I think Trinitarian theologians can talk across one another as a result.

a. *Perichoresis as the participation of the persons in the divine essence.* This seems to be adhered to by most in the tradition.[27] On this account, Father, Son, and Spirit are perichoretically related because they share the same essence, and are only differentiated by the things that "individuate" them (e.g. incarnation and sending) or express their relationships (e.g. fatherhood, sonship, generation/filiation or procession/spiration). Moltmann's emphasis on social unity, not ontological unity, in his use of perichoresis, leads McCall to think that Moltmann has not done enough to avoid tritheism. This is probably present in Edwards by implication, at any rate.

b. *Perichoresis of personhood.* This understanding of perichoresis, in which the Father is the logical or causal font of the Trinity, is essential to the Eastern Orthodox view, as represented by John Zizioulas, for example.[28] Because the Father is personal, the Son and Spirit generated must also be personal, receiving personhood from the Father, who is unbegotten. Lee suggests that Edwards borrows this Eastern conception in seeing the first person as the font or unifying principle of the Trinity, as he does in the "Discourse on the Trinity" (*YE* 21:135).

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[25] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 172.

[26] Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 205.

[27] See Tom McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 165 and Stephen R. Holmes, *The Holy Trinity: Understanding God's Life* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2011), 21–22.

[28] John D. Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution," in *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act* (ed. Christoph Schwöbel; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995). See also *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985).

c. *Perichoresis of persons*. That is, three subjects who are one in memory and intellect and emotion/will because each is in the other, and because each is in the other, God is one subject. This is prominent in Athanasius, and the Cappadocians. Perhaps Edwards has this viewpoint and this should be implicit in his *Discourse*. This may be what Strobel intends.

d. *Perichoresis of natural attributes*. This refers to memory, intellect, and will. In this system, built on the psychological analogy, the Father is the memory of the Godhead, but the Father also has intellect and will because the Son and Spirit are in perichoretic relationship with him. This is definitely Edwards's model. He wishes to speak of only one subject, with only one memory, intellect, and will, and so the persons who are identified *as* memory or intellect or will/love, contribute their attribute to the whole. Kyle Strobel is of the opinion that an undergirding, implicit perichoresis of persons facilitates this perichoresis of attributes in Edwards's descriptions of this kind. This is possible, but it is quite a complicated way of arriving at threeness of person and oneness of essence and communion. I am not sure it really works. In sum, ironically for a Western theologian who wishes to emphasize the *unity* of the Godhead by using the psychological model, Edwards, when he does differentiate the persons, does so in a way that seems to challenge even an eastern understanding of divine simplicity, one that is generic rather than slavishly governed by Greek philosophical perfection.

3. *Ontology*. Was Edwards's ontology dispositional? A further controversy, and perhaps the most contentious, has been the proposal that Edwards reflected a dispositional ontology in his way of understanding the Godhead. This is a theory proposed by Sang Lee[29] and Stephen Daniel[30] and supported by Amy Plantinga Pauw

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[29] Sang Hyun Lee, "Jonathan Edwards' Dispositional Conception of the Trinity: A Resource for Contemporary Reformed Theology," in *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions* (ed. David Willis-Watkins, Michael Welker, and Matthias Gockel; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 444–55; idem, "Edwards on God and Nature," in *Edwards in Our Time: Jonathan Edwards and the Shaping of American Religion* (ed. Sang Hyun Lee and Allen C. Guelzo; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 15–44; idem, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*; idem, ed., *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith* (*YE* 21).

[30] Stephen H. Daniel. "Edwards's Occasionalism," in *Jonathan Edwards as Contemporary*, 1–14; idem, *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards: A Study in Divine Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); idem, "Postmodern Concepts of God and Edwards's Trinitarian Ontology," in *Edwards in Our Time*, 45–66. As I have noted elsewhere, "In his book, Daniel is careful to define *disposition* in a different way from even Sang Lee's use of the term. From Daniel's perspective, a divine disposition is not something that God *has* but something that God *is*…. Daniel's unique contribution is to aver that the God of Edwards does not exist apart from communication and that God is the discursive space in which everything else has its identity…. Daniel repeatedly joins the names of Barth and Edwards together as joint champions of the postmodern notion of God as the space of intelligibility and of God and the Trinity as communication (Edwards) or revelation (Barth). That is, the fundamental dispositional reality of God holds all other reality together in its disposition towards him. Though not construed in dispositional terms, Murray Rae's interesting essay 'The Spatiality of God' provides analogous thought in this regard. Commenting on Barth's theology, Rae states: 'Barth says therefore that God has his own space…. As God has space for himself, for the triune communion that constitutes his own life, so he creates space for us.'" W. Ross Hastings, *Jonathan Edwards and the Life of God: Toward an Evangelical Theology of Participation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 100–101. The Rae quotation is from "The Spatiality of God," in *Trinitarian Theology after Barth* (ed. Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday; PTMS 148; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 85.

and Michael McClymond. The essence of it has been the putative discovery in Edwards's theology of a "dispositional ontology" that has replaced traditional metaphysical notions of substance with a modern conception of reality as consisting in dispositions, and actions flowing from dispositions. This has received a serious critique in the work of Paul Helm,[31] Steve Holmes,[32] Oliver Crisp,[33] Steve Studebaker,[34] Michael Gibson,[35] and most recently, Kyle Strobel,[36] though not all in the same way. Having said this, in a post-Newtonian world of quantum chemistry and physics, a world in which we are not sure whether electrons are particles or waves, a world in which substances are indeed only known by their relations to other substances, even if anachronistic, perhaps there is something to what Lee suggests. However, I do think space requires substance also. The idea of God as the discursive space in which everything else has its identity, and God in himself as three persons in relation, each giving space to the other, and incorporating us as humanity in the church in Christ by the Spirit into that space, is appealing. On the other hand, avoiding all sense of a substratum in the Trinity and emphasizing God's relational nature, as Lee and Daniel seem to do, emphasizes *one* aspect of the nature of the Trinity. However, it is difficult to avoid the rather solid reality as it seems to me to be conveyed by the tenor of biblical witness and as noticed by the Cappadocians, that the Father is as person, the "substratum" or font, as we have noticed.

My response to dispositional ontology is to emphatically affirm both the personal *and* relational nature of Edwards's Trinity. In this sense he breaks with the rationalism of the Enlightenment, and with the notion of the individualism of that era. With an Enlightenment focus on rational faculties, as Alan Torrance has said, "In Descartes and his successors we have the individualist, which collapses so easily into the collectivist."[37] Edwards does, I believe, avoid this, and in many ways, he presages the likes of theologians such as Colin Gunton who, in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, examines the "different ontology" of John MacMurray and finds "the first evidence for a more relational view of the matter, that we truly find ourselves neither as individuals nor as parts of collectives, but as persons in free rela-

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[31] Paul Helm, "The Human Self and the Divine Trinity," in *Jonathan Edwards as Contemporary*, 93–106.

[32] Stephen R. Holmes, "Does Jonathan Edwards Use a Dispositional Ontology? A Response to Sang Hyun Lee," in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian* (ed. Paul Helm and Oliver Crisp; Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 99–114.

[33] Oliver D. Crisp, "Jonathan Edwards on Divine Simplicity," *RelS* 39 (2003): 23–41, and an unpublished essay, "Jonathan Edwards on the Trinity and Individuation." In that Crisp defends the idea that Edwards remained within the *actus purus* tradition, his views represent a challenge for dispositionalism in Edwards.

[34] Studebaker, "Jonathan Edwards's Social Augustinian Trinitarianism."

[35] Michael Gibson, "'The Happy Society': The Erotic Ontology of the Doctrine of God in Jonathan Edwards," http://vanderbilt.academia.edu/MichaelGibson/Papers/1447277/The_Erotic_Ontology_of_the_Doctrine_of_God_in_Jonathan_Edwards, 1.

[36] Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards's Theology: A Reinterpretation*, 90–91.

[37] See Alan J. Torrance, "On Deriving Ought from Is," in *The Doctrine of God and Theological Ethics* (ed. Alan Torrance and Michael Banner; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006), 193–94, and Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 87–92.

tions to each other."[38] Gunton's resistance to either absolutization, individualism, or collectivism, leaves him defending a middle ground which preserves relational and personal ontological integrity as essential constituents of personhood. Macmurray is important, Gunton suggests, because this unique ontology seems to arise out of an implicitly Trinitarian reflection. Edwards got this, it seems to me, in the eighteenth century.

4. *Revelation.* How does Edwards see the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity? The relationship between the economic and the immanent Trinities has been studied by Chung-Hyun Baik.[39] He references seven different proposals for the relationship: Karl Barth's "Mutual Correspondence";[40] Karl Rahner's "Identity"; Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Robert Jenson's "Eschatological Unity"; Leonardo Boff and Norman Pittenger's "Immanent is 'Much More Than' Economic"; Joseph Bracken's "'Immersing' Economic into Immanent"; Marjorie Suchoki and Catherine LaCugna's "'Absorbing' Immanent into Economic"; and Sang Lee's "Mutual Inclusiveness." The relation between the immanent and the economic Trinity in Edwards is not always clearly discernible in his work. At minimum, I believe he would have agreed with Barth that there is no quaternity back of the revealed God. At times, it may appear to coalesce in a way that mirrors LaCugna's view or, like Lee, to be "mutually inclusive" when we consider his soteriology. Edwards's teaching on participation of the saints in God by the infusion of the Holy Spirit—who is the bond of the immanent Trinity, the mutual love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father—seems to indicate that they are brought into the inner life of the Trinity. The union of soteriology and theology proper is critical to biblical Trinitarianism for LaCugna, who argues that "an ontological distinction between God *in se* and God *pro nobis* is, finally, inconsistent with biblical revelation, with early Christian creeds, and with Christian prayer and worship."[41] According to LaCugna's criteria, Edwards is certainly Trinitarian, as a result of being participational. Furthermore, he may appear to agree with LaCugna in regard to the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinities. Michael McClymond reiterates the union of soteriology and the Trinity when he notes that "Trinitarian communication and creaturely participation carry the tune throughout most of the symphony" of Edwards's theological work.[42] McClymond reflects that, in Edwards, a profound connectedness between the in-

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[38] Gunton, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 92.

[39] Chung-Hyun Baik, *The Holy Trinity—God for God and God for Us: Seven Positions in the Immanent-Economic Trinity Relation in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010).

[40] In rescuing the Trinity from Schleiermacher's dusty basement, Barth set the doctrine in the prolegomena of his dogmatics and then made it the architectonic of his theology. Jüngel, one of the most perceptive interpreters of Barth, observes that "the *Church Dogmatics* is the ingenious and diligent attempt to think the proposition 'God corresponds to himself' through to the end." Eberhard Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being Is in Becoming* (trans. Horton Harris; Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976), 7. Far from being a theological afterthought, the doctrine of the Trinity has both a positive and critical function in Christian theology and in the gospel according to Barth.

[41] Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), ix, 6.

[42] McClymond, "Hearing the Symphony," 82.

ner life of the Trinity and God's work in the economy of salvation can be found. Sang Lee also agrees on this point: "For Edwards what God does in history and what God is in his being are absolutely consistent. The immanent Trinity . . . is not a speculative theory far removed from the story of God's salvation here on earth, but rather the very ground and pattern for that story."[43] Similarly, Robert Jenson confirms: "Of a metaphysical break between God's triune history with us and God's own immanent being, Edwards knows nothing."[44] While these sentiments may be true, this does not imply that a complete identity of the economic and immanent Trinities can be found in Edwards's work, and I think this averral would be an overstatement of the case, for the following reason: in Edwards's thought, one finds the Godhead *in se*, which no human has ever seen and cannot see until the beatific vision. In this sense, he seems to fit better within Barth's mutual correspondence position; that is, the processions within the immanent Trinity correspond with the missions of the economic Trinity, and what we see of God in the economy is fundamentally who God is in reality. It is interesting to note that just as Edwards's Trinitarian theology reflects a correspondence of the immanent and economic Trinities by pneumatological means, Barth does so principally by Christological means—the election of the Son to assume and reconcile humanity in the free decision of God to be for humanity.

And yet, for Edwards and Barth, more remains to be seen of the transcendent majesty of that immanent triune God. For Edwards, this will unfold as we view the beatific vision and are transformed asymptotically throughout eternity, though it will never contradict God's revealed triune nature. While the revelation of God in Jesus Christ (since it is reliable) must not only reveal who God truly is but also be sufficient to bring about human knowledge of God and salvation, it need not tell us all there is to know about God within Godself, which remains shrouded in a certain element of mystery. We find this to be evident in texts about God written after the incarnation event, such as 1 Tim 6:16: ". . . who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen." Nevertheless, our primary focus will be on what is revealed as sufficient for Christian life and mission. Jason Vickers has some wise counsel in this regard: "The Trinitarian theologian can, with Chrysostom, encourage initiates to remain focused on that birth that we have seen and heard and not to become overly distracted by what we have not seen or heard, namely, the manner of eternal generation of the Son from the Father, the manner of the Spirit's procession, and so on."[45] Edwards does not adhere to these sentiments exactly, for he deliberates

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[43] Sang Hyun Lee, "Jonathan Edwards' Dispositional Conception of the Trinity," 445–46.

[44] Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 93.

[45] Jason E. Vickers, *Invocation and Assent: The Making and Remaking of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 196. We can then say that the functions of the persons in the economy of creation and redemption are reflective of the relations within the immanent Trinity. Edmund Hill expresses the relationship between the missions and the processions of God in this manner: "The sendings of the Son and the Holy Spirit reveal their eternal processions from the Father (and the Holy Spirit's procession as well), and thus reveal the inner trinitarian mystery of God," in Edmund Hill, *The Mystery of the Trinity*

extensively on the inner processions of the immanent Trinity in line with his elevated view of reason.

5. *Pneumatology*. Does Edwards have a marked desire to honor the Spirit within the Trinity? Does he espouse within the Reformed-Puritan tradition a new emphasis on pneumatology? The most fundamental aspect of the Trinity which is critical to the second and third unions in Edwards's theology is the Spirit dynamic. The Spirit is the intradivine relations, the communion of the Father and the Son, the love of God. There is an awareness of the Spirit in Edwards's theology which is marked. How the Spirit is viewed within the economy of God needs some correction to the tradition, in his opinion. The psychological analogy or account of the Trinity, whether legitimate or not, puts great store on the Spirit as the bond of the Trinity, Augustine's *nexus amoris* or *vinculum caritatis*. My work has convinced me that the prominent pneumatology of Jonathan Edwards makes him, even more so than John Calvin, the Protestant theologian of the Spirit.

Edwards's favored model when it comes to the working of the Trinity to effect human redemption is without doubt, the psychological Trinity. His version of participation is expressed using this pneumatologically dominant model. The Spirit as the intra-relational reality of God, or love, comes to regenerate and indwell the believer. By receiving this Spirit infusion, the saints are immediately taken into the inner life of the Trinity, because the Spirit is the love of the Father and the Son. This pneumatic version of participation has significant advantages. The fact that the Spirit lived in the saints with immediacy would lead to the expectation that there would be an immediacy about grace—people were actually reborn and could actually become holy, given they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Thus his vision of the Spirit bringing us into participation in Christ presents a vibrant living spirituality manifesting in a holy ethic, a beautiful life. And of course, this is a treasured evangelical concern.

However, within a psychological model, as opposed to a social one, participation has some serious flaws, such as confusion of divine and human persons. In a social model, participation of human persons in the divine life, in Christ, by the Spirit, divine persons stay divine and human persons stay human. They can be in relation but still remain human and divine. When conceived within the psychological account of the Trinity, the presence of the Holy Spirit who is the nexus of the Father and the Son, in the heart of a human person, with the ill-defined personhood inherent to this model, seems to make that human person divine in essence, rather than in a union in which there is nearness *and* differentiation. I contend that this was why Edwards took heat for his view of *participation* as a "godded with God" reality. Had he employed the social analogy as a social account of the Trinity, rather than employing a psychological account from the psychological analogy, he might have had better success in working out his Trinity into Trinitarian soteriology.

(London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985), 89. This does not remove all mystery from the Godhead, but it prevents us from casting a veil over what has been unveiled.

A further challenge of Edwards's weighted pneumatology is that the huge traction given to the Spirit's role in this psychological analogy somewhat shades the need for the incarnation. I am convinced that Edwards was heavily invested in seeking to give great honor to the Spirit, in his theological endeavors. For example, though this is not new in the Tradition, he speaks of the Spirit as the gift (in this he reflects Irenaeus and Augustine) toward which the cross was oriented. According to Edwards, the Spirit is the gift purchased by the cross, thus conveying equal honor to the Spirit in the story of redemption. As Edwards says:

> But according to what has now been supposed, there is an equality. To be the wonderful love of God is as much as for the Father and the Son to exercise wonderful love; and to be the thing purchased, is as much as to be the price that purchases it. The price, and the thing bought with that price, answers each other in value; and to be the excellent benefit offered, is as much as to offer such an excellent benefit.[46]

Edwards's drive to honor the Spirit may be accounted for by his experience of the power of the Spirit in the Great Awakening. Whatever the reasons, and gains, this results in a relative underplaying of Christology, as compared to pneumatology, in salvation. As indicated in the work of Pauw,[47] Edwards demonstrates a somewhat ahistorical and pneumatic view of the incarnation that, in terms of assurance, deemphasizes the participation of God the Son in humanity. Edward's view of the incarnation is fundamentally a Spirit Christology, as I have opined in a 2005 *International Journal of Systematic Theology* article. The saints' union with God thus becomes Spirit-dominated in a way that leads to other problems, particularly an emphasis on sanctification at the expense of justification, an overly introspective spirituality that leads to a profound uncertainty regarding one's own salvation. There was a need to temper this pneumatic orientation with an emphasis on the vicarious obedience of that one representative human, Christ, in life as well as death, along with the atonement of the cross, for our salvation. In fact, it is to live in the reality that the whole history of the man Christ Jesus as God's covenant partner has become our history. The *ordo historia* becomes the *ordo salutis*. Edwards's inward turn and the ambivalence about assurance is *exacerbated by a view of election and predestination* that is individualistic, rather than communal. Edwards and Barth were at one point considered to have a community of interest with regard to the decree and counsel of God, both being supralapsarian. This is nominal at best. Barth's well-known, radical Christological renovation of this doctrine was motivated by his perceived concern that the classical Reformed doctrine of election, which includes the arbitrariness of the *deus absconditus*, cannot provide assurance. Edward T. Oakes relates how Barth actually transformed Calvin's (and Augustine's) version of predestination by grounding election in Christ.[48] Oakes comments, "He alone is the primal object of the Father's election. It is in him that the family of man is sum-

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[46] Edwards, "Treatise on Grace," in *Treatise on Grace and Other Posthumously Published Writings*, 67–68.

[47] Pauw, *Supreme Harmony of All.*

[48] Edward T. Oakes, "Predestination in America," *NV* 8 (2010): 683–702.

moned to election. And the individual is summoned to his own personal and private relationship with God only as a part of this family."[49]

In George Hunsinger's discussion of Barth's understanding of participation, he suggests that Barth made a crucial move that I think Edwards should have made more emphatically. He starts with the Spirit's role as mediator of communion in the man Christ Jesus rather than with the saints. In other words, the appropriate order for the strands that make up the knot of Trinitarian salvation is Trinity, incarnation, and—only on the basis of incarnation—the possibility of deification. Hunsinger states:

> The Spirit thus plays a role in originating and maintaining the incarnation, or the communion between Christ's deity and his humanity (*communio naturarum*), as well as a role in sustaining through time the primordial communion between the incarnate Son and his heavenly Father. The loving bond between Christ and believers by which they are incorporated into him as a community, as the body of which he himself is the head, takes place by the Spirit on this Trinitarian and incarnational basis. The mediation of the Spirit thus moves in two directions at once: from the eternal Trinity through Jesus Christ to humankind, and from humankind through Jesus Christ to the eternal Trinity.[50]

Thus, emphasizing Christ's true humanity *for us*, in the matter of the Spirit's work in bringing us into union with him, allows for the Christian life to be contemplative, one properly focused on Christ, bringing out the glorification of God and thereby mitigating excessive self-examination. Some self-examination is good. In fact, the NT contains some clear exhortations in this regard. However, it is a question of emphasis. Teresa of Avila has it right when she says:

> It is a great grace of God to practice self examination; but too much is as bad as too little. Believe me, by God's help we shall advance more by contemplating the Divinity than by keeping our eyes fixed on ourselves.[51]

An evangelical understanding of Trinitarian participation, therefore, seeks to hold both great movements of participation in proper relationship. That is, the participation of God in humanity by the incarnation of the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and human participation by the Spirit in the life of the Son, such that we can experience life in God, and be transformed by it. The first is Christ's history for us, the second is our history in him, by the Spirit. We will value preeminently the justification of humanity and creation in Christ, but we will not undervalue the echo of this in which, by the Spirit, Christ comes to dwell in us. Furthermore, keeping the incarnational and the pneumatic together will keep a vision alive for the way hu-

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[49] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation* (trans. Edward T. Oakes; San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 175.

[50] George Hunsinger, "The Mediator of Communion: Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* (ed. John Webster; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 150 (emphasis added).

[51] Teresa of Avila (1515–1582), *Interior Castle, or, The Mansions* (trans. The Benedictines of Stanbrook; 3rd ed.; London: Thomas Baker, 1921), 50–51 (1.2.9).

manity "becomes itself" by participating in Christ, that is, a holiness that extends to vocational holiness and what it means to be human image bearers caring for creation, rather than a vision of the spiritual life which is dualistic and an eschatology of infinite asymptotic approach to something never achieved.