

Introduction

The emanation or communication of the divine fulness, consisting in the knowledge of God, love to him, and joy in him, has relation indeed both to God and the creature: but it has relation to God as its fountain, as the thing communicated is something of its internal fulness. . . . In the creature's knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both exhibited and acknowledged; his fulness is received and returned. Here is both an emanation and remanation. . . . So that the whole is of God, and in God, and to God; and he is the beginning, the middle, and the end.

—JONATHAN EDWARDS, CONCERNING
THE END FOR WHICH GOD CREATED THE
WORLD

Echoing the Apostle Peter, Jonathan Edwards claims that “being partakers of the divine nature” is not only a soteriological benefit that is “peculiar to the saints,” but also “one of the highest privileges of the saints.”¹ Human participation in the divine life is, therefore, a central theme in Edwards’s soteriology and a defining motif in his overall theological thinking.² This project seeks to present an internally coherent picture of Edwards’s doctrine of participation in God as a uniquely Reformed–Puritan construct, at once traditional yet creative.³

SECONDARY LITERATURE ON EDWARDS’S SOTERIOLOGY

In his monograph, Anri Morimoto compares Edwards’s soteriology of participation in God with the various doctrines of grace in medieval Catholicism.⁴ Michael McClymond outlines, in an essay, similarities between the soteriologies of Gregory Palamas and Edwards.⁵ He attends to Edwards’s construal of participation in God as a form of Christianized Neoplatonism

mediated through the Cambridge Platonists. While Morimoto helpfully situates Edwards's theology of grace within the context of the larger pre-Reformation Latin tradition, and McClymond has briefly outlined the parallels between Palamas and Edwards, no systematic and broad account of Edwards's doctrine of participation in the divine life has been attempted thus far. This project is an initial attempt to fill the lacuna and, in doing so, to locate the key secondary interpretations of Edwards's thought—that is, his Trinitarianism and aesthetics—in relation to his soteriology of participation in God.⁶

METHOD AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

My approach, while not denying Edwards's philosophical originality, concentrates on his creative retrieval and synthesis of theological motifs both from his own Puritan-Reformed-Augustinian tradition and the larger Western theological tradition.⁷ The method is not, however, oriented toward the genetic-historical, but rather focuses on the synthetic-comparative.

The primary thrust of the project aims to systematically draw together Edwards's various ideas related to participation in God. Because human participation in God is inextricably linked to Trinitarian self-communication, I argue that Edwards's motif of *exitus et reditus*, or, in his nomenclature, emanation and remanation, is the key to explicating this dialectic (table 1.2).⁸

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The chapters following this introduction are arranged around three interrelated loci: the doctrines of the Trinity, Christ, and salvation. As I shall show, the ground of possibility for Edwards's doctrine of participation in God is his doctrine of self-communication within God. In chapter 1, I discuss Edwards's understanding of the self-communication of essence and persons within the ontological Trinity. The focus is on the procession of the Spirit as an eternal movement of procession and return *ad intra*.

Chapter 2 works out this emanation and remanation theme in creation and redemption as grounded in the Trinitarian internal processions and divine counsels. The Holy Spirit, as the bond of love between Father and Son, is the basis for the willed egress of creatures from God in creation and their return to God in redemption.

Chapter 3 bridges Edwards's doctrines of the Trinity and Christology. We investigate his Trinitarian construal of the *pactum salutis* by which the Son compacted with the Father in the Spirit to become incarnate. As this self-communication of the Son in human form was the work of the Trinity *ad extra*,

we look at how the Father and Spirit inseparably and distinctly participate in incarnating the Son.

In the next two chapters, the focus shifts to Christology proper. Chapter 4 centers on the relation between the divine Word and his assumed human nature. The central question is this: How does Jesus as man participate in the being and operations of the divine Son? In chapter 5, the study looks at the mutual interaction and participation between the two natures in Christ. Here, we look at two lines of inquiry: Is the human nature deified? Does the divine nature suffer?

Subsequently, the center of gravity moves to Edwards's soteriology. In chapter 6, I present the theme of union with Christ as fundamental to Edwards's understanding of the manner in which the saints participate in Christ and his benefits. While the investigation covers various aspects of salvation—regeneration, faith, adoption, justification, and sanctification—the prime focus of this chapter is on Edwards's doctrine of justification. In the penultimate chapter, the dissertation analyzes his doctrine of grace, looking in detail into the nature of the Spirit's self-communication in sanctification and the saint's participation in "the divine nature." The concluding chapter looks briefly at Edwards's doctrine of glorification as the continuation and culmination of sanctification.

Notes

1. Edwards, "Treatise on Grace," in *WJE* 21:156. See also Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition Christian*, vol. 5, *Doctrine and Modern Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 161.

2. See also Roland André Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards: An Essay in Aesthetics and Theological Ethics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Delattre even argues that the idea of participation in God is the central interpretive key to Jonathan Edwards's ethics; see his "The Theological Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: A Homage to Paul Ramsey," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 74.

3. Conrad Chery argues for Edwards's Calvinism and against his mysticism in *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990). James M. Gustafson points to the Reformed Augustinianism of Edwards; see *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Theology and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 171–76.

4. Anri Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

5. Michael McClymond, "Salvation as Divinization: Jonathan Edwards, Gregory Palamas and the Theological Uses of Neoplatonism," in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003), 139–60. McClymond highlights the parallels between Palamite soteriology and Edwards's theology, which include divine

illumination, direct “mystical” experience, the divine essence–energies distinction, everlasting spiritual progress, and an embodied, holistic anthropology.

6. On Edwards’s doctrine of the Trinity, see Amy Plantinga Pauw’s seminal monograph, *The Supreme Harmony of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), which is the revision of her similarly titled dissertation: “The Supreme Harmony of All’: Jonathan Edwards and the Trinity” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1990). On this aesthetics, see Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility*, passim.

7. Beginning with Perry Miller’s landmark work, many other seminal studies have demonstrated Edwards’s creativity in the “modern” sense; see Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (Cleveland, OH: World, 1959). He not only restated the Reformed tradition by appropriating many philosophical ideas of his time but also advanced a thorough reconstruction of the substance ontology of the Western theological tradition. Thus, Sang Hyun Lee argues that the traditional metaphysics of substance and form was reconceived by Edwards as an ontology of dispositions and habits. See his *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); see also idem, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, expanded ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). All citations hereafter shall refer to the expanded edition. See also Avihu Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards’s Philosophy of History: The Reenchantment of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Edwards appropriated the Enlightenment idea of progress, without its human-centered emphasis, into his theocentric notion of an ever-advancing redemptive history.

8. See particularly Lee, *PTJE*, ch. 7ff.