

ABSTRACT

Love, Beauty, Holiness, and Happiness: The Narrative of Union in Jonathan Edwards's
Theology

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Recent Edwards scholarship, particularly the work of Amy Plantinga Pauw and Ross W. Hastings, has firmly established Trinitarian union to be the consistent, driving theme of Edwards's theology. In this thesis, I aim to contribute to this conversation by organizing Jonathan Edwards's theology into the narrative of God bringing the saints into an eternally perfecting union and thereby making them supremely happy. I derive this narrative of union from Edwards's dissertation, *The End for Which God Created the World*. My thesis evaluates the extent to which Edwards's major theological, philosophical, and pastoral texts fit into and contribute to this narrative. The discussion follows a redemptive historical trajectory, driven by Edwards's major works. I begin with Edwards's theology proper. I then treat Edwards's understanding of the fall and original sin, salvation by union with Christ, and the doctrine of the Christian life. I conclude by considering Edwards's vision of heaven and hell. Throughout the paper, I use the centrality of union in Edwards's thought to explore the relationship between love, beauty, holiness, and happiness.

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LOVE, BEAUTY, HOLINESS AND HAPPINESS
THE NARRATIVE OF UNION IN JONATHAN EDWARDS'S THEOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

“Man’s happiness consists in his union with his Creator”¹

The early eighteenth-century Calvinist Congregational minister Jonathan Edwards has become the subject of extensive historical, philosophical, and theological scholarship in the last century.² Edwards’s long held reputation as the rigid, fire and brimstone preacher of Massachusetts has been gradually qualified as scholars continue to mine his theological corpus and uncover the vastness of his intellectual legacy. While God’s absolute sovereignty in bringing about his glory on the earth is continually recognized as a primary theme in Edwards’s writings, we have seen more scholarship highlighting Edwards’s devotion to Trinitarian theology, divine communication, participation in the life of God, virtue, and perhaps above all, beauty. Whereas before the resurgence, Edwards was often more associated with words like sin, worm, misery, hell, and of course *spider*, Edwards is increasing associated with words like love, sweetness, excellence, harmony, happiness, and beauty – notions that any reader of Edwards would certainly recognize as the driving vocabulary of his thought. George Marsden was sharp in his observation: “The key to Edwards’s thought is that everything is related because

¹ Jonathan Edwards, *The Reality of Conversion*. Sermons, Series II, July-December 1740 (WJE Online Vol. 56).

² The resurgence of interest in Edwards is usually traced to Perry Miller’s 1949 biography of Edwards. The “revolution” in Edwards’s studies, however, occurred in the last few decades, particularly through the publications of Edwards’s complete works by Yale in the early 90’s which made available previously unpublished works.

everything is related to God.”³ Dane Ortlund also spoke well when he wrote, “[Edwards’s] theological framework could be summarized in three words: *triune beauty enjoyed*.”⁴ It is with these two statements in mind that I want to launch our discussion. In this thesis, I will argue that Edwards’s notably undertreated work, *The End for which God Created the World*, can be used to establish a narrative within which we can read the rest of Edwards’s theology. The narrative of Edwards’s theology that I will propose is that of God bringing his people (the elect) into an eternally perfecting union with himself and thereby sharing with his people his supreme happiness. As we walk through Edwards’s theology, we will have two objectives. The first has to do with Marsden’s observation above. Throughout our discussion, we will recurrently treat the themes of love, beauty, holiness, and happiness in Edwards’s thought. I suggest that when we consider the centrality of union in Edwards’s theological vision, the relationship between love, beauty, holiness, and happiness – terms which Edwards seems to use almost interchangeably – becomes clearer. The second objective is related. Given Edwards’s devotion to divine beauty, in this discussion we consider the implications that Edwards’s union-centered narrative has on his aesthetic thought. For Edwards, we shall see, beauty – both moral and natural – consists in union, while that which is most contrary to beauty, consists in the disposition toward disunion.

Union as a theme in Edwards’s theology has been treated most extensively in Amy Plantinga Pauw’s groundbreaking study *The Supreme Harmony of All: The*

³ George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 460.

⁴ Nathan A. Finn and Jeremy M. Kimble, *A Reader’s Guide to the Major Writings of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 31.

Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards. Pauw argues that Edwards's trinitarianism "provides an unusually wide view of his deepest philosophical, theological, and pastoral inclinations."⁵ Pauw's study walks through Edwards's understanding of redemptive history and highlights how every step is informed by his Trinitarian convictions. A second notable work in this area is a recent study by W. Ross Hastings. Hastings's thesis is as follows:

Union is a significant driving force in Edwards's Trinitarian theology, if not its overarching trope...his theology tells a 'from eternity, to eternity' story of the three union in the Spirit: the eternal union within the Trinity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the union in human history of the human and divine natures of Christ by the Spirit, and the union of the saints with God by the Spirit.⁶

Hastings identifies these three unions, the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the unity of God with the Church, as three pillars upon which Edwards builds his theology. Hastings' work extensively treats these three pneumatological unions to develop an Edwardsian theology of participation or *theosis*. During his discussion, Hastings places Edwards in conversations with other voices on participation, namely the Cappadocian Fathers and Karl Barth.

My work follows a similar redemptive-historical arch that we find in that of Pauw and Hastings. However, as stated above, my interest lies in how *End of Creation* provides a narrative and how Edwards's major works fit into this narrative. Furthermore, I am interested in how this centrality of union helps us understand the relationship between

⁵ Amy Plantinga Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 3.

⁶ W. Ross Hastings. *Johnathan Edwards and the Life of God: Toward an Evangelical Theology of Participation*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2015), 2.

love, beauty, holiness, and happiness. While the structure of the following discussion is similar to those mentioned above, the particularities treated in Edwards's theology will be diverse.⁷

In the following discussion, we see how Edwards's major theological developments contribute to the narrative of God bringing the Church into an eternally perfecting union with himself. Chapters One and Two of our discussion will provide for us a foundation. In Chapter One, I will outline Edwards's argument in his *Discourse on the Trinity*, in order to introduce our terminology of love, beauty, and holiness. We will see how these notions meet in the person of the Holy Spirit, who is the "bond of union" in Edwards's thought. In Chapter Two, I will outline Edwards's argument in *End of Creation*. Here we will establish the narrative within which we will place the rest of Edwards's major theological developments: the narrative of God creating a people to communicate his perfect happiness by bringing them into an eternally-perfecting union.

In Chapter Three we will consider Edwards's understanding of the fall and original sin – *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended* will be our primary text. In this chapter I will argue that Edwards's understanding of the fall and the natural state of humanity is principally understood in terms of *disunion*. Here we will introduce what I am calling the three-fold disunion that came about with the fall. At the fall, the Holy Spirit forsook its dwelling in the human soul and this withdrawal brought about

⁷ It should be noted that the nature of this project puts natural limits on the topics and doctrines that we will treat. I let Edwards's major works drive the discussion. This means that we will discuss doctrines that Edwards has major works devoted to. This marks an important difference between this project and those of Pauw and Hastings. Pauw and Hastings both discuss the Incarnation at length. Pauw's soteriological discussion focuses on predestination and the Incarnation (which both have aspects of union-centrality). My soteriology discussion will focus on how union speaks to Edwards's understanding on regeneration, faith and justification, because these are topics that Edwards has works fully dedicated to (unlike predestination and the incarnation).

three severed unions: humanity lost the union it had with God and the union it had with amongst humanity. What is more, the union of faculties that existed within the soul of each person was likewise lost, leaving the faculties in a state of disorder. This state of the three-fold disunion is the state of nature – the misery of humanity.

In Chapter Four we will look at Edwards's soteriological thought – particularly his understanding of the doctrine of union with Christ. In this chapter, my focus will be on Edwards's understanding of regeneration and conversion as well as faith and justification. In this discussion, I will draw particular attention to Edwards's language of the Holy Spirit uniting to the faculties of the soul, which marks the first step in God bringing his people into union with himself. Here will treat Edwards's *Treatise on Grace and Justification by Faith*. Edwards, we will see, understands the saint's union with Christ as a *mutual union*. At regeneration, the first grace in God's act of redemption, relative to the soul, the Holy Spirit unites the soul's faculties. The regenerated soul unites back to Christ in love by faith and is thereby justified: this forms the mutual union – regeneration on God's part, faith on the part of the believer.

In Chapter Five, we will use *Charity and its Fruits*, *The Religious Affections*, and *True Virtue* to look at Edwards's understanding of the life of the saint. Particularly, we will ask, what does the life of one whose faculties (understanding and will) are united to the Spirit of God look like? I divide this chapter into two sections: the life of saint as beholding beauty and the life of the saint as becoming beautiful. These two sections correspond to the two primary human faculties – understanding and will. The soul whose *understanding* is united to the Spirit lives a life of beholding beauty, likewise the soul whose *will* is united to the Spirit lives a life of becoming beautiful. This chapter will

contain our strongest application of union to Edwards's aesthetic thought. We will see how the beauty beheld (natural beauty) consist in the imitations of union, while the saints' becoming beautiful consists in their growth in moral beauty, or holiness, which is primarily defined in terms of "union of heart" to God and others.

In the concluding chapter, we will complete the narrative by discussing Edwards vision of heaven as an eternally perfecting union between the Godhead and the saints. This will further shed light on the relationship between love, beauty, holiness, and happiness in Edwards's thought.

Before we begin, I would like to introduce two frameworks that will help us structure our narrative of union: the four states of human redemptive history and Edwards's notion of the "three worlds." These two frameworks make up the structure of the thesis – it will therefore be helpful to keep these in mind as we consider union in Edwards's thought. There is a long tradition – going back to Augustine but utilized heavily among the Reformed Scholastics and the Puritans – to view redemptive history in four states: The state of innocence, the state of nature, the state of grace, and the state of glory. Our discussion we will essentially follow this sequence, as we will highlight the status of union (or lack thereof) in each state. In the state of innocence, humanity had union with God, with one another, and there was union amongst the faculties within each soul. In the state of nature – humanity's fallen state – we have the three-fold disunion (mentioned above). In the state of grace, the saints are united to Christ, by the Spirit, who reestablishes the order of the human faculties and frees the soul to extend again in union to God and others. Finally, in the state of glory, the saints enter a more perfect union with God, unhindered by sin. While this union is perfect, it still *perfects* into eternity. This

outlook applies also to Edwards's notion of the "three worlds:" earth, heaven, and hell. These worlds can likewise be understood in reference to union. Earth is either a state of union or disunion, for the saints and unredeemed respectively. Heaven, as world of love, is principally marked by union; hell, the world of hate, is principally marked by disunion. With this framework in mind, we will begin constructing the narrative of God bringing his people into an eternally perfecting union. As we move along we will give constant attention to how union informs Edwards's aesthetics – how union in Edwards's theology helps us hold together love, beauty, holiness, and happiness in one view. This thesis, I hope, will demonstrate the consistency of Edwards's thought by evaluating the extent to which Edwards's convictions of God's love – particularly the disposition of this love toward union – dominates his whole theological outlook.

CHAPTER ONE

Love, Beauty, and Holiness: Union in Edwards's Trinitarian Thought

The doctrine on the Trinity is widely agreed to be the foundation of Jonathan Edwards's theology. This is the overarching consensus across Edwards scholarship, but it has a grounding in Edwards's own work. Although it was never completed, Edwards, in his outline for *A Rational Account of the Main Doctrines of the Christian Religion Attempted*, speaks of his aim to "explain the doctrine of the Trinity before I begin to treat of the work of redemption."¹ The Trinity is fundamental to Edwards's convictions regarding divine beauty and is, therefore, the cornerstone of his whole theological structure.²

Apart from being the center of his theological vision, Edwards's work on the Trinity is among his most innovative, and likewise controversial endeavors.³ In this chapter I will outline the argument in Edwards's most mature Trinitarian text, *Discourse on the Trinity*. Herein we will see how Edwards understands divine love, beauty, and holiness, and how these relate to one another. This will provide for us the terms we need to treat the expression of union in Edwards's theology.⁴ The doctrine of the Trinity will

¹ Kyle C. Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards's Theology: A Reinterpretation* (London: T&T Clark, 2014). Quoting from Edwards, *Works* 6, "Outline of *A Rational Account*", 396.

² Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 194.

³ The specific Edwardsian innovations, and the controversies that accompany, will be noted in this discussion. The primary goal however is to outline the argument and establish the terms.

⁴ In the course of this thesis, we will be treating the relationship between love, beauty, holiness, and *happiness* as they relate to union. Happiness will come more in focus in the next chapter.

first be presented, as summarized by Edwards himself, and then we will consider how Edwards arrives at this understanding. The doctrine is concisely stated as follows:

And this I suppose to be that blessed Trinity that we read of in the holy Scriptures. The Father is the Deity subsisting in the prime, unoriginated and most absolute manner, or the Deity in its direct existence. The Son is the Deity generated by God's understanding, or having an idea of himself, and subsisting in that idea. The Holy Ghost is the Deity subsisting in act, or the divine essence flowing out and breathed forth, in God's infinite love to and delight in himself. And I believe the whole divine essence does truly and distinctly subsist both in the divine idea and the divine love, and that therefore each of them are properly distinct persons.⁵

Edwards begins the discourse with the premise of divine happiness, "When we speak of God's happiness, the account that we are wont to give of it is that God is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, in perfectly beholding and infinitely loving, and rejoicing in, his own essence and perfections."⁶ God's happiness consists in his perfect love toward, and delight in, himself. This (God's love towards himself), is what the very divine essence consists in, hence, it is written, "God is love". If God is love, and the eternal divine essence consists in this divine love, then it necessarily follows that there is a plurality in the Godhead. For God to be eternally loving there must be an eternal object of that love.⁷ This eternal love to himself presupposes a perfect idea of himself, for to

⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards Volume 21: Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith*, edited by Sang Hyun Lee (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 131. This model (the Son as the divine wisdom and the Spirit as the divine love) is often referred to as the psychological analogy and the Trinity and is first and foremost associated with Augustine. Edwards does, however, make notable departures for the Augustinian tradition. See Kyle C. Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards's Theology: A Reinterpretation*. Bloomsbury, 2013. 66-67. From this point on, all references taken from the Works of Jonathan Edwards published by Yale University Press will be indicated by *Works* followed by volume number and page.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 114. It should be noted that Edwards grants considerable credit to the abilities of human reason, even regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. Edwards himself wrote: "I am not afraid to say twenty things about the Trinity which the scripture never said." *Works* 13: 256-256. Elsewhere Edwards speaks of "shadows" of the Trinity in pre-Christian philosophy, namely Plato and the Chinese *Tao Te Ching*. McClymond and McDermott, 202.

delight in something requires the idea of the thing. The thought that God has of himself is so perfect and absolute that the idea itself perfectly reflects and therefore shares the divine essence. Edwards proposes that this perfect thought of the Father is the Son, the very object of the Father's eternal love. To help explain this Edwards employs the concept of *actus purus* (pure act), a similar notion to that of divine simplicity. "In God, there are no distinctions to be admitted of faculty, habit, and act, between will, inclination, and love: but that is all one simple act."⁸ On a similar note, Edwards later states, "It is a maxim amongst divines that everything that is in God is God."⁹ If there is no distinction in God between idea and actuality; God's idea of himself is so absolute that it is actually God. "And I do suppose the Deity to be truly and properly repeated by God's thus having a perfect idea of himself; and that this idea of God is a substantial idea and has the very essence of God, [and] is truly God, to all intents and purposes."¹⁰

Edwards's doctrine of the eternal begetting of the Son of God is thus laid out: The Father, "with perfect clearness, fullness and strength," views his own essence to beget an eternal perfect image of the divine essence, in which there is no distinction between act and substance. This representation is both wholly substance and wholly act so that the

⁸ Edwards, *Works* 21:113.

⁹ Ibid., 132. Among others Edwards has perhaps 16th century Scottish Presbyterian Thomas Boston in mind, who, in *Human Nature and its Fourfold State*, writes almost the same statement verbatim. "For, consider it a certain truth, that whatsoever is in God, is God; therefore, his attributes or perfections are not any thing really distinct from Himself." Thomas Boston, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 2015), 107.

¹⁰ Edwards, *Works* 21:114. Edwards even speculates that were a human to have a perfect idea of him or herself, this too would beget a second, perfectly identical image of the subject.

idea of God is absolutely God. “Hereby there is another person begotten; there is another infinite, eternal, almighty... most holy and the same God.”¹¹

Edwards holds this reading to be abundantly taught in the Word of God. I will relate some of the scriptural proofs he provides. The Scriptures speak of Christ as the form of God, his perfect image and representation. “Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of [God], should shine unto them.” Christ is called “the image of the invisible God.” And again, he is said to be “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.”¹² It is only fitting for that which is called the form, image, and representation of something, to be the perfect idea of that thing; for the end of any image is to beget an idea of the thing represented. Edwards further emphasizes that Christ is not *in* the image of the Father, as humanity is in the image of God, and Adam’s son in the image of Adam. But rather, Christ *is* the image of the Father; he is the image in the most proper sense.¹³

In the Scriptures, Christ is taught to be the most immediate representation, and therefore the most immediate idea, of the Father. In John’s Gospel, we read, “He that seeth me seeth him that sent me,” and again, “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”¹⁴ Edwards sites these passages to further advance the notion that Christ is the perfect idea of the Father. “Seeing the perfect idea of a thing is to all

¹¹ Ibid., 116.

¹² II Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3. All scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless specified otherwise. Ibid. 117.

¹³ Ibid., 117.

¹⁴ Ibid., 118. John 12:45; John 14:7-9.

intents and purposes the same as seeing the things; it is not only equivalent to the seeing of it, but is the seeing [of] it: for there is no other seeing than having the idea.”

The third and final proof we will look at is the Son’s title of the *Logos* of God.¹⁵ Edwards argues that whether *Logos* be translated as the reason of God, or the Word of God, the teaching is still that the *Logos* is the idea of God. It should follow that the *understanding* or *reason* of God is the same as the idea of God. Likewise, if *Logos* is translated to mean *word* of God, this should too be taken to mean the idea of God. A word signifies a thought either expressed outwardly (as in a spoken word) or inwardly (as in the actual idea itself). The outward, spoken word is merely the expression of the inward thought or idea. Therefore, when Christ is called the revealed Word of God, this should be understood to mean that Christ is the revealed idea of God, and if he is the perfect idea of God, he is himself God revealed.

There is another component to Edwards’s theology of the eternal begetting of the Son of God. Not only is the Son begotten as the perfect, eternal thought of the Father, but the Son subsists as the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of the Father so that God’s wisdom is properly seated in the Son. Edwards holds that the sum of all divine wisdom and understanding consists in God’s perfect thought of himself, for he himself is the all-comprehending Being. If the Son is the perfect thought of the Father, and the sum of all divine wisdom consists in God’s thought of himself, it can be deduced that the Son is the wisdom of God, for he is the perfect thought of the Father. That the Son is the wisdom of God Edwards sees also to be taught in scripture. Christ is called the Wisdom of God in I Cor. 1:24. Edwards sites the personification of God’s Wisdom in Luke 11:49

¹⁵ John 1:1., *Ibid.*, 120.

as a reference to Christ. Edwards also attributes the voice of Wisdom in Proverbs 8 to Christ: “The Lord possessed me in the beginning... When he prepared the heavens, I was there.”¹⁶ Thus, Edwards presents the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, to be the Wisdom of God – God’s perfect, eternal thought. “I think we may be bold to say that that which is the form, face, and express and perfect image of God, in beholding which God has eternal delight, and is also the wisdom, knowledge, logos and truth of God, is God’s idea of himself.”¹⁷

We now turn to Edwards discussion on the third person of the Trinity. On the Spiration of the Holy Spirit, Edwards writes:

The Godhead being thus begotten by God’s having an idea of himself and standing forth in a distant subsistence or person in that idea, there proceeds a most pure act, and an infinitely holy and sweet energy arises between the Father and the Son: for their love and joy is mutual, in mutually loving and delighting in each other... This is the eternal and most perfect and essential act of the divine nature, wherein the Godhead acts to an infinite degree and in the most perfect manner possible. The Deity becomes all act; the divine essence itself flows out and is as it were breathed forth in love and joy. So that in the Godhead therein stands forth in yet another manner of subsistence, and there proceeds the third person in the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit.¹⁸

The Son is begotten by the Father having a perfect idea or idea of himself, and subsists as the Wisdom of God. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is breathed forth, or generated, by the infinite love between the Father and the Son, and subsists as the love of God. As the love of God, the Holy Spirit is God’s beauty and his happiness. “But the Holy Ghost, being the love and joy of God, is his beauty and happiness.”¹⁹ This relationship between love

¹⁶ Ibid., 119. Proverbs 8: 22, 27.

¹⁷ Ibid., 120.

¹⁸ Ibid., 120.

¹⁹ Ibid, 130.

and happiness was, if we recall, introduced at the beginning of the treatise, where Edwards speaks of God's happiness consisting in God perfect love for himself. Scripture relates that the divine essence consists in love; "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."²⁰ Edwards deems it reasonably clear that the Holy Spirit is that love. As mentioned above, the nature of God's love consists essentially his eternal love to, and delight in himself. If the essence of divine love is God's love toward himself, and the Holy Spirit is generated as the love between the Father and the Son, it follows that the Holy Spirit is the very love of God. Edwards builds further on the writing of the apostle John to support this claim. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby we know that we dwell in him, because he hath given us his Spirit."²¹ Edwards holds this as evidence that the Spirit is God's love. The saints have God's love in them in that his Spirit dwells in their hearts.

Edwards then discusses how the name "Holy Spirit" further confirms this. He points out that throughout scripture, the word "spirit" is frequently used to denote the disposition, inclination, or temper of the mind.²² Following this line of reasoning, Edwards concludes, "I suppose when we read of the Spirit of God, who we are told is a spirit, it is to be understood of the disposition, temper or affection of the divine mind." Edwards continues:

"Now the sum of God's temper or disposition is love, for he is infinite love; and as I observed before, there is no distinction to be made between habit and act, between temper or disposition and exercise. This is the divine disposition or nature that we are made partakers of (II Pet. 1:4); for our partaking or communion with God consists in communion or partaking of the Holy Ghost."

²⁰ I John 4:8.

²¹ I John 4:12.

²² Edwards, *Works* 21: 122; Num. 14:24; Ps. 51:10; Luke 9:55; 1 Thess. 5:23 are among the passages Edwards references.

Edwards reasons that if the Holy Spirit of God is to be understood indeed as a spirit, and spirit often denotes disposition or affection, the Holy Spirit ought to be understood as the sum of God's disposition, which Edwards has already established to be love.

Edwards also draws attention to the fact that the Holy Spirit is the only person to be specifically denominated as Holy. While the Father and the Son are both infinitely holy, the Spirit is attributed holiness in a peculiar way that the Father and the Son are not. Edwards holds this peculiarity to be rather explicable. In the first place, holiness is always immediately seated in the temper or disposition of the mind; a mind is holy when its disposition and affections are holy. It is fitting that the Holy Spirit, who is the love of God, be specifically denominated as holy, for love is the sum of all God's disposition. Secondly, the holiness of the God consists in his perfect, infinite love toward, and delight in himself, which, as Edwards has identified, is the Holy Spirit. Edwards maintains that it is in God's holiness (his infinite, perfect love to himself) that his infinite beauty and excellency are seated.²³ It is also here where we understand the Holy Spirit to be the happiness and joy of God. God's holiness is his perfect love for himself, and it is this holiness that makes God supremely happy.²⁴ Hence Edwards's convictions regarding the Holy Spirit as the love of God is confirmed by the Spirit being the only person in the Trinity whose name specifically denotes holiness.

We have then Edwards's doctrine of the Trinity. In the Godhead there is the Father (deity in its prime), the Son (the wisdom and understanding of God), and the Holy Spirit

²³ Ibid., 123.

²⁴ Ibid, 130, 144. The relationship between holiness and happiness - and likewise sin and misery - is consistent throughout Edwards's writings. This will be will treated further in following chapters. For this chapter, it will suffice to say that for Edwards, the Holy Spirit is the love of God, and therefore his beauty, holiness, and his happiness.

(the love, will, and disposition of God),²⁵ who is the beauty, holiness, and happiness of God. It is now fitting to briefly address an obvious objection to Edwards's Trinitarian thought: How can the Son, who is the understanding of God, be called a person? Likewise, how can the Holy Spirit, who is the love between the Father and the Son, be called a person? Edwards anticipates and responds to this objection in his *Discourse*. In his answer, Edwards introduces an innovative take on the ancient notion of *Perichoresis*.²⁶ Edwards proceeds from the definition of a person as one who has an understanding and a will.²⁷ Edwards remarks that divines do not suppose that God has three distinct understandings, but one and the same understanding. He continues.

In order to clear up this matter, let it be considered, that the whole divine essence is supposed truly and properly to subsist in each of these three – viz. God, and his understanding, and love – and that there is such a wonderful union between them that they are after an ineffable and inconceivable manner one in another, and are as it were... one of another.²⁸

By virtue of this perfect perichoretic union, all three persons receive their will and understanding. Edwards here engages Christ's words from John 10: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me". The Father has a will because he is *in* the Holy Spirit – who is the love (will) of God – via their perfect union. Likewise, the Father has understanding because he is *in* the Son, who is the understanding of God. The Son thus has a will by being in the Spirit and the Spirit has understanding by being in the Son. This is one of Edwards's more

²⁵ The Holy Spirit, as the love of God, is also the will of God. "There is God's will, but that is not wholly distinguished from his love, but is the same, but only with a different relation." *Ibid*, 131.

²⁶ Kyle Strobel treats this point extensively in his chapter, "Personal Beatific Delight". Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards's Theology: A Reinterpretation*. 35-64.

²⁷ Edwards, *Works* 21: 133.

²⁸ *Ibid*.

innovative teachings. He recognizes the dangers of this speculation and thus concludes his thoughts by qualifying that he does not attempt to fully explain the Trinity, and thus make it out to be anything less than a mystery.

Edwards goes on to provide several scriptural proofs to support the Spirit's subsistence as the perfect love of God.²⁹ However, to relate these would distract from the current objective, as we can now see our key terms (love, beauty, and holiness) in one view. Holiness, love, and beauty are for Edwards in inseparable union with one another. One cannot speak of holiness and not necessarily have beauty and love included. They always appear in close relation to one another throughout Edwards's writings.³⁰ To more closely analyze these relationships, we will consider these three notions in pairs. The Trinity discourse has established for us the inseparability of God's love and his holiness, as they are one and the same in the Holy Spirit. The foundational claim of Edwards's pneumatology is, as we have seen, that the Holy Spirit is the very love of God. In the same discussion, Edwards writes "The Spirit of God is the very same with holiness" and thus draws an inseparable relationship between love and holiness. Thereunto Edwards notes explicitly, "the holiness of God consists in infinite love to himself."³¹ This relationship is

²⁹ One additional observation Edwards that is worth noting, regarding the Spirit as the love of God: "I can think of no other good account can that can be given of the apostle Paul's wishing grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...without ever mentioning the Holy Ghost...but that the Holy Ghost is himself the love and grace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And in his blessing...where all three persons are mentioned, he wishes grace and love from the Son and the Father, but the communion, or the partaking, of the Holy Ghost. The blessing from the Father and the Son is the Holy Ghost; but the blessing from the Holy Ghost is himself. Christ promises that he and Father will love believers, but no mention of the Holy Ghost; and the love of Christ and the love of the Father are distinctly mentioned, but never any mention of the Holy Ghost's love". Therefore, Edwards reasons, the Holy Ghost must be that love. *Ibid*, 130.

³⁰ Dane C. Ortlund notes that these three – along with harmony, excellence, and sweetness – are used by Edwards synonymously. Finn and Kimble, *Reader's Guide*, 32.

³¹ Edwards, *Works* 21:123.

also emphasized in the 1722 sermon, *The Way of Holiness*. “Yet if they have not charity, or holiness – *which is the same thing*, for by charity is intended love to God as well as man – though they have and to all those things, yet they are nothing; they are as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.”³²

In Edwards’s *Discourse*, we see that the Holy Spirit is the very love of God, or, put more specifically, the perfect, infinite love between the Father and the Son. It is in this perfect love where God’s holiness, and therefore God’s beauty, is found. Here Edwards establishes the relationship between holiness and beauty: “God’s holiness *is* the infinite *beauty and excellency* of his nature. And God’s excellency consists in his love to himself.”³³ God is supremely beautiful because he is supremely holy. He is supremely holy because of his perfect love to himself, which is his Holy Spirit. In the *Religious Affections*, we find this notion again clearly laid out. “Holiness is the nature of the Spirit of God... Holiness, which is as it were the beauty and sweetness of the divine nature, is as much the proper nature of the Holy Spirit, as heat is the nature of fire.”³⁴ Elsewhere, Edwards argues that aside from God’s beauty consisting in his holiness, his very divinity is seated in his holiness. In speaking of God’s holiness Edwards states, “This is the beauty of the Godhead, and the divinity of Divinity (if I may so speak), the good of the infinite Fountain of Good; without which God himself (if that were possible to be) would be an infinite evil; and without which there had better been no being.” Further, we find, “God is God, and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above ‘em, chiefly by his divine beauty.”³⁵

³² Edwards, *Works* 10:474.

³³ Edwards, *Works* 21:123, emphasis added.

³⁴ Edwards, *Works* 2:201.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 274, 298.

For Edwards, God's holiness is not a mere attribute, it is the divine beauty, the sum of all his excellences, and the *sine qua non* of his very divinity.³⁶

The inseparable union between love and beauty can be logically deduced from what we have already stated. If love and holiness are inseparably united, and holiness and beauty are inseparably united, then love and beauty are too united. God is infinite beauty and is distinguished from all other beings chiefly by his beauty. His beauty *is* his holiness which *is* his perfect, infinite love toward himself. Edwards's Trinity discourse lays out this relationship even more explicitly, as the Spirit (love) is called the "beauty and excellency and loveliness of the divine nature."³⁷ Another clear treatment of love and beauty in Edwards's thought is his *Dissertation of the Nature of True Virtue*. Although this work will be discussed extensively later, it is appropriate to mention in brief the relationship Edwards draws between love and beauty. "Virtue is the beauty of those qualities and acts of the mind that are of moral nature, i.e. such as are attended with desert or worthiness or praise."³⁸ The moral beauty of virtue, according to Edwards, essentially consists in love. This Edwards deems to be abundantly clear through Scripture, Christian divines, and even "the more considerable Deists."³⁹

³⁶ "Nevertheless the fullness of God consists in the holiness and happiness of the Deity," Edwards, *Works* 21:187.

³⁷ Edwards, *Works* 21:143.

³⁸ Edwards, *Works* 8:539. Edwards frequently distinguishes between natural beauty (music, the human form, etc.) and moral beauty. Virtue belongs to that category of moral beauty.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 541. For Edwards, true virtue is not considered as love in and of itself, but specifically as love to Being in general. This will be treated at length in its own chapter.

Having established the terms needed, we will now begin to make our first application to union in Edwards's thought. It is clear from what has been laid out that love, beauty, and holiness, although we distinguish them, cannot be separated in Edwards's theology. They imply and are contained in one another: God's holiness *is* his perfect love within himself and it is in God's holiness that his beauty chiefly consists. It is also clear from what has been established that, for Edwards, these three meet in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the love of God; God's perfect, infinite love within himself is God's holiness, and God's holiness is "the beauty and excellence of his nature."⁴⁰ Crucial to Edwards's Trinitarian theology is the notion that the Holy Spirit is the "bond of union" between the Father and Son and the Godhead and the Church. The saints have communion with the Father, the Son, and with each other by partaking, or drinking of, the same Holy Spirit. "This [the Spirit] is the common excellency and joy and happiness in which they are all united; 'tis the bond of perfectness by which they are one in the Father and the Son, as the Father is in the Son and [he in him]."⁴¹ Edwards concludes his discourse with a reflection on Christ's priestly prayer recorded in John 17. Here he reiterates, "the Spirit is the bond of union and that by which Christ is in his saints and the Father in him," it is the "sum of all, 'the love wherewith thou has loved me may be in them, and I in them.'"⁴² And again, in his *Treatise on Grace*, Edwards writes: "the holiness of God consists in his love, especially in the perfect and intimate union and love there is between the Father and the

⁴⁰ Edwards, *Works* 21:123.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 144.

Son. But the Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son is the bond of union, as it is [the] holy union between the Father and Son.”⁴³

As stated above, the goal of this thesis is to address union in Edwards’s theology, and to evaluate the extent to which the idea of union dominates the narrative of Edwards’s thought. By beginning with Edwards’s Trinitarian thought, we have established that divine love, beauty, and holiness are all primarily seated in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is that principle, or bond of union, which unites the Father and the Son, and ultimately the Church and the Triune God. Edwards’s Trinitarian thought, love is first and foremost manifested in union, as the love of the God, the Holy Spirit, acts as that bond of union, which perfectly unites the Father and the Son. Where there is divine love, there is union, for divine love itself, the Holy Spirit, unites the lover with the object of love.⁴⁴ Throughout the course of the following chapters, we will see how this idea of love manifesting itself as union and a disposition towards union plays out in the rest of Edwards’s theological development. Edwards’s devotion to beauty will also be upheld, for, as we have demonstrated, love and beauty go hand and hand. For Edwards, where there is discussion of divine love, there is discussion of God’s holiness and where there is discussion of God’s holiness, there is necessarily discussion of God’s beauty.

We will now turn to Edwards’s *Dissertation on the End for which God Created the World*. Our chief purpose with this text is to explore the same idea of love as a disposition toward union. I will outline the argument and advance the central claim of the dissertation: God created the world so that he, by communicating his happiness with his

⁴³Ibid, 186.

⁴⁴ “The Spirit, therefore, acts economically as he acts immanently, as a disposition of love and union.” Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards’s Theology: A Reinterpretation*. 58.”

people through union, may be glorified. We will then continue in our discussion, demonstrating how the doctrine laid out in *End of Creation* establishes the narrative in which we can read all of Edwards's thought.

CHAPTER TWO

Creating a People for an Eternally Perfecting Union

Towards the end of his life, Edwards took on the endeavor to draft a treatise length discourse on a question of why God created the world. This dissertation, appropriately titled *Concerning the End for which God Created the World*, treads into seldom explored theological waters – especially amongst Protestants. It is, in a sense, a theological explication of the doctrine Edwards would have been familiar with since childhood. The Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches: the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. In this dissertation, Edwards proposes that God created the world for his glory, and for the good (happiness) of his saints, the elect. In the previous discussion of this question God's glory is typically given the priority over human happiness. Edwards suggests that these two are not in conflict, but are rather one and the same and are implied in one another.¹

In this chapter, I will outline the argument of the treatise, ultimately using it to establish the metanarrative of Edwards's theology. It is widely observed that this dissertation acts as an accumulation of Edwards's theological vision.² Through a summary

¹ For more information on the history of this discussion, see McClymond and McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 181-121. Selderhuis, in his study on Calvin, notes how in light of this question, Calvin prioritizes God's glory as the end for his creating the world. Selderhuis, Herman J. *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 55.

² Sydney Ahlstrom argues that all Edwards's sermons and treatises must read in view of this dissertation. Likewise, John Piper calls *End of Creation* the one book that captures the essence of Edwards's thought. McClymond and McDermott, 208. George Marsden calls this work the prolegomenon to all his work. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 460.

and analysis of the treatise, I hope to bring union and happiness – specifically happiness in union – to the center of the text. This will set us up to bring union to the center of his theology as a whole. This chapter, along with our discussion on Edwards’s Trinitarian thought, will hopefully serve a solid foundation upon which I will build my argument. Whereas the Trinity discourse will establish for us the terminology of beauty, love, and holiness, this text will establish the broader picture within which we will engage Edwards’s other major writings. I assert the thesis of *End of Creation* to be that God created the world so that he might share his perfect happiness with a society of intelligent beings by bringing them into an ever-perfecting union and, through this communication of his fullness, he might be infinitely glorified. Through our discussion of this text we will establish the narrative of Edwards’s thought to be that of God eternally communicating his happiness to his elect through union. Throughout the following chapters, we will see how Edwards’s major writings play a role in this narrative. *End of Creation* provides a glimpse of the final union between Christ and his bride, and the other major works tell of how the saints are brought into this union.

Edwards begins his argument by establishing his terms. He distinguishes between subordinate ends, ultimate ends, and chief ends. A subordinate end is simply an end in a succession of ends that all contribute toward an ultimate end. Edwards uses the example of a man who sells his garment to obtain tools so he might till a garden, plant crops, and *ultimately*, satisfy his appetite. All the actions leading up to the ultimate end of satisfying his appetite are properly called subordinate ends.³ In addition to subordinate ends, we have ultimate ends. An ultimate end is something that an agent seeks for its own sake, not as a

³ Edwards, *Works* 8:406.

means to a higher end. It is, as Edwards puts it, the end in which the desire of the agent terminates and rests. The ultimate end of the farmer would thus be satisfying his appetite with his crops. Finally, Edwards defines chief, or highest ends. The chief end is the end that is most highly valued. A chief end can be an ultimate end, but not always. To help explain this Edwards employs a different example. Suppose there is a man who embarks on a journey to obtain two different benefits (in Edwards's case, to marry his bride and to obtain an extraordinary optic glass). Neither of these is a subordinate end, for they are both sought after and valued for their own sake. The securing of his bride is the chief end, for the enjoyment of her is greater than that of the telescope. Both the securing of his bride and the obtaining of the telescope are, however, ultimate ends. All chief ends, therefore, are ultimate ends, while not all ultimate ends are chief ends.⁴ In this dissertation, Edwards inquires what may be the ultimate end for which God created the world.⁵

Edwards begins the actual argument with the speculation that God must have had some good in mind, which excited him to create the world. There was an end in the mind of the Godhead which inclined God to bring a universe into existence and to fill it with intelligent beings. Edwards entertains the thought that God could have created the world in order to display his mercy and justice on intelligent creatures, but quickly dismisses this supposition as unfitting and seeks a more satisfying explanation. At this early point in his

⁴ Ibid, 409.

⁵ Moving forwards in the treatise, Edwards speaks in terms of God's ultimate end. As we have seen however, the primary ultimate end is the chief end. It is not clear to me why Edwards does not speak in terms of chief end, but let it suffice to say that as far as this treatise is concerned, the chief end is the ultimate end.

contemplation, Edwards establishes that if we were to identify an ultimate end, it shall be one end and that all God's works in creation and providence should serve that one end. ⁶

Although Edwards is aware of the limits of human reason, especially in matters of divinity, he opens his first section by inquiring into what insight reason might bring when considering this question. He establishes it would be contrary to reason to suppose that God's end in creation should suggest any insufficiency or mutability in God. Whatever end God does intend by the creation of the world, the notion that God's perfect happiness is dependent on the creation must be altogether excluded. Edwards holds it to be universally accepted by all those who call themselves Christians that God is supremely happy and that nothing can add or take away from his happiness. God, in his triunity, is completely self-sufficient for his existence and his happiness. God is infinitely perfect and all creation depends wholly on him for its existence; "all things else, with regard to worthiness, importance and excellence, are perfectly as nothing in comparison of him."⁷

Reason teaches that only that which is good and valuable in itself (that which God should value for itself) would be a worthy end for which God created the world. Stated otherwise, in creating the world, God must have had regard for that which is the most worthy of regard. Since God is infinitely greater than all things, God must have created out of regard for himself – God therefore must be his own end in creation. Edwards explains that holiness consists in having "infinitely the highest regard to that which is in itself infinitely highest and best."⁸ Edwards frequently points out that God's holiness consists

⁶ Ibid, 413.

⁷ Ibid, 420. It is interesting to note, especially given the goal of this thesis, that Edwards begins this dissertation, as well as the Trinity Discourse, with the premise of God's supreme happiness.

⁸ Ibid, 421.

in his perfect love toward himself. That which excited God to create the world, therefore, must be his perfect regard for himself. That which is highest in his heart, Edwards reasons, should be highest in his actions and conduct. To confirm these things, Edwards invokes the voice of a third-party judge, neither the creator nor the creature, but rather Wisdom herself. This judge likewise establishes that God, being infinitely greater and more glorious than all things in existence, should be given the utmost regard “in all actions and proceedings, determinations and effects in whatever, whether creating, preserving, using, disposing, changing, or destroying.”⁹ Finally, in an eloquent summary of what has been established, Wisdom concludes,

Such an arbiter... would therefore determine that the whole universe, including all creatures animate and inanimate, in all actings, proceedings, revolutions, and entire series of events, should proceed from a regard and with a view of *God*, as the supreme and last end of all: that every wheel, both great and small, in all its rotations, should move with a constant invariable regard to him as the ultimate end of all; as perfectly and uniformly as if the whole system were animated and directed by one common soul: or, as if such an arbiter as I have before supposed, one possessed of perfect wisdom and rectitude, become the common soul of the universe, and actuated and governed it in all its motions.¹⁰

Having established that God had utmost the regard for himself in the creation of the world, Edwards proceeds in Section II to further explain what is to be understood by this regard, and how this plays out practically. Edwards deems it most fit, proper, and desirable that God’s glorious attributes (infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, etc.) should be manifested.¹¹ These attributes, which would have otherwise been eternally dormant, were made manifest by God’s creating of the world. God would have, of course,

⁹ Ibid, 424.

¹⁰ Ibid, 425.

¹¹ Ibid, 428.

known he possessed such attributes however, his wisdom, prudence, justice, goodness, and truth, would never be exerted or expressed. Edwards holds that if these attributes are excellent in themselves, they are also excellent in their exercise.¹² If these attributes are infinitely good in themselves, it is fitting that these perfections should be known by a society of intelligent beings. He continues that it would an infinitely worthy reality if these intelligent beings increased in their knowledge of God's glory (the sum of these excellences) into eternity.¹³ From here Edwards advances that if God's glory should be known by intelligent beings, it follows that his glory should be loved and delighted in by these beings. If the perfection of these attributes is excellent, and the knowledge of them is excellent, the delight in them is also excellent. If God loves and delights in his own perfection, he will likewise delight in others delighting in his perfection. When someone delights in a dear friend, he or she will also delight in others delighting in that friend; in the same way, God, who loves his own glorious attributes, delights in his creatures loving his glorious attributes.¹⁴

Now that Edwards has established the fittingness that God's attributes should be known and loved by intelligent creatures, he shifts his attention to the communicative disposition of God. There is an infinite fullness of all possible good in God. For this fullness to be known and loved, it must be communicated to intelligent beings. Edwards sees all of

¹² Edwards, in his own footnote to the text, cites Presbyterian pastor, Mr. G. Tennent. "To suppose these perfections not to be exerted, would be to represent them as insignificant. Of what use would God's wisdom be, if he had nothing to design or direct? To what purpose his almightiness, if it never brought anything to pass? And of what avail his goodness, if it never did any good?" Ibid, 430.

¹³ This notion of increasing knowledge of God (and therefore increasing blessedness) is central to Edwards's understanding of salvation and his vision of heaven. This will be addressed extensively throughout our discussion.

¹⁴ Ibid, 432.

the fullness of God's excellences to be manifested in his perfect knowledge, holiness, and happiness. Therefore, for God to communicate his fullness to intelligent creatures, he communicates to them his perfect knowledge, holiness, and happiness.

As this fullness is capable of communication of emanation *ad extra*; so it seems a thing amiable and valuable in itself that it should be communicated or flow forth, that this infinite fountain of light should, diffusing its excellent fullness, pour forth light all around. And as this is in itself excellent, so a disposition to this in the Divine Being must be looked upon as a perfection or an excellent disposition.

Thus, Edwards concludes this section by establishing that since God's fullness is capable of being communicated to his creatures, it is fitting that his fullness should be communicated to his creatures. This glorious emanation of his infinite fullness (knowledge, holiness, and happiness), arising from God's communicative disposition, is God's ultimate end in his creating the world.

Edwards's next task in Section III (and Section IV: Objections and Answers) is to show how God, in creating the world to communicate his fullness, is indeed acting out of highest regard for himself, and that he is, therefore, his own end. Edwards wants to assert that by seeking the happiness of his elect, he is seeking his own glory and by seeking his own glory he is acting out of ultimate regard for himself. Edwards reiterates what was earlier discussed. God is supremely happy because God is supremely holy. His happiness consists in knowing and loving himself. His perfect love toward and delight in himself is his holiness and therefore his happiness consists in holiness.¹⁵ If God loves his own perfections he likewise loves the exercise of these perfections. What is more, "'tis fit that he should take delight in his own excellences being seen, acknowledged, esteemed, and

¹⁵ Edwards speaks of "holiness and happiness" together throughout this treatise, as well as other treatises and sermons. The relationship of holiness and happiness will be further addressed in the discussion to come.

delighted in. This is implied in a love to himself and his own perfections. And in seeking this, and making this his end, he seeks himself and makes himself his end.”¹⁶

Edwards expands further on the idea of God’s fullness as his knowledge, holiness, and happiness, and how, by communicating these to his creatures, he makes himself his own end. One thing that God communicates to creatures his divine knowledge, or, more specifically, God’s knowledge of himself. In communicating God’s knowledge of himself, specifically of his glory, he is seeking his own end for the same reason mentioned above: If he delights in the knowledge of his perfections, he delights in intelligent beings also delighting in this knowledge. “As [God] delights in his own light, he must delight in every beam of that light.”¹⁷ Edwards then discusses how in communicating his holiness, God is again seeking himself. If God loves his holiness in himself, he would love it in creatures as well. God is not receiving anything from the creature, just as the sun receives nothing from a jewel through which its light shines. The holiness in the creature is another instance of his own holiness, for he is the beginning and end of it all.¹⁸ Finally, Edwards touches on God’s communicating his happiness to creatures as another instance of him seeking himself as his end. The logic is essentially the same: if God loves his happiness, he also loves his happiness being communicated and enjoyed by others.

At this point in the argument, Edwards has established that God created the world with intelligent creatures for the purpose of communicating his fullness to them by

¹⁶ Ibid, 438.

¹⁷ Ibid, 442.

¹⁸ Ibid, 442, 446, 450.

sharing with them his knowledge, holiness, and happiness. Here Edwards introduces the notion of union. For Edwards, this communication of fullness comes through the saint being united to God, and the increase of the saints' blessedness comes by way of the union's becoming nearer and nearer into eternity: union is the mode and means of communication. Before we address union in this text, however, we must take a step back and consider the purpose and place of this work in Edwards's body of thought. It is important to note that in this text, Edwards is not dealing with the salvation of the saints per se. He is addressing the *end* of salvation. Salvation is the chief work of God's providence in the world and God's work in saving a people for himself serves the ultimate end, which Edwards has defined as the saint's happiness and God's glory. That means, interestingly enough, that the atoning work of Christ and the Spirit's application of that work receives little treatment in this discourse. Thus, the way in which this union between God and his elect is entered, namely, redemption, is not emphasized. This text is concerned with the eschaton, the end of ends: God being glorified for eternity by giving ever-increasing happiness to his saints. It is not until we address Edwards's soteriological thought, specifically the Spirit's regenerating work in the sinner through uniting to the soul's faculties, that we will see how this eschatological union is entered. *End of Creation* recognizes the redemption of the elect as the end of creation, insofar as this redemption serves the ultimate end, the details of this redemption are not directly treated, but are more or less assumed. When Edwards speaks of this eschatological union between God and the saints, he speaks of that union as it will be, but not how it will come about. In a later chapter, we will see how the elect are brought into this union.

Here Edwards sets forth his vision of eternity as an ever-perfecting union between God and the saints. The union is eternally perfecting by virtue of God eternally communicating his fullness to his people. The more that is communicated, the stricter the union will become, and this will increase into eternity. Despite the eternally perfecting nature of the union, the union will never achieve perfection. The more knowledge, holiness, and happiness the saints receive from God, the more conformed and united they are to him. Inversely, the more united they are to him, the more knowledge, holiness, and happiness they receive.

What is communicated is divine, or something of God: and each communication is of that nature, that the creature to whom it is made, is thereby conformed to God, and united to him; and that in proportion as the communication is greater or less...And 'tis' farther to be considered that the thing which God aimed at in the creation of the world, as the end which he had ultimately in view, was that communication of himself, which he intended throughout all eternity...And 'tis to be considered that the more those divine communications increase in the creature, the more it comes one with God: for so much the more is it united to God in love, the heart is drawn nearer and nearer to God, and the union with him becomes more firm and close.

Edwards continues, indicating that this end is precisely what Christ petitioned for in his priestly prayer.

For it will forever come nearer and nearer to an identity with that which is in God... For it will forever come nearer and nearer to that strictness and perfection of union which there is between the Father and the Son... it must come to an eminent fulfilment of Christ's request in John, "That they may all be *one*, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." In this view, those elect creatures which must be looked upon as the end of all the rest of creation, considered with respect to the whole of their eternal duration, and as such made God's end, must be viewed as being, as it were, one with God. They were respected as brought home to him, united with him, centering most perfectly in him, and as it were swallowed up in him.¹⁹

¹⁹ Ibid, 442-443.

This is the glorious end where, according to Edwards, all of God's works in creation, providence, and redemption find their fulfillment. While the bulk of the argument has been laid out, we have by no means addressed all of Edwards's points in this treatise. Edwards has a lengthy chapter dedicated to Scripture's teaching on God's glory as his end in creating the world. He writes, in addition, a chapter on Scripture's teaching that the saints' happiness is the end of all God's providences.

In the concluding chapter, Edwards demonstrates in further detail how these two ends are one – they are contained in one another. To explain this Edwards distinguishes between God's internal glory and his external glory. God's internal glory is his infinite fullness – all of God's glorious attributes – which Edwards has already established to be his knowledge, holiness and happiness.²⁰ God's external glory is the communication of these. This distinction allows Edwards to hold these two together - one end (God's glory) in two different expressions. Thus, when scripture speaks of the "glory of God," it means his fullness as such, as well as the communication of his fullness. Edwards still wants to further clarify how God, in seeking the good of his creatures, is seeking himself. Here he employs his own terminology of *emanation* and *remanation*. The emanation is synonymous with the communication that Edwards has been dealing with. God's fullness is received by the creatures through this emanation, but it is then returned to God by remanation. God is not, however, receiving anything from the creatures. He cannot, therefore, be charged with being dependent on the creature for anything. Rather, what God is receiving is indeed his own fullness. "The beams of glory come from God, and are

²⁰ Ibid. 529. It is important to note that for Edwards, all of God's attributes are contained in this three (knowledge, holiness, happiness). Other attributes that we spoke of (eternality, omniscience, omnipotence, immutability, etc.) are expressions of degree.

some things of God, and are refunded back again in their original. So that the whole is *of* God, and *in*, and *to* God; and God is the beginning, middle and end of this affair.”²¹ Edwards maintains that although God has regard for the creatures’ good, his respect to himself and his creatures ought not be divided. By this remanation, the creatures are not giving back to God anything other than another instance of his own glory. This remanation is, therefore, that which Edwards had earlier described as God delighting in his creatures delighting in him. Because God infinitely values his fullness, he values the communication and, therefore, the participation of this fullness in the creature.²² God, in seeking the creatures’ good is seeking himself, for the good of the creature is knowing and loving God. Edwards then concludes his observations by restating his vision of the eternally perfecting union.

God’s respect to the creature’s good, and his respect to himself, is not a divided respect; but both are united in one, as the happiness of the creature aimed at is happiness in union with himself. The creature is no further happy with this happiness which God makes his ultimate end that he becomes one with God. The more happiness the greater union: when the happiness is perfect, the union is perfect. And as the happiness will be increasing to eternity, the union will become more and more strict and perfect; nearer and more like that between God the Father and the Son; who are so united, that their interest is perfectly one.²³

God’s regard for himself is not divided or shared with this regard for his elect, but they are implied in one another. Because his elect will be eternally united to him, his happiness will be their happiness. He is the beginning and the end, so he has the highest regard for himself. He has the highest regard for creatures’ good as well, for he delights in them delighting in

²¹ Ibid, 531.

²² Ibid, 532.

²³ Ibid, 532. Edwards speaks of the union between the Father and Son, but there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. Here Edwards is being consistent with his Trinitarian theology laid out most explicitly in the *Discourse on the Trinity*, For Edwards, the Holy Spirit *is* that bond which unites the Father and the Son, for he is the love of God.

his happiness. These two are in no way in conflict, for by seeking the creatures' good he seeks himself, for he *is* their good.

Thus far we have laid out Edwards's argument in *End of Creation*. This has given us a glimpse into Edwards's vision of eternity: an eternally perfecting union between God and his elect people. Edwards believes that all God's works in creation and providence are directed toward this end, for in this union is God most glorified and do the elect creatures obtain their perfect happiness. Moving forward with the task at hand, I wish to bring two matters to attention. My first aim to bring union and happiness to the forefront of this treatise. My second aim is to show how this dissertation, given its nature and content, sets up the meta-narrative to Edwards's theology. If we see where, in Edwards's mind, all of God's providential works are leading, we have a hermeneutical framework with which to read the rest of his theology. If, from the onset of our discussion, union is brought to the center, what remains in the following chapters shows how Edwards's devotion to union informs virtually every stage in the narrative of his theology.

Edwards's thesis in *End of Creation* is that that which excited God to create the world – that good which he had in mind – was the communication of his fullness to intelligent creatures. Edwards's goal throughout the discussion is to demonstrate how this is consistent with the teaching of Scripture that God created the world for his glory. God's glory and the elect's good are not divided, but rather are one. At the beginning of this chapter, I proposed a more precise thesis statement for *End of Creation*. If the outline I have provided is true to the text, we can make the terms of the thesis more explicit. The more specific thesis I propose is that God created the world so that he might communicate his perfect happiness to his elect creatures by bringing them into union with him. What I

have done is narrowed “God’s fullness,” (which Edwards identifies as God’s knowledge, holiness, and happiness) to primarily happiness. I will demonstrate that in this treatise, as well as other works from Edwards, knowledge and holiness both contribute to ultimate happiness. Although Edwards speaks in terms of knowledge, holiness, and happiness, it is happiness that is consistently elevated as the sum of these things. In the second place, in this more precise thesis of *End of Creation*, I have narrowed Edwards’s language of communication to the more explicit language of union or uniting. The quotations for *End of Creation* given above have already demonstrated that this communication of fullness comes through union. This idea of communication by union will be discussed further when we treat the Spirit’s work in regeneration, which Edwards frequently describes as the Spirit uniting to the faculties of the believer.

Edwards repeatedly establishes that one of the goods which God communicates to his creatures is his knowledge. This knowledge is not mere knowledge of the world, but God’s own knowledge of himself with all his glorious attributes.²⁴ This knowledge, according to Edwards, is not meant as its own end. God communicates his knowledge to his creatures so that they may know his perfections, and, by knowing his perfections, that they might delight in them. Thus happiness is, in a sense, more ultimate than knowledge. This idea that the knowledge of God results in happiness is found elsewhere in Edwards’s work. For example, his sermon *The Pleasantness of Religion*, Edwards speaks of the knowledge of God contributing to the saints and angels’ happiness. “Great part of the happiness of the angels and saints in heaven is their knowledge; their understanding is

²⁴ Ibid, 441.

enlarged, and their knowledge, we may conclude, is immensely larger than that of the wisest men in this world.”²⁵

It is straightforward that, in Edwards’s theology, the saints’ knowledge of God contributes toward their happiness. The relationship between holiness and happiness for Edwards is trickier to capture. The fact that there is a close relationship, however, is indisputable. In many cases, in his treatises, sermons, and miscellanies, Edwards speaks of them as a pair, often referring to “holiness and happiness,” as if they are implied in one another. I will relate a just of few of these instances. In *Freedom of the Will*, Edwards speaks about the elect having a “certain measure of holiness and happiness” appointed for them. All that may befall each believer works together to accomplish this good which God assigned for each saint.²⁶ In *Original Sin*, Edwards writes that children, despite being born in sin, “are capable subjects of eternal holiness and happiness.”²⁷ In one Miscellany, Edwards reflects, “Christ purchased glory for us in another world, that we should be like God, that we should be perfect in holiness and happiness; which still is comprised in that, in having the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.”²⁸ This relationship between holiness and happiness is further confirmed by Edward’s consistent emphasize of the contrary: while holiness is always associated with happiness, sin is always paired with misery. On numerous occasions in *The Religious Affections*, Edwards speaks of “sin and misery.” Edwards insists repeatedly that no one can receive salvation who is not

²⁵ Edwards, *Works* 14:108.

²⁶ Edwards, *Works* 1:116.

²⁷ Edwards, *Works* 3:238.

²⁸ Edwards, *Works* 13:467.

aware of his or her *sin and misery* apart from Christ.²⁹ Edwards also speaks of salvation as a freedom, or rescue, from sin and misery and a restoration to holiness and happiness.³⁰

That holiness and happiness are, in Edwards's writings, contained within one another has been demonstrated. There are, however, other areas where Edwards implies that happiness is the end or result of holiness; he uses the language of happiness *consisting in* holiness. This is fitting, for it would make more sense to claim that holiness makes one happy (since God is supremely holy) than to say that happiness makes one supremely holy – unless of course we say finding happiness in God, which, for Edwards, would be the same as holiness. Edwards writes that the true glory of heaven consists in the beauty and happiness, which, Edwards specifies, consists in holiness.³¹ Furthermore, in *Charity and Its Fruits*, Edwards writes,

A gracious hope has this tendency from the nature of the happiness hoped for. The happiness which a gracious person wishes is that which consists in holiness. But the more a man seeks and the more he hopes for such a happiness, which consists in holiness, the more does it quicken and enliven a disposition to holiness.³²

The Christian who seeks happiness, for Edwards, is the one who seeks holiness, for happiness is found in holiness. Although holiness and happiness go hand in hand, Edwards sees happiness as a consequence of holiness, for the saints' happiness is derived from their holiness.

²⁹ Edwards *Works* 2:161, 509, and 511.

³⁰ Edwards, *Works* 3:348; 8:489.

³¹ Edwards, *Works* 2: 247.

³² Edwards, *Works* 8:307.

Although Edwards speaks of God communicating his knowledge, holiness, and happiness, it is safe to concentrate these into the saints' happiness. God communicates his own knowledge, holiness, and happiness, and these, when received by the saint, make the saint supremely happy, according to their capacity.³³

It is important to note that Edwards himself attributes all that saints receive (knowledge and holiness) to their ultimate happiness. Throughout his *Miscellanies*, Edwards speaks of human happiness as the end of creation. In his third miscellany, which begins with the claim that "Happiness is the end of creation," Edwards writes, "how happy may we conclude will be those intelligent creatures that are made to be eternally happy."³⁴

Through outlining the argument in *End of Creation*, and briefly noting the relationship between knowledge, holiness, and happiness, we can see how the thesis proposed above is a fitting summary of Edwards inquiry into the end for which God created the world. God created the world so that he might communicate his perfect happiness to his elect, by bringing them into an eternally-perfecting union.

Moving forward in the following chapters, we will demonstrate how this union-centered vision of God's end in creation contributes to a union-centered body of divinity. Thus far we have seen how union is central to Edwards's understanding of God's love, beauty, and holiness. We have also seen how union is central to the communication of God's fullness to his creatures, ultimately leading to their perfect happiness. What is more,

³³ This idea of happiness respective to one's capacity will be treated at the end of the discussion, where we will look at Edwards's vision of heaven.

³⁴ Edwards, Jonathan. *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*. Edited by John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 37.

Edwards's vision of heaven consists in an eternally perfecting union between the Godhead and the saints, whereby the saint's happiness eternally increases the closer the union becomes. In the proceeding chapters, we will see how the whole narrative of Edwards's theology is deeply union-centered. *End of Creation* provides for us the framework of this narrative: God uniting his people to himself. We will now walk through Edwards's major theological contributions, bringing union to the forefront and establishing it as the thread that informs the narrative of his thought.

CHAPTER THREE

Fall, Original Sin, and the Threefold Disunion

Thus far we have outlined Edwards's argument in *End of Creation* to establish the centrality of union in Edwards's larger theological narrative: God created the world for his glory and the happiness of his elect, and this happiness (and his eternal glorification) consist in an eternally perfecting union of love between the Triune God and the Church. We have also taken a close look at Edwards's Trinitarian thought to demonstrate how love, beauty, holiness (which for Edwards are in some measure interchangeable) meet in the Holy Spirit, who is the bond of union between the Father and the Son, and the Godhead and his people. These first two chapters have built the foundation for the rest of our discussion. *End of Creation* has helped provide the narrative of God bringing his Church into an eternally perfecting union with him, and the *Discourse on the Trinity* has established the role of union in Edward's aesthetic thought. We will now turn to Edwards's understanding of the fall and original sin. The doctrines of the fall and original sin are not immediately associated with things like Triune beauty, love, and holiness – especially when we consider the language Edwards employs when discussing such topics. In this chapter, however, we will see how these doctrines cannot be spoken about in Edwardsian terms without the reliance on the idea of union. We will treat Edwards's understanding of the fall and original sin with the same two considerations as before: the narrative of God bringing his people into union with him, and the role of union in Edwards's aesthetic thought. This chapter will give considerable attention to Edwards's

treatise, *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin*, but we will also engage various sermons and treatises that speak to this topic. The goal of this chapter is to place Edward's writings on the fall and original sin into the narrative of union by emphasizing the loss of union that came with the fall. For Edwards, the fall brought about a threefold disunion: humanity lost their union with their creator, humans lost their union with one another, and the faculties within each human lost the harmonious union they had in the state of innocence.¹ This chapter will also introduce a corollary to Edwards's aesthetic thought: whereas beauty consist in a disposition toward unity (for holiness, which is God's beauty, consists in divine love, which is the Spirit – the bond of union) the contrary of beauty – that which is most hateful – consists in disunity.

Before we treat the theology, there is important context surrounding *Original Sin* to consider. Edwards wrote *Original Sin* in the years 1756-1757 and it was published posthumously in 1758. Shortly after drafting *The Freedom of The Will*, Edwards decided to continue to battle rising Arminian sentiments by writing a robust defense of the classic Calvinist understanding of the doctrine of original sin. Edwards and his Calvinistic contemporaries saw that orthodox Calvinism was under threat in Great Britain and America and exerted much effort to combat these challenges and defend orthodoxy. John Taylor of Norwich and his anti-Calvinistic teaching posed a particular threat. While Edwards wrote both *Original Sin* and *Two Dissertations* in response to Taylor's influence, *Original Sin* was written as a direct response to Taylor's book, *The Scripture-*

¹ It is important, and it hopefully become clearer as we move forward, that Edwards speaks of multiple expressions of union. The "union" between God and humanity was a *real* union by virtue of the Holy Spirit, the bond of union; Edwards also speaks of this as *communion* with God. The union that Adam and Eve possessed before the fall was more so a *disposition* of union. Finally, the union that the human faculties possessed was primarily a union expressed in *harmony* or *agreement*.

Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination. ² Taylor argued that the historical reading of Genesis 1-3 introduced a doctrine of original sin that is not actually taught in the scripture. He contended that Adam's sin brought his posterity physical death but rejected the historical teaching that Adam's posterity inherited the guilt and corruption of nature from that first sin. ³ Edwards was deeply troubled by Taylor's influence. He remarked, "no one book has done so much towards rooting of these parts of New England, the principles and scheme of religion maintained by our pious and excellent forefathers." ⁴ Edwards was not alone in his concern. He was joined in his polemic endeavors by his friends, Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins, who both wrote treatises in defense of orthodox Calvinism. ⁵ Taylor received considerable pushback in Great Britain, as well. In a letter to John Wesley, Augustus Toplady wrote, "no single person since Mohamet has given such a wound to Christianity as Dr. Taylor." He saw Taylor's work, particularly his writings on original sin, as poison to European clergy and universities. What is more, Issac Watts and John Wesley in Great Britain went on, like Edwards, to write book-length responses to Taylor. ⁶

Edwards was not concerned with Taylor's work for the sole reason that it challenged his own theological tradition. For Edwards, there was much at stake for

² Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 449.

³ Finn and Kimble, *A Reader's Guide*, 157.

⁴ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 451.

⁵ Joseph Bellamy wrote both *True Religion Delineated* (1750) and *Four Sermons on the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin* (1758). Samuel Hopkins contributed to the efforts with his 1759 volume entitled, *Sin, Thro' Divine Interposition, an Advantage to the Universe*. Ibid, 450-451.

⁶ Finn and Kimble, *A Reader's Guide*, 158-159.

Christians who erred in this area of doctrine. The sentiment that doctrine divides and morality unites was beginning to take root – Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Nathan the Wise* is published only a couple decades after Edwards writes *Original Sin*. Much of Edwards’s treatises are polemic in nature because Edwards did not believe that one could separate doctrine from morality. Edwards’s concern was that rising Arminian sentiments put Christians not only in risk of doctrinal error, but moral error as well - these two informed one another. This concern is displayed well in Edwards’s 1731 Sermon, *God Glorified in Man’s Dependence*. In this sermon, Edwards presents redemption as a work of Triune God – Father, Son, and Spirit. Humanity is wholly dependent on all three persons for salvation. “We are dependent on Christ the Son of God, as he is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. We are dependent on the Father, who has given us Christ, and made him to be these things to us. We are dependent on the Holy Ghost, for 'tis of him that we are in Christ Jesus; 'tis the Spirit of God that gives us faith in him, whereby we receive him, and close with him.”⁷ Edwards acknowledges that humans are quick to exalt themselves and depend on their own powers or goodness.⁸ This tendency is “repugnant to the design and tenor of the gospel, and robs it of that which God accounts its luster and glory.”⁹ For Edwards, if God’s sovereignty in salvation is misunderstood and one attributes any part of salvation (conversion, justification, etc.) to his or her own efforts, he or she robs God of the honor he is due and thus err both doctrinally and morally.

⁷ Edwards, *Works* 17:201.

⁸ *Ibid*, 214.

⁹ *Ibid*, 213.

Now that we have some historical context, we turn to *Original Sin*. Edwards divides his volume into four parts. Part I focuses on the evidence for original sin that can be gathered by observing the history of humanity. He focuses on the universal sinfulness of humanity as well as the universal mortality, particularly the death of infants. Part II contains observations from scripture that further defend the doctrine of original sin. In Part III, Edwards looks at redemption in Christ and considers what implications this brings to the doctrine of original sin. Finally, in Part IV, Edwards replies to common objections. He addresses, among other things, whether God is the author of sin, whether it is just that Adam's posterity be punished for sin, and whether it is then lawful to beget children if they will inherit sin and all its miseries. Some of these questions will be addressed in our discussion, however the purpose of this chapter is to consider Edwards's teaching on the consequences of the fall.¹⁰

As mentioned above, our focus is placing Edwards's teaching on original sin into this broader theological narrative. If Edward's theology tells the story of God bringing his people into union with him (and thereby sharing with them his perfect love, holiness, and happiness), we must first establish the natural state of fallen humanity. If, for Edwards, God's work of redemption is primarily defined by union, it is fitting that his understanding of fallen humanity be defined principally as disunion. Here Edwards is remarkably consistent: if "Man's happiness consists in his union with his creator," and happiness primarily consists in holiness (which is likewise union with God), it is perfectly fitting that sin, which is primarily characterized by misery, should consist

¹⁰ For helpful summary of Edwards's argument in *Original Sin*, see the chapters on original sin in McClymond, McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* and Finn and Kimble, *A Reader's Guide*.

principally in disunion with the creator.¹¹ We will now consider what I have chosen to call the threefold disunity that was brought about by the fall. We will treat each form of disunion individually, but it is important to note that all three inform one another and all three contribute to Edwards's understanding of fallen humanity, and the miserable condition it exists in.

We will first consider the union with God that humanity lost at the time of the fall. Edwards teaches that God, when he created Adam and Eve, implanted in them two kinds of principles: the inferior, or natural, and the superior, or supernatural.

There was an inferior kind, which may be called *natural*, being the principles of mere human nature; such as self-love, with those natural appetites and passions, which belong to the nature of man, in which his love to his own liberty, honor and pleasure, were exercised: these when alone, and left to themselves, are what the Scriptures sometimes call *flesh*. Besides these, there were the *superior* principles, that were spiritual, holy and divine, summarily comprehended in divine love; wherein consisted the spiritual image of God, and man's righteousness, and true holiness; which are called in Scripture the *divine nature*.¹²

These superior principles Edwards also refers to as the supernatural principles. They are designated as supernatural because they belong to man by virtue of the communication and influence of the Holy Spirit, the "divine inhabitant" from whom these principles come, and on whom they depend.¹³ Here we see another instance of Edwards's

¹¹ Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online Volume 56*.

¹² Edwards *Works* 3:381. In this passage, Edwards speaks of the spiritual image of God. This is an important distinction for Edwards, one that he fleshes out fully in *The Religious Affections*. When speaking of the image of God in which humanity was created, Edwards distinguishes between the natural and the spiritual, or moral. The natural image of God which humanity bears refers to certain faculties and functions i.e. that humans are rational and are given dominion over the earth. The spiritual, or moral, image is what Edwards is speaking of here: the principle of holiness. After the fall, humanity lost the spiritual, moral image, but retained the natural.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 382.

Trinitarian theology that we discussed above. The Holy Spirit, who is divine love and holiness, is the source of the principles of holiness and divine love which belonged to Adam and Eve. Furthermore, as the Holy Spirit is the bond of union, it was by the indwelling of the Spirit that Adam and Even had union and communion with God. Before the fall, these superior principles, rooted in the communication and influence of God's Spirit, were given to "possess the throne" and maintain dominion of the human heart. "These divine principles thus reigning, were the dignity, life, happiness, and glory of man's nature."¹⁴ So long as these principles of divine love and holiness reigned, Adam and Eve were perfectly holy and happy and enjoyed union and communion with God, by virtue of his indwelling Spirit. But, as we know, this blessedness would not last. With the temptation in the Garden, the lower principles took the throne from the higher, and Adam and Eve sinned. Edwards describes this event as such: When Adam sinned, thereby breaking God's covenant and falling under the curse, these superior principles left his heart. For indeed God then left him; that communion with God, on which these principles depended, entirely ceased; the Holy Spirit, that divine inhabitant, forsook the house.¹⁵ We must note the language Edwards employs. The superior principles left his heart *for* indeed God then left him. When Adam sinned, God left Adam by withdrawing his Spirit from him. When the Spirit left, and with it all principles of holiness and divine love, humanity was left in ruin, for the human heart was then given wholly over to the lower to the principles of the *flesh*. This marks the transition of humanity from the state of

¹⁴ Ibid. Note that here again we see Edwards insisting that man's happiness consist in being united to God.

¹⁵ Ibid.

innocence to the state of depravity: it marks the moment when the bond of union left, and humanity lost their union with God.

In Edwards's earliest sermons he was already expressing this strong association of the fall with the loss of union with God. In his 1722 sermon, *Way of Holiness*, he writes, "'Tis impossible by reason of God's holiness, that anything should be united to him God and brought to the enjoyment of him which is not holy.'"¹⁶ Here, on the one hand, we see the consistent association of happiness and union with God, and, on the other hand, the association of human sinfulness and lost union with God.

We have spoken of the loss of union with God that came through the fall, by consequence of the Spirit's leaving, and the lower, natural principles taking the throne from the superior, spiritual principles. This overthrowing of the higher by the lower did not only bring about the loss of union between the person and God, but there was brought about another disunion: a disunity, or loss of harmony, amongst the faculties within each person. Before moving forward, we should say a brief word about Edwards's language of *principles* and of *faculties*. It is difficult to say how Edwards sees the relationship between these two things. Edwards's frequent pairing of "faculties and principles" together suggests that they might be synonymous.¹⁷ These two however, do have an important distinction in Edwards's writings. Principles, for Edwards, are foundational to faculties; they inform the exercise of the faculties. A person, in Edwards's tradition, consists primarily of two faculties: an understanding and a will.¹⁸ There is for Edwards

¹⁶ Edwards, *Works* 10:475.

¹⁷ For example see Edwards, *Works* 1:166, and 2:122, 138.

¹⁸ This was introduced in chapter one, but we will treat more extensively in chapter 5.

no such thing as a new faculty. If God were to give a human a new faculty, they would not be human anymore, but something of a new nature. Likewise, when humanity fell, they did not lose any *faculties*, for if they had, then humanity would have become something ontologically different at the fall. One can, however, lose principles and likewise be given principles. These principles are the springs of action that inform the exercise of the faculties. Man in the state of innocence had understanding and will, and the operation of these faculties (judgment and inclination or choice) were informed by a proper love for God, for the principle of divine love had the soul rightly ordered. After the fall, humanity still had understanding and will; however, the faculties were radically changed. Self-love and pride reigned and now informed the function of the faculties. The understanding became clouded and the will became bent inward toward the self. Edwards, as we will see, speaks of disorder amongst the inner principles and the faculties. Suffice it to say that when there is disunity amongst the principles, there is likewise disorder amongst the faculties, for the principles inform the function of the faculties.

Before the lower principles took the throne, here was unity between the higher and lower principles. In one of his notes of Galatians, Edwards writes,

Man's natural principles, or those principles of humanity that man had, were in his primitive state very good, because that man's spiritual principles that he had were to that degree as the Spirit dwelt and acted in him, to that degree that the natural principles were entirely subordinate to them. Then the flesh did not lust against the Spirit. These two natures or two sorts of principles were by an entire, an absolute, subordination of *one to the other united*, so as to be as it were *one nature*. The spiritual principles have absolute rule. And therefore man was then wholly spiritual, because he lived in the Spirit, and walked wholly in the Spirit; and the flesh was only a servant to the Spirit.¹⁹

¹⁹ Edwards, *Works* 24:1087. Emphasis added.

Hence we see that this disunity that now exists amid the higher and lower principles of fallen humanity is, like the first expression of disunity, a direct consequence of the Spirit leaving the soul. Edwards understands fallen humanity to be left in a state of inner warfare. Before the fall, there was a unity and harmony within each person. The lower, natural principles of self-love, love of pleasure and honor, and natural human appetites served the higher principles. While lower were subordinate to the higher, Edwards speaks of them as united in this subordination, forming one nature of natural and spiritual. Edwards describes these principles as having existed in an “excellent order, peace and beautiful harmony...their proper and perfect state.” In this proper state, with the higher principles in control, man’s self-love, love of pleasure, thoughts, and desires were all properly subordinate to the love of God and love of his glory.²⁰ Edwards likens these lower principles to a fire in a house. The principles can be a good servant to the soul in a number of ways, and even allow the soul to flourish, when they are under control. However, much a like a fire, while they are good servants, they are bad masters. Just as when the fire takes grows out of control, it can destroy the house it once served, so do the lower principles, when they take possession of the human heart, lead the soul into ruin. This is essentially what happened with the fall.

The disrupting of the proper, rightly ordered relationship amongst the principles directly affects the relationship among the faculties (for if we recall, the principles inform

²⁰ Edwards, *Works* 3:382. It is important to note that self-love is different from selfishness. For Edwards, self-love is merely the desire to be happy. Self-love is not inherently sinful, so long as the principle of self-love is subordinate to the higher principles. It is also important that human reason is not the higher principle of divine love and holiness. When these principles, which were in Adam and Eve by the Holy Spirit left, they did not lose their reason. Reason belongs to humanity naturally. This is why there is still “human nature” in fallen humanity. This is closely related to Edwards’s distinction of the natural and moral image of God. The natural image, to which reason belongs, was retained after the fall. See footnote 9.

the exercise of the faculties). In the fallen state, the understanding and the will were both directed by, above all, the love of God. The soul's judgment and the soul's desires were united, and all were ordered by a love of God and his glory. In the fallen state, the faculties struggle against one another. To emphasize this loss of unity amongst the faculties brought about by the fall, Edwards frequently employs martial imagery when describing the conflict between the higher and lower principles in a person. "As, when a subject has once renounced his lawful sovereign, and set up a pretender in his stead, a state of enmity and war against his rightful king necessarily ensues."²¹ Edwards uses elsewhere in his writings this same language of inner warfare in the soul. In one sermon, he writes, "Sin is a woeful confusion and dreadful disorder in the soul, whereby everything is put out of place, reason trampled under foot and passion advanced in the room of it, conscience dethroned and the abominable lust reigning."²² The soul of a fallen person is characterized by Edwards as being in a confused and disordered state. There is war between reason and passion, conscience and lusts. The same language is again employed in Edwards's 1723 sermon, *The Pleasantness of Religion*. Here he speaks again of this war raging within each person. When one sins, "he doth it against his reason and conscience; his flesh drives him on against his mind, his understanding consents not but opposes him in it." Edwards continues, "So that he enjoys his pleasures with *war with himself*, his own reason and conscience opposing him."²³ Thus, for Edwards, the fall brought about an inner war in stark contrast to the unity of principles the human soul

²¹ Ibid, 383.

²² Edwards, *Works* 10:576

²³ Edwards, *Works* 14:103. Emphasis added.

possessed before the fall. The more noble powers of reason, conscience, and understanding, are perpetually at odds with the lower passions and appetitive desires.

Edwards is not innovative with this language of inner warfare. Thomas Boston employs strikingly similar language in his discussion on the sinfulness of man's natural state. He opens his treatment by establishing a stark contrast between man in the state of innocence, and the state of man after the fall.

We have seen what man was, as God made him; a lovely and happy creature. Let us view him now as he has *unmade* himself; and we shall see him a sinful and miserable creature. This is the sad state we are brought into by the fall; a state as black and doleful as the former was glorious.²⁴

Boston speaks of man unmaking himself in the fall. Here, Boston is not speaking of unmaking in a physical sense. It is clear from his following discourse that Boston sees the fall, like Edwards, as bringing about an inner war – a spiritual and psychological undoing. In a similar manner to Edwards, Boston speaks of faculty of the will, which “at first was faithful and ruled with God, is now turned traitor.”²⁵ Boston, like Edwards, expresses this conviction that the natural state of fallen humanity is one of a deeply rooted disorder amongst the faculties.

We have seen that the fall caused a break in the union that unfallen humanity had with their creator by the indwelling of the Spirit. We have also discussed the loss of unity within each person, as the lower powers usurped the higher and brought about an inner war amongst the faculties. We now turn to the third fractured union that was brought about at the fall: the loss of a disposition of unity amongst human beings. To help

²⁴ Boston, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*, 59. Emphasis added. Note how for Boston, like Edwards, holiness and happiness are spoken of together, just as sin and misery.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 96.

develop this point, we will engage Edwards's sermon series *Charity and its Fruits* as well as his treatise, *True Virtue*. These two works are the fullest expressions of Edwards's moral theolog, and understanding Edwards's doctrine of love and true virtue will help us understand what was lost at the fall. If we recall from *Original Sin*, self-love belongs to the category of inferior principles. Self-love, along with the love of pleasure, is not an evil inclination, so long as it serves the higher principles. In fact, we shall see, it is this principle of self-love, that, when rightly ordered, allows one to love virtuously.

What we have said, and whereto we now turn, is captured well by Edwards in his opening to the sermon "Charity Contrary to a Selfish Spirit," from *Charity and its Fruits*.²⁶ This passage deserves to be quoted in full.

The ruin which the Fall brought upon the soul of man consists very much in that he lost his nobler and more extensive principles, and fell wholly under the government of self-love. He is debased in his nature and become little and ignoble. Immediately upon the Fall the mind of man shrunk from its primitive greatness and extensiveness into an exceeding diminution and confinedness. As in other respects, so in this, that whereas before his soul was under the government of that noble principle of divine love whereby it was, as it were, enlarged to a kind of comprehension of all his fellow creatures; and not only so, but was not confined within such straight limits as the bounds of creation but was extended to the Creator, and dispersed itself abroad in that infinite ocean of good and was, as it were, swallowed up by it, and become one with it. But as soon as he transgressed, those nobler were immediately lost and all this excellent enlargedness of his soul was gone and he henceforward shrunk into a little point, circumscribed and closely shut up within itself to the exclusion of other. God was forsaken and fellow creatures forsaken, and man retired within himself and become wholly governed by narrow, selfish principles.²⁷

²⁶ *Charity and Its Fruits* was a fifteen-sermon series on I Corinthians 13. It written and preached in Northampton in 1738 and was published in 1752. This work and *True Virtue* will be discussed more in-depth in Chapter 5.

²⁷ Edwards, *Works* 8:252-253.

Here, Edwards uses language remarkably similar to the language in *Original Sin*, which was written roughly twenty years after this sermon was preached. He speaks of the principle of divine love being replaced by the lower principle of self-love, and human transitioning from a state of *extensiveness* to *confinedness*. Under the rule of the higher principle of divine love, the human soul was *extended* to the Creator *and to fellow creatures*; the soul was so enlarged that it *comprehended* God and the other creatures so that had it become *one* with them. We have already spoken of the union that was lost between humanity and God; here Edwards introduces the loss of union with fellow creatures that was also brought about at the fall.

In *True Virtue*, Edwards speaks of true love as a union of heart to others. “I have observed from time to time that in pure love to others...there’s a union of the heart with others; a kind of enlargement of the mind, whereby it so extends itself as to take others into a man’s self: and therefore it implies a disposition to feel, to desire, and to act as though others were one with ourselves.”²⁸ This is precisely the love that Edwards speaks of as having been lost by the fall. True, virtuous love unites the one loved to him or herself so that the one loved is one with the lover. It is from this union of heart to all that Edwards derives the language of *enlargement* and *extension* of the heart to comprehend or unite to others. Before the fall, man’s heart was governed by this principle of divine love so that Adam and Eve were united to God and each to other in love. It is important to note that this love and self-love are not mutually exclusive, so long as the self-love is subservient to the higher, divine love. Edwards defines self-love as “man’s love of his

²⁸ Ibid, 589. This idea of love as a disposition toward union will be treated extensively in the chapter devoted to Edwards’s moral thought. We must, however, note it in this discussion, to help establish the fall as loss of this union.

own happiness.”²⁹ Love of one’s own happiness is not evil, and, Edwards writes, is not contrary to Christianity. “That a man should love his own happiness is necessary to his nature, as a faculty of will is; and it is impossible that it should be destroyed in any other way than by destroying his being.”³⁰ Before the fall, the principle of self-love was ruled by the higher principle of divine love. This meant that one could love his or her own happiness, but in a manner that was not *selfish*, for self-love was properly ordered. If self-love is love of happiness, then a rightly ordered self-love is a love of a happiness that has a proper object. Therefore, if happiness is found in loving God and loving others, then the self-love that loves and seeks this happiness is rightly ordered. After the fall, when self-love overthrew the higher love, one began to find happiness in objects completely confined and limited within his or herself, apart from God and others; thus Edwards describes the fallen soul as confined and circumscribed within itself.

In one discussion on the relationship between true, virtuous love and love of happiness (self-love), Edwards writes that a Christian can love his or her happiness just much as a non-Christian. He continues,

As for instance, when the happiness for which he longs is to enjoy God, and to behold the glory of God, or to enjoy communion with God. Or a man may place his happiness in glorifying God; it may seem the greatest happiness to him that he conceive of to give God glory as he ought to do, and he may long for this happiness...So persons may place their happiness considerably in the good of others, the good of their neighbor, and desiring that happiness, which consists in seeking their good. They love themselves; they love their own happiness. But this is not a confined self-love, because his self-love flows out in such a channel as to take in others with himself.

²⁹ Ibid, 575.

³⁰ Ibid, 254.

Thus, for Edwards, a properly ordered self-love will allow one to *take others in*. This builds on Edwards's notion of love as a union of heart. When one loves another, they unite, or take another into them, so that they are one with them. The one who exercises such love finds their happiness in the other's happiness and desires their good as it were their own. For Edwards, virtuous love and love of happiness go hand and hand, for, Edwards writes, "what can be more properly be called love to any being, or any thing, than to place one's happiness in that thing?"³¹ Before the fall, the human heart, under the reign of the principle of divine love, was extended and enlarged in love so that it loved and found its happiness in others and in God. After the fall, the soul turned inward when the lower principle of self-love took the throne, leaving the human heart to love only the things confined within it and to make these things the object of its happiness. The human heart, instead of extending outward to unite to comprehend others, turned inward, and this union of heart was lost.

By surveying some of Edwards's writings on the fall and its consequences, we have established that the fall brought about a threefold disunion. With the entrance of sin into the human heart, humanity lost its union with God, with others, and within itself. In our earlier discussion, we established the inseparable relationship in Edwards's thought between holiness and happiness, and likewise sin and misery. We have also demonstrated that for Edwards, this happiness and holiness consist in one being united to God, the source of all happiness and holiness. If human holiness and happiness consist in love to, and therefore union with, God, then it is fitting that Edwards would understand the fall, which leads to sin and misery, primarily in terms of disunion.

³¹ Ibid, 258.

Before we continue, it should be briefly noted how Edwards understood the transmission of original sin, for it plays into our union narrative. Edwards's teaching on the transmission of sin to Adam's progeny is one of his most innovative endeavors. The historical Reformed position on the transmission of original sin spoke of Adam as the "federal head" of the human race. This role was assigned to Adam in what is called by the Reformed the "covenant of works." Under the conditions of this covenant, Adam was promised life and blessing, on the condition that the commandment to refrain from eating the fruit was obeyed. The condition of the covenant also contained the threat of death that would come with disobedience. As the federal head of humanity, Adam was considered the legal representative of his progeny. This meant that Adam's progeny would enjoy the blessings of his obedience, or likewise bear the consequences of his disobedience, equally as if they were the ones who obeyed or disobeyed.³² When Adam sinned, therefore, the guilt and punishment of that sin was imputed to all those of whom he was the legal representative. Whereas the Reformed has historically explained the transmission of sin to Adam's progeny in terms of this federal headship, Edwards introduces a new notion – one of a unique *moral union* between Adam and his progeny.³³ Edwards likens the imputation of Adam's sin to his progeny to the transmission of a disease from a root of a tree to its branches.

The first existing of a corrupt disposition in their hearts is not to be looked upon as sin belonging to them, distinct from their participation of Adam's first sin: it is as it were the *extended pollution* of that sin, through the whole tree, by virtue of constituted union of the branches with the root; or the inherence of the sin that the

³² Finn and Kimble, *Readers Guide*, 156.

³³ *Ibid.*, 168. Caldwell writes, "Edwards affirms the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity because, in his view, Adam and the human race share a unique moral union, constituted by God, by which God looks on Adam's transgression and the first rising of the evil inclination in the hearts of every human being *as a single moral event.*"

head of the species in the members, in the consent and concurrence of the hearts of the members with the head in that first act.

Because of the union that Adam has with his progeny, like that of a root with its branches, God sees humanity as morally one. The curse that came through Adam's sin is given to his offspring just as a disease spreads from the root to its branches. It is important to note that this guilt is not ours, however, merely by this union, but ours by our own consent to Adam's sin. The union is, after all, a *moral* one. For Edwards, Adam's progeny consented to his sin. Caldwell summarizes this well. "The descendants are not guilty because God imputed Adam's sin to them irrespective of their will and desires; they are guilty because they actually are complicit in the affair of Adam's transgression".³⁴ This consent to Adam's sin is given at the first rising of a sinful disposition in each human heart. We see then, that even Edwards's doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin is thoroughly union-centered. It is by virtue of this moral union between Adam and his posterity that the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed, for in this moral union, each person consents to Adam's sin.

Before closing this discussion, we should briefly note the corollary I mentioned at the beginning. Edwards's Trinitarian thought provides for us a picture the close relationship between beauty and union. God is supremely beautiful because God is supremely holy, and God's holiness is his eternal love for himself, which, as we have seen, is the Holy Spirit, who unites the Father and the Son. The state of sin is, for Edwards, above all marked as a state of disunion. The beauty of Eden (and the beauty of heaven) consist in its perfect harmony. In both of these states, humans had (or will have)

³⁴ Ibid., 169.

union with God, fellow creatures, and within their own souls (for the will and understanding will be united under the love of God). In contrast, the state of sin, which is miserable, hateful, and called a “dreadful disorder of the soul,” is characterized chiefly in terms of disunity, or anti-communion.³⁵ Not only in the state of sin is there disunion with God, others, and within each soul, but this disunion results in enmity with God and fellow creatures and an inner warfare amongst the higher and lower principles. We thus have our corollary: whereas in Edwards’s thought, that which is beautiful consists in union, that which is particularly hateful consists in disunion.³⁶ This will be treated more fully in final chapter, where we look at the beauty of the world and moral beauty in Edwards’s theology.

In this chapter, we have treated Edwards’s teaching on the fall to establish that for Edwards, the consequences of the fall are appropriately summarized as a threefold disunion. We have also noted Edwards’s innovative teaching on the imputation of original sin by virtue of humanity’s moral union with Adam. At this point in our narrative, we have humanity in miserable ruin. Humanity has lost the union they once had with their Creator, and with fellow human beings. What is more, the human faculties, which once functioned in harmonious union, are now in a state of warfare, adding to human misery by driving them further into sin. Edwards writes that immediately after the fall, God had already begun his gloriously work of redemption. This work was “to

³⁵ Edwards, *Works* 10:576

³⁶ I hesitate to use the word *ugly* for it does not have the same moral weight that *hateful* has. Sin is indeed ugly, but in a moral, not a natural sense. Perhaps the German word for ugly *häßlich*, gets us closer to this. Although *häßlich* is used in the natural sense (something material can be *häßlich*) the root of the word is *hassen*, which is the German word for “hate.” The ugliness is not just non-beauty, it is something positively hateful.

bring all elect creatures in heaven and earth to a union one to another, in one body under one head, and to unite all together in one body to God the Father.”³⁷ The fall, for Edwards, is characterized primarily in terms of disunion, it is therefore fitting that Edwards would understand redemption – the restoration of that which was lost by the fall – as God bringing all things back into union. In the following chapters, we will see how Edwards’s understanding of redemptive history continues along the trajectory of this narrative: God rescuing his chosen people out of sin and misery, and sharing with them his perfect happiness by bringing them into an eternally perfecting union with him. What is more, Edwards’s understanding of the imputation of Adam’s sin by virtue of a moral union anticipates the new union that will be the key doctrine to Edwards’s soteriology – the mystical union of Christ and his people. By the union with Adam, humanity shares his sin and misery, but by their union with Christ, the saints share in God’s holiness and happiness.

³⁷ Edwards, *Works* 9:125.

CHAPTER FOUR

Union with Christ as the Essence of Salvation

“The great end of the covenant of grace is to gather fallen men and unite them to God under Christ as the head of union.”¹

Among the Reformed, the doctrine of union with Christ is consistently upheld as the foundational soteriological doctrine. This emphasis on the believer’s union with Christ as the means by which he or she receives the benefits of salvation has its roots in Calvin’s own writings. On the believers’ union with Christ, Calvin writes:

I confess that we are deprived of this utterly incomparable good [salvation] until Christ is made ours. Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts – in short, that mystical union—are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers of him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are ingrafted into his body – in short, because he deigns to make us one with him.²

Calvin emphasizes that to be a Christian means to be *one with Christ*. Those who are united to Christ have fellowship with him and, by virtue of the union, share in all his benefits. By union with Christ the believer not only partakes in Christ’s salvific gifts (justification and sanctification), but in Christ himself.

¹ McMullen, Michael, ed. *The Blessing of God: Previously Unpublished Sermons of Jonathan Edwards*. First Edition. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2003), 325.

² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), III.XI.10. For other sections dealing with the believer’s mystic union, and the benefits therein, see III.I.1; III.II.24; and III.II.35.

Edwards's Puritan predecessors, namely John Owen and Thomas Boston, upheld Calvin's emphasis on *unio Christi*. In his expositional commentary on Hebrews, Owen remarks, that "[the mystic union] is the cause of all other graces that we are made partakers of; they are all communicated to us by virtue of our union with Christ. Hence is our adoption, our justification, our sanctification, our fruitfulness, our perseverance, our resurrection, our glory."³ Strikingly similar to Owen's own words are the words of Thomas Boston, whom Edwards thought to be a "truly great divine."⁴ In his treatise, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*, Boston identifies the third state, the state of grace, as the mystical union between Christ and believers. After his lengthy discourse on regeneration, Boston presents the following doctrine: "They who are in the state of grace are ingrafted in, and united to, the Lord Jesus Christ. They are taken out of their natural stock, cut off from it; and are now ingrafted into Christ, as the new stock."⁵ The state of grace for the Christian is synonymous with the state of being united to Christ. Boston proceeds:

The chief of the particular benefits which the believers have by it [union with Christ], are justification, peace, adoption, sanctification, growth in grace...as for communion with Christ, it is such a benefit, being the immediate consequence of union with Him, as comprehends all the rest as mediate ones.⁶

³ John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Works of John Owen Volume 21. (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 2009), 149. Also see: J.V. Fesko. "John Owen on Union with Christ and Justification." *Themelios* 37:1 (2012), 12.

⁴ Ferguson, Sinclair B. *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance—Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 67.

⁵ Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, 254.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 285.

. The Reformers and their successors have always stressed that salvation, from beginning to end, is a sovereign work of God's grace. It is by the Spirit uniting the believers to Christ that saving grace is bestowed to God's elect.⁷

Thus far, we have established union to be a recurring, central component to the narrative of Edwards's theology. We have discussed Edwards's Trinitarian thought, highlighting the Holy Spirit as the bond of union between the Father and the Son and the one in whom God's love and beauty, as well as his holiness and happiness are primarily seated. We then examined *The End for Which God Created the World* and used Edwards's argument in this treatise to construct a narrative with which to view his major theological developments. The overarching narrative we identified is that of God bringing his people into an eternally perfecting union with himself – a union which serves the singular end of glorifying God and making his elect supremely happy. In Chapter Three we looked at Edwards's writing on the fall and original sin. These doctrines have a central role in the narrative. Edwards sees the fall as bringing about a threefold disunion among and within humans. All three of the fractured unions come about by the Holy Spirit, the bond of union, withdrawing himself from the human soul. Humanity lost their union with God. Humanity lost the harmonious union of their faculties – the higher, supernatural principle of divine love (the Holy Spirit) left and the lower, natural principles took control. Human beings also lost the union of love they had with other humans – the soul went from being extended towards others in a union of heart to being

⁷ For more contemporary treatments of the Reformed doctrine of union with Christ, see Loius Berkhof. *Systematic Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 47-53.; John Murray. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

confined and ruled by inordinate self-love. This threefold fractured union left humanity in a state of sin and misery.

In his biography of Edwards, George Marsden writes that for Edwards, the very essence of salvation is nothing other than the believer's true "union of the heart with Jesus Christ."⁸ Similarly, the editors of a standard collection of Edwards's sermons note that, "Edwards became the first major Reformed thinker since the Reformation era to place such a high premium on the doctrine of what scholastic (or academic) theologians called in Latin the *unio Christi*."⁹ In this chapter, I will demonstrate the validity of this claim by establishing the centrality of union in Edwards's understanding of grace and salvation. We will continue along our redemption narrative now by turning to the key elements of Edwards's soteriological thought. Specifically, we will focus on Edwards's own understanding of the saint's union with Christ. For Edwards, when the saint is united to Christ at regeneration by the Holy Spirit, all that was lost in the fall begins to be restored. When the Spirit unites the soul to Christ, the soul is brought out of the state of sin and misery and is granted again the capacity for holiness and happiness. In this chapter and the next, we will see how the effects of the fall are reversed through God's redemption. The saints are brought back into fellowship with God; the Holy Spirit – the principle of divine love – becomes a new principle that restores harmony to the soul's faculties; and now that the principle of divine love is again seated in the heart, the soul is freed to extend itself to God and others in a disposition of loving union. Whereas the loss

⁸ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 192. The quote was taken from a 1739 sermon on I Timothy 2:5. See footnote 19, pg. 545.

⁹ Jonathan Edwards, *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader*, ed. Wilson H. Kimnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Douglas A. Sweeney (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), xlv.

of this union with God brought sin and misery, the soul's union with Christ brings holiness and happiness. Edwards, we shall see, follows the Reformed tradition in his insistence that the Spirit's union to the soul of the saint is the foundation of all the salvific benefits bestowed to the saint. For Edwards, union with Christ is not an abstract notion – it is a *real* union. Edwards is consistent and precise in empathizing that *each* grace bestowed to the saint depends on their union with Christ; the Spirit's uniting the believer to Christ is the foundation of regeneration and calling/conversion, faith, justification, and perseverance.¹⁰

The goal of this chapter is to provide a concise overview of Edwards's soteriology – specifically in relation to our narrative of God bringing the object of his love, the elect, into a union of love and happiness. The first item we need to consider, and the topic that will dominate this discussion, is Edwards's teaching on regeneration, as this is the first work of God in bringing his people into union with him. For Edwards, the believer's union with Christ consists in a *mutual union*. God unites to his people at their conversion and the soul unites back to God in faith and is thereby justified. These two unions – regeneration, on God's part, and faith on the part of the believer – will be the focus of this chapter. For the first section, our primary text will be Edwards's posthumously published *Treatise on Grace*.¹¹

¹⁰ Sanctification also belongs to this list, but it will be treated in the next chapter. Edwards does at times speak of regeneration, calling, and conversion synonymously. “The same is manifest by conversion being represented as a new birth or as regeneration.” “By reason of this instantaneousness of the work of conversion, one of the names under which conversion is frequently spoken of in Scripture, is *calling*.” While elsewhere it may appear that Edwards speaks of conversion as the subjective realization of one's regeneration, for our purposes, we will speak of regeneration, calling, and conversion as synonymous. Edwards, *Works* 21:160-161.

¹¹ I will be outlining the majority of the argument from this treatise, however we will not be following the order of the argument that Edwards provides. I restructure the argument in a way that, I believe, flows better logically. This treatise should be read as accompanying Edwards's work in *Original Sin* and

Crucial to Edwards's understanding on regeneration is his teaching on the difference between common and saving grace, or, otherwise stated, the difference between common and saving influences of the Spirit.¹² Edwards's central claim regarding this distinction – also the thesis statement of *Treatise on Grace* – is that common and saving grace does not differ only in degree, but in nature and kind entirely.¹³ To develop this distinction, Edwards relies heavily on the biblical differentiation between the flesh and the spirit. Believers, the *spiritual*, are those who are “born again,” or regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Those who live by the “flesh” are unregenerate: they remain in the state of nature. If we recall from our discussion in the last chapter, the natural state is that which all humanity is born into; it is a state in which the soul is completely deprived of the higher principle of divine love (the Holy Spirit), and is thus ruled by the lower, natural principles of the flesh.¹⁴ Edwards wants to demonstrate that while the Holy Spirit

Freedom of the Will – namely as a work meant to guard against rising Arminian notions. Edwards wants to emphasize the *immediate* work of God's Spirit on the soul of the saint.

¹² This distinction also plays a central role in Edwards's works *Charity and Its Fruits* and *The Religious Affections*. We will draw specifically from the *Affections* in our discussion.

¹³ “And that special or saving grace in this sense is not only different from common grace in degree, but entirely diverse in nature and kind; and that natural man not only have not a sufficient degree of virtue to be saints, but that they have no degree of that grace that is in godly men.” *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁴ We must recall that by “principle” Edwards means a spring of action. Unless we remember this, it will seem problematic when Edwards refers to the Holy Spirit as the “principle of divine love” (for this language is challenging in regards the personhood of the Spirit). Consider a passage from *Charity* where Edwards explains this notion of “principle.” “What is grace but a principle of holiness? or a holy principle in the heart? But the word “principle” is relative; it relates to something of which it is a principle. If grace be a principle, of what is it a principle but of action? Principles and acts are correlates which necessarily have respect one to the other. Thus the meaning of a principle of life is a principle of life which acts. So when we speak of a principle of understanding we mean a principle whence flow acts of understanding. So by a principle of sin is meant a principle whence flow acts of sin. A principle of hatred is a principle whence flow acts of hatred. And a principle of love is a principle whence flow acts of love. So when we say a principle of grace we mean a principle whence flow gracious actions. A principle of grace has as much a relation to practice as a root has to the plant. If there be a root, it is a root of something, either a root of some plant which grows from it, or which tends to bring forth some plant. It is absurd to say of a root that it is a root of nothing.” Edwards, *Works* 8:298.

influences humans in the natural state, the natural person has none of that principle which those who are in the state of grace have. We will now consider Edwards's argumentation for what has just been said. We will also discuss the exact nature of this work of regeneration i.e. that work of the Spirit that is distinct in believers – that which distinguishes common from saving grace.

We must first consider Edwards's comments on the manner in which scripture distinguishes saints from sinners as those who are born and live by the spirit, and those who are born and live by the flesh. Those that live by the flesh, scripture also denotes as "the natural man."

This is evident by what Christ says in John 3:6, where Christ, speaking of regeneration, says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Now, whatever Christ intends by the terms "flesh" and "Spirit" is in the words, yet this much is manifested and undeniable, that Christ here intends to show Nicodemus the necessity of a new birth, or another birth than his natural birth; and that, from this argument, that a man that has been the subject only of the first birth, has nothing in his heart which he must have in order to enter the kingdom. He has nothing of what Christ calls spirit."¹⁵

From this passage, Edwards argues that Christ intends to classify flesh and spirit as two things entirely different in nature – one cannot arise from the other. "A man cannot have anything of a nature that is superior to flesh that is not born again, and therefore we must be 'born again.'"¹⁶

Edwards builds on this distinction by asserting that certain moral principles are implied in *flesh* and *spirit* and that these moral principles are likewise entirely different and opposite one another. Scripture identifies the works of the flesh as adultery, fornication,

¹⁵ Ibid, 154.

¹⁶ Ibid.

uncleanness, hatred, etc., while the fruit of the Spirit is joy, love, peace, etc. Edwards also quotes from Galatians 6, “for he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” And likewise, Romans 8:6-9 reads, “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity with God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be.” These passages cited further advance Christ’s teaching on the necessity of the new birth. Those who are natural, or of the flesh, that is those who have only experienced the first birth, “have no degree of that of that moral principle or quality that those that are new born have whereby they have a title to the kingdom of heaven.”¹⁷

Aside from the moral principles that distinguish the spiritual from the natural, Edwards also notes certain benefits that scripture identifies to further distinguish the spiritual from the natural. Edwards discusses these graces not only to further establish the distinction between the natural and spiritual, but to further support the doctrine that common and saving grace do not differ by mere degree. The regenerate, those in whom the Spirit dwells, receive certain benefits that belong to them alone; the unregenerate do not lack these only by degree, but lack them entirely. These benefits that belong to the *spiritual* are theirs solely by virtue of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling.

One of these graces that Edwards identifies is the special “sense of the things of religion.”¹⁸ The natural person has “no degree of that relish and sense of spiritual things or things of the Spirit.” Edwards draws from I Corinthians 2:14.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid, 156.

‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ A ‘natural man’ is here set in opposition to a ‘spiritual’ one, or one that has the Spirit, as appears by the foregoing and following verses... Therefore by natural men are meant those that have not the Spirit of Christ and are none of his, and are the subjects of no other than the natural birth. But here we are taught that a natural man is perfectly destitute of any sense, perception, or discerning of those things of the Spirit, by the words, he neither does nor ‘can know them,’ or ‘discern’ them. So far from this, they are ‘foolishness unto him’: he is a perfect stranger, so that he does not know what the talk of such things means; they are words without meaning to him; he knows nothing of the matter any more than a blind man of colors.¹⁹

A second grace that Edwards’s discusses as belonging to believers alone, solely by virtue of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, is communion or fellowship with Christ. Only believers have communion with God because only believers have the Holy Spirit, the bond of union, dwelling within them. “Yea, a believer’s communion with the Father and the Son does mainly consist in his partaking of the Holy Spirit as appears by II Cor. 13:14, ‘The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the *communion* of the Holy Ghost.’”²⁰ Edwards continues,

But that unbelievers have no fellowship or communion with Christ appears, (1) because they are not united to Christ. They are not in Christ. For the Scripture is very and evident in this, that those who are in Christ are actually in a state of salvation, and are justified, sanctified, accepted of Christ, and shall be saved... But those that are not in Christ and are not united to him, can have no degree of communion with him; for there is no communion without union. The members can have no communion with the head or participation of its life and health unless they are united to it. The branch must be united with the vine, otherwise there can be no

¹⁹ Ibid. The primary “sense” that Edwards is referring to is the sense of the beauty of Christ. This will be discussed at length, however, in the next chapter. For our purpose here, we want to be clear that only those who have the Holy Spirit are able to understand the things of religion: the beauty of Christ and holiness, the hideousness of sin, etc.

²⁰ Ibid, 158. Edwards argues that Scripture does not speak of fellowship with the Holy Spirit in the way it does about with the Father and Son, because the Holy Spirit is through whom believers have fellowship with the Father and Son. “Hence our communion with God the Father and God the Son consists in our partaking of the Holy Ghost, which is their Spirit: for to have communion of fellowship with another, is to partake with them of their good in their fullness, in union and society with them.” Ibid, 188. For more on this, see Chapter 1, note 47.

communication from the vine to it, nor any partaking of any degree of it sap, or life, or influence.”²¹

If we recall from our discussion on Edwards’s Trinitarian thought, the Holy Spirit is the bond of loving union between the Father and Son. It is by partaking of this bond of union that the believers have union and *therefore* communion and fellowship with God. This benefit belongs to the saints alone; those in the natural state have no degree of this fellowship because they do know the indwelling of the Spirit.

One final benefit that ought to be noted is that only saints are said to be “partakers of the divine nature.”

Those that are not true saints, and in a state of salvation, not only have not so much of that holy nature and divine principle that is in the hearts of the saints; but they do not partake of it, because a being “partakers of the divine nature” is spoken of as the particular privilege of true saints (II Pet. 1:4)... The “divine nature” and “lust” are evidentially spoken of as two opposite principles in the man. Those that are in the world, and that are men of the world, have only the latter principle; but to be partakers of the divine nature is spoken of as peculiar to them that are distinguished and separated from the world, by the free and sovereign grace of God giving them all things that pertain to life and godliness, giving the knowledge of him and calling them to glory and virtue, and giving them the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, and that they have escaped the corruption of the world of wicked man. And being partakers of the divine nature is spoken of, not only as peculiar to the saints, but as one of the highest privileges of the saints.²²

This particular privilege of being partakers of the divine nature is central to understanding the difference between saving and common grace. Before we treat this however, we need to make a brief note about “free and sovereign” nature of grace mentioned above. Recall that the thesis Edwards wants to advance is that saving grace is wholly different in nature and kind from common grace. When the Holy Spirit regenerates someone, the Spirit becomes a new principle that was beforehand altogether absent. When

²¹ Ibid. 158.

²² Ibid, 155-156.

a soul is transferred from the state of nature to the state of grace through regeneration, it is not the case that the natural faculties are merely improved, but rather that the new principle (the Holy Spirit) is freely and sovereignly imparted to the soul. There are three key images that Edwards utilizes to argue for God's immediate work in the soul of the saint. Firstly, the work of conversion in scripture is represented as a work of creation. "When God creates, he does not merely establish and perfect the things which were made before, but makes wholly and immediately something new, either of out nothing, or out of that which was perfectly void of any such nature, as when he made man of the dust of the earth."²³ Regeneration is represented as a new creation because that new principle which the regenerate soul now possesses, was prior to regeneration totally absent.

Conversion is also represented in the scriptures as a new birth. With natural generation, there is not a mere perfection of what had already been, but a begetting of something altogether new. Similarly, when a soul is regenerated, the new, spiritual principle in the them is not a mere perfection of the old, natural principle. It is not a matter of a higher degree – it is something of a new nature.²⁴

The third image from scripture that further confirms this, for Edwards, is that of conversion being compared to resurrection.

Natural men (as was said before) are said to be dead, and to be raised, when they are converted by God's mighty effectual power, from the dead. Now there is no medium between being dead and alive; he that is dead has no degree of life in him, he that has the least degree of life in him is alive. When a man is raised from the dead, life is not something in a greater degree in him than it was before, but it is all new.

²³ Ibid, 159.

²⁴ Ibid, 160

The essential difference between the natural and spiritual person is that the spiritual has the Holy Spirit. Through the indwelling of the Spirit the saint receives certain benefits. The saint has the sense of divine things and fellowship with God; the saint is in a state of salvation and is a partaker of the divine nature (and therefore a partaker of God's holiness and happiness).²⁵ The fact that the transfer of the soul from the former state to this present state is compared to a resurrection, further testifies that the natural person has no share in these benefits. Just as the dead person has no life, the natural person has no fellowship with God, no sense of divine things, and does not share in God's holiness and happiness, because the Holy Spirit does not dwell in the natural person.

Now that we have considerable background on the topic of regeneration, we turn to the primary question of what *specifically* distinguishes the common from the saving work of the Spirit. Edwards holds that the Holy Spirit influences both sinners and saints in a common sense, and works in the saints alone in the special, saving sense. We know that common and saving grace do not differ in merely in degree but in nature completely. The question is wherein lies the *core* difference between these common and saving influences; what happens in the saint by which the Holy Spirit becomes a new principle in a way that does not occur for the unbelievers? For Edwards, the primary difference consists in this: in instances of common grace, the Spirit merely influences or assists one's natural faculties, while in the work of regeneration, the Holy Spirit communicates his own nature as the principle of divine love by *uniting to the very faculties of the soul*.²⁶

²⁵ "Nevertheless the fullness of God consists in the holiness and happiness of the Deity. Hence persons, by being made partakers of the Holy Spirit, or having it dwelling in them are said to be "partakers of the fullness of God." Ibid, 187.

²⁶ "For by this it appears that the divine principle in the saints is of the nature of the Spirit: for as the nature of the Spirit of God is divine love, so divine love is the nature and essence of that holy principle in the hearts of the saints." Ibid, 191.

On the Spirit's assistance of natural principles, Edwards writes, "men's natural faculties may be assisted by the operation of the Spirit of God on their minds, to enable them to exert those acts which, to a greater or lesser degree, they exert naturally."²⁷

Earlier in the treatise, Edwards provides some instances of this assistance: The Spirit can convict the natural person of sin and even give the natural person "common illuminations and common affection."²⁸ When Edwards treats this same topic in *Religious Affections*, he advances, in greater detail, a similar claim to that in *Treatise on Grace*.

The Spirit of God, in all his operations upon the minds of natural men, only moves, impresses, assists, improves, or in some way acts upon natural principles; but gives no new spiritual principle. Thus when the Spirit of God gives a natural man visions, as he did Balam, he only impresses a natural principle, viz. the sense of seeing, immediately exciting ideas of that sense; but gives no new sense; neither is there anything supernatural, spiritual or divine in it. So if the Spirit of God impresses on a man's imagination, either in a dream or when he is awake, any outward ideas of the senses, either voices, or shapes and colors, 'tis only exciting ideas of the same kind that he has by natural principles and senses.

Similarly, in this discussion, Edwards discusses how conscience naturally gives one an apprehension of right and wrong. "The Spirit of God," however, "assists men's consciences to do this in a greater degree, helps conscience against the stupefying influence of worldly objects and their lusts."²⁹ In each of these instances of common influences of the Spirit, the Spirit assists or acts on the person's natural principles, there is no new, divine principle infused, as is the case with the special, saving influence.

²⁷ Ibid, 192.

²⁸ Ibid, 179.

²⁹ Edwards, *Works* 2:206-207.

When the Spirit works in a saving manner, it does not merely assist natural faculties, but communicates its own nature, by infusing itself, the principle of divine love, into the soul. On this Edwards writes,

True saving grace is no other than the very love of God; that is, God, in one of the persons of the Trinity, uniting himself to the soul of a creature as a vital principle, dwelling there and exerting himself by the faculties of the soul of man, in his own proper nature, after the manner of a principle of nature. . . . That holy and divine love dwells in their hearts, *and is so united to human faculties* that 'tis become a principle of new nature. That love, which is the very native temper and spirit of God, so dwells in their souls that it exerts itself in its own nature in the exercise of those faculties, after the manner of a natural or vital principle in them.³⁰

Recalling from earlier discussions, the Holy Spirit is understood by Edwards to be God's love – specifically the perfect, eternal union of love between the Father and Son. We have also seen that Edwards regards God's holiness as primarily consisting in his perfect love within himself and that the divine nature primarily consists in God's holiness. For this reason, the Holy Spirit, the love God, is also the holiness and happiness of God, for God's holiness is his love for himself, and his happiness consists in his holiness. The Holy Spirit is, therefore, rightly called the principle of divine love. It was this holy principle of divine love – God's Spirit – that forsook the human soul at the fall. The Spirit forsaking the soul left humanity in a state of sin and misery, for the soul was destitute of the Holy Spirit, that principle which makes one partake in God's holiness and happiness. At the new birth, or regeneration, we see the Spirit come to dwell in the saint, by uniting to the saint's soul, or, more specifically for Edwards, the very faculties of the soul. This work is totally diverse in kind from the common influences of the Spirit, for here the natural faculties are not merely moved by the Spirit, but the Spirit *communicates* its own nature to the soul, by uniting to the faculties as a new, vital principle.

³⁰ Edwards, *Works* 21:194-195. Emphasis added.

In our discussion on *End of Creation*, we saw that that good which excited God to create the world was the communication of his fullness (his knowledge, holiness, and happiness). We also discussed that God communicates this fullness to his elect by bringing them into union with him and that this union will become stricter into eternity as more fullness is eternally communicated.³¹ We established this to be the metanarrative of Edwards's theology; we then treated the fall as a critical event in this narrative. Now with Edwards's teaching on regeneration, we see the first step toward this eternally perfecting union: the Spirit becomes the new vital principle of divine love by uniting to the faculties of the soul.

This language of the Spirit uniting to the faculties of the soul is, as far as I know, a uniquely Edwardsian emphasis.³² This insistence that Edwards places on the Spirit's uniting to the human faculties stems, I maintain, from Edwards's deep convictions regarding human depravity. If a human being in the state of nature is deeply depraved, to the very core, if their very faculties - the source of all thoughts and desires - are horribly corrupt, it is fitting that restoration of the whole person must begin with the restoration of these faculties. For Edwards, this means the Holy Spirit, God's love and holiness, must

³¹ To refresh, consider this passage we looked at earlier. "What is communicated is divine, or something of God: and each communication is of that nature, that the creature to whom it is made, is thereby conformed to God, and united to him; and that in proportion as the communication is greater or less...And 'tis' farther to be considered that the thing which God aimed at in the creation of the world, as the end which he had ultimately in view, was that communication of himself, which he intended throughout all eternity...And 'tis to be considered that the more those divine communications increase in the creature, the more it comes ones with God: for so much the more is it united to God in love, the heart is drawn nearer and nearer to God, and the union with him becomes more firm and close." Edwards, *Works* 8: 442.

³² I say this because I have not found this specific language of the Spirit uniting to the faculties of the soul in Calvin, Turretin, the Westminster Standards, Boston, or Owen. That is not to say that Edwards is the only one to use such a phrase. However, it is perhaps safe to say that the emphasis that Edwards places on regeneration consisting in the Spirit's uniting to the faculties of the soul, as opposed to the soul or heart in general, is a uniquely Edwardsian emphasis. It should also be noted that in many scholarly discussions of this topic, Edwards's language of union to faculties is noticeably undertreated.

itself unite to these fallen faculties and function as a new principle that influences and moves them. “Christ’s love, that is, his Spirit, is actually united to the faculties of their souls. So that it properly lives, *acts and exerts its nature in the exercise of their faculties.*”³³ Whereas in the natural state, the faculties, in their corruption, only produced sin, the new principle produces from them virtue and holiness. We see this notion too in a 1740 sermon, *True Conversion*. “Those appetites of the body that before governed and bore rule are now restored and kept under. They are new and bright and subject to the Spirit and to the love of love of God.”³⁴

It should be noted that this emphasis of the Spirit uniting to the faculties of the soul does not only appear in the *Treatise on Grace*. In Part III of the *Religious Affections*, where Edwards treats in a similar manner the difference between common and saving grace, he writes,

The Spirit of God is given to the true saints to dwell in them, as his proper lasting abode; and to influence their hearts, as a principle of new nature, or as a divine supernatural spring of life and action. The Scriptures represent the Holy Spirit, not only as moving, and occasionally influencing the saints, but as dwelling in them as his temple, his proper abode, and everlasting dwelling place. And he is represented as *being there so united to the faculties of the soul*, that he becomes there a new principle or spring of new nature and life.³⁵

Similarly, later in the treatise, Edwards advances that all gracious affectious in believers have their root in this principle.

The reason of it appears from this, that gracious affections do arise from those operations and influences which are spiritual, and that in the inward principle from whence they flow, is something divine, a communication of God, a participation of the divine nature, Christ living in the heart, the Holy Spirit dwelling there, in union

³³ Edwards, *Works* 21:195.

³⁴ Michael McMullen, ed., *The Blessing of God: Previously Unpublished Sermons of Jonathan Edwards* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2003).304.

³⁵ Edwards, *Works* 2:200. Emphasis added.

with the faculties of the soul, as an eternal vital principle, exerting his own proper nature, in the exercise of those faculties.³⁶

As to what these affections are and what it means, for Edwards, to participate in the divine nature, will be treated in the next chapter.

We now have a sufficient view of regeneration, where God, by his Holy Spirit, unites to the souls of his elect and brings them out of the state of nature and into the state of grace, that is union with Christ. Edwards ends his *Treatise on Grace* with the exclamation,

And herein lies the mystery of the vital union that is between Christ and the soul of a believer, which orthodox divines speak of much of: Christ's love, that is, his Spirit, is actually united to the faculties of their souls. So it properly lives, acts, and exerts its nature in the exercise of their faculties. By this love being in them, he is in them (John 17:26); and so it is said, I Cor. 6:17, "But he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit."³⁷

We see here that, for Edwards, the believers' union with Christ that the theologians in Edwards's tradition speak so much of, consists in Christ's Spirit being united to the faculties of his saints. Regeneration, or calling and conversion, is that moment in which the Spirit unites to their faculties and brings them into fellowship with Father and the Son. Before we move on to the next chapter, where we will look at Edwards on the Christian life i.e. what happens in the life of the saint, who now has the new principle of divine love united to his or her faculties, we must briefly touch on the other salvific benefits that belong to the believers by virtue of this union. We will look specifically at Edwards's definition of faith as the believer uniting to Christ; we will also consider the legal nature of justification as the saint shares in Christ's merit through their union;

³⁶ Ibid, 392.

³⁷ Edwards, *Works* 21:195.

thirdly we will discuss the perseverance of the saints through, and because of their union with Christ.

For our discussion on faith and justification, there is no more fitting text to turn to than Edwards's 1734 sermon, *Justification by Faith Alone*. Before we discuss this, however, we need to first introduce Edwards's notion of the *new sense of divine excellency* that is given to the saints at their regeneration, as this is a key prerequisite for saving faith.³⁸ Up until this point, we have focused on regeneration as the *physical infusion* of the Holy Spirit into the soul – the uniting of the Spirit to the soul's faculties.³⁹ We have seen how, for Edwards, this means that the saint is now united to Christ, by his Spirit, and that his Spirit now acts as a new, holy principle of divine love that exerts its own nature in the exercise of the faculties. We have not yet, however, seen what this looks like relative to the saint – what effects this new principle has on their faculties – how these faculties function differently under this new principle.

The immediate effect, for Edwards, of regeneration, or conversion, is that the saint receives a *new sense*.⁴⁰ Of this new sense, Edwards writes in *Treatise on Grace*,

The first effect that is produced in the soul, whereby it is carried above what it has or can have by nature, is to cause it to relish or taste the sweetness of the divine relation. That is the first and most fundamental thing in divine love, and that from which everything else that belongs to divine love, naturally and necessarily proceeds. When the soul is brought to relish the excellency of the divine nature, then it will naturally...incline to God in every way. It will incline to be with him and to enjoy him. It will have benevolence to God: it will be glad that he is happy; it will incline that he should be glorified, and that his will should be done in all

³⁸ The *new sense* will be treated more extensively in the following chapter.

³⁹ It is important to note that for Edwards, the infusing of the Spirit in to the saint is physical, not in the sense that it is *material*, but rather in the sense that it transforms one nature. See McClymond and McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 361-362.

⁴⁰ We encountered this notion indirectly when we spoke of the natural person having no sense of the things of religion (for they must be “spiritually discerned”).

things. So that the first effect of the power of God in the heart in regeneration, is to give the heart a *divine taste or sense*, to cause it to have a relish of the loveliness and sweetness of the supreme excellency of the divine nature; and indeed this is all the immediate effect of the divine power that there is, this is all the Spirit of God needs to do, in order to a production of all good effects in the soul.⁴¹

Edwards speaks of the new sense as the first effect in the heart of the saint, after their regeneration i.e. after the Spirit has been united to the faculties of the soul and now exerts itself as a new principle. Now that the soul has the principle of divine love restored, the saint is “carried above what it has or can have by nature” and is now able to relish the beauty and excellency of the divine nature. This new sense of God’s excellency causes the soul to “incline to God in every way.”

It will do us well to consider one additional description of the new sense, this time from the *Religious Affections*. Edwards writes that when the beauty of divine things (namely, God’s moral beauty, or his holiness) is discovered in the soul, it opens a “new world to its view.” If for Edwards, all beauty has its source in God’s moral perfections, only when the soul has a true sense of God’s moral perfections can all other beauty truly be recognized.⁴² Edwards continues,

By this sense of the moral beauty of divine things, is understood the sufficiency of Christ as a mediator: for ‘tis only by the discovery of the beauty of the moral perfection of Christ, that the believer is let into the knowledge of the excellency of his person...and ‘tis only by the knowledge of the excellency of Christ’s person that any know his sufficiency as a mediator, for the later depends upon, and arises from the former. ‘Tis by seeing the excellency of Christ’s person, that the saints are made sensible of the preciousness of his blood, and its sufficiency to atone for sin...by this sight of the moral beauty of divine things, is seen the

⁴¹ Edwards, *Works* 21:173-174.

⁴² “the beauty of all arises from God’s moral perfection.” And later, “He that sees the beauty of holiness, or true moral good, sees the greatest and most important thing in the world, which is the fullness of all things, without which the world is empty, no better than nothing, yea, worse than nothing. *Unless this is seen, nothing is seen, that is worth seeing: for there is no other true excellency or beauty.*” Edwards, *Works* 2:273, 274. Emphasis added.

beauty of the way of salvation by Christ, for that consists in the beauty of the moral perfections of God, which wonderfully shines forth in every step of this method of salvation, from beginning to end.⁴³

From these two excerpts, we establish that when the souls of the saints receive the new sense of divine beauty, they will naturally incline themselves to God, seeing God as the object of their love and the source of all their happiness. Edwards also notes at this place in his discussions that by this new sense one also sees the true evil of sin, “for he who sees the beauty of holiness, must necessarily see the hatefulnes of sin, its contrary.”⁴⁴ Therefore, those with this new sense not only see the hatefulnes of their sin, but simultaneously they see the beauty of Christ – how he, because of his moral excellency, is a worthy mediator and that he, through the preciousness of his blood, is able to atone for their sins. It with this consideration that we now turn to Edwards’s teaching on faith and justification.

In 1734, Edwards gave a two-part lecture to his congregation titled *Justification by Faith Alone*. This address was published four years later in Boston, along with four other works, compiled together as *Five Discourses on Important Subjects Nearly Concerning the Great Affair of the Soul’s Eternal Salvation*. *Justification* was the first of these discourses. In the preface to this work, Edwards remarks that the original address was given “in the time of the late wonderful work of God’s power and grace in this place.” This, of course, refers to the Great Awakening. Edwards believed that the work of God witnessed at this time was, in fact, a testimony of God’s approbation of Edwards’s address on this doctrine. Although Edwards received reproach from some for this

⁴³ Ibid 273-274.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 274.

address, he nevertheless stated that “the following discourse of justification...seemed to be remarkably blessed, not only to establish the judgments of many in this truth, but to engage their hearts in a more earnest pursuit of justification.”⁴⁵

Edwards begins the discourse by establishing a definition of justification that he believes to be consistent with what is meant in scripture. “A person is said to be *justified*, when he is approved by God as free from the guilt of sin and its deserved punishment, and as having that righteousness belonging to him that entitles the reward of life.”⁴⁶

Edwards here points out the negative and positive component of justification. The soul is pardoned by the judge based on both a negative and a positive righteousness belonging to them. In the negative sense, the soul is freed from any obligation of punishment, for their guilt is removed. In the positive sense, the soul is declared righteous and therefore has a title to positive reward.

Edwards introduces a difficulty with the notion that faith is a *condition of* justification. Justification *by* faith alone is the biblical language and therefore Edwards is “forced” to use it. He does, however, recognize a bit of ambiguity. For Edwards, there is not much explained by the statement that “faith is the condition of justification.” In one sense, he writes, “Christ alone performs the condition of our justification and salvation.” And yet, in another sense, faith is the condition of our justification. What is more, in a third sense, “other qualifications and acts are conditions of salvation and justification too.” In regard to these other qualifications, Edwards has in mind certain things that “accompany and flow from faith, with which justification shall be, and without which it

⁴⁵ Edwards, Jonathan. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, 2 Volumes*. Edited by Patrick H. Alexander. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishing, 1998), Volume I, 620.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 623.

will not be.” Such “qualifications” found in scripture are love to God, love to the saints, and forgiving others of their trespasses.⁴⁷ Given this ambiguity, there is more that must be said. Saying faith is the condition of justification does not, for Edwards, express well what is meant in scripture when we read that one is justified by faith.

Edwards asserts that there is a difference between being justified by a thing (the thing being a certain condition) and that thing “universally, necessarily, and inseparably attending justification.” The reason for this is that there are many things that do inseparably attend justification and yet are not given the same signification (the condition for justification) in scripture as faith. For example, we are not told in scripture that one is justified *by* loving God. It is not, therefore, an inseparable connection that faith has to justification that gives it such a signification in scripture (for many other things, as we have seen, have such a connection). It is rather “some particular influence that faith has in the affair, or some certain dependence [which] that effect has on its influence.” The next move is, therefore, to determine this particular dependence that justification has on faith. This will help one understand what is meant by “justification by faith.”⁴⁸

According to Edwards, what is most obviously intended by this expression, “justified by faith,” is that *if* there is a mediator who has purchased justification, “faith in this mediator is that which renders it a meet and suitable thing, in the sight of God, that the believer, rather than others, should have this purchased benefit assigned to him.” Since, in his death, Christ has actually purchased justification for infinitely unworthy creatures, there must be a certain qualification, or relation to the mediator, whereby some

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 624.

have an interest in his purchase. It is likewise the lack of this relation to the mediator that leaves others destitute of said interest. Circling back to his original definition, Edwards continues that if to be justified is to be approved by God, and scripture says that one is justified by faith, then this can only mean that by faith one is rendered approvable by God. We know that some are justified by Christ, and those who are justified, are done so by some relation to him. We also know that it is by faith that one is rendered approvable by God. It follows then that it is by faith that one has such a relation to Christ, the mediator. We have then before us that dependence that was spoken of earlier. The dependence that justification has on faith lies therein, that it is through faith that we have the justifying relation to the mediator.

For Edwards, this relation to the mediator that comes through faith is a relation of union.

When it is said that we are not justified by any righteousness or goodness of our *own*, what is meant is, that it is not out of respect to the excellency or goodness of any qualifications or acts in us whatsoever, that God judges it meet that this benefit of Christ should be ours...but purely from the relation faith has to the person in whom this benefit is to be had, or as it unites to that mediator, in whom and by whom we are justified.⁴⁹

Edwards defends that this relation is a relation of union with the following three propositions. In the first place, scripture frequently denotes true Christians as those who are *in Christ*. There appears here, therefore, to be some sort of union that believers have with Christ. This is represented in scripture by certain metaphors: members to a head, branches to a stock, and the marriage of bride and groom.

Secondly, this union to Christ, whereby Christians are said to be *in Christ*, is the basis for their right to his benefits. The scriptural representations are again helpful to

⁴⁹ Ibid.

defend this claim. It is by virtue of the union between the body and the head that the body partakes in the life of the head; it is by virtue of the union between the stock and the branches that the branches partake in the sap and life of the stock; it is by virtue of the union between the husband and wife that the wife has joint interest in his estate. Likewise, it is by the union that the saints have with Christ that they are regarded as partakers of his benefits.⁵⁰ Here Edwards emphasizes the legal aspect of justification. Because of their union, the saint and Christ are, much like the husband and bride, *legally* one – they are regarded as one before the judge and the benefits of one belong wholly to the other.

Thirdly, faith is that qualification in which one is rendered acceptable to partake in Christ's benefits because faith *is* that act by which, on the part of the believer, he or she unites to Christ. Edwards leaves room for mystery with this understanding of faith.

I don't now pretend to define justifying faith, or to determine precisely how much is contained in it, but only to determine thus much concerning it, viz. that it is that by which the soul, that before was separate, and alienated from Christ, unites itself to him, or ceases to be any longer in that state of alienation, and comes into that aforementioned union or relation to him, or to use the Scripture phrase, that 'tis that by which the soul comes to Christ, and receives him: and this is evident by the Scriptures using these very expressions to signify faith. ⁵¹

Edwards wants to be clear that union with, or interest in Christ is not a reward for faith, but rather that “faith is the soul’s active uniting with Christ, or is itself the very act of union, *on their part.*” Edwards maintains that God sees fit that, since this union is between two active, intelligent agents, “there should be a mutual act of both, each should

⁵⁰ Ibid, 625.

⁵¹ Ibid, 625-626.

receive the other, as actively joining themselves to the other.”⁵² God requires this because God treats human beings as reasonable creatures, capable of acts and choice. As reasonable creatures with wills, it is fit “that they only who are one with Christ by their own act, should be looked upon as one in law.”⁵³

Edwards here, in his discussion on faith and justification, speaks of a *mutual union*. We saw earlier that when Christ’s Spirit regenerates a soul, this occurs by the Spirit uniting itself to the soul, or specifically for Edwards, the soul’s faculties. At the soul’s conversion, the soul is given a new sense, and can now see the beauty of God, which beforehand it was completely blind to. This, as we saw above, causes the soul to willfully incline to Christ, having recognized the hatefulfulness of sin and the beauty of salvation offered in Christ. It is precisely this inclining to God that Edwards spoke about in the *Religious Affections*, which he here identifies as justifying faith: the soul’s uniting back to Christ.

Circling back to the *Treatise on Grace*, we know now why Edwards writes that the mystery of the saints’ vital union with Christ lies therein, that the Holy Spirit is united to the faculties of their souls. This union that comes through regeneration is the foundation for the *mutual union* wherein salvation consists. The union of the Holy Spirit to the soul naturally disposes the soul to faith. In the act of faith, the soul unites back to Christ and is justified, now being *legally* regarded as one with Christ and therefore a partaker of his benefits. Edwards writes in *Justification by Faith* that what is *real* in the

⁵² Ibid. 626. It should be noted that the definition of faith as the soul uniting to Christ is found elsewhere in Edwards’s writings.

⁵³ Ibid. It is for this reason that Edwards speaks in terms of *efficacious grace*, not *irresistible grace*, as is sometimes used in Calvinist circles. God is not forcing the soul into fellowship with him. Rather the soul *chooses* to unite to Christ, but only after it has been given the new sense sees God’s beauty. See McClymond and McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 362-363.

union between Christ and the saints is the foundation of what is *legal*.⁵⁴ There is a real union between Christ and Christians, by the indwelling of God's Spirit and because of this real union there is a legal union; the two are legally regarded as one before the Judge.

In this chapter, we have focused on Edwards's notion of the mutual union between Christ and his saints whereby they are saved. Edwards, in a similar fashion to Calvin, Owen, and Boston (all of whom we heard from at the opening of this chapter), teaches that every benefit that believers have, they have by this union. "Those that are in Christ are actually in a state of salvation, and are justified, sanctified, and shall be saved."

⁵⁵ Edwards believes that all benefits that Christ has (aside, of course, from any incommunicable attributes) are rightly shared by those with whom he is united. One additional important salvific benefit that ought to be noted, that belongs to the saints by virtue of this union, is their perseverance in grace. In an undated sermon titled *Jesus Christ is the Great Mediator and Head of Union*, a sermon fully devoted to the doctrine of union with Christ, Edwards writes that it is also by this union that believers can be assured of their perseverance.

Hence we may see the certain truth of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. For if Christ be the head of union between us and God, it is a sure evidence that this union is everlasting, for he is one who can't fall as our first head [Adam] did. If the head lives and remains united to God, so shall the members. John 14:19 says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." The spiritual life of the saints never can cease, because Christ is the head and fountain of this life, who liveth, and is "alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:13).⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid, 626

⁵⁵ Edwards, *Works* 21:158.

⁵⁶ Edwards, *The Blessing of God*, 324-325.

We have thus a concise overview of Edwards's understanding of the saints' union with Christ. The whole work of salvation, from beginning to end, is accomplished and kept secure by this union. The Spirit of God regenerates the souls by uniting to their faculties and converting them from the state of sin and misery to the state of grace. Through this union (the union on God's part) the souls are given a new sense by which they incline, or unite, back to God *on their part* in faith and are justified. In this union – in this being *in Christ* – the souls have all of Christ's benefits. His atoning work on the cross and his own righteousness are counted as theirs, giving them a title to eternal life. What is more, by this union they are kept secure for eternity, for they are now one with him who cannot die. In the following chapter, we will we look at Edwards's understanding of Christian life. What does the life of a saint look like? Or, more specifically, what does the life of one who has the Spirit of God united to their faculties look like? This next chapter will still operate within the framework of our union, narrative but we will now focus more on how Edwards's aesthetic thought is thoroughly union-centered.

CHAPTER FIVE

Edwards on the Life of the Saint: Beholding Beauty and Becoming Beautiful

The goal of this chapter is to provide an Edwardsian outlook on the Christian life – specifically the life of a soul in the state of union with Christ i.e. a soul whose faculties are united to the Holy Spirit. Thus far, we have organized Edwards’s thought into the narrative which we derived from *End of Creation*. This is the narrative of God communicating his fullness to a people by bringing them into an every-perfecting union with him and thus making them supremely happy. We saw that for Edwards, every event in creation and providence is purposed by God for this end. We said at the beginning of this project that we had two primary goals: to put Edwards’s theology into a narrative of union and to consider his aesthetic thought in light of his union-centrality. In this chapter, these two goals meet. The Christian life belongs in this narrative because the saints are those united to Christ in this life and await the consummation of this union in the life to come. In consideration with this narrative we will also see in this chapter that the life of the saint is a life of participating in the life of God, which consists in love (union) to God and others. The aesthetic component consists therein that for Edwards, natural beauty and moral beauty (virtue) are likewise defined in terms of union. ¹

¹ Going into this chapter we have to keep in mind the terms that were established in our discussion on Edwards’s Trinitarian thought. We saw that for Edwards, love, beauty, holiness, and happiness are all inseparable and all meet in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the love of God and is called the bond of union. In other words, where there is divine love, there is union – this is best expressed in Edwards’s understanding of the Holy Spirit (God’s love) as the perfect union between the Father and the Son. The Father infinitely loves the Son, and the Son infinitely loves the Father, and are united by this mutual love (the Holy Spirit). This pattern then repeats: God loves his elect and therefore, by the Spirit, unites to them and the elect soul, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, unites back to God in faith, as

I have chosen to divide this chapter into two key aspects of the Christian life for Edwards: beholding beauty and becoming beautiful.² These two aspects of the Christian life correspond to the two primary faculties that make a person: the understanding (the faculty of perception) and the will (the faculty of inclination). This chapter is thus a consideration of the implications of the saint's union with Christ – a soul whose faculties are united to the Spirit. We will see that for Edwards, the life of one whose understanding is united to the Spirit is a life of beholding beauty. We will also see that, for Edwards, the life of one whose will is united to the Spirit is a life of becoming beautiful. We shall see in the following discussion that these two aspects of the life of the saints cannot be discussed except for in terms of union. They are both rooted in the reality that the Spirit is united to the soul's faculties (understanding and will) and they both have union-centered expressions. The saints' union with Christ grants them the capacity to behold beauty and this beauty (natural beauty and moral beauty) consists in union. Secondly, the life of the saint becoming beautiful necessitates the saint's increasing in holiness. This holiness consists primary in love which Edwards defines as a union of heart to God and others. These two aspects of the Christian life correspond to the two primary faculties that make a person: the understanding (the faculty of perception) and the will (the faculty of inclination). We will discuss Edwards's view on the understanding and the will and how these two faculties relate to one another. We then consider the life of a saint in relationship to these two faculties as the life of beholding beauty and becoming beautiful.

we have seen in the previous chapter. We continue here to explore the life of the saint with this in consideration.

² The description of the Christian life as “becoming beautiful” I am borrowing from Crisp and Strobel's recent study. Crisp, Oliver D., and Kyle C. Strobel. *Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to His Thought*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

Edwards begins the *Religious Affections* by identifying and defining the two fundamental human faculties.³

God has indued the soul with two faculties: one is that by which it is capable of perception and speculation, or by which it discerns, and views, and judges of things; which is called understanding. The other faculty is that by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way inclined with respect to the things it views or considers; either it is inclined to ‘em, or is disinclined, and averse from ‘em; or is the faculty by which the soul does not behold things, as an indifferent unaffected spectator, but either as liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting.⁴

Thus the two faculties are named: one of perception and discernment (the understanding) and one of inclination or its opposite, aversion (the will). In the opening of *Freedom of the Will*, Edwards defines the will in a similar manner; here he emphasizes the will as the faculty by which one chooses. “The faculty of the will is that faculty or power or principle of mind by which it is capable of choosing: an act of the will is the same as an act of choosing or choice.”⁵ This is perfectly consistent with the definition of the will as the faculty by which soul is inclined to an object it perceives. Edwards explains that in every choice, something is chosen rather than something else. Likewise, in an act of

³ I say the two fundamental faculties because these are for Edwards and for many in his time, the two faculties that determined personhood. The will and understanding as the two faculties that make a person was discussed in our chapter on Edwards’s Trinitarian thought. If we recall, the Holy Spirit is the will and the Son is the understanding and all three persons have will and understanding by virtue of their union with one another. There are of course, other human faculties: imagination, memory, conscious, etc.

⁴ Edwards, *Works* 2:96.

⁵ Edwards, *Works* 1:137. While we are not concerned here with whole the argument of *Freedom of the Will*, it will help our orientation if we make a note about Edwards’s intention with, and the context surrounding this treatise. This project, published in 1754, along with Edwards’s defense in *Original Sin*, both belong to Edwards’s efforts to combat rising Arminian sentiments and specifically to “reestablish Calvinism’s international intellectual responsibility.” Marsden, 436. A common objection to Calvinist doctrine at the time was the believe that God’s sovereignty and human moral inability apart from grace undermined human moral accountability. Edwards saw himself has defending the same orthodoxy established by the Augustine/Pelagius and Luther/Erasmus conflicts. He believed the efforts and accomplishments of the Reformers were in danger of being undone. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 439-440. One of Edwards’s key goals in this work is to demonstrate how the bondage the of human will by sin does not remove one’s moral accountability for their sin.

refusal, the soul chooses the absence of the thing refused. The will is therefore that faculty by which the soul chooses what it is inclined toward; for Edwards, the choosing and inclining are the same and this what we call the will.

So that whatever names we call the act of the will by—choosing, refusing, approving, disapproving, liking, disliking, embracing, rejecting, determining, directing, commanding, forbidding, inclining or being averse, a being pleased or displeased with—all may be reduced to this of choosing. For the soul to act voluntarily, is evermore to act electively. ⁶

It is important to note that while Edwards distinguishes between these two faculties, they cannot be totally separated. For Edwards, a soul *is* an understanding and a will. These two faculties do not operate independently from one another – nor does one have priority over the other in human action. This notion in Edwards’s thought has seen a great deal of interest in scholarship regarding Edwards’s anthropology. Whereas in the history of Christianity, one faculty is often believed to be the prime mover of the human soul, we see in Edwards’s anthropology what Jeffrey Waddington calls a “unified operation of the human soul.”⁷

Historically there are three primary schools of thought regarding the relationship between the understanding and the will. To discuss Edwards’s view of the relationship between the intellect and the will, it will be helpful to understand where Edwards falls in relation to the three prevailing views. The first camp is often referred to as the intellectualist understanding. Intellectualists, among whom Thomas Aquinas is the most notable, hold that the intellect (or understanding) is prior to the will in human action. According to this position, the intellect judges what is the good and the will follows the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Harry Stout, ed. *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017). See Jeffrey Waddington’s entry for the will, 600.

intellect in choosing that good. The understanding tells the will what it should embrace or reject. Norman Fiering writes that the intellectualist position is often identified by the dictum, “the choice of the will is determined by the last judgment of the practical intellect.”⁸ It is important to note that for intellectualists, the will is not culpable for moral error, because it is determined by the intellect. “The will by its nature (or, better, man by his nature) always desires the good, but the power of willing relies on the intellect to determine what is good in any given case.”⁹

Another position on the relationship between the understanding and the will is often called the Scholastic-voluntarist view. This position finds its roots in the writings of Duns Scotus. The Scholastic-voluntarist view, in direct opposition to the intellectualists, held that the will was self-determining faculty, completely free from the dictates of the understanding. The last judgment of the intellect was for the Scholastic-voluntarists just one factor in the will’s decision, not the single determining factor. This position is often depicted by the story of Buridan’s donkey. In the story, the donkey stands equidistant between two stacks of equally attractive hay. Because these two stacks are equally desirable for the appetite, and not distinguishable by the intellect, the donkey starves, not able to decide which to eat. According to Scholastic-voluntarists, a human being would suffer the same fate, for the intellect which ultimately determines action, would not be able to make a rational choice to which it would lead the will.¹⁰

⁸ Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2006), 264.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, 266-67.

The third position is known as the Augustinian-voluntarist position. Normal Fiering, George Marsden, and Jeffrey Waddington all identify Edwards as belonging to this camp.¹¹ This third group upholds the “unified operations of the human soul and understand the will and intellect working convergently in sin or regeneration.”¹² In this understanding, the whole soul is either oriented toward the self (in the natural state) or oriented to God (in the state of grace). This should sound similar to Edwards, especially considering what we have said about his teaching on the fall and original sin. If we recall, Edwards believes that at the fall, the lower, natural principle of self-love took the throne from the higher, spiritual principle of divine love and thus reoriented the whole soul to the self, away from God. For Edwards, much like Augustine and Calvin, the will does not refer to a particular faculty or operation of the rational soul *as much* as it refers to the whole inclination, or “inner essence” of the soul.¹³ Fiering, in discussing the Augustinian position, calls the will the “battle ground” between God and the Devil. He quotes Luther from his exchange with Erasmus on the will; this image is taken from Augustine and is found in Calvin as well. “The human will is like a beast of burden. If God rides it, it wills and goes whence God wills... if Satan rides it, it wills and goes where Satan wills. Nor

¹¹ Ibid, 288. In his entry on the will in *The Encyclopedia of Jonathan Edwards*, Waddington agrees that Edwards could fall into this camp. In his longer treatment on the subject, however, Waddington concedes that Edwards has certain intellectualist tendencies. Waddington, Jeffrey C. *The Unified Operations of the Human Soul: Jonathan Edwards' Theological Anthropology and Apologetic*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. 2013, 239. Marsden, George, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 282-283.

¹² Harry Stout, ed. *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*, 599.

¹³ Fiering, Norman S. "Will and Intellect in the New England Mind." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1972).

may it choose to which rider it will run, nor which it will seek. But the riders themselves contend who shall have and hold it.”¹⁴

The Augustinian view is distinct from the Scholastic-voluntarist view, which holds that the will must be self-determining to be free. For the Augustinians, the will is not self-determining, but rather follows the inclination of the soul. In the fallen state, where the soul is bent toward the self, the will is free to sin but not free to be truly virtuous. In the gracious state, the soul is turned toward God and is now truly free. True freedom in this tradition is not a self-determining will, but rather the freedom to live in obedience to God.¹⁵ The Augustinian/Edwardsean view is also distinct from and opposed to the intellectualist view, for according to the Augustinians the last dictate of the understanding does not necessarily determine what person, by their will, chooses.¹⁶ Rather, in this tradition, the will is submissive to “innate or infused propensities” – either concupiscence (in the state of nature) or grace (in the gracious state).¹⁷

In *Freedom of Will*, Edwards argues that rather than the will being determined by the last dictate of the understanding, actions of the will are determined by the strongest motive/inclination. The strongest motive places a *moral necessity* upon the will which the will submits to. The strongest motive is dependent on the overall inclination of the soul –

¹⁴ Ibid, 530.

¹⁵ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought in in British Context*, 269.

¹⁶ I use this language of the person choosing by their will because this is the language Edwards uses when speaking about faculties. The faculties are powers by which a soul exercises a certain function. A *person* chooses something by/through their will; a *person* understands something by their faculty of understanding. It is not that the will wills or the understanding understands, but rather the soul wills or understands by the respective faculty.

¹⁷ Ibid, 269.

either toward sin or toward holiness. “For when a person is unable to will or choose such a thing, through a defect of motives, or prevalence of contrary motives, ‘tis the same as his being unable through want of an inclination, or the prevalence of a contrary inclination, in such circumstances, and under the influence of such views.”¹⁸ Edwards provides some examples of this “moral inability” – the inability to act against the strongest inclination.

A woman of great honor and chastity may have a moral inability to prostitute herself to her slave. A child of great love and duty to his parents, may be unable to be willing to kill his father. A lascivious man, in the case of certain opportunities and temptations, and in the absence of such restrains, may be unable to forbear gratifying his lust. A drunkard, under such and such circumstances, may be unable, to forbear taking a strong drink [...] A strong habit of virtue and great degree of holiness may cause a moral inability to love wickedness in general, may render a man unable to take complacency in wicked persons or things; or to choose a wicked life, and prefer a virtuous life. And on the other hand, a great degree of habitual wickedness may lay a man under an inability to love and choose holiness; and render him utterly unable to love an infinitely holy Being, or to choose and cleave to him as his chief good.¹⁹

Here we see Edwards employing the language of habit and disposition. The will acts according to either the holy or sinful disposition of the soul. While a certain dictate of the understanding might be a factor, the dictate is only one motive, which, unless it is the strongest motive, will be overcome.

We must not forget however, that although for Edwards the understanding is not the primary determinant of action, it nevertheless plays an important role: the will and intellect work *together*. “It appears from these things, that *in some sense*, the will always follows the last dictate of the understanding. But then the understanding must be taken in a larger sense, as including the whole faculty of perception or apprehension, and not

¹⁸ Edwards, *Works* 1:159-160.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 160.

merely what is called reason or judgement.”²⁰ Here Edwards displays the relationship between the will and understanding. The will always follows understanding insofar as we call the understanding that faculty of perception and apprehension, as well as reason and judgment. An object must first be perceived by the understanding in order for the will to be inclined toward or averse to it. What determines the inclination is not, however, a judgment of the understanding, but rather the disposition or inclination of the soul.²¹

We should also briefly note the special emphasis that Edwards places, within his Augustinian framework, on the working together of the intellect and the will.²² This special emphasis on the unity of the will and intellect is seen primarily in Edwards’s teaching on the new sense and true religious affections. The “new sense” for Edwards, as we have seen above, consists of both an enlightening of the understanding to see divine beauty *and* a new inclination toward that beauty. For this reason, Edwards consistently remarks that true religious affection consists in both heat and light – heat corresponding to love (the will) and light corresponding to knowledge (understanding). The distinction that Edwards establishes between affections and mere emotion further solidifies the concurrent working of the will and intellect. Whereas emotions do not require an object, affections do. As McCylmond and McDermott point out, one can say “I am emotional” without specifying an object. Whereas if one says, “I am affectionate” it raises the

²⁰ Ibid, 148.

²¹ This recalls back to the initial passage we considered on the understanding and the will from the *Affections*. “The other faculty [will] is that by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way inclined *with respect to the things it views or considers* [understanding].” Edwards, *Works* 2:96. Emphasis added.

²² For a full treatment of this concurrence, see Waddington, *The Unified Operations of the Soul*, 334-339.

question “To what or whom?”²³ For Edwards, true religious affections require the new sense given at regeneration. For there to be a strong affection for God, the understanding must have a perception of him.

If there is still debate as to which is prior for Edwards, the intellect or the will, it would perhaps be helpful to recall what we said above about Edwards’s understanding of regeneration. At the soul’s regeneration, the Holy Spirit unites itself to the soul’s faculties (understanding and will). Waddington says it well when he writes that “the intellect and the will are equally moral faculties which are fallen in Adam and restored in Christ [...] the mind is darkened and the will is perverted. In regeneration the intellect is enlightened and the will is renewed.” Waddington, interestingly enough, does not discuss Edwards’s emphasis of the Spirit uniting to the understanding and will to enlighten and renew them. When this is noted, we can better understand how Edwards speaks on these two faculties working together. In this light, we can more fully recognize that no one faculty is superior to the other, for both are fallen and restored in their being united to the Spirit. There is a logical priority given to the understanding, for it first perceives the object that will is inclined toward, but neither faculty is more important, for they operate together, under the new principle of divine love.

To fully appreciate Edwards’s view on the relationship between the will and the understanding we must note the historical context – particularly that of the Great Awakening – which sparked Edwards’s writing on these issues. Edwards’s Augustinian-voluntarist convictions become clear in his defense of the revivals that occurred during the awakening. Edwards’s chief opponent at this time was Charles Chauncy, a

²³ McClymond and McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 313-314.

rationalistic Boston clergy man. Chauncy, who represented the intellectualist camp described above, was deeply critical of the revivals, regarding the “enthusiasms” as “a disease, a sort of madness.”²⁴ For Chauncy, “an *enlightened mind*, and not *raised affections*, ought always to be the guide of those who call themselves men; and this, in the affairs of religion, as well as other things.”²⁵ Edwards argued, in contrast to Chauncy, that the Bible’s model of true religion consists greatly in true affections. Whereas all affections for Chauncy appeared to be movements and impulses of lower faculties, Edwards argued that true religious affections stem from a *sensible knowledge* of God and could therefore not be collapsed with unruly emotions. Hence, Edwards’s account of religion consists in intellect and will (knowledge and affections) arising and working together.²⁶

Now that we have a grounding in Edwards’s understanding of the will and intellect, we will continue in our discussion of the Christian life as beholding beauty and becoming beautiful. As stated above, in this chapter we are considering how the renewed faculties function in the life of the saint. What does it look like, for Edwards, when one’s understanding and will have been united to the Holy Spirit and the Spirit operates as the new principle that informs the exercise of these faculties? Although we will be treating each faculty individually, we will do so knowing that they cannot be fully separated in the functions. We will first consider how the life of the saint whose understanding (perceptive faculty) is renewed, is one of beholding beauty. Beauty in the world, we shall

²⁴ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 272.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 281.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 282-283.

see, consists in union and is beautiful because it imitates God's own moral beauty. We will then consider how the life of the saint whose will (faculty of inclination) is renewed, is a life of beautification. This moral beauty, we shall see, also consists in union, for true virtue is, for Edwards, a union of heart, and in exercising true virtue, saints participate in God's moral beauty.

As we saw in our discussion on saving versus common grace, the first effect that regeneration works in the soul is a new sense, or perception, of divine beauty. This is the work of the Spirit uniting to the soul's understanding and acting as a new principle that informs the faculty's function. In the state of nature, the soul's understanding is darkened and unable to perceive divine beauty. "Before [Christ] shines into men's souls, they are dead and dull in a deep sleep, are not diligent at their work, but lie still and sleep and do nothing respecting their souls. All their affections are dead, dull and lifeless; their understandings are darkened with the dark shades of spiritual night, and there is nothing but spiritual sleep and death in their souls."²⁷ At regeneration, where the Spirit unites to the mind, a "spiritual and divine light" is "immediately imparted to the soul by God," whereby the mind is enlightened to see spiritual beauties.²⁸

The chief beauty that is revealed to the soul by the new sense is the beauty of God's moral perfections. In *Religious Affections*, Edwards writes,

From what has been said, therefore, we come necessarily to this conclusion, concerning that wherein spiritual understanding consists; viz. that it consists in a sense of the heart, of the supreme beauty and sweetness of the holiness or moral

²⁷Edwards, *Works* 10:249.

²⁸ Edwards, *Works* 17:411. The Sermon from which this passage comes, *A Divine a Supernatural Light*, contains an argument virtually identical to that in *Treatise on Grace*.

perfection of divine things, together with that discerning and knowledge of the things of religion that depends upon, and flows from such a sense.²⁹

For Edwards, true religion and all spiritual knowledge is dependent on a sense of the moral perfection of divine things. This is consistent with what has been said prior in our discussion, that for Edwards, God's beauty is seated primarily in his holiness, or moral perfection.³⁰

For Edwards, the life of the saint is one of beholding beauty because once divine beauty is discovered in the soul, the saint is now able to *truly* see the beauty in all things.

When the true beauty and amiableness of the holiness or true moral good that is in divine things, is discovered to the soul, *it as it were opens a new world to its view*. This shows the glory of all the perfections of God, and of everything appertaining to the divine being: for, as was observed before, the beauty of all arises from God's moral perfection.³¹

Edwards goes on to explain that only when the beauty of God's holiness is perceived can a soul relish in the beauty of Christ the mediator, who, by his moral perfection, is able to atone for sin. What is more, "by this is seen the fitness and suitableness of [salvation]: for it wholly consists in its tendency to deliver us from sin and hell, and to bring us to the happiness which consists in the possession and enjoyment of moral good, in a way sweetly agreeing with God's moral perfections."³² By this beauty, Edwards writes, is truly understood the beauty of the Word of God: "take away all the moral beauty and

²⁹ Edwards, *Works* 2:272.

³⁰ [God's moral perfection] is the beauty of the Godhead, and the divinity of divinity (if I may so speak), the good of the infinite Fountain of good; without which God himself (if that were possible to be) would be an infinite evil: without which, we ourselves had better never have been; and without which there had better have been no being." Ibid, 274.

³¹ Ibid, 273. Emphasis added.

³² Ibid, 274.

sweetness in the Word, and the Bible is left wholly a dead letter, a dry, lifeless, tasteless thing.” By this discovery is also seen the duty that one has to love and honor God, for God’s worthiness of this esteem is rooted in his moral perfection. In this new sense is also seen the “true evil of sin: for he who sees the beauty of holiness, must necessarily see the hatefulness of sin, its contrary.” It is also by this sense that one understands the glory of heaven, “which consists in the beauty and happiness that is in holiness.”³³ This sense of the beauty of God’s holiness is therefore the foundation and prerequisite of all spiritual knowledge. When the saints discover the beauty of God’s moral perfections, they can see the beauty of all things pertaining to religion.

We will now consider how, for Edwards, not only these *spiritual beauties* are now seen, which the understanding before regeneration was too “darkened” to perceive, but the *whole world* is seen differently when one is given this new sense. As stated above, with the discovery of divine beauty, a “new world” is opened to the soul, for the beauty of *all things* arises from God’s moral perfections.³⁴ It is for this reason that Edwards writes,

He that sees the beauty of holiness, or the true moral good, sees the greatest and most important thing in the world, which is the fullness of all things, without which the world is empty, no better than nothing, yea, worse than nothing. *Unless this is seen, nothing is seen, that is worth seeing*: for there is no other true excellency or beauty, Unless this be understood, nothing is understood, that is worthy of the exercise of the noble faculty of understanding.³⁵

³³ Ibid, 274.

³⁴ Ibid, 273.

³⁵ Ibid, 274.

Here Edwards makes the bold claim that only when God's moral beauty is discovered in the soul, can one truly perceive the beauty in the world – unless this beauty is seen, nothing is seen that is worth seeing. While the natural person can perceive shadows of beauty in the world, it is accounted as nothing in comparison the beauty of the world that is seen with the renewed understanding.

Edwards's understanding of natural beauty is very much built upon this assumption.³⁶ For Edwards, the beauty of anything (moral and natural) arises from and has its source in God's own beauty (consisting in his holiness). This means that if anything is beautiful, it is beautiful because in some way participates in, or imitates, God's own moral perfection. Here we will see how the soul's understanding, which has been united to the Spirit and thus renewed to perceive God's moral beauty, is now able to perceive anew the beauty of the world, which imitates God's own beauty. Before we treat this issue, however, we must recall Edwards's understanding of God's moral perfection (holiness) and wherein it consists. As we discussed extensively in Chapter One, and revisited briefly above, God's holiness, and therefore God's beauty, consists in his perfect love within himself. According to Edwards, God the Father is deity in its prime, the Son is the perfect, eternal thought or idea (Logos) of the Father, and the Spirit is the perfect, eternal love between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit for Edwards both the love of God and the Bond of Union, who perfectly unites the Father and the Son. Thus for Edwards, love and union are inextricably related; where there is love (God's Spirit), there is union (the manifestation or inclination of that love). For this reason, as we

³⁶ Natural beauty, as will hopefully become clear, is for Edwards any beauty that is not moral beauty. This includes the beauty of nature, art, a human face, etc.

saw in Chapter Two, God's love for his people is expressed in God communicating his fullness to his elect by uniting himself to them. This union, and the eternally perfecting of this union, was the end for which God created the world – for in this union is God glorified (by the communication of his attributes) and are the elect made supremely happy (by receiving and participating in these attributes).³⁷ We saw how the Spirit, as the love of God and the bond of union, brings the elect into the state of salvation by uniting to their souls and bringing them to saving faith. This faith, as we saw, consists in the saint's love for Christ, which causes he or she to unite back to Christ and thus form the *mutual union* wherein justification consists. We shall then see, before this chapter is complete, how the life of holiness (becoming beautiful), consists in uniting in love to God and others.

If Edwards holds that all beauty arises from God's moral perfection, or his holiness, and his holiness consists in his perfect love (the Holy Spirit, bond of union), which manifests as a disposition in God to unite to the object of his love, then it is fitting that the most excellent of natural beauties, which are beautiful because their beauty arises from God's own beauty, should also consist in, or imitate union. This is precisely what we see in some of Edwards's earliest writings on natural beauty. With these considerations regarding God's holiness and the disposition to unite, we turn to Edwards's observations on the beauty of the world. Central to Edwards's understanding of natural beauty is the conviction that the spiritual world is, in a sense, *more real* than the material world and thus informs the material world. Physical bodies exist as *shadows* of spiritual realities; their beauty consists therein, that they imitate spiritual beauties. "The

³⁷ Also recall that for Edwards, there is no communion (communication and sharing of goods) without union. Edwards, *Works* 8:158.

things of the world are ordered [and] designed to shadow forth spiritual things”³⁸

Expanding on this notion, Edwards writes,

Again, it is apparent and allowed that there is a great and remarkable analogy in God's works. There is a wonderful resemblance in the effects which God produces, and consentaneity in his manner of working in one thing and another, throughout all nature. It is very observable in the visible world. Therefore 'tis allowed that God does purposely make and order one thing to be in an agreeableness and harmony with another. And if so, why should not we suppose that he makes the inferior in imitation of the superior, the material of the spiritual, on purpose to have a resemblance and shadow of them? We see that even in the material world God makes one part of it strangely to agree with another; and why is it not reasonable to suppose he makes the whole as a shadow of the spiritual world?³⁹

Here we see Edwards's sacramental view of the world. The material world is a shadow of the spiritual. If the spiritual is that which is eternal and superior, it is fitting that God would so design the material world to be in “agreeableness and harmony” with the spiritual world. Having established this, we can better understand what Edwards means when he writes that the discovery of divine beauty reveals a whole new world to the soul. While Edwards maintains that God's common grace allows all rational creatures to perceive beauty in a limited sense, the saints, whose understanding is *illuminated* to see the spiritual beauties, perceive beauty in its fullest, for they see how it imitates the exceedingly more beautiful, spiritual beauties. We can say therefore that the life of the saint is a life of perceiving beauty, for once divine beauty is discovered in the soul, the soul can now recognize (and delight in) its many reflections in the material world.⁴⁰

³⁸ “Physical bodies” in Edwards's usage is not limited to human bodies, but anything that takes material form.

³⁹ Edwards, *Works* 6:54.

⁴⁰ It is worth noting how Edwards's teaching on creation in this respect resembles Calvin's remarks on the “pious delight” in meditating on creation. “Meanwhile let us not be ashamed to take pious delight in the works of God open and manifest in this most beautiful theater. For, as I have elsewhere said, although it is not the chief evidence for faith, yet it is the first evidence in the order of nature, to be mindful that wherever

Moving forward, we will look at some specific cases where Edwards sees natural beauty reflecting spiritual beauty. If we recall, the primary and most excellent of all spiritual beauties is the moral beauty of the divine nature – God’s holiness. When this beauty is discovered in the soul, all other beauties are discovered, for they have their source in this primary beauty. Given what we have discussed regarding Edwards’s teaching on God’s holiness, and how it relates to love, and specifically union, it is fitting that Edwards would maintain that natural beauty consists in what he calls “mutual consents.”

THE beauty of the world consists wholly of sweet mutual consents, either within itself, or with the Supreme Being. As to the corporeal world, though there are many other sorts of consents, yet the sweetest and most charming beauty of it is its resemblance of spiritual beauties. The reason is that spiritual beauties are infinitely the greatest, and bodies being but the shadows of beings, they must be so much the more charming as they shadow forth spiritual beauties. ⁴¹

This passage comes from a 1725 notebook entry entitled, *The Beauty of the World*. Here we see the same language we saw above – that of the material world imitating the spiritual; but here Edwards introduces the language of “mutual consents” and remarks that the most beautiful consents in nature are those that resemble the spiritual. Here we ought to consider what Edwards means by “consent”. To do this we will consider some instances where this language is used elsewhere in his writings. If, for Edwards, the spiritual/moral is primary and superior, and the material/natural is secondary and imitates the former, then in order to understand what Edwards means by consent in the natural

we cast our eyes, all the things they meet are works of God, and at the same time to ponder with pious meditation to what end God created them.” Calvin writes of the saint’s duty to contemplate the material world and to inquire to what God created each thing. Edwards would perhaps be more specific: to inquire what spiritual reality is typified in each part of the created order. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.XIV.20.

⁴¹ Edwards, *Works* 6:306.

sense, we must establish what he means by consent in the spiritual/moral sense. For Edwards, we shall see, consent in the natural sense is used to signify proportion and harmony; consent in the spiritual/moral sense, signifies love, closing, and *union* (terms used virtually interchangeably by Edwards). To be consistent with Edwards's own outlook however, we will introduce the spiritual/moral sense first.

It is safe to say, because of the various contexts in which these words are used, that for Edwards, love, union, closing, and consent, are virtually interchangeable. I will not say they are perfect synonyms. If we wanted to be technical, Edwards generally uses consent and love synonymously, while closing and uniting are typically used as the expression or disposition that stems from love and consent.⁴² In other words, where there is love there is consent, and where there is love and consent, there is disposition to close, or unite with the object of that love.⁴³ Scholars frequently point out the close relationship in Edwards's writing that these terms share. We saw in our discussion on faith that for Edwards, faith is the soul's uniting back to Christ. Sang Hyun Lee comments on faith as uniting and relates this action to Edwards's notion of consent.

What does Edwards mean by "union" in this context? Two observations can be made. For one thing, faith, for Edwards, is "an active union" with Christ in the sense that a movement of the heart or an affectional function of the mind is involved. Using such expressions as "closing with," "heartily joining," and "consenting" interchangeably with "uniting," Edwards writes that "[t]he heart must close with the new covenant by dependence upon it, and by love and desire."⁴⁴

⁴² This discussion is a bit pre-mature. It will be discussed further when, in the second part of this chapter, we treat Edwards's understanding of true virtue and the life of the saint as becoming beautiful. There has been, however, enough discussion on love and union in the previous chapters (namely one and two) to make these remarks here.

⁴³ Along with closing and uniting, we could add communicate.

⁴⁴ Edwards, *Works* 21:66.

The same scholar points out elsewhere that when Edwards uses “consent” in reference to primary (moral beauty) he really means “love” – for as it relates to moral beauty, love and consent are used by Edwards interchangeably.⁴⁵

Let’s consider a few places in Edwards’s writings where we see these terms used in the sense I have just described. The previous discussion has sufficiently established the inseparable relationship between love and union: God’s love forming the perfect union of the Trinity, God’s love has a disposition to unite to his people, the regenerate soul uniting back to Christ in love after receiving the new sense. We will now consider how Edwards uses the term *consent* to express this uniting love we have seen throughout our discussion.

In the first place, Edwards uses “consent” to express the love within the Trinity.

Love is certainly the perfection as well as happiness of a spirit. [If] God, doubtless, as he is infinitely perfect and happy, has infinite love [...] Then there must have been an object from all eternity which God infinitely loves. But we have showed that all love arises from the perception, either of consent to being in general, or consent to that being that perceives. Infinite loveliness, to God, therefore, must consist either in infinite consent to entity in general, or infinite consent to God. But we have shown that consent to entity and consent to God are the same, because God is the general and only proper entity of all things. So that 'tis necessary that that object which God infinitely loves must be infinitely and perfectly consenting and agreeable to him; but that which infinitely and perfectly agrees is the very same essence, for if it be different it don't infinitely consent [...] Again, we have shown that one alone cannot be excellent, inasmuch as, in such case, there can be no consent. Therefore, if God is excellent, there must be a plurality in God; otherwise, there can be no consent in him.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Gerald R. McDermott. *Understanding Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to America's Theologian*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Sang Hyun Lee, “Edwards on Beauty,” 214.

⁴⁶ Edwards, *Works* 13:284.

This excerpt should be understood within the context of Edwards's observations on consent as it relates to excellency. "This is [a] universal definition of excellency: The consent of being to being, or being's consent to entity. The more the consent is, and the more extensive, the greater is the excellency."⁴⁷ We see there that the perfect, infinite, love of God – wherein God's holiness and beauty consists – is also called by Edwards, the "infinite consent" within the Godhead.

Consent for Edwards is thus used to describe that perfect, eternal, love of union that is displayed within God's triune life. Edwards also uses the language of "consent" to describe the believer's love to Christ – the closing act of faith by which the soul unites back to Christ as the result of their regeneration. "Lastly, besides all these, there is in saving faith a consent to Christ himself, or a closing of the heart or inclination with the person of Christ."⁴⁸ In our discussion on saving faith and the mutual union between Christ and the saint, we saw that the Spirit excites in the soul a love for Christ, which naturally causes the soul to incline to Christ. Here Edwards calls this loving inclination towards union *consent*. Although this will shortly be treated more extensively, we should introduce here that Edwards defines true virtue – which for him, is love. "True virtue most essentially consists in benevolence to Being in general. Or perhaps to speak more accurately, it is that consent, propensity and union of heart to Being in general, that is immediately exercised in a general good will." Love therefore, for Edwards is defined as "consent" or "union of heart" to Being in general (God). This last point will be discussed

⁴⁷ Edwards, *Works* 6:337. "Excellence, to put it in other words, is that which is beautiful and lovely." Ibid, 345

⁴⁸ Edwards, *Works* 21:458.

further, but for now we have a sufficient foundation regarding Edwards's use of *consent* to assess his understanding of natural beauty.

To refresh: Edwards believes that the beauty of the world consists wholly in what he calls "mutual consents." Edwards also teaches that the beauty of the world shadows or imitates divine beauty. The chief, most excellent of all divine beauties is God's holiness which consist in his perfect love or consent within himself. For us to truly appreciate what Edwards means by consent in the natural world, we must rely on his understanding of what consent means in the spiritual world, for the natural world is a shadow of the spiritual. As we have just seen, consent in the spiritual sense is love, specifically the uniting disposition of love, which is primarily exemplified within God's triune self. This moral consent is seen also in God uniting to his people and the saints uniting (consenting) to Christ in faith. Thirdly, consent in this moral sense is seen in true virtue, or true charity, which Edwards calls a "union of heart to being" (primarily to God and to others out of that). Thus, when Edwards says the beauty in nature consists in "consents," he says this because in these consents in nature, we are reminded of the most beautiful of all beauties: God's holiness.

We will now consider explicit incidents in nature where we see these "mutual consents." Now that we have a thorough grounding in Edwards's notion of consent as it relates to moral beauty, we are better able to comprehend how this plays out in his understanding of the beauty of the world. There is perhaps no better passage in Edwards's writings that holds all of these observations in one view as the following.

As bodies, the objects of our external senses, are but the shadows of beings, that harmony wherein consists sensible excellency and beauty is but the shadow of excellency; that is, it is pleasant to the mind because it is a shadow of love. When one thing sweetly harmonizes with another, as the notes in music, the notes are so

conformed and have such proportion one to another that they seem to have respect one to another, *as if they loved one another*. So the beauty of figures and motions is, when one part has such consonant proportion with the rest as represents a general agreeing and *consenting* together; which is very much the image of love in all the parts of a society united by a sweet consent and charity of heart. Therein consists the beauty of figures, as of flowers drawn with a pen, and the beauty of the body, and of the features of the face.⁴⁹

We have seen where Edwards speaks about natural beauties imitating spiritual, and how these beauties consist in mutual consents. Here Edwards explicitly states that these consents shadow and image *love*. The different notes in a piece of music unite together into harmony, *as if they loved each other*. This language echoes *A Divine and Supernatural light*, where Edwards compares the soul's inclining to Christ as the soul "symphonizing" with him.

This light, and this only, will bring the soul to a saving close with Christ. It conforms the heart to the gospel, mortifies its enmity and opposition against the scheme of salvation therein revealed: it causes the heart to embrace the joyful tidings, and entirely to adhere to, and acquiesce in the revelation of Christ as our Savior; it causes the whole soul to accord and symphonize with it, admitting it with entire credit and respect, cleaving to it with full inclination and affection. And it effectually disposes the soul to give up itself entirely to Christ.⁵⁰

Likewise, the beauty in a drawing, the human body, and the face, consist in the various parts consenting to one another to make up the whole. The beauty of these objects consists in these mutual consents, for in these consents they imitate the spiritual beauty of God's holiness.

Before we move forward, we'll consider one more instance of the natural imitating the spiritual. The particular beauty of the world that Edwards speaks of most

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 380.

⁵⁰ Edwards, *Works* 17:424.

frequently is that of the sun and its influence on both terrestrial and extra-terrestrial bodies. In his observations on the beauty of the world, he writes,

Thus there is the resemblance of a decent trust, dependence and acknowledgment in the planets continually moving round the sun, receiving his influences by which they are made happy, bright and beautiful, a decent attendance in the secondary planets, an image of majesty, power, glory and beneficence in the sun in the midst of all; and so in terrestrial things.⁵¹

And then further, regarding terrestrial things the sun's influence on terrestrial things:

How much a resemblance is there of every grace in the fields covered with plants and flowers, when the sun shines serenely and undisturbedly upon them. How a resemblance, I say, of every grace and beautiful disposition of mind; of an inferior towards a superior cause, preserver, benevolent benefactor, and a fountain of happiness [...] Thus, mere light is pleasing to the mind. If it be to the degree of effulgence, 'tis very sensible, and mankind have agreed in it: they all represent glory and extraordinary beauty by brightness [...] That mixture of all sorts of rays, which we call white, is a proportionate mixture that is harmonious [...] to each particular simple color and contains in it some harmony or other that is delightful. And each sort of rays play a distinct tune to the soul, besides those lovely mixtures that are found in nature—those beauties, how lovely, in the green of the face of the earth, in all manner of colors in flowers, the color of the skies, and lovely tinctures of the morning and evening.⁵²

For Edwards, the sun serves in nature as the grand imitator of divine moral beauty –

God's love. Compare these passages above with the following remarks on God's love.

“For God is the fountain of love, as the sun is the fountain of light. And therefore the glorious presence of God in heaven fills heaven with love, as the sun placed in the midst of the hemisphere in a clear day fills the world with light.”⁵³ And again,

And so the disposition in the sun to shine, or abundantly to diffuse its fullness, warmth and brightness, is only a tendency to its own most glorious and complete state. So God looks on the communication of himself, and the emanation of the

⁵¹ Edwards, *Works* 6:305.

⁵² *Ibid*, 305-306.

⁵³ Edwards, *Works* 8:369.

infinite glory and good that are in himself to belong to the fullness and completeness of himself.⁵⁴

The sun's disposition to communicate light to the whole world, and thus beautify the world by revealing its forms and colors is an imitation of God's disposition to communicate his attributes to all the objects of his love. Thus, for Edwards, when a believer beholds anything in nature, (which is only able to be beheld in the first place by the sun's communicating its light) the believer ought to recognize how this communication imitates God's own love to himself and to his creatures. This is why Edwards writes that the sun shining on a field and illuminating the flowers and greenery resembles grace. Just as all light has its source in the sun, all grace has its root in God's love. The beauty of the sun and all of the consents it reveals in nature serve as a shadow of the moral excellency of God and his loving disposition to consent or unite to the object of love.

We have demonstrated that for Edwards, a central part of the Christian life consists in beholding beauty. Beauty that is beheld in the world (whether it be a piece of music, or a field of flowers), consist in mutual consents. These consents make something beautiful because they imitate God's love and holiness – his disposition to consent, to unite to the object(s) of his love. Because the natural imitates the spiritual, and spiritual consents consist in loving-union, we can say that for Edwards, the beauty of the world consist in small expressions of *union*.

We now turn to the second main consideration of this chapter: the life of a saint as a life of becoming beautiful. We have seen how one whose understanding (faculty of perception) is united to the Holy Spirit, the principle of holiness, leads a life of beholding

⁵⁴ Ibid, 439.

beauty. Here we will consider how one whose will (faculty of inclination) is united to the Spirit, lives a life of becoming beautiful. While the renewed understanding is freed to see God's beauty and how God's love informs and beautifies the world, the renewed will frees the soul to actually participate in God's life of life and the soul itself become beautiful in this participation. Just as the beauty of the world consists in *consents* that mirror God's moral beauty, so the beauty of the saint consists in his or her mirroring of God's moral beauty by holiness. Holiness, we will see, consists primarily in love (charity), which Edwards defines as a uniting, or consenting of heart to God and to others. For this section, we will rely primarily on Edwards's two major works in moral theology – *Charity and Its Fruits* and *Dissertation on the Nature of True Virtue*. I will not, as I have done previous chapters, outline the arguments in these texts. Rather, for our purposes we will focus on drawing out Edwards's understanding of the holy life. Here we will revisit close relationship between love, beauty, holiness, and union that we did in chapter one. However, where that previous discussion was concerned with God's Triune life, here we consider these things in the life of the saint. In this section we will also consider a corollary to the relationship between beauty and union: whereas love (moral beauty) consists in a disposition toward union, the contrary, vice (moral ugliness) consists in a disposition towards isolation, hatred, and the severing of union.

Before we continue, we would do well to make a few notes about the two texts we will discussing in this section. *Charity and its Fruits* (1738) and *True Virtue* (written around 1756 but published posthumously in 1765) complement each other remarkably well, although they were written in vastly different styles and for different purposes. *Charity* is a collection of fifteen sermons on I Corinthians 13:1-8 on the nature of true

Christian charity. Edwards's purpose in these sermons were, like *Religious Affections*, immediately related to the context of the First Great Awakening. Edwards gave these sermons to his congregation in order to demonstrate the true fruits of a genuine conversion. Alongside the revivals, there was always suspicion regarding the authenticity of religious experience. Edwards preached these sermons with the conviction of the biblical principle, "By their fruits ye shall know them."⁵⁵ Similar to that of *True Virtue*, the central doctrine advanced in the Charity sermons is that "All that virtue which is saving, and distinguishing of true Christians from others, is summed up in Christian, or divine love."⁵⁶ The central claim of *True Virtue* is that true virtue consists in love to Being in general (God). However, unlike *Charity*, which was addressed to his congregation, *True Virtue* (published with *End of Creation*) was written to eighteenth-century British moral philosophers. After the publication of *Freedom of the Will*, Edwards took his place as an intellectual in the broader Anglophone world. He now had the standing to participate in the conversations regarding moral philosophy and *True Virtue* was his way into that conversation. Edwards was always eager to read the works of the Scottish Enlightenment moralists (namely Francis Hutcheson, Lord Kame, and David Hume), that he might "have an idea of the notions that prevail in our nation."⁵⁷ While we will not treat these figures in-depth, it is important to note the leading view coming out this school was that all human beings were endowed with a "moral sense." All humans were capable of living virtuously – humans only need to discover and follow

⁵⁵ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 190

⁵⁶ Edwards, *Works* 8:131

⁵⁷ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 466-467)

the dictates of the natural law within them to live a moral life and receive their eternal reward.⁵⁸ Included in this innate moral law for these moralists, was a law of benevolence, which promoted harmony amongst individuals. Edwards enters this conversation by using similar language of virtue, benevolence, and harmony. We shall see, however, how Edwards, offers a Christian response to this definition of virtue, by advancing the claim: “Nothing is of the nature of true virtue, in which God is not the *first* and the *last*.”⁵⁹

To begin we will consider Edwards’s definition of true virtue. Edwards begins *True Virtue* with the observation that virtually all philosophers, when they speak of virtue, have in mind something beautiful – some kind of beauty or excellency. This is, of course, is not a natural beauty, as we discussed above, but rather a moral beauty. “Virtue is the beauty of those qualities and acts of the mind that are of a *moral* nature, i.e. such as are attended with desert of worthiness of *praise* or *blame*. Things of this sort, it is generally agreed, as far as I know, are not anything belonging to mere speculation; but to the *disposition* and *will*, or ... to the “heart”⁶⁰ The definition Edwards provides is as follows: “True virtue most essentially consists in benevolence to being in general. Or perhaps to speak more accurately, it is that *consent*, propensity and *union of heart* to Being in general, that is immediately exercised in a general good will.”⁶¹ Edwards

⁵⁸ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 465-466.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 467.

⁶⁰ Edwards, *Works* 8:539. Thus here we see that whatever this true virtue be, in is seated in the will. Thus we can rightfully treat this section, as mentioned above, as a consideration of the implications/effects of the renewed will in the saint.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 540. Emphasis added.

narrows this definition, by equating consent and union of heart to Being in general to *love* to Being in general. This is fitting, given what we have already said about love and consent/union being synonymous (so long as we mean consent in a moral, not natural sense).⁶² Edwards narrows the definition further, by substituting Being in general with God – that Being who has the greatest share of being – “infinitely the greatest and best of beings.”⁶³ God is properly the object of true virtue (love) because he has the greatest share of universal existence – this is what Edwards means by “Being in general.” Furthermore, a secondary ground by which God is the proper, ultimate object of love, is his beauty or moral excellency. “For as God is infinitely the greatest being, so he is allowed to be infinitely the most beautiful and excellent: and all the beauty to be found throughout the whole creation, is but the reflection of the diffused beams of that Being who hath an infinite fullness of brightness and glory.” Anyone who has true virtue therefore, must have a supreme love for God for true virtue consists “radically and essentially, and as it were summarily” in love to God.⁶⁴

Edwards observes that while writers on morality (namely the Scottish moralist mentioned above) do not typically exclude God from their discussions altogether, an agent’s regard for God is often treated as a secondary, subordinate part of morality to

⁶² Edwards does not take much time here to demonstrate that true virtue primarily consists in love. He holds this to be a given. “It is abundantly plain by the Holy Scriptures, and generally allowed not only by Christian divines, but by the more considerable Deists, that virtue most essentially consists in love.” Edwards, *Works* 8:541.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 550. This approach is not typical for Edwards. It would be much easier to argue from the beginning from Scripture that true virtue consists in love to God. In this particular treatise, Edwards attempts to construct a philosophical case for his Christian moral theology. For this reason, it is interesting to note, Edwards does not appeal to Scripture in this treatise.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 551. While we are looking at this doctrine in the specific context of *True Virtue*. This is consistent with what has been said. If God’s holiness consists primarily in his perfect love for himself, it is fitting that true virtue (belonging to rational creatures) should likewise consist in love to God.

their responsibility of benevolence to the created system. Edwards argues if true virtue consists partly in respect to the divine Being, then it must consist chiefly in respect to the divine Being. “If true morality requires that we should have some regard, some benevolent affection to our Creator, as well as to his creatures, then doubtless it requires that the first regard be paid to him; and that he be every way the supreme object of our benevolence.”⁶⁵

True virtue consists first and foremost in love to God and only by this love to God can one love other in way that is consistent with true virtue. To demonstrate this, Edwards shows how any benevolence to a particular person, or private system,⁶⁶ apart from benevolence to God, is not only not true virtue, but is in fact *contrary* to the nature of true virtue. For Edwards, even if one were to have benevolence for every creature in the existence, this would fall short infinitely short of true virtue, for the love of God is lacking. Any private affection to one (or any number of beings) apart from love to God, is in fact, *against* love to God and is of a whole different tendency than that of true virtue. This private affection makes one, on Edwards’s account, an enemy of God. Such private affection to any object(s), apart from God is the product of a *selfish, contracted, narrow spirit*.⁶⁷ If one only had regard for the good of those close to him, apart from, or at the expense of the good of the general public, he would no doubt be considered selfish –

⁶⁵ Ibid, 553.

⁶⁶ By private system Edwards has in mind any people group or society – a circle of friends, a family, fellow citizens, etc. This benevolence within private systems are those laws of benevolence which the Scottish moralist believed were innate in all human beings.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 555. This language should recall our discussion on humanity’s fallen state as a state on perpetual *inwardness*. This will come back into play shortly.

“generally abhorred...esteemed base and sordid.”⁶⁸ Even if this same regard were to extended to everyone in the created order, he would still be infinitely short from achieving true virtue, for his love excludes Being in general. Furthermore, this private affection, apart from meeting the definition of true virtue, actually established enmity between the agent and God. For in having an object of love apart from God, this agent sets up an object of love *above* God and therefore robs God of the honor he is due. This most naturally tends toward enmity against God, “even as setting up another prince as supreme in any kingdom, distinct from the lawful sovereign, naturally tends to enmity against the lawful sovereign.”⁶⁹ Thus here we see Edwards’s criticism of the popular moral thought of the time; the “natural” benevolence to a private sphere of people, is not only not consistent with true virtue, it is, in fact, contrary to it.

While true virtue consists primarily in love to God, virtuous love for creatures naturally will arise from this love; only when love to creatures arises from love to God is it true, virtuous love. Love to creatures (beings) is *dependent* on love to God (Being in general). Edwards does not take time to argue why there must be love for fellow creatures – this he assumes to be universally accepted. He is more concerned with correcting the tendency to *focus* on love to creatures, and thus not making love to God the foundation (as we have just seen). Edwards moves straight to discussing what virtuous love for fellow creatures looks like; what is the chief evidence that love to creatures is consistent with true virtue?

The most proper *evidence* of love to a created being, its arising from that temper of mind wherein consists a supreme propensity of heart to God, seems to be the agreeableness of the kind and degree of our love to *God's end* in our creation and

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 555-556.

in the creation of all things, and the coincidence of the exercises of our love, in their manner, order, and measure, with the *manner* in which *God* himself exercises love to the creature in the creation and government of the world, and the way in which God as the first cause and supreme disposer of all things, has respect to the creature's happiness, in subordination to himself as his own supreme end.⁷⁰

From this passage we should observe four things. (1) Virtuous love to creatures arises from supreme propensity (union) of heart to God (this we have already demonstrated). (2) The evidence of virtuous love to creatures is evidenced by its agreeableness to God's end in creation. (3) Virtuous love among creatures should coincide with (participate in) the manner in which God exercises love to his creatures in the creation and government of the world and (4) that this love should thus seek the happiness of the creatures in subordination with to God's own end – his glory.

The goodness of any thing is the agreeableness to its *end* – its fitness to “answer the design for which it was created for.”⁷¹ Therefore, the excellency of a moral agent consist in its agreeableness to the end for which moral agents were created. The end for which moral agents were created is to be holy and happy, by partaking in God's own holiness and happiness, which consists in his perfect, uniting love within his triune self and to those created objects of his love.

God's love, as we have seen, manifests in his uniting to the objects of his love and thereby communicating his own holiness and happiness to them. This is consistent with God seeking his own end, for God is most glorified when rational creatures enjoy his fullness (as we saw in chapter 2). The love and holiness of the saints, therefore, imitates this love.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 558.

⁷¹ Ibid, 559.

And so far as a virtuous mind exercises true virtue in benevolence to created beings, it chiefly seeks the good of the creature, consisting in its knowledge or view of God's glory and beauty, its union with God, and conformity to him, love to him, and joy in him. And that temper or disposition of heart, that consent, union, or propensity of mind to Being in general, which appears chiefly in such exercises, is virtue, truly so called; or in other words, true grace and real holiness.

Real holiness thus consist in love, union of heart to God, but also to other creatures.

When one has true benevolence to another being, it seeks that being's happiness. God, when he loves a creature, desires the happiness of that creature. He unites himself to that creature and thereby communicates his happiness to that creature. The saint, recalling from our discussion on regeneration, is one who's will (faculty of inclination) is united to the Holy Spirit, the principle of divine love. This new principle, causes the soul to incline and unite to God, seeing God has the worthy object of love, and the source of all happiness. This new principle of grace, true virtue, and love (Edwards uses all three synonymously) which belong to the saint by the Spirit's indwelling and being united to their faculties (in this case, will) changes the overall inclination of the soul.

If we recall from Chapter three, in the natural state, the fallen soul is perpetually turned inward, being ruled by self-love. This is the effect of the Spirit, the principle of divine love, leaving the soul and the lower principles of desire and self-love taking the throne. For the saints, the principle of divine love takes up residence in the soul and the disposition of the soul is transformed from one of *narrowness* and *confinedness*, to one of *enlargedness* and *extendedness*. Edwards speaks of this transformation in a sermon called *Charity Contrary to a Selfish Spirit*, the tenth sermon in *Charity and its Fruits*. As soon as Adam transgressed at the fall, "those nobler principles were immediately lost and all this excellent enlargedness of his soul was gone and he thenceforth shrunk into a little point, circumscribed and closely shut up within itself to the *exclusion of others*, God was

forsaken and fellow creatures forsaken, and man retired within himself and become wholly governed by narrow, selfish principles.”⁷² This state left humanity in misery. If happiness is only found in holiness and this comes from sharing in God’s holiness through union with him, it follows that this state of sin and confinedness and enmity with God, should be marked by misery. God, in the work of redemption, purposed “to bring the soul of man out of its confinement, and again to infuse those nobler and divine principles by which it was governed at first. And so Christianity restores an excellent enlargement and extensiveness to the soul. It again possesses it of divine love or that Christian charity...whereby it again embraces its fellow creatures and it devoted to and swallowed up in the Creator.”⁷³

This new state of enlargement and extensiveness that marks the life of saint, is a life of Charity, true virtue, real holiness. As we saw above, Edwards, defines true virtue or real holiness as a union of heart to Being in general. This is first a foremost a union of heart or love to God and from this flows the propensity to unite to other creatures. Here we will briefly consider *why* Edwards insists on love being expressed as a union of heart. For one thing, we could say that this is an imitation of God own love – the love between the Father and Son, the Holy Spirit, is the perfect, eternal, bond of union within the Godhead. But there is more to be said here. For Edwards, the relationship between love and a propensity to unite is built on the notion of self-love. Self-love, we must remember, is not inherently sinful – it is only sinful when it becomes disordered. Self-love, for Edwards, is the love of one’s own happiness. This is central to the human nature, because

⁷² Ibid, 253. My emphasis.

⁷³ Ibid, 254.

all humans desire to be happy. What is sinful is when self-love becomes confined within the person - when the will of the soul is bent inward and seeks happiness in things which are confined to the self. Edwards is clear that “Christianity does not destroy humanity.”⁷⁴ The saints do not lose self-love; they do not lose the love of their own happiness. Rather, whereas in sin they sought happiness within themselves, those in the state of grace seek their happiness in God, for God is the new object of their love. “What can be more properly called love to any being, or any thing, than to place one’s happiness in that thing.”⁷⁵

This is where Edwards’ notion of union is central. “Love enlarges [the heart] and extends it to others. A man’s self is as it were extended and enlarged by love. Others...as it were, become parts of himself; so that wherein their interest is promoted he looks on his own as promoted, and wherein their interest is touched his is touched.”⁷⁶ God, who is supremely happy, unites to his people that they might be one with him, and thereby share in his happiness. His happiness becomes their happiness, because they are one. Likewise a saint, with this inclination to extend herself in love toward another, unites to the object of her love. She sees this person as part of herself – his happiness becomes her happiness; his pain becomes her pain. It is in this spirit that Edwards writes, “consider that the happiness of men consists in union and friendship with some other being... The creature

⁷⁴ Ibid, 254. Here we see one place where Edwards echoes the famous Thomistic doctrine that grace does not destroy but rather perfect nature. The love of happiness, which is part of the human nature, is not destroyed by grace, but rather it is perfected by being *redirected* toward God.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 258.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 263.

has not enough in himself to fill his own desires, and the heart seeks some other being to be happy in. Man is a creature who cannot be happy but in union and friendship.”⁷⁷

Edwards writes that this is precisely the manner in which Christ’s love for his people was manifested.

Such was Christ’s love to us that he was pleased in some respects to look on us as himself. By this love to men he has so espoused them and united his to heart to them that he is pleased in many respects to look on them as himself. His elect were from all eternity dear to him, as the apple of his eye. He looked upon them so much as himself that he looked on their concerns as his concerns, their interest as his own, and has made their guilt by a gracious assumption of it to himself, that it might be looked upon as his by divine imputation. And this love has sought to unite them so to himself as to makes them, as it were, members of himself, so that they are his flesh and his bone.⁷⁸

Divine love, for Edwards, always follows this pattern of uniting and thereby sharing benefits. God’s love for his people is expressed in his tendency to create them, unite to them, and through this union share with him his holiness and happiness. Christ’s ministry on earth in accomplishing redemption followed this pattern of uniting to them, taking their sin, and sharing with them his righteousness. The saints repeat this pattern by uniting to Christ in love in the mutual union that is saving faith, and unite to other creatures in love, having that principle of divine love and extensiveness of heart informing their wills.

What has been described – the union of heart to God and others - is the nature of true virtue. This is, for Edwards, love, or charity, the sum of all virtue and the very nature of holiness. It is that peculiar mark of the saints, who have the source of all holiness, God’s love, the Holy Spirit, dwelling in their souls and united to their faculties. The

⁷⁷ Edwards, *The Blessing of God*, 384.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 267.

natural person, has we have seen, does not partake in this holiness but lacks it completely, being completely without the indwelling of the Spirit. We have also seen that for Edwards, God is supremely holy and because he is infinitely holy, he is infinitely beautiful – his beauty *is* his holiness. This holiness consists in God’s perfect, eternal love to himself. This love, which is the person of the Holy Spirit, is that eternal bond of union between the Father and the Son. Just as God’s beauty consist in his moral excellency, so does the beauty of the saints consist in their moral excellency. “As the beauty of the divine nature does primarily consist in God’s holiness, so does the beauty of all divine things. Herein consists the beauty of the saints, that they are saints, or holy ones: ’tis the moral image of God in them, which is their beauty; and that is their holiness.”⁷⁹ As saints grow in holiness, as their love for God and others grows more and more like that of God himself, they become more and more beautiful. Just as the beauty of the Godhead consist in divine love, uniting consent, so does the beauty of the saint. The beauty of world, which images and shadows divine beauty likewise images this love, for the beauty of the world consist is “mutual consents.” Just as God’s love is manifested in a disposition to unite, so Edwards remarks that notes in a piece of music come together, “as if they loved one another.”⁸⁰ The life of the saint for Edwards is thus one of beholding beauty and one of becoming beautiful. When the Spirit unites and to the soul’s understanding the soul is able to *perceive* God’s beauty and everything in the world that imitates it. When Spirit unites to the soul’s will – the source of all inclination – divine love becomes a new principle that replaces the reign of self-love. The soul is transformed from a state of

⁷⁹ Edwards, *Works* 2:258.

⁸⁰ Edwards, *Works* 6:380.

confindeness and takes instead a disposition of extensiveness. The will is now inclined to unite to God in love, and thereby find happiness in his happiness. This propensity of union of heart to God extends also to his creatures. The soul, like the world, imitates and participates in God own beauty. Yet, unlike in natural beauty, this imitation is not a mere shadow, it is real, spiritual beauty. The beauty of the saints is an *actual* participation in the beauty of God, not a mere imitation, for the source of saint's beauty is God's own beauty, his moral perfection: divine love. Just as in our in our opening chapter, we have again love, beauty, holiness, and happiness in one view; this time, however, in regards to the life of the saint. The saint is made beautiful (and becomes increasingly beautiful) when he or she is made holy and becomes increasingly more holy. True virtue is the nature of this holiness and it consists in the propensity or union of heart to being (God and his creatures). In this holiness are saints not only made beautiful, but also happy. Their happiness comes from being united to God in love, who is supremely happy. Likewise part of the nature of love is finding happiness in others, by uniting to them and viewing their happiness as one's own, for in their union they are one in the other.

Before we move to our including chapter, there is one more matter I will note. Charity is the sum of all virtue and holiness. Charity, as we have seen, is defined as a propensity or union of heart to being. For Edwards, whereas all virtue consist in in this disposition toward union, those vices which are most contrary to charity are those vices which lend to the greatest disposition of disunion. Pride, envy, and selfishness are anti-communal vices. They do not lend toward an extensive deposition to unite with other, but rather lend to an inward, circumscribed disposition. Charity seeks the happiness of others and leads one to find her own happiness in the happiness of another. In contrast, "envy

may be defined, a spirit of opposition to other's happiness, or to the happiness of others considered as compared with their own." ⁸¹ Envy, which has its roots in pride, is directly contrary to the nature of true virtue; it does extend outward in union, but is narrow, confined, and therefore disunites. Likewise, selfishness, which also rooted in pride, is contrary to true virtue. One who is selfish does not extend in love toward others, but rather he is confined to self-interest. "He has no commerce or communion with another" but rather is "circumscribed within himself as to exclude others." ⁸² Here Edwards is remarkably consistent. Holiness and moral beauty consist in the tendency to unite to others in love. Those vices that are particularly odious are those that are expressed by the contrary tendency – a confined state where the interests of the soul are circumscribed inward. This is not a propensity of union, but rather of disunion or of anti-communion.

This last comment anticipates our concluding chapter. Here we will conclude the narrative of Edwards's theology by considering Edwards's vision of the other "two worlds": heaven and hell. Heaven is the "world of love" – the world of the ever perfecting union between God and his saints. Hell, for Edwards is a world of hate – a world of eternal inwardness: no love, no beauty, no union.

⁸¹ Edwards, *Works* 8: 219.

⁸² *Ibid*, 258.

CONCLUDING CHAPTER

Heaven as an Eternally-Perfecting Union

Earlier on in our discussion, we looked at *End of Creation* and caught a glimpse of Edwards's vision of the end for which God created the world. We established this end – that which all God's works in creation and providence are directed toward – to be an eternally-perfecting union of the triune God and the saints. In this union God eternally communicates his fullness that the saints are made supremely happy and God is eternally glorified. In the following chapters, we saw how this narrative of union plays out in the rest of Edwards's thought, letting his major works drive the conversation. We saw how for Edwards, the state of sin and misery is principally a state of disunion: there is disunion of humanity with God, disunion of human persons with others, and disunion within the soul of each person. We then considered the extent to which Edwards's soteriological vision is dominated by the *mutual union* that is *unio Christi*. In regeneration the Spirit of God unites to the soul of the sinner. Faith, whereby the person is justified, consists in the soul's uniting back to Christ in love. It is in this mutual union that the soul has union with Christ and is made a partaker of all Christ's benefits. In the last chapter we looked at the life of the saint – the life of one who is in union with, but also has the Spirit of God united to his or her faculties. The life of the saint we identified as a life of beholding beauty and becoming beautiful. Beauty beheld, consists in recognizing the sweet mutual consents (unions) in creation that image the love of God.

Likewise, becoming beautiful consists in growing in virtue and holiness, the sum of which consist in charity: union of heart to God and others.

Throughout our discussion, we recurrently saw the inseparable relationship between love, beauty, holiness, and happiness, and how the idea of union in Edwards's thought allows us to speak about how these relate to and are contained in one another. Divine love (who is for Edwards the third person of the Trinity) is the eternal, perfect love and the bond of union between the Father and the Son. It is this same divine love that brings God into union with his creatures and the creatures in union with one another. This divine love (the perfect, infinite love within the Triune God) *is* God's holiness and God's holiness is where his beauty chiefly consists. It is also in God's holiness, his perfect love, that his perfect happiness consists. The happiness and beauty of the saints likewise consists in their holiness. The holiness and happiness of the saints, we have seen, belongs to them by their being united to God in love. For when they are all one with him, his happiness becomes their happiness.

In this concluding chapter, we will finish our narrative by revisiting God's end of creation as understood by Edwards. Here we will look more closely at Edwards's vision of heaven. It is consistently held among Christians that heaven is a place of progressive blessedness. One might think of C.S. Lewis's *The Last Battle*, where Farsight, Jewel, and Reepicheep bid the Friends of Narnia to come "further up and further in." The last words of the story tell us that Aslan's Country is like a book in which every chapter is better than the one before.¹ Edwards shares this conviction that in that world, the happiness will not be stagnant, but will increase eternally. Edwards, however, goes further and

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1984), 198, 203, 211.

speculates *why* the happiness of the saints in heaven will increase into eternity. For Edwards, the happiness of heaven will increase because the saint's union with God will become eternally nearer. Edwards calls heaven a "world of love" – it is a world where the saints' love for God will eternally increase and therefore their union with God becomes eternally nearer. As the union grows stricter, their holiness and happiness increase into eternity. Heaven is therefore likewise, as consistent with the rest of Edwards's thought, a world most beautiful. In this chapter, we will also briefly treat Edwards's vision of hell. Here we see another consistency in Edwards's thought. While heaven is primarily understood as a world of love, hell is primarily understood as a world of hate. Heaven is a place of infinite holiness and happiness, hell is a place of infinite sin and misery. Heaven is a place principally marked by union, hell is principally marked by disunion.

As Edwards understands it, God's end in creation is to eternally communicate his fullness (summed in his knowledge, holiness, and happiness) to his people. All of God's works, chiefly the "great work" of redemption, are directed to accomplish this end. This end entails that the objects of God's love be brought into union with him, just as the three persons of the Trinity are in union with one another. It was this union that Christ spoke of when he prayed to the Father "That they all may be *one*, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, I in them and thou in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."² God's knowledge, holiness, and happiness is perfect and infinite, and the union of love, by the Spirit, between the Father and the Son, is of perfect nearness. Created beings will never reach the infinite knowledge, holiness, and happiness of the Godhead – they will never be as one with the Father and the Son as the Father and

² Edwards, *Works* 8:443.

the Son are with one another. The saints can, however, eternally increase in knowledge, holiness, and happiness; their union with God, while never as perfect as the union within the Godhead, can for eternity, become nearer and nearer. This is precisely Edwards's vision of the eternal life of the saints in heaven. God communicates his fulness by union, and as more is communicated, the union becomes nearer and nearer.

What is communicated is divine, or something of God: and each communication is of that nature, that the creature to whom it is made, is thereby conformed to God, and united to him... And 'tis farther to be considered that the thing which God aimed at in the creation of the world, as the end which he had ultimately in view, was that communication of himself, which he intended throughout all eternity... And 'tis to be considered that the more those divine communications increase in the creature, the more it becomes one with God: for so much the more is it united to God in love, the heart is drawn nearer and nearer to God, and the union with him becomes more firm and close: and at the same time the creature becomes more and more conformed to God. The image is more and more perfect, and so the good that is in the creature comes forever nearer and nearer to an identity with that which is in God. In the view therefore of God, who has a comprehensive prospect of the increasing union and conformity through eternity, it must be an infinitely strict and perfect nearness, conformity, and oneness. For it will forever come nearer and nearer to that strictness and perfection of union which there is between the Father and the Son: so that in the eyes of God, who perfectly sees the whole of it, in its infinite progress and increase, it must come to an eminent fulfillment of Christ's request [mentioned above].³

And elsewhere, Edwards continues,

The creature is no further happy with this happiness which God makes his ultimate end that he becomes one with God. The more happiness the greater union: when the happiness is perfect, the union is perfect. And as the happiness will be increasing to eternity, the union will become more and more strict and perfect; nearer and more like that between God the Father and the Son; who are so united, that their interest is perfectly one. If the happiness of the creature be considered as it will be, in the whole of the creature's eternal duration, with all the infinity of its progress, and infinite increase or nearness and union to God; in this view, the creature must be looked upon as united to God in an infinite nearness.⁴

³ Ibid, 442-443.

⁴ Ibid, 533-534.

Edwards's vision of heaven is thus one of progressive blessedness. God eternally communicates his knowledge, holiness, and happiness to the saints – the more the saints receive, the stronger their love for God grows. The greater the love becomes, the closer the union becomes, likewise the stricter the union becomes, the more communication there is and the more conformed to Christ's image the saints become.

While this vision is cast most explicitly in *End of Creation*, Edwards also has several *Miscellanies* devoted to the topic of heaven – many of which focus on heaven as a progressive state. In one Miscellany, Edwards argues specifically that the glorified saints shall grow in holiness and happiness for eternity. “Therefore, their knowledge will increase to eternity; and if their knowledge, doubtless their holiness. For as they increase in the knowledge of God and of the works of God, the more they will see of his excellency; and the more they see of his excellency, the more will they love him; and the more they love God, the more delight and happiness, will they have in him.” He remarks in another, and we have seen this principle elsewhere, that “holiness and happiness are all one in heaven;” where one is increased, the other is increased.⁵ Where there is increase in love, there is always, for Edwards, a closing or uniting – the more love, the greater the holiness and the stricter the union, the stricter the union, the more happiness. Thus Edwards's vision of heaven as a progression in happiness is consistent with the rest of the narrative we have been constructing. Redemption brings the elect into union with God and the eternal life of the saints consist in the eternal perfection of this union.

⁵ Edwards, *Works* 13: 276, 202.

This eternally perfecting union in love does not only apply to the saints with the Godhead, Edwards always speaks of the saints growing in stricter union with one another. On this union among the saints, Edwards, observes,

How soon do earthly lovers come to an end of their discoveries of each other's beauty; how soon do they see all that is to be seen! Are they united as near as 'tis possible, and have communion as intimate as possible? how soon do they come to the most endearing expressions of love that 'tis possible to give, so that no new ways can be invented, given or received. And how happy is that love, in which there is an eternal progress in all these things; wherein new beauties are continually discovered, and more and more loveliness, and in which we shall forever increase in beauty ourselves; where we shall be made capable of finding out and giving, and shall receive, more and more endearing expressions of love forever: our union will become more close, and communion more intimate.⁶

Thus the same pattern of increasing love, union, and happiness proceeds throughout eternity amongst the saints. This is no surprise, given how Edwards defines true virtue (love), namely, as union of heart. Recall what he treated above: "Love enlarges [the heart] and extends it to others. A man's self is as it were extended and enlarged by love. Others...as it were, become parts of himself; so that wherein there interest is promoted he looks on his own as promoted, and wherein their interest is touched his is touched."⁷ He also we see Edwards introduce beauty back into this vision of love and union. As the union of love becomes nearer, the more beautiful the saints become, recalling that beauty consist in holiness.

Edwards's vision of heaven follows the same pattern we have seen throughout his theological corpus. In eternity passed, the perfect, eternal divine love between the Father and Son (which is the Holy Spirit) perfectly united the persons of the Trinity. God's

⁶ Ibid, 336-337.

⁷ Edwards, *Works* 8:263.

holiness and happiness, and beauty consists in this love. This same divine love brought the elect into union and fellowship with the Triune God. This love is likewise manifested among the saints when they one another. Heaven is the eternal, perfect increase of this love. The more love is communicated, the stricter the union becomes; the stricter the union becomes, the greater the holiness; the greater the holiness, the greater the happiness; the greater the love, holiness, and happiness, the greater the beauty. “In heaven it is the direct reverse of what is on earth, for there by length of time, things become more and more youthful, that is, more vigorous, active, tender, and beautiful.”⁸

As is consistent with his theological narrative, because it is a world of love, it is a world of union. Edwards concludes his sermon series on I Corinthians 13 with a sermon title, *Heaven is a World of Love*.⁹ On the saints in heaven, Edwards writes,

They all love God with a supreme love. There is no enemy of God in heaven, but all love him as his children. They all are united with one mind to breathe forth their whole souls in love to their eternal Father, and to Jesus Christ, their common Head. Christ loves all his saints in heaven. His love flows out to his whole church there, and to every individual member of it; and they all with one heart and one soul, without any schism in the body, love their common Redeemer. Every heart is wedded to this spiritual husband. All rejoice in him, the angels concurring. And the angels and saints all love one another. All that glorious society are sincerely united. There is no secret or open enemy among them; not one heart but is full of love, nor one person who is not beloved. As they are all lovely, so all see each other's loveliness with answerable delight and complacence. Everyone there loves every other inhabitant of heaven whom he sees, and so he is mutually beloved by everyone.¹⁰

⁸ Edwards, *Works* 13: 341.

⁹ This sermon is the final sermon to Edwards's sermon series (which became on his best-known works), *Charity in its Fruits*. Edwards fittingly concludes this masterwork on the nature of Christian charity with this picture of heaven as a world where divine love (that is love that comes from the Spirit of God – both in God and the saints and angels) is made perfect. That fact that hell is also spoken of helps us understand the place of hell in Edwards's theology. Hell, the world of hate, is not the center, but rather stands in stark contrast to heaven, the world of love.

¹⁰ Edwards, *Works* 8:374.

Throughout our discussion, we have considered a corollary to Edwards's convictions regarding love, beauty, and union. In Chapter Three we saw how the sinful condition of humanity – which Edwards chiefly denotes as misery – is principally understood as a state of disunion. We revisited this notion again in Chapter Five. Whereas true virtue, which is the highest moral beauty, consists in a disposition toward union, those vices which are most contrary to moral beauty (Edwards cites pride, envy, and greed), sever union. The will of the fallen person, as Edwards understands, is bent inward and is ruled by self-love. Whereas the free and holy will extends to unite and commune with God and others, the will of the wicked is confined, narrow, and essentially anti-communal.

In Edwards's vision of hell, we see this same pattern. Heaven is a world of love, hell, for Edwards, is primarily a world of hatred.¹¹ Heaven is a world marked by union; hell is a world by disunion. Heaven is a place of ever-increasing love, holiness, and happiness; hell is a place of ever-increasing hate, sin, and misery. We will consider some of Edwards's remarks where we see this to be the case.

In Edwards's sermon, *Heaven is a World of Love*, there is also a warning about the danger for those who are not in Christ. "Hell is a world of hatred. There are three worlds. One is this present world, which is an intermediate world, a world where good and bad, love and hatred are mixed together; a sure sign that the world is not to continue. Another is heaven, a world of love where is love and no hatred. And the other is hell, a world of hatred where there is no love."¹² Whereas heaven is a place of perfect, mutual

¹¹ I stress this point because whereas hell is usually primarily recognized as a place of misery and suffering, Edwards uniquely emphasizes hatred. Hell is, of course, for Edwards a place of misery, but *because* it is a world of hate, a world of disunion.

¹² *Ibid*, 390.

love amongst God, the angels, and the saints, hell is a world of “perfect” hatred to God, the angels, the saints, *and* the wicked themselves.

There are none there but what have been haters of God, and so have procured God's hatred on themselves. And they shall continue to hate him. There is no love to God in hell. Everyone there *perfectly* hates him, and are continually, without restraint, expressing their hatred to him, blaspheming and cursing him, and, as it were, spitting venom at him. And though they all join together in their enmity and opposition to God, *yet there is no union among themselves*. They agree to nothing but hatred and expressions of hatred. They hate God, and hate Christ, and hate angels and saints in heaven. And not only so, but hate one another. They will all be like a company of serpents or vipers one to another, not only spitting poison at God but at one another, biting and tormenting one another.¹³

We saw how in the state of the innocence, in the state of grace, and in the state of glory, the principle of divine love reigns in the soul. In the state of nature, the principle of self-love ruled the soul, making the soul confined and turned inward, not extending out to unite to others. Yet even in the fallen state, God's grace restrained these principles in the human heart. In hell, however, “all those principles which are contrary to love will rage and reign without any restraining grace to keep them within their bounds. Here will be unrestrained pride, and envy, and revenge. Here will be contention in its perfection, and without any such thing as making peace.”¹⁴ Pride, envy, and hatred, - those vices which pull the soul inward, away from love, union, and communion – reign in hell unrestrained. For this reason, Edwards writes that although the wicked are joined in hatred, there is no union among them.

For, Edwards, just as it is in heaven, hell is likewise a world of progression. In heaven, as the love and union increase, so does holiness, happiness, and beauty. In hell,

¹³ Ibid, 390-391. My emphasis.

¹⁴ Ibid, 391.

as the hatred increases, the souls of the wicked grow more confined, more miserable, and more odious.

Therefore, their [the saints] knowledge will increase to eternity; and if their knowledge, doubtless their holiness. For as they increase in the knowledge of God and of the works of God, the more they will see of his excellency; and the more they see of his excellency the more will they love him; and the more they love God, the more delight and happiness, will they have in him. It will be objected, that at this rate we might prove that the damned increase in perfection. I answer, no, for though it is true that they shall increase in knowledge, [they shall] increase in odiousness in the same proportion. For the more knowing good is, the more good; so the more knowing evil is, the more evil. ¹⁵

Just as the capacity for blessedness in the saints increases in to eternity, so the capacity for misery of the wicked increases. Edwards vision of the afterlife – both heaven and hell – is a state of progression. One is a world of increasing love, holiness, beauty, and happiness, as the union among the inhabitants of heaven becomes stricter; the other is a world of increasing hatred, wickedness, odiousness, and misery, as the inhabits grow more and more confined in their hatred.

This concludes our discussion – the narrative of Edwards’s thought has come full circle. In our survey of Edwards’s theology, we have drawn out the narrative of God bringing his people into an eternally perfecting union. In the course we have seen how union is a central aesthetic component that unites, if you will, Edwards’s understanding of love, holiness, beauty, and happiness. We cannot give an adequate account of Edwards’s Trinitarian thought, his understanding of divine love, holiness, beauty, and happiness without speaking in terms of union. We likewise cannot give an adequate account of Edwards’s understanding of sin (moral ugliness) apart from the terminology of (dis)union. Salvation, for Edwards, is achieved by a soul’s union with Christ. The

¹⁵ Edwards, *Works* 13:275-276.

Christian saint is one who has her faculties united to the Spirit of God. She is one who beholds the beauty of the world, particularly as it, in its mutual *consents*, imitates the beauty of divine love. The saint is likewise one who herself becomes beautiful, as her growth in true virtue (union of heart to God) conforms her more and more to Christ's image. Heaven and hell are worlds of increasing union or disunion; heaven, in its unity is altogether lovely, hell in its disunion, is altogether hateful. Union is therefore that concept that gives us an orientation when viewing Edwards's theology. Everything in Edwards's thought is indeed related; bringing union to the center allows us to see these relationships more concretely. Edwards's theology, as theologies should, tells the story of God's redemption. Our discussion has laid out Edwards's vision of this redemption: God, through his divine love, brings his people into union with himself, and thereby makes them supremely happy, holy, and beautiful.

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