

C H A P T E R O N E

WHEREIN IS CONSIDERED WHAT REASON TEACHES CONCERNING THIS AFFAIR

SECTION ONE

SOME THINGS OBSERVED IN GENERAL WHICH REASON DICTATES

[27] Having observed these things to prevent confusion, I now proceed to consider what *may*, and what may *not*, be supposed to be God's ultimate end in the creation of the world.

Reason by itself is a defective guide

[28] Indeed this affair seems properly to be an affair of divine revelation. In order to [determine]¹⁸ what was designed, in the creating of the astonishing fabric of the universe we behold, it becomes us to attend to and rely on what HE who was the architect has told us. He best knows his own heart and what his own ends and designs were, in the wonderful works which he has wrought. Nor is it to be supposed that mankind—who, while destitute of revelation, by the utmost improvements of their own reason and advances in science and philosophy could come to no clear and

¹⁸ Original "In order to be determined . . ."

established determination who the *author* of the world was—would ever have obtained any tolerable settled judgment of the end which the author of it proposed to himself in so vast, complicated, and wonderful a work of his hands.

Revelation has improved the use of reason, but not enough

[29] And though it be true that the revelation which God has given to men, as a light shining in a dark place, has been the occasion of great improvement of their faculties and has taught men how to use their reason; and though mankind now, through the long-continued assistance they have had by this divine light, have come to great attainments in the habitual exercise of reason; yet I confess it would be relying too much on reason to determine the affair of God's last end in the creation of the world, without being herein *principally* guided by divine revelation, since God has given a revelation containing instructions concerning this very matter.

But reason can help answer objections to revelation

[30] Nevertheless, as objections have chiefly been made against what I think the Scriptures have truly revealed from the pretended dictates of reason, I would, in the *first* place, soberly consider in a few things what seems rational to be supposed concerning this affair—and *then* proceed to consider what light divine revelation gives us in it.

Six things that seem rational to suppose

[31] As to the *first* of these, I think the following things appear to be the dictates of reason:

[DICTATE ONE]

*God's acting for the sake of his ultimate end
implies no insufficiency in himself*

[32] That no notion of God's last end in the creation of the world is agreeable to reason, which would truly imply any indigence,¹⁹ insufficiency, and mutability in God, or any dependence of the

¹⁹ "Indigence" means poverty and deprivation.

Creator on the creature for any part of his perfection or happiness. Because it is evident, by both Scripture and reason, that God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, and independently glorious and happy; that he cannot be profited by, or receive anything from, the creature; or be the subject of any sufferings, or diminution of his glory and felicity, from any other being.

[33] The notion of God creating the world, in order to receive any thing properly from the creature, is not only contrary to the nature of God, but inconsistent with the notion of creation; which implies a being receiving its existence, and all that belongs to it, out of nothing. And this implies the most perfect, absolute, and universal derivation and dependence. Now, if the creature receives its ALL from God, entirely and perfectly, how is it possible that *it* should have any thing to add to God to make him in any respect more than he was before, and so the Creator become dependent on the creature?²⁰

[DICTATE TWO]

*God's existence precedes his action
and so can't be the end of God's action*

[34] Whatsoever is good and valuable *in itself* is worthy that God should value it with an *ultimate* respect. It is therefore worthy to be made the *last end* of his operation, if it be properly *capable* of being attained. For it may be supposed that some things, valuable

²⁰ While this is compelling to me, as it was to Edwards, it is not at all assumed by some, who conceive of God creating other creators (angels and humans) who can originate reality that God neither wills nor foresees, and therefore must reckon with as coming from outside himself. Such theologians would then not agree with Edwards that God "cannot . . . receive anything from the creature" that he did not first supply. One recent form of this historically unorthodox theology is called the "Openness of God" or "Free-will Theism." For example, one popular exponent of this view says, "If the future is genuinely 'open'—if it is to some degree not yet created, *leaving room for self-creating beings to create it*—then the truth value of propositions regarding the future, insofar as the future is yet open, must themselves also be open, and God must know them as such, for God's knowledge is, by definition, exhaustively accurate" (emphasis added) (Greg Boyd, *Trinity and Process: A Critical Evaluation and Reconstruction of Hartshorne's Di-Polar Theism Towards a Trinitarian Metaphysics* [New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1992], p. 307). Similarly, in Boyd's more popular *Letters from a Skeptic*, he says, "God can't foreknow the good or bad decisions of the people He creates until He creates these people and they, in turn, create their decisions" (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1994), p. 30. Boyd concedes that "until the time of the Socinians [Faustus Socinus died in 1604], the belief that God's omniscience included all future events was not generally questioned" (*Trinity and Process*, p. 296f.). That is true. Moreover, the Socinian view has never been viewed as orthodox since that time—which should give us pause, before we reject a view of God that has always and everywhere been considered orthodox by the church.

and excellent in themselves, are not properly capable of being *attained* in any divine operation; because their existence, in all possible respects, must be conceived of as *prior* to any divine operation. Thus God's existence and infinite perfection, though infinitely valuable in themselves, cannot be supposed to be the *end* of any divine operation; for we cannot conceive of them as in any respect *consequent* on any works of God. But whatever is *in itself valuable*, absolutely so, and is *capable* of being sought and *attained*, is worthy to be made a last end of the divine operation. Therefore,

[DICTATE THREE]

What is in itself most valuable and attainable by creation is God's ultimate end in creation

[35] Whatever that be which is *in itself* most valuable, and was so originally, prior to the creation of the world, and which is *attainable* by the creation, if there be any thing which was superior in value to all others, *that* must be worthy to be God's *last* end in the creation; and also worthy to be his *highest end*. In consequence of this it will follow,

[DICTATE FOUR]

God's moral rectitude consists in his valuing the most valuable, namely, himself

[36] That if God *himself* be, in *any respect*, properly *capable* of being his own end in the creation of the world, then it is reasonable to suppose that he had respect to *himself*, as his last and highest end, in this work; because he is *worthy* in himself to be so, being infinitely the greatest and best of beings. All things else, with regard to worthiness, importance, and excellence, are perfectly as nothing in comparison of him. And therefore, if God has respect to things according to their nature and proportions, he must necessarily have the greatest respect to himself. It would be against the perfection of his nature, his wisdom, holiness, and perfect rectitude, whereby he is disposed to do everything that is fit to be done, to suppose otherwise.

[37] At least, a great part of the moral rectitude of God,

whereby he is disposed to every thing that is fit, suitable, and amiable [i.e., pleasant, admirable] in itself, consists in his having the highest regard to that which is in itself highest and best. The moral rectitude of God must consist in a due respect to things that are objects of moral respect; that is, to intelligent beings capable of moral actions and relations. And therefore it must chiefly consist in giving due respect to that Being to whom most is due; for God is infinitely the most worthy of regard. The worthiness of others is as nothing to his; so that to him belongs all possible respect. To him belongs the *whole* of the respect that any intelligent being is capable of. To him belongs ALL the heart. Therefore, if moral rectitude of heart consists in paying the respect of the heart which is due, or which fitness and suitableness requires, fitness requires infinitely the greatest regard to be paid to God; and the denying of supreme regard here would be a conduct infinitely the most unfit. Hence it will follow, that the moral rectitude of the disposition, inclination, or affection of God CHIEFLY consists in a regard to HIMSELF, infinitely above his regard to all other beings; in other words, his holiness consists in this.²¹

*It is fitting that God show by his works
what he values most, himself*

[38] And if it be thus fit that God should *have* a supreme regard to himself, then it is fit that this supreme regard should *appear* in those things by which he makes himself known, or by his *word* and *works*, i.e. in what he *says*, and in what he *does*. If it be an infi-

²¹ The truth of the preceding two paragraphs has been enormously important in the shaping of my own understanding of reality. I would encourage the reader to wrestle earnestly with this truth: "That the moral rectitude of . . . God CHIEFLY consists in a regard to HIMSELF, infinitely above his regard to all other beings." This is a continental divide in theology. If you really believe this, all the rivers of your thinking run toward God. If you do not, all the rivers run toward man. The theological and practical implications are innumerable. Settling this issue is worth many nights of prayer and months of study. Edwards calls God's regard to himself his "holiness." It may be more proper to call it God's "righteousness." Thus his "holiness" would be the infinite worth that God has in his own estimation, and his righteousness would be his valuing and respecting that worth without wavering and upholding it in all that he does. In my book *The Justification of God*, I have tried to show that this understanding of God's righteousness is the key to unlocking the "justification of God" in Romans 9, and that it is a deeply Biblical definition, not merely a rationally compelling one. There I argue that in the Old Testament and in Paul, "the righteousness of God must be his unswerving commitment always to preserve the honor of his name and to display his glory." John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), p. 219, see p. 97.

nately amiable [i.e., pleasant, admirable] thing in God that he should have a supreme regard to himself, then it is an amiable [i.e., pleasant, admirable] thing that he should *act* as having a chief regard to himself, or act in such a manner as to *show* that he has such a regard: that what is highest in God's *heart* may be highest in his *actions* and *conduct*. And if it was God's intention, as there is great reason to think it was, that his *works* should exhibit an *image* of himself their author, that it might brightly appear by his works what manner of being he is, and afford a proper representation of his divine excellencies, and especially his *moral* excellence, consisting in the *disposition of his heart*; then it is reasonable to suppose that his works are so wrought as to *show* this supreme respect to himself, wherein his moral excellence primarily consists.

*The degree of regard for a being
is in proportion to its existence and excellence*

[39] When we are considering what would be most fit for God *chiefly* to respect with regard to the universality of things, it may help us to judge with greater ease and satisfaction to consider what we can *suppose* would be determined by some third being of perfect wisdom and rectitude that should be perfectly indifferent and disinterested. Or if we make the supposition that infinitely wise justice and rectitude were a distinct, disinterested person whose office it was to determine how things shall be most properly ordered in the whole kingdom of existence, including king and subjects, God and his creatures; and upon a view of the whole, to decide what regard should prevail in all proceedings—how such a judge, in adjusting the proper measures and kinds of regard, would weigh things in an even balance; taking care that a greater part of the whole should be more respected than the lesser, in proportion (other things being equal) to the measure of existence. So that the *degree of regard* should always be in a *proportion compounded* of the *proportion of existence* and *proportion of excellence*, or according to the degree of *greatness* and *goodness*, considered *conjunctly*.

As the Creator is infinite, so he must have all possible regard

[40] Such an arbiter, in considering the system of *created* intelligent beings by itself, would determine that the *system in general*, consisting of many millions, was of greater importance, and worthy of a greater share of regard, than only one individual. For, however considerable some of the individuals might be, no one exceeds others so much as to countervail all the system. And if this judge consider not only the system of created beings, but the system of *being in general*, comprehending the *sum total* of universal existence, both Creator and creature; still every part must be considered according to its importance or the measure it has of *existence* and *excellence*.

[41] To determine then what proportion of regard is to be allotted to the Creator and all his creatures taken together, both must be as it were put in the balance; the *Supreme Being*, with all in him that is great and excellent, is to be compared with all that is to be found in the *whole creation*; and according as the former is found to outweigh, in such proportion is he to have a greater share of regard. And in this case, as the whole system of created beings, in comparison of the Creator, would be found as the light dust of the balance, or even as nothing and vanity; so the arbiter must determine accordingly with respect to the *degree* in which God should be regarded, by all intelligent existence, in all actions and proceedings, determinations and effects whatever, whether creating, preserving, using, disposing, changing, or destroying. And as the Creator is infinite, and has all possible existence, perfection, and excellence, so he must have all possible regard. As he is every way the first and supreme, and as his excellency is in all respects the supreme beauty and glory, the original good, and fountain of all good; so he must have in all respects the supreme regard. And as he is *God over all*, to whom all are properly subordinate and on whom all depend, worthy to reign as supreme Head, with absolute and universal dominion; so it is *fit* that he should be so regarded by all, and in all proceedings and effects through the whole system: The universality of things, in their whole compass and series, should look to him in such a manner as that respect to

him should reign over all respect to other things, and regard to creatures should, universally, be subordinate and subject.

Every wheel should move with invariable regard to God

[42] When I speak of *regard* to be thus adjusted in the universal system, I mean the regard of the *sum total*; all intelligent existence, created and uncreated. For it is fit, that the regard of the *Creator* should be proportioned to the worthiness of objects, as well as the regard of creatures. Thus, we must conclude that such an arbiter as I have supposed would determine that the whole universe, in all its actings, proceedings, revolutions, and entire series of events, should proceed with a view to *God* as the supreme and last end; that every wheel, 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, possessed of perfect wisdom and rectitude, became the common soul of the universe and actuated and governed it in all its motions.

*Infinite wisdom and rectitude arbitrates
what is fit and suitable in the universe*

[43] Thus I have gone upon the supposition of a third disinterested person. The thing supposed is impossible; but the case is, nevertheless, just the same as to what is most fit and suitable in itself. For it is most certainly proper for God to act, according to the greatest *fitness*, and he knows what the greatest fitness is, as much as if perfect rectitude were a distinct person to direct him. God himself is possessed of that perfect discernment and rectitude which have been supposed. It belongs to him as supreme arbiter, and to his infinite wisdom and rectitude, to state all rules and measures of proceedings. And seeing these attributes of God are infinite and most absolutely perfect, they are not the less fit to order and dispose, because they are in him who is a being concerned, and not a third person that is disinterested. For being *interested* unfits a person to be an arbiter or judge no otherwise than as interest tends to mislead his judgment, or incline him to act contrary to it. But that God should be in danger of either is contrary to the sup-

position of his being absolutely perfect. And as there must be *some* supreme judge of fitness and propriety in the universality of things (otherwise there could be no order), it therefore belongs to God, whose are all things, who is perfectly fit for this office, and who alone is so, to state all things according to the most perfect fitness and rectitude, as much as if perfect rectitude were a distinct person. We may therefore be sure it is and will be done.

*It should seem that God proposes himself
as the chief end of creation*

[44] I should think that these things might incline us to suppose that God has not forgot himself in the ends which he proposed in the creation of the world; but that he has so stated these ends (however self-sufficient, immutable, and independent), as therein plainly to show a supreme regard to himself. Whether this can be, or whether God has done thus, must be considered afterwards, as also what may be objected against this view of things.

[DICTATE FIVE]

*What God values for its own sake in creation
is his ultimate end in creation*

[45] Whatsoever is good, amiable [i.e., pleasant, admirable], and valuable *in itself*, *absolutely* and *originally* (which facts and events show that God aimed at in the creation of the world), must be supposed to be regarded or aimed at by God *ultimately* or as an ultimate end of creation. For we must suppose from the perfection of God's nature that whatsoever is valuable and amiable [i.e., pleasant, admirable] in itself, simply and absolutely considered, God values simply for itself; because God's judgment and esteem are according to truth. But if God values a thing simply and absolutely on its own account, then it is the *ultimate* object of his value. For to suppose that he values it only for some *farther* end is in direct contradiction to the present supposition, which is that he values it absolutely and for itself. Hence it most clearly follows that, if that which God values *for itself*, appears, in fact and experience, to be what he seeks by any thing he does, he must regard it as an *ultimate* end. And therefore, if he seeks it in creating the world or any

part of the world, it is an ultimate end of the work of creation. Having got thus far, we may now proceed a step farther, and assert,

[DICTATE SIX]

*What God attained in creating the world,
he aimed at, and what he aimed at is his end*

[46] Whatsoever thing is *actually* the *effect* of the creation of the world, which is simply and absolutely valuable in itself, that thing is an ultimate end of God's creating the world. We see that it is a good which God *aimed* at by the creation of the world; because he has *actually attained* it by that means. For we may justly infer what God *intends*, by what he actually *does*; because he does nothing inadvertently or without design. But whatever God *intends* to attain, from a value for it, in his actions and works, that he *seeks* in those acts and works. Because, for an agent to *intend* to attain something he values by the means he uses is the same thing as to *seek* it by those means. And this is the same as to make that thing his *end* in those means. Now, it being, by the supposition, what God *values ultimately*, it must therefore, by the preceding position, be *aimed at* by God, as an ultimate end of creating the world.

SECTION TWO

*SOME FURTHER OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THOSE THINGS
WHICH REASON LEADS US TO SUPPOSE GOD AIMED AT
IN THE CREATION OF THE WORLD*

What is the actual effect or consequence of creation?

[47] From what was last observed, it *seems* to be the most proper way of proceeding—as we would see what light *reason* will give us, respecting the particular end or ends God had ultimately in view in the creation of the world—to consider what thing or things are *actually* the effect or *consequence* of the creation of the world that are simply and originally valuable in themselves. And this is what I would directly proceed to, without entering on any tedious metaphysical inquiries, wherein fitness or amiableness [i.e., pleas-

antness, admirableness] consists; referring what I say to the dictates of the reader's mind, on sedate and calm reflection.

[SUPPOSITION ONE]

*If God is sufficient for great effects,
it is fitting that he effect them in creation*

[48] It seems a thing in itself proper and desirable that the glorious attributes of God, which consist in a *sufficiency* to certain acts and effects, should be *exerted* in the production of such effects as might manifest his infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, &c.²² If the world had not been created, these attributes never would have had any *exercise*.²³ The *power* of God, which is a sufficiency in him to produce great effects, must for ever have been dormant and useless as to any effect. The divine *wisdom* and prudence would have had no exercise in any wise contrivance, any prudent proceeding, or disposal of things; for there would have been no objects of contrivance or disposal. The same might be observed of God's *justice*, *goodness*, and *truth*.

[49] Indeed God might have *known* as perfectly that he pos-

²² The words "sufficiency" and "exerted" are meant to contrast the ability of God to a thing and the actual effecting of the thing through his exerting himself. The point is that it would seem proper that God, out of highest respect to himself, should exert himself to make his glorious attributes manifest.

²³ This statement taken by itself would be misleading as to what Edwards really thinks. It sounds as though there is no exercise of these attributes in the triune being of God apart from creation. This illustrates the very difficult task Edwards had of always qualifying his statements to give them the careful nuances that such a difficult theme as this demands. To clarify what he thinks here, consider these words from Miscellany #553, "There are many of the divine attributes that, if God had not created the world, never would have had any exercise—the power of God, the wisdom of God, the prudence and contrivance of God, the goodness and mercy and grace of God, the justice of God. . . . 'Tis true that there was from eternity that act in God, within Himself and towards Himself, that was the exercise of the same perfections of His nature. But it was not the same kind of exercise. It virtually contained it, but was not explicitly the same exercise of His perfection. God, who delights in the exercise of His own perfection, delights in all the kinds of its exercise" (Harvey Townsend, ed., *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards* [Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1972], p. 136). In other words, Edwards, when speaking more carefully, would not say that God's attributes lay dormant *in every way*. They were in exercise as the members of the Trinity know and love each other, yet they were not in exercise with "the same kind" of exercise as they would have in creation as a public shining forth of God's glory.

Edwards does not make it explicit, but Daniel Fuller draws out the implication from Edwards, that all the attributes of God find exercise in the eternal life of the Trinity except mercy, or grace. Yet it is not as though God would not have an essential divine attribute without creation, for grace is unique in that it is but the free overflow of all the other excellencies of God for weak and dependent creatures to enjoy. Grace is the overflow of fullness and sufficiency, not the effort to repair a divine defect. See Daniel Fuller, *Unity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), pp. 129-137.

sessed these attributes, if they never had been exerted or expressed in any effect. But then, if the attributes which consist in a *sufficiency* for correspondent effects, are in themselves excellent, the *exercises* of them must likewise be excellent. If it be an excellent thing that there should be a sufficiency for a certain kind of action or operation, the excellency of such a sufficiency must consist in its *relation* to this kind of operation or effect; but that could not be, unless the *operation itself* were excellent. A sufficiency for any work is no further valuable than the work itself is valuable.²⁴

[50] As God therefore esteems these attributes *themselves* valuable and delights in them, so it is natural to suppose that he delights in their proper *exercise* and expression. For the same reason that he esteems his own sufficiency wisely to *contrive* and dispose effects, he also will esteem the wise *contrivance* and disposition itself. And for the same reason, as he delights in his own disposition to do justly and to dispose of things according to truth and just proportion, so he must delight in such a righteous disposal itself.

[SUPPOSITION TWO]

*It is most fitting that beings exist to know
what God can manifest of his excellency*

[51] It seems to be a thing in itself fit and desirable that the glorious perfections of God should be *known*, and the operations and expressions of them seen, by *other beings* besides himself. If it be fit that God's power and wisdom, &c. should be exercised and *expressed* in some effects and not lie eternally dormant, then it seems proper that these exercises should *appear* and not be totally hidden and unknown. For if they are, it will be just the same as to the above purpose, as if they were not. God as perfectly knew himself and his perfections, [and] has as perfect an idea of the exer-

²⁴ Edwards's own footnote: "The *end* of wisdom" (says Mr. G. Tennent, in his sermon at the opening of the Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia) "is *design*; the *end* of power is *action*; the *end* of goodness is *doing* good. To suppose these perfections not to be *exerted* would be to represent them as insignificant. Of what use would God's *wisdom* be, if it had nothing to design or direct? To what purpose his *almightiness*, if it never brought any thing to pass? And of what avail his *goodness*, if it never did any good?" [In his own sentence, Edwards does not mean that God is no more valuable than creation is valuable. He means that when a divine attribute is regarded as a *sufficiency* for action, the value of the sufficiency *as such* is coordinate with the value of the potential operation. As the next paragraph makes plain, the value of the effect comes from the value of the attribute, not vice versa. This is the opposite of utilitarianism in God.]

cises and effects they were sufficient for, *antecedently* to any such actual operations of them, and since. If, therefore, it be nevertheless a thing in itself valuable and worthy to be desired, that these glorious perfections be actually *exhibited* in their correspondent effects, then it seems also that the *knowledge* of these perfections and discoveries is valuable in itself absolutely considered, and that it is *desirable* that this knowledge should exist.

[52] It is a thing infinitely good in itself that God's glory should be *known* by a glorious society of created beings. And that there should be in them an *increasing* knowledge of God to all eternity, is worthy to be regarded²⁵ by him, to whom it belongs to order what is fittest and best. If *existence* is more worthy than defect and non-entity, and if any *created* existence is in itself worthy to be, then *knowledge* is; and if any knowledge, then the most *excellent sort* of knowledge, *viz.* that of God and his glory. This knowledge is one of the highest, most real, and substantial parts of all created existence, most remote from non-entity and defect.

[SUPPOSITION THREE]

It is fitting that God's glory be delighted in as well as known

[53] As it is desirable in itself that God's glory should be known, so when known it seems equally reasonable it should be esteemed and delighted in, answerably to its dignity. There is no more reason to esteem it a suitable thing, that there should be an idea in the *understanding* corresponding unto the glorious object, than that there should be a corresponding *affection* in the will.²⁶ If the per-

²⁵ "Regarded," that is, esteemed and valued.

²⁶ In Edwards's thinking "God has endued 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 the 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 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. This faculty is called by various names; it is sometimes called the *inclination*; and, as it has respect to the actions that are determined and governed by it, is called the *will*; and the *mind*, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, is often called the *heart*" (Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, ed. by John E. Smith, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2 [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959], p. 96). Therefore, when Edwards talks about "delighting" or "esteeming" and so on, these are not the acts of a third faculty after "understanding" and "will." These "affections" are "no other, than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul" (p. 96). "The will, and the affections of the soul, are not two faculties; the affections are not essentially distinct from the will, nor do they differ from the mere actings of the will and inclination of the soul, but only in the liveliness and sensibleness of exercise" (p. 97).

fection itself be excellent, the knowledge of it is excellent, and so is the esteem and love of it excellent. And as it is fit that God should love and esteem his own *excellence*, it is also fit that he should value and esteem the *love* of his excellency. And if it becomes a being highly to *value* himself, it is fit that he should love to have himself *valued* and esteemed. If the idea of God's perfection in the understanding be valuable, then the love of the heart seems to be more especially valuable, as moral beauty especially consists in the disposition and affection of the heart.

[SUPPOSITION FOUR]

*It is fitting that a full fountain
should send forth abundant streams*

[54] As there is an infinite fullness of all possible good in God—a fullness of every perfection, of all excellency and beauty, and of infinite happiness—and as this fullness is capable of communication, or emanation *ad extra*;²⁷ so it seems a thing amiable [i.e., pleasant, admirable] and valuable in *itself* that this infinite fountain of good should send forth abundant streams. And as this is in itself excellent, so a *disposition* to this in the Divine Being, must be looked upon as an *excellent* disposition. Such an emanation of good is, in some sense, a *multiplication* of it. So far as the stream may be looked upon as any thing besides the fountain, so far it may be looked on as an *increase* of good. And if the fullness of good that is in the fountain is in itself excellent, then the emanation, which is, as it were, an increase, repetition, or multiplication of it, is excellent.

[55] Thus it is fit, since there is an infinite fountain of light and knowledge, that this light should shine forth in beams of communicated knowledge and understanding; and, as there is an infinite fountain of holiness, moral excellence, and beauty, that so it should flow out in communicated holiness. And that, as there is an infinite fullness of joy and happiness, so these should have an emanation,

²⁷ This Latin phrase is standard in theological idiom for the works of God directed to reality outside himself. His *ad extra* work is "toward the outside," as opposed to what he does within himself and among the members of the Trinity. Thus his eternal begetting of the Son would be an *ad intra* work, but his creation of the world would be *ad extra*.

and become a fountain flowing out in abundant streams, as beams from the sun.²⁸ Thus it appears reasonable to suppose that it was God's last end that there might be a glorious and abundant emanation of his infinite fullness of good *ad extra*, or without²⁹ himself; and that the disposition to communicate himself, or diffuse his own FULLNESS,³⁰ was what moved him to create the world.

[56] But here I observe that there would be some impropriety in saying that a disposition in God to communicate himself *to the creature* moved him to create the world. For an inclination in God to communicate himself to an *object* seems to presuppose the *existence* of the object, at least in idea. But the diffusive disposition that excited God to give creatures existence was rather a communicative *disposition* in general, or a disposition in the fullness of the divinity to flow out and diffuse itself. Thus the disposition there is in the root and stock of a tree to diffuse sap and life is doubtless the reason of their communication to its buds, leaves, and fruits, *after* these exist. But a disposition to communicate of its life and sap to its *fruits*, is not so properly the cause of its *producing* those fruits, as its disposition to diffuse its sap and life in general. Therefore, to speak strictly according to truth, we may suppose *that a disposition in God, as an original property of his nature, to an emanation of his own infinite fullness, was what excited him to create the world; and so, that the emanation itself was aimed at by him as a last end of the creation.*

²⁸ Edwards nears the end of his answer already. Why did God create the world? He will have much more to say. But he does not get much beyond this image of fullness of joy that is disposed by its nature to overflow, not compelled from outside or drawn out by something other than God, but simply by virtue of the nature of fullness or goodness. In his Miscellany #87 he puts it like this: "Tis not proper to ask what moved God to exert his goodness; for this is the notion of goodness, an inclination to show goodness. Therefore such a question would be no more proper than this, viz. what inclines God to exert his inclination to exert goodness—which is nonsense, for it is an asking and an answering a question in the same words" (Jonathan Edwards, *The "Miscellanies,"* ed. by Thomas Schafer, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13 [New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994], p. 252).

²⁹ "Without" means "outside" in this context.

³⁰ Edwards's own footnote: I shall often use the phrase *God's fullness*, as signifying and comprehending all the good which is in God, natural and moral, either excellence or happiness: partly because I know of no better phrase to be used in this general meaning; and partly, because I am led hereto by some of the inspired writers, particularly the apostle Paul, who often useth the phrase in this sense. [The texts that Edwards has in mind would include Colossians 1:19, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the *fullness* to dwell in Him." Colossians 2:9, "For in Him all the *fullness* of Deity dwells in bodily form." Ephesians 1:22-23, "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the *fullness* of Him who fills all in all." Ephesians 4:13, "... until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the *fullness* of Christ."]]

SECTION THREE

WHEREIN IT IS CONSIDERED HOW, ON THE SUPPOSITION
OF GOD'S MAKING THE AFOREMENTIONED THINGS
HIS LAST END, HE MANIFESTS A SUPREME AND ULTIMATE
REGARD TO HIMSELF IN ALL HIS WORKS

[57] In the last section I observed some things which are actually the consequence of the creation of the world, which seem absolutely valuable in themselves and so worthy to be made God's last end in his work. I now proceed to inquire how God's making such things as these his last end is consistent with his making *himself* his last end, or his manifesting an ultimate respect to himself in his acts and works. Because it is agreeable to the dictates of reason that in all his proceedings he should set himself highest;³¹ therefore, I would endeavor to show how his infinite love to and delight in himself will naturally cause him to value and delight in these things, or rather how a value to these things is implied in his value of that infinite fullness of good that is in himself.

*Delighting in the exercise of his sufficiency,
God delights in himself and makes himself his end*

[58] Now, with regard to the first of the particulars mentioned above—God's regard to the *exercise* of those attributes of his nature, in their proper operations and effects, which consist in a *sufficiency* for these operations—it is not hard to conceive that God's regard to *himself*, and value for his own perfections, should cause him to value these exercises and expressions of his perfections; inasmuch as their excellency consists in their relation to use, exercise, and operation. God's love to himself, and his own attributes, will therefore make him delight in that which is the use, end, and operation of these attributes.

[59] If one highly esteem and delight in the virtues of a friend,

³¹ See above, ¶¶ 36-44. Here in the following phrases Edwards introduces the language of God's "infinite love to and delight in himself." This should be read and understood in the context of God's infinite moral rectitude or righteousness or holiness that inclines him to delight in what is most beautiful and worthy, namely, himself. To many this sounds "selfish" or "egocentric" or "narcissistic" in a pejorative sense, because such a self-assessment and self-worship in us creatures would, in fact, be evil. But that is only because we are not worthy of such a self-assessment and self-worship. God is. In fact, he would be unrighteous if he failed to delight fully in what is most beautiful and worthy, namely, himself.

as wisdom, justice, &c. that have relation to action, this will make him delight in the *exercise* and genuine *effects* of these virtues. So if God both esteem and delight in his own perfections and virtues, he cannot but value and delight in the expressions and genuine effects of them. So that in delighting in the *expressions* of his perfections, he manifests a delight in himself; and in making these expressions of his own perfections his end, *he makes himself his end*.

*Delighting in his glory being known and enjoyed,
God delights in himself and makes himself his end*

[60] And with respect to the second and third particulars, the matter is no less plain. For he that loves any being, and has a disposition highly to prize and greatly to delight in his virtues and perfections, must from the same disposition be well pleased to have his excellencies known, acknowledged, esteemed, and prized by others. He that loves any thing, naturally loves the *approbation* of that thing, and is opposite to the disapprobation of it. Thus it is when one loves the virtues of a friend. And thus it will necessarily be, if a being loves himself and highly prizes his own excellencies. And thus it is *fit* it should be, if it be fit he should thus love himself, and prize his own valuable qualities; that is, it is fit that he should take delight in his own excellencies being seen, acknowledged, esteemed, and delighted in. This is implied in a love to himself and his own perfections; and in making *this* his end, he makes himself his end.

*In his disposition to overflow from fullness
God makes himself his end*

[61] And with respect to the fourth and last particular, viz. God's being disposed to an abundant communication, and glorious emanation, of that infinite fullness of good which he possesses, as of his own knowledge, excellency, and happiness, in the manner [which] he does; if we thoroughly consider the matter, it will appear that herein also God makes himself his end, in such a sense as plainly to manifest and testify a supreme and ultimate regard to himself.

The general disposition to overflow with fullness precedes and grounds the existence of creatures

[62] Merely in this *disposition* to cause an emanation of his glory and fullness—which is prior to the existence of any other being and is to be considered as the inciting cause of giving existence to other beings—God cannot so properly be said to make the *creature* his end, as *himself*. For the creature is not as yet considered as existing. This disposition or desire in God must be *prior* to the existence of the creature, even in foresight. For it is a disposition that is the original ground even of the future, intended, and foreseen existence of the creature.

[63] God's benevolence, as it respects the creature, may be taken either in a larger or stricter sense. In a larger sense, it may signify nothing diverse from that good disposition in his nature to communicate of his own fullness in general; [such] as his knowledge, his holiness, and happiness; and to give creatures existence in order to it. This may be called benevolence, or love, because it is the same good disposition that is exercised in love. It is the very fountain from whence love originally proceeds, when taken in the most proper sense; and it has the same general tendency and effect in the creature's well-being. But yet this cannot have any particular present or future created existence for its object, because it is prior to any such object and the very source of the futurity [i.e., the future coming into being] of its existence. Nor is it really diverse from God's love to himself; as will more clearly appear afterwards.

[64] But God's love may be taken more strictly for this general disposition to communicate good, as directed to *particular objects*. Love, in the most strict and proper sense, *presupposes* the existence of the object beloved, at least in idea and expectation, and represented to the mind as future. God did not love angels in the strictest sense, but in consequence of his intending to create them, and so having an idea of future existing angels. Therefore his love to them was not properly what *excited* him to *intend* to create them.³² Love

³² This is a difficult paragraph to grasp. The key is in seeing the difference between what moved God to "intend" to create, and what moved God to create. Once God has a creature in his foreknowledge and *intends* to create him, then benevolence, or love, *toward the creature* is properly the motive of his action. But before (in order of thought, if not time) the creature is foreseen, there is something that "excites" the "intention" to create. That is not properly love to the creature (who is not yet in view as an intention), but purely the disposition to emanate or communicate or overflow. This "disposition" is what Edwards wants to show now as an expression of love to God himself.

or benevolence, strictly taken, presupposes an *existing* object, as much as pity [presupposes] a miserable suffering object.

*God's delight in overflowing is a delight in himself
as one who overflows*

[65] This propensity in God to diffuse himself may be considered as a propensity to himself diffused, or to his own glory existing in its emanation. A respect to himself, or an infinite propensity to and delight in his own glory, is that which causes him to incline to its being abundantly diffused, and to delight in the emanation of it.³³ Thus, that nature in a tree, by which it puts forth buds, shoots out branches, and brings forth leaves and fruit, is a disposition that terminates in its own complete self. 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 his infinite glory to belong to the fullness and completeness of himself, as though he were not in his most glorious state without it.³⁴

[66] Thus the church of Christ (toward whom and in whom are the emanations of his glory, and the communication of his fullness) is called the *fullness of Christ*, as though he were not in his complete state without her, like Adam without Eve. And the church is called the glory of Christ, as the woman is the glory of

³³ This is an extremely important sentence. It shows how close to the bottom line we are in explaining the origin of creation. Notice the steps toward the bottom line, that is, trace the causes back as far as you can: 1) *creation* by God comes from 2) the abundant *diffusion* of God's glory that comes from 3) God's *inclination* to an abundant diffusion of glory that comes from 4) God's infinite *delight* in his glory. The deepest source of it all is the mysterious power of delight in God's being God. This delight is in other places called love, and sheds much light on the Biblical assertion that "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16).

³⁴ Edwards wrestles mightily with how God can be motivated to create the world by the desire to display his glory for the enjoyment of his creatures, and yet not seem to be deficient as God apart from the existence of creation (see Edwards's material at footnote 48). In other words, God's dependence on his creation for his happiness seems to be implied in God's creating from a desire to enjoy the display of his glory for the good of his people. Edwards is aware that some of his expressions come very close to saying that God is dependent on his creation. This is partly why he uses the phrase "as though" so often. For example, here he says, "God looks on the communication of himself and the emanation of his infinite glory to belong to the fullness and completeness of himself, as though he were not in his most glorious state without it." This phrase "as though" is Edwards's signal to us that there are complexities of reality and thought here, and we need to be sure to take into account what he has said elsewhere. In fact, the first objection Edwards will raise to his own viewpoint and then answer is that it makes God look dependent on creation. See his three Answers to Objection One in Section Four, ¶¶ 77-92.

None of these problems is new to Edwards. For example, the answer he gave in Miscellany #1208 goes like this: "God may have a true, proper, and real delight (and so a part of his happiness) in seeing the state of the creature, in seeing its happy state; or he may delight in the exercise of his own goodness (and so gratifying the inclination of his own heart); and yet all his happiness be eternal and immutable. He eternally has this disposition and eternally sees and enjoys this future grati-

the man, 1 Corinthians 11:7. Isaiah 46:13. “*I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel MY GLORY.*”³⁵

[67] Indeed, after the creatures are *intended*³⁶ to be created, God may be conceived of as being moved by benevolence to them, in the strictest sense in his dealings with them. His exercising his goodness, and gratifying his benevolence to them in particular, may be the spring of all God’s proceedings through the universe; as being now the determined way of gratifying his general inclination to diffuse himself. Here God acting for *himself*, or making himself his last end, and his acting for *their* sake, are not to be set in opposition; they are rather to be considered as coinciding one with the other, and implied one in the other.³⁷ But yet God is to be considered as first and original in his regard; and the creature is the object of God’s regard, consequently, and by implication, as being, as it were, comprehended in God; as it shall be more particularly observed presently.

Considering the specifics of what actually overflows in creation

[68] But how God’s value for and delight in the emanations of his fullness in the work of creation argues his delight in the infinite fullness of good in himself, and the supreme regard he has for himself (and that in making these emanations, he ultimately makes himself his end in creation) will more clearly appear by considering

fication of it as though it were present. Indeed all things are present to him; with him is no succession, no past and future, and he is independent in this delight. He brings the thing to pass by which he is gratified by his own independent power. . . . Although God has truly delight in the creature’s happiness and holiness, yet still, his happiness is in himself; for those are but communications of himself—they are wholly being from the fountain. God’s delight in these things is only a delight in his own brightness, communicated and reflected, and in his own action of communicating, which is still to be resolved into a delight in himself” (Harvey Townsend, ed., *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards* [Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1972], pp. 146-147). A key sentence that has helped me comprehend what Edwards is saying is, “It is no argument of the emptiness or deficiency of a fountain that it is inclined to overflow.” See *The End for Which God Created the World*, ¶ 87.

³⁵ Edwards’s own footnote: Very remarkable is the place, John 12:23, 24. “*And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*” Christ had respect herein to the blessed fruits of his death, in the conversion, salvation, and eternal happiness of those that should be redeemed by him. This consequence of his death, he calls his glory; and his obtaining this fruit, he calls his being glorified; as the flourishing, beautiful produce of a corn of wheat sown in the ground is its glory. Without this he is alone, as Adam was before Eve was created. But from him, by his death, proceeds a glorious offspring; in which are communicated his fullness and glory: as to fill his emptiness, and relieve his solitariness; by Christ’s death, his fullness is abundantly diffused in many streams; and expressed in the beauty and glory of a great multitude of his spiritual offspring.

more particularly the nature and circumstances of these communications of God's fullness.

*In sharing the knowledge of himself
he makes himself his end in creation*

[69] One part of that divine fullness which is communicated is the divine *knowledge*. That communicated knowledge, which must be supposed to pertain to God's last end in creating the world, is the creature's knowledge of HIM. For this is the end of all other knowledge, and even the faculty of understanding would be vain without it. And this knowledge is most properly a communication of God's infinite knowledge, which primarily consists in the knowledge of himself. God, in making *this* his end, makes *himself* his end. This knowledge in the creature is but a conformity to God. It is the image of God's own knowledge of himself. It is a participation of the same, though infinitely less in degree: as particular beams of the sun communicated are the light and glory of the sun itself in part.³⁸

[70] Besides, God's glory is the object of this knowledge or the thing known, so that God is glorified in it, as hereby his excellency is seen. As therefore God values himself, as he delights in his own knowledge, he must delight in every thing of that nature; as he delights in his own light, he must delight in every beam of that light; as he highly values his own excellency, he must be well pleased in having it *manifested* and so *glorified*.

³⁶ See note 32 for the significance of "intended."

³⁷ Here is another profound reality that transforms the way I think about everything. God's acting for his own sake and his acting for my sake are not at odds. They are, Edwards says, "not to be set in opposition" but "coincide with one another" and "are implied in one another." This is massively important. It comes to expression in the cross, where God vindicates his own righteousness in the very act of saving us for infinite joy at his right hand (Rom. 3:25-26; compare 1 Pet. 3:18; Ps. 16:11). It is the very heart of the gospel. I have tried to unfold this great vision of God-centered, man-satisfying gospel in *The Pleasures of God*: "The exaltation of [God's] glory is the driving force of the gospel. The gospel is a gospel of grace! And grace is the pleasure of God to magnify the worth of God by giving sinners the right and power to delight in God without obscuring the glory of God." John Piper, *The Pleasures of God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Press, 1991), p. 203, see p. 19.

³⁸ These words, and numerous others in the remainder of Section Three, could give the impression that Edwards failed to preserve the distinction between the essence of the creature and the essence of God. But be sure to take seriously the phrases "image of" and "conformity to." The creature participates in God's knowledge of God and God's love of God and so is in the image of God and conforms to God in greater and greater degree, but is not God, nor ever arrives at becoming God. See footnote 42 and related material at footnotes 41-46, 113, 115.

In sharing his holiness God makes himself his end in creation

[71] Another emanation of divine fullness is the communication of virtue and *holiness* to the creature; this is a communication of God's holiness, so that hereby the creature partakes of God's own moral excellency, which is properly the beauty of the divine nature. And as God delights in his own beauty, he must necessarily delight in the creature's holiness which is a conformity to and participation of it, as truly as a brightness of a jewel, held in the sun's beams, is a participation or derivation of the sun's brightness, though immensely less in degree. And then it must be considered wherein this holiness in the creature consists, viz. in love, which is the comprehension of all true virtue; and primarily in love to God, which is exercised in a high esteem of God, admiration of his perfections, complacency [i.e., satisfaction, delight] in them, and praise of them. All which things are nothing else but the heart exalting, magnifying, or glorifying God; which, as I showed before, God necessarily approves of and is pleased with, as he loves himself, and values the glory of his own nature.

In sharing his happiness he makes himself his end in creation

[72] Another part of God's fullness which he communicates, is his *happiness*. This happiness consists in enjoying and rejoicing in himself; so does also the creature's happiness.³⁹ It is a participation in what is in God, and God and his glory are the objective ground of it. The happiness of the creature consists in rejoicing in God, by which also God is magnified and exalted.⁴⁰ Joy, or the exulting of

³⁹ When we see that God's passion for his own glory leads him to share that passion with us, we also see why his passion for himself is not "selfish" in a pejorative sense. God is the one being in the universe for whom self-exaltation is the highest virtue and the most loving act, because in exalting himself he displays the one Reality in the universe that can satisfy our souls and he shares the very passion for that Reality that satisfies him. The object of our happiness is God, and our happiness is God's happiness. No greater happiness can be conceived.

⁴⁰ Here we see more clearly why (as we saw in footnote 34) God's creating for *his* sake and for *our* sake are not at odds but in fact "are implied in one another." God's pursuit of the happiness of the creature is a pursuit of our happiness *in God*—not in money or sex or family or career or health. And when we thus rejoice in God, Edwards says, "God is [by this] magnified and exalted." So God is glorified by our being satisfied in him. This means that God's radical God-centeredness and our passion for ultimate satisfaction cannot be in tension, but come to fulfillment in the continual act of worshipful rejoicing in God. The implications of this are all-pervasive. It implies that we may not be indifferent to our quest for joy in God, but must pursue it as our highest duty, which is what I have tried to unfold under the rubric "Christian Hedonism." See John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Press, revised edition, 1996).

the heart in God's glory, is one thing that belongs to praise. So that God is all in all with respect to each part of that communication of the divine fullness which is made to the creature. What is communicated is divine or something of God,⁴¹ 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 the communication itself is no other, in the very nature of it, than that wherein the very honor, exaltation, and praise of God consists.

*In giving creatures an ever-increasing likeness to God,
God makes himself first cause and last end*

[73] And it is farther to be considered that what 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 through all eternity [from creation and forever into the future]. And if we attend to the nature and circumstances of this eternal emanation of divine good, it will more clearly show HOW, in making this his end, God testifies a supreme respect to himself and makes himself his end.

[74] There are many reasons to think that what God has in view, in an increasing communication of himself through eternity, is an *increasing* knowledge of God, love to him, and joy in him.⁴² And it is to be considered that the more those divine communications *increase* in the creature, the more it becomes one with God;⁴³ for so much the more is it united to God in love, the heart

⁴¹ "Something of God" must be construed carefully, lest we impute to Edwards a confusing of the creature and the Creator, which many of his words could lead us to do (as we saw in footnote 38). God's knowledge and love and joy are "something of God," and may be shared by the creature. This results, as the following words here signify, in the creature being "conformed to God and united to him." That ever-increasing *conformity* and *union* will be expounded in detail in what follows immediately and at the end of Chapter Two, Section Seven, ¶¶ 279-285. See related material in footnotes 38, 42-46, 104, 113, 115.

⁴² This sentence is extremely important in view of how strongly Edwards will express the union of God and his people. When he speaks of God's communicating "himself" to the creature, and therefore speaks of a "strict" union between "himself" and his people, we must recall this sentence, which stresses that his knowledge and love and joy in himself is what he has chiefly in mind. In participating in these, man is drawn, as it were, into the very life of the Trinity ("Heaven Is a Progressive State," in *Ethical Writings*, ed. by Paul Ramsey, p. 730), but not in the sense of being divinized or confused in essence with God. See footnotes 38, 41, 43-46, 104, 113, 115.

⁴³ Becoming "one with God" is none other than the "conformity" and the "union" referred to in footnotes 38, 41, and 42, not a merging of human and divine essences into one.

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 identity⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ So that in the eyes of God, who perfectly sees the whole of it, in its infinite progress and increase, it must come to

⁴⁴ There are two cautions given here. One is that a creaturely “image” is always an image, no matter how closely it conforms to the original. The other is that “identity” is not conceived by Edwards any other way than by the sharing of God’s knowledge, love, and joy that he has of himself.

⁴⁵ Here we are introduced powerfully to Edwards’s view of the eternal state as one that will be an “increasing union and conformity through eternity.” In other words, eternity will not be static. The perfected, holy creature will, in his perfection, make progress in conformity to God. Since God can see all of the infinite progress (which never comes to an end) as though the whole of it were present to him, he regards the union of his people to himself as an “infinitely strict and perfect nearness and conformity, and oneness.” But beware of jumping to the unwarranted conclusion that this “nearness, conformity and oneness” involves a loss of distinction between Creator and creature. *The End for Which God Created the World* ends with Edwards’s meditations on this final state of ever-increasing joy and union with God.

Let the most perfect union with God be represented by something at an infinite height above us; and the eternally increasing union of the saints with God, by something that is ascending constantly towards that infinite height, moving upwards with a given velocity; and that is to continue thus to move to all eternity. God, who views the whole of this eternally increasing height, views it as an infinite height. And if he has respect to it, and makes it his end, as in the whole of it, he has respect to it as an infinite height, though the time will never come when it can be said it has already arrived at this infinite height. (§ 280)

The importance of this vision in Edwards’s argument has to do with the fact that God’s glory and our joy are one great goal in creation. Edwards is at pains to show that God’s last end in creation is both the display of his glorious fullness, on the one hand, and the blessing of his creatures with infinite joy, on the other hand. These are not separate ends, but one. “The happiness of the creature consists in rejoicing in God, by which also God is magnified and exalted” (see § 72). This is why in Chapter Two there is an entire section (Section Five, § 226 ff.) devoted to amassing Biblical texts that demonstrate that the “communication of good to the creature” was the ultimate end of God in creating the world.

Now how does this lead Edwards to an endless, increasing state of happiness in the age to come? There are Biblical reasons (see Paul Ramsey, Appendix II, “Heaven Is a Progressive State,” in *Ethical Writings*, pp. 706-738, especially 707-712). But there is also a reason that flows from the nature of the case: since God is infinite, the creature cannot fathom the totality of his greatness or comprehend his infinite beauty or delight in all that he is. Rather it will take an eternity for us to know and to enjoy all that God is; that is, God will be progressively revealed to us. Thus, since the display of God’s glory in our finite, creaturely experience of knowing and delighting in God is the aim of creation, the achievement of this aim will take all eternity—there will never be a time when there is no more glory for the redeemed to discover and enjoy.

Edwards speaks of this ever-increasing knowledge and joy as an increasing conformity and union with God. (See footnote 43 and the footnotes mentioned there.) In fact, he does so in

an eminent fulfillment of Christ's request, in John 17:21, 23. *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, that they may be made perfect in ONE.

[75] In this view, those elect creatures, which must be looked upon as the end of all the rest of the 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, as if swallowed up in him: so that his respect to *them* finally coincides, and becomes one and the same, with respect to himself. The interest of the creature is, as it were, God's own interest, in proportion to the degree of their relation and union to God.

[76] Thus the interest of a man's *family* is looked upon as the same with his *own* interest; because of the relation they stand in to him, his propriety in them, and their strict union with him.⁴⁶ But God's elect creatures, with respect to their eternal duration, are infinitely dearer to God, than a man's family is to him. What has been said shows that as all things are *from* God, as their first cause and fountain; so all things tend *to* him, and in their progress come nearer and nearer to him through all eternity, which argues that he who is their first cause is their last end.

ways that at times sound as if the creature and the Creator were metaphysically coalescing into one. But he does not lose sight of the distinction. For example, in Miscellany # 5 he says that in heaven "as [the holiest of all] see further into the divine perfections than others, so they shall penetrate further into the vast and infinite distance that is between them and God, and their delight of annihilating themselves, that God may be all in all, shall be the greater" (*Miscellanies*, ed. by Thomas Schafer, p. 202.). There is a mystery here that Edwards is happy to acknowledge: what does it really mean for spirits or minds to become united in knowledge and love and joy? "UNION, SPIRITUAL. What insight I have of the nature of minds, I am convinced that there is no guessing what kind of union and mixtion [sic], by consciousness or otherwise, there may be between them. So that all difficulty is removed in believing what the Scripture declares about spiritual unions—of the persons of the Trinity, of the two natures of Christ, of Christ and the minds of saints" (Miscellany, # 184, *Miscellanies*, ed. by Thomas Schafer, p. 330). Nevertheless, the matter is clear enough in Edwards that Paul Ramsey can say, "So if there is hope of increase of love in the society of heaven, this in no way promises merger with the divine or threatens the saints' collapse into identity one with another" (*Ethical Writings*, p. 534). See related material at footnotes 38, 41, 104, 113, 115.

⁴⁶ For a similar reference to the "strict union" among members of a family, see footnote 115.

SECTION FOUR

*SOME OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED, WHICH MAY BE MADE
AGAINST THE REASONABLENESS OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID OF
GOD MAKING HIMSELF HIS LAST END*

[OBJECTION ONE]

*Does not Edwards's view make God dependent on creation
for his own completeness?*

[77] **OBJECTION 1.** Some may object against what has been said as being inconsistent with God's absolute independence and immutability; particularly, as though God were inclined to a communication of his fullness and emanations of his own glory, as being his own most glorious and complete state.⁴⁷ It may be thought that this does not well consist with God, being self-existent from all eternity; absolutely perfect in himself, in the possession of infinite and independent good. And that, in general, to suppose that God makes himself his end in the creation of the world seems to suppose that he aims at some interest or happiness of his own, not easily reconcilable with his being perfectly and infinitely happy in himself.

[78] If it could be supposed that God needed any thing, or that the goodness of his creatures could extend to him, or that they could be profitable to him, it might be fit that God should make himself and his own interest his highest and last end in creating the world. But seeing that God is above all need and all capacity of being made better or happier in any respect, to what purpose should God make himself his end, or seek to advance himself in any respect by any of his works? How absurd is it to suppose that God should do such great things with a view to obtain what he is already most perfectly possessed of, and was so from all eternity, and therefore cannot now possibly need, nor with any color of reason be supposed to seek!

⁴⁷ That is, it may not seem that a state of overflowing communication in creation should be viewed "as being [God's] own most glorious and complete state." This may seem to imply dependence on creation for being in a "complete state."

[FIRST ANSWER TO OBJECTION ONE]

[79] *Answer 1.* Many have wrong notions of God's happiness, as resulting from his absolute self-sufficiency, independence, and immutability. Though it be true that God's glory and happiness are in and of himself, are infinite and cannot be added to, and unchangeable, for the whole and every part of which he is perfectly independent of the creature; yet it does not hence follow, nor is it true, that God has no real and proper delight, pleasure, or happiness in any of his acts or communications relative to the creature or effects he produces in them, or in any thing he sees in the creature's qualifications, dispositions, actions and state.

*God delights in our happiness,
seeing it as a work of his own goodness*

[80] God may have a real and proper pleasure or happiness in seeing the *happy state* of the creature; yet this may not be different from his delight in himself, being a delight in his own infinite goodness, or the exercise of that glorious propensity of his nature to diffuse and communicate himself, and so gratifying this inclination of his own heart. This delight which God has in his creature's happiness cannot properly be said to be what God receives from the creature. For it is only the effect of his own work in and communications to the creature, in making it and admitting it to a participation of his fullness, as the sun receives nothing from the jewel that receives its light and shines only by a participation of its brightness.

*God delights in our holiness
seeing it as an infusion of his own beauty*

[81] With respect also to the creature's *holiness*; God may have a proper delight and joy in imparting this to the creature, as gratifying hereby his inclination to communicate of his own excellent fullness. God may delight, with true and great pleasure, in beholding that beauty which is an image and communication of his own beauty, an expression and manifestation of his own loveliness. And this is so far from being an instance of his happiness not being in and from himself, that it is an evidence that he is happy in himself, or delights and has pleasure in his own beauty.

[82] If he did not take pleasure in the *expression* of his own beauty, it would rather be an evidence that he does not *delight* in his own beauty, that he hath not his happiness and enjoyment in his own beauty and perfection. So that if we suppose God has real pleasure and happiness in the holy love and praise of his saints, as the image and communication of his own holiness, it is not properly any pleasure distinct from the pleasure he has in himself, but it is truly an instance of it.

*God's delighting in the effulgence of his attributes
is a delighting in himself*

[83] And with respect to God's being glorified in those perfections wherein his glory consists, expressed in their corresponding effects—as his wisdom in wise designs and well-contrived works, his power in great effects, his justice in acts of righteousness, his goodness in communicating happiness—this does not argue that his pleasure is not in himself and his own glory, but the contrary. It is the *necessary consequence* of his delighting in the glory of his nature that he delights in the emanation and effulgence of it.

*The pleasure God has in the creature
is not properly pleasure from the creature*

[84] Nor do these things argue any *dependence* in God on the creature for happiness. Though he has real pleasure in the creature's holiness and happiness, yet this is not properly any pleasure which he receives from the creature. For these things are what he *gives* the creature. They are wholly and entirely from him. His rejoicing therein is rather a rejoicing in his own acts and his own glory expressed in those acts, than a joy derived from the creature. God's joy is dependent on nothing besides his own act, which he exerts with an absolute and independent power.

*Why God would not be so happy
if his happiness were not shared by man,
yet God not be dependent on the happiness of man*

[85] And yet, in some sense, it can be truly said that God has the more delight and pleasure for the holiness and happiness of his creatures. Because God would be less happy if he were less good,

or if he had not that perfection of nature which consists in a propensity of nature to diffuse his own fullness. And he would be less happy if it were possible for him to be hindered in the exercise of his goodness, and his other perfections, in their proper effects. But he has complete happiness, because he has these perfections, and cannot be hindered in exercising and displaying them in their proper effects. And this surely is not because he is dependent, but because he is independent on any other that should hinder him.⁴⁸

How man is not profitable to God

[86] From this view, it appears that nothing which has been said is in the least inconsistent with those expressions in Scripture that signify, “man cannot be profitable to God,” &c. For these expressions plainly mean no more than that God is absolutely independent of us, that we have nothing of our own, no stock from whence we can give to God, and that no part of his happiness originates from man.

That a fountain is inclined to overflow is no deficiency

[87] From what has been said, it appears that the pleasure God hath in those things which have been mentioned is rather a pleasure in diffusing and *communicating* to, than in *receiving* from, the creature. Surely, it is no argument of indigence [i.e., deprivation, poverty] in God that he is inclined to communicate of his infinite fullness. It is no argument of the emptiness or deficiency of a fountain that it is inclined to overflow.

All God's overflowing has been eternally present to his mind

[88] Nothing from the creature alters God's happiness, as though it were changeable either by increase or diminution. For though these *communications* of God—these exercises, operations, and expressions of his glorious perfections, which God rejoices in—are in time; yet his *joy* in them is without beginning or

⁴⁸ See footnote 34. It is a crucial distinction to say “God would be less happy if he were less good,” rather than to say, “God would be less happy if his creation did not exist.” It is not the existence of the creation *per se* that elicits happiness in God; rather it is what creation says about the way God is, that elicits happiness in God. As Edwards said in the preceding paragraph, “God's joy is dependent on nothing besides his own act, which he exerts with an absolute and independent power.”

change. They were always equally present in the divine mind.⁴⁹ He beheld them with equal clearness, certainty, and fullness, in every respect, as he does now. They were always equally present; as with him there is no variableness or succession. He ever beheld and enjoyed them perfectly in his own independent and immutable power and will.

[SECOND ANSWER TO OBJECTION ONE]

*God was perfectly satisfied in himself,
but was gratified in creating*

[89] *Answer 2.* If any are not satisfied with the preceding answer, but still insist on the objection, let them consider whether they can devise any other scheme of God's last end in creating the world, but what will be equally obnoxious to this objection in its full force, if there be any force in it. For if God had any last end in creating the world, then there was something in some respect future, that he aimed at, and designed to bring to pass by creating the world; something that was agreeable to his inclination or will; let that be his own glory, or the happiness of his creatures, or what it will. Now, if there be something that God seeks as agreeable or grateful [i.e., pleasing] to him, then in the accomplishment of it, he is gratified. If the last end which he seeks in the creation of the world be truly a thing grateful [i.e., pleasing] to him (as certainly it is, if it be truly his end, and truly the object of his will), then it is what he takes a real delight and pleasure in. But then, according to the argument of the objection, how can he have any thing future to desire or seek, who is already perfectly, eternally, and immutably satisfied in himself? What can remain for him to take any delight in or to be further gratified by, whose eternal and unchangeable delight is in himself, as his own complete object of enjoyment. Thus the objector will be pressed with his own objection, let him embrace what notion he will of God's end in the cre-

⁴⁹ He probably has in mind Biblical teaching like that in 1 Peter 1:19-20, "[You were redeemed] with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For *He was foreknown before the foundation of the world*, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you" (emphasis added). If Christ was foreknown as a spotless lamb before the foundation of the world, then the whole plan of creation and redemption was foreknown before the world. God had the whole scope of creation and redemption in view from eternity.

ation. And I think he has no way left to answer but that which has been taken above.

[90] It may therefore be proper here to observe, that let what will be God's last end, *that* he must have a real and proper pleasure in. Whatever be the proper object of his will, he is gratified in [it]. And the thing is either grateful [i.e., pleasing] to him in itself, or for something else for which he wills it; and so is his further end. But whatever is God's last end, that he wills *for its own sake*; as grateful [i.e., pleasing] to him in itself, or in which he has some degree of true and proper pleasure. Otherwise we must deny any such thing as will in God with respect to any thing brought to pass in time; and so must deny his work of creation, or any work of his providence, to be truly voluntary.

[91] But we have as much reason to suppose that God's works in creating and governing the world are properly the fruits of his will, as of his understanding. And if there be any such thing at all as what we mean by *acts of will* in God, then he is not indifferent whether his will be fulfilled or not. And if he is not indifferent, then he is truly gratified and pleased in the fulfillment of his will. And if he has a real *pleasure* in attaining his end, then the attainment of it belongs to his *happiness*, that in which God's delight or pleasure in any measure consists. To suppose that God has pleasure in things that are brought to pass in time, only figuratively and metaphorically, is to suppose that he exercises will about these things and makes them his end only metaphorically.

[THIRD ANSWER TO OBJECTION ONE]

God goes not out of himself in what he seeks

[92] *Answer 3.* The doctrine that makes God's *creatures* and not *himself* to be his last end is a doctrine the furthest from having a favorable aspect on⁵⁰ God's absolute self-sufficiency and independence. It far less agrees therewith than the doctrine against which this is objected. For we must conceive of the efficient⁵¹ as *depend-*

⁵⁰ "... favorable aspect on God's absolute self-sufficiency . . ." = "... favorable view of God's absolute self-sufficiency . . ." The meaning is that such a doctrine would undermine belief in God's self-sufficiency.

⁵¹ "The efficient" refers to God who acts efficiently, that is, effectively.

ing on his ultimate end. He depends on this end, in his desires, aims, actions, and pursuits; so that he fails in all his desires, actions, and pursuits, if he fails of his end. Now if God himself be his last end, then in his dependence on his end, he depends on nothing but himself. If all things be of him and to him, and he the first and the last, this shows him to be all in all. He is all to himself. He goes not out of himself in what he seeks, but his desires and pursuits as they originate from, so they terminate in, himself; and he is dependent on none but himself in the beginning or end of any of his exercises or operations. But if not himself, but the creature, were his last end, then as he depends on his last end, he would be in some sort dependent on the creature.

[OBJECTION TWO]

Does God do everything from a selfish spirit?

[93] **OBJECTION 2.** Some may object that to suppose God makes himself his highest and last end is dishonorable to him, as it in effect supposes that God does everything from a selfish spirit. Selfishness is looked upon as mean and sordid in the creature; unbecoming and even hateful in such a worm of the dust as man. We should look upon a man as of a base and contemptible character who was governed, in everything he did, by selfish principles, and made his private interest his governing aim in all his conduct in life. How far then should we be from attributing any such thing to the Supreme Being, the blessed and only Potentate! Does it not become us to ascribe to him the most noble and generous dispositions and qualities, the most remote from every thing private, narrow, and sordid?

[FIRST ANSWER TO OBJECTION TWO]

*If God is supremely valuable,
he should value himself supremely*

[94] **Answer 1.** Such an objection must arise from a very ignorant or inconsiderate notion of the vice of selfishness and the virtue of generosity. If by selfishness be meant a disposition in any being to regard himself, this is no otherwise vicious or unbecoming than as

one is less than a multitude; so the public weal is of greater value than his particular interest. Among created beings, one single person is inconsiderable in comparison of the generality, and so his interest is of little importance compared with the interest of the whole system. Therefore in them, a disposition to prefer self, as if it were more than all, is exceeding vicious. But it is vicious on no other account than as it is a disposition that does not agree with the nature of things, and [with] that which is indeed the greatest good. And a disposition in anyone to forego his own interest for the sake of others, is no further excellent, no further worthy [of] the name of generosity, than it is treating things according to their true value; prosecuting⁵² something most worthy to be prosecuted; an expression of a disposition to prefer something to self-interest that is indeed preferable in itself.

[95] But if God be indeed so great and so excellent that all other beings are as nothing to him, and all other excellency be as nothing and less than nothing and vanity in comparison with his, and if God be omniscient and infallible, and perfectly knows that he is infinitely the most valuable being, then it is fit that his heart should be agreeable to this—which is indeed the true nature and proportion of things, and agreeable to this infallible and all-comprehending understanding which he has of them, and that perfectly clear light in which he views them—and that he should value himself infinitely more than his creatures.

[SECOND ANSWER TO OBJECTION TWO]

God's esteeming himself supremely is not contrary to his esteeming human happiness, since he is that happiness

[96] *Answer 2.* In created beings, a regard to self-interest may properly be set in *opposition* to the public welfare, because the private interest of one person may be inconsistent with the public good; at least it may be so in the apprehension [i.e., perception] of that person. That which this person looks upon as his interest, may interfere with or oppose the general good. Hence his private interest may be regarded and pursued in opposition to the public. But

⁵² "Prosecuting" in the old sense of "pursuing" or "accomplishing."

this cannot be with respect to the Supreme Being, the author and head of the whole system, on whom all absolutely depend, who is the fountain of being and good to the whole. It is more absurd to suppose that his interest should be opposite to the interest of the universal system, than that the welfare of the head, heart, and vitals of the natural body, should be opposite to the welfare of the body. And it is impossible that God, who is omniscient, should apprehend his interest as being inconsistent with the good and interest of the whole.

[THIRD ANSWER TO OBJECTION TWO]

*Nothing is more loving than for God to exalt himself
for the enjoyment of man*

[97] *Answer 3.* God seeking himself in the creation of the world, in the manner which has been supposed, is so far from being inconsistent with the good of his creatures that it is a kind of regard to himself that inclines him to seek the good of his creature. It is a regard to himself that disposes him to diffuse and communicate himself. It is such a delight in his own internal fullness and glory that disposes him to an abundant effusion and emanation of that glory. The same disposition that inclines him to delight in his glory causes him to delight in the exhibitions, expressions, and communications of it. If there were any person of such a taste and disposition of mind that the brightness and light of the sun seemed unlovely to him, he would be willing that the sun's brightness and light should be retained within itself. But they that delight in it, to whom it appears lovely and glorious, will esteem it an amiable [i.e., pleasant, admirable] and glorious thing to have it diffused and communicated through the world.

[98] Here, by the way, it may be properly considered, whether some writers are not chargeable with inconsistency in this respect. They speak against the doctrine of GOD making himself his own highest and last end, as though this were an ignoble selfishness—when indeed he only is fit to be made the highest end, by himself and all other beings, inasmuch as he is infinitely greater and more worthy than all others—yet with regard to *creatures*, who are infinitely less worthy of supreme and ultimate regard, they sup-

pose that they necessarily, at all times, seek their own happiness and make it their ultimate end in all, even their most virtuous actions; and that this principle, regulated by wisdom and prudence, as leading to that which is their true and highest happiness, is the foundation of all virtue and every thing that is morally good and excellent in them.

[OBJECTION THREE]

*Is it not contemptible for God to do his works
for the praise and applause of men?*

[99] **OBJECTION 3.** To what has been supposed, that God makes himself his end—in seeking that his glory and excellent perfections should be known, esteemed, loved, and delighted in by his creatures—it may be objected that this seems unworthy of God. It is considered as below a truly great man to be much influenced in his conduct by a desire of popular applause. The notice and admiration of a gazing multitude would be esteemed but a low end to be aimed at by a prince or philosopher in any great and noble enterprise. How much more is it unworthy [for] the great God to perform his magnificent works, e.g. the creation of the vast universe, out of regard to the notice and admiration of worms of the dust, that the displays of his magnificence may be gazed at and applauded by those who are infinitely more beneath him, than the meanest rabble are beneath the greatest prince or philosopher.

[100] This objection is specious. It hath a show of argument, but it will appear to be nothing but a show, if we consider,

[FIRST ANSWER TO OBJECTION THREE]

[101] **Answer 1.** Whether it be not worthy of God to regard and value what is excellent and valuable in itself, and so to take pleasure in its existence.

*If God's glory is infinitely worthy,
delighting in it and praising it is an excellent thing*

[102] It seems not liable to any doubt, that there could be no future existence worthy to be desired or sought by God, and so worthy

to be made his end, if no future existence was valuable and worthy to be brought to effect. If, when the world was not, there was any possible future thing fit and valuable in itself, I think the knowledge of God's glory, and the esteem and love of it, must be so. Understanding and will are the highest kind of created existence. And if they be valuable, it must be in their exercise. But the highest and most excellent kind of their exercise is in some actual knowledge, and exercise of will. And certainly, the most excellent actual knowledge and will that can be in the creature is the knowledge and the love of God. And the most true excellent knowledge of God is the knowledge of his glory or moral excellence, and the most excellent exercise of the will consists in esteem and love, and a delight in his glory. If any created existence is in itself worthy to be, or any thing that ever was future is worthy of existence, such a communication of divine fullness, such an emanation and expression of the divine glory, is worthy of existence. But if nothing that ever was future was worthy to exist, then no future thing was worthy to be aimed at by God in creating the world. And if nothing was worthy to be aimed at in creation, then nothing was worthy to be God's end in creation.

If praising God is excellent, God would be misguided not to delight in it

[103] If God's own excellency and glory is worthy to be highly valued and delighted in by him, then the value and esteem hereof by others is worthy to be regarded by him; for this is a necessary consequence. To make this plain let it be considered, how it is with regard to the excellent qualities of another. If we highly value the virtues and excellencies of a *friend*, in proportion, we shall approve of others' esteem of them, and shall disapprove the contempt of them. If these virtues are truly valuable, they are worthy that we should thus approve others' esteem, and disapprove their contempt of them. And the case is the same with respect to any being's *own* qualities or attributes. If he highly esteems them and greatly delights in them, he will naturally and necessarily love to see esteem of them in others and dislike their disesteem. And if the attributes are worthy to be highly esteemed by the being who hath them, so is the esteem of them in others worthy to be proportion-

ably approved and regarded. I desire it may be considered whether it be unfit that God should be displeased with contempt of himself? If not, but on the contrary, it be fit and suitable that he should be displeased with this, there is the same reason that he should be pleased with the proper love, esteem, and honor of himself.

[104] The matter may be also cleared by considering what it would become us to approve of and value with respect to any public society we belong to, e. g. our nation or country. It becomes us to love our country, and therefore it becomes us to value the just honor of our country. But the same that it becomes us to value and desire for a friend, and the same that it becomes us to desire and seek for the community, the same does it become God to value and seek for himself; that is, on supposition, that it becomes God to love himself as it does men to love a friend or the public, which I think has been before proved.

*God prizes holiness in the creature,
and holiness is essentially prizing God*

[105] Here are two things that ought particularly to be adverted to. (1) That in God, the love of himself and the love of the public are not to be distinguished, as in man: because God's being, as it were, comprehends all. His existence, being infinite, must be equivalent to universal existence. And for the same reason, [the fact] that public affection in the creature is fit and beautiful, [therefore] God's regard to himself must be so likewise. (2) In God, the love of what is fit and decent, cannot be a distinct thing from the love of himself, because the love of God is that wherein all holiness primarily and chiefly consists, and God's own holiness must primarily consist in the love of himself. And if God's holiness consists in love to himself, then it will imply an approbation of the esteem and love of him in others. For a being that loves himself, necessarily loves love to himself. If holiness in God consist chiefly in love to himself, holiness in the creature must chiefly consist in love to him. And if God loves holiness in himself, he must love it in the creature.

[106] Virtue, by such of the late philosophers as seem to be in chief repute, is placed in public affection, or general benevolence. And if the essence of virtue lies primarily in this, then the love of

virtue itself is virtuous no otherwise, than as it is implied in, or arises from, this public affection or extensive benevolence of mind. Because if a man truly loves the public, he necessarily loves love to the public.

Where God makes virtue his end, he makes himself his end, since virtue is goodwill toward Being, namely God

[107] Now therefore, for the same reason, if universal benevolence in the highest sense be the same thing with benevolence to the Divine Being, who is in effect universal Being, it will follow that love to virtue itself is no otherwise virtuous, than as it is implied in, or arises from, love to the Divine Being.⁵³ Consequently, God's own love to virtue is implied in love to himself, and is virtuous no otherwise than as it arises from love to himself. So that God's virtuous disposition, appearing in love to holiness in the creature, is to be resolved into the same thing with love to himself. And consequently, whereinsoever he makes *virtue* his end, he makes *himself* his end. In fine, God being as it were an all-comprehending Being, all his moral perfections—his holiness, justice, grace, and benevolence—are some way or other to be resolved into a supreme and infinite regard to himself; if so, it will be easy to suppose that it becomes him to make himself his supreme and last end in his works.

[108] I would here observe, by the way, that if any insist that it becomes God to love and take delight in the virtue of his creature for its *own* sake, in such a manner as not to love it from regard to *himself*; this will contradict a former objection against God taking pleasure in communications of himself; *viz.* that inasmuch as God is perfectly independent and self-sufficient, therefore all his happiness and pleasure consists in the enjoyment of himself. So that if the same persons make both objections, they must be inconsistent with themselves.

⁵³ The idea that virtue is "benevolence to being in general" is the thesis of Edwards's treatise, *The Nature of True Virtue*, which was first published bound together with this treatise on *The End for Which God Created the World*, under the title *Two Dissertations*. Edwards intended them to be read together, as is shown in several places by his cross referencing. Today *True Virtue* may be read in Jonathan Edwards, *Ethical Writings*, ed. by Paul Ramsey, in: *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 8 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 537-628; or in: Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), pp. 122-142. Or Jonathan Edwards, *The Nature of True Virtue*, ed. by William K. Frankena (Ann Arbor, MI, The University of Michigan Press, 1960).

[SECOND ANSWER TO OBJECTION THREE]

*That the praise of God comes from lowly creatures
only highlights the glory of grace*

[109] *Answer 2.* I would observe, that it is not unworthy of God to take pleasure in that which is in itself fit and amiable [i.e., pleasant, admirable], even in those that are infinitely below him. If there be infinite grace and condescension in it, yet these are not unworthy of God, but infinitely to his honor and glory.

[110] They who insist that God's own glory was not an ultimate end of his creation of the world, but the happiness of his creatures, do it under a color of exalting God's benevolence to his creatures. But if his love to them be so great, and he so highly values them as to look upon them [as] worthy to be his *end* in all his great works, as they suppose, they are not consistent with themselves in supposing that God has so little value for their love and esteem. For as the nature of love, especially great love, causes him that loves to value the esteem of the person beloved; so, that God should take pleasure in the creature's just love and esteem will follow from God's love both to himself and to his creatures. If he esteems and loves himself, he must approve of esteem and love to himself, and disapprove the contrary. And if he loves and values the creature, he must value and take delight in their *mutual* love and esteem.

[THIRD ANSWER TO OBJECTION THREE]

[111] *Answer 3.* As to what is alleged, that it is unworthy of great men to be governed in their conduct and achievements by a regard to the applause of the populace, I would observe, What makes their applause worthy of so little regard is their ignorance, giddiness, and injustice. The applause of the multitude very frequently is not founded on any just view of things, but on humour, mistake, folly, and unreasonable affections. Such applause deserves to be disregarded. But it is not beneath a man of the greatest dignity and wisdom, to value the wise and just esteem of others, however inferior to him. The contrary, instead of being an expression of greatness of mind, would show a haughty and mean spirit. It is such an

esteem in his creatures that God regards, for such an esteem only is fit and amiable [i.e., pleasant, admirable] in itself.

[OBJECTION FOUR]

*Creatures are less obliged to be thankful to God
for what he does for his own sake*

[112] **OBJECTION 4.** To suppose that God makes himself his ultimate end in the creation of the world derogates from the freeness of his goodness in his beneficence to his creatures, and from their obligations to gratitude for the good communicated. For if God, in communicating his fullness, makes himself his end, and not the creatures, then what good he does, he does for himself, and not for them; for his sake, and not theirs.

[ANSWER TO OBJECTION FOUR]

God's glory and the creature's good are not at odds

[113] *Answer.* God and the creature, in the emanation of the divine fullness, are not properly set in opposition, or made the opposite parts of a disjunction. Nor ought God's glory and the creature's good to be viewed as if they were properly and entirely distinct in the objection. This supposes that God having respect to his glory, and [to] the communication of good to his creatures, are things altogether different; that God communicating his fullness for *himself*, and his doing it for *them*, are things standing in a proper disjunction and opposition. Whereas, if we were capable of more perfect views of God and divine things, which are so much above us, it probably would appear very clear, that the matter is quite otherwise, and that these things, instead of appearing entirely distinct, are *implied* one in the other.

*God, in seeking the diffusion of his glory,
seeks the creature's glory and happiness*

[114] God in seeking his glory seeks the good of his creatures, because the emanation of his glory (which he seeks and delights in, as he delights in himself and his own eternal glory) implies the communicated excellency and happiness of his creatures. And in

communicating his fullness for them, he does it for himself, because their good, which he seeks, is so much in union and communion with himself. God is their good. Their excellency and happiness is nothing but the emanation and expression of God's glory. God, in seeking their glory and happiness, seeks himself, and in seeking himself, *i.e.* himself diffused and expressed (which he delights in, as he delights in his own beauty and fullness), he seeks their glory and happiness.

*The creature moves forever nearer to union with God,
so that God's respect to the creature
is an ever more perfect respect to himself*

[115] This will the better appear if we consider the degree and manner in which he aimed at the creature's excellency and happiness in creating the world, *viz.* during the whole of its designed eternal duration, in greater and greater nearness and strictness of union with himself, in his own glory and happiness, in constant progression, through all eternity. As the creature's good was viewed when God made the world, with respect to its whole duration, and eternally progressive union to, and communion with him; so the creature must be viewed as in infinitely strict union with himself.⁵⁴ In this view it appears that God's respect to the *creature*, in the whole, *unites* with his respect to *himself*. Both regards are like two lines which at the beginning appear separate, but finally meet in one, both being directed to the same center. And as to the *good* of the creature itself, in its whole duration and infinite progression, it must be viewed as *infinite*, and as coming nearer and nearer to the same thing in its infinite fullness. The nearer anything comes to infinite, the nearer it comes to an identity with God.⁵⁵ And if any *good*, as viewed by God, is beheld as infinite, it cannot be viewed as a distinct thing from God's own infinite glory.

⁵⁴ See footnote 45. Also notice that the concept of a "strict union" is applied, in the next paragraph, to the union between Christ and the church.

⁵⁵ "Identity" is a strong word. But it can be used in different senses. There are good reasons to believe that Edwards did not intend for us to take it in the sense that God and man would merge *essentially*, or *in being*, without distinction, even though there are Biblical texts that Edwards is eager to come to terms with, such as, "that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:58). See footnotes 38, 41, 45, 104, 113, 115.

St. Paul teaches that Christ's love to the Church is love to himself

[116] The apostle's discourse of the great love of Christ to men, (Eph. 5:25, &c.) leads us thus to think of the love of Christ to his church, as coinciding with his love to himself, by virtue of the strict union of the church with him. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it—that he might present it to himself a glorious church. So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself—even as the Lord [loves] the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Now I apprehend that there is nothing in God's disposition to communicate of his own fullness to the creatures that at all derogates from the excellence of it, or the creature's obligation.

God is no less good because the good he imparts is himself

[117] God's disposition to cause his own infinite fullness to flow forth is not the less properly called his *goodness* because the good he communicates is what he delights in, as he delights in his own glory. The creature has no less benefit by it; neither has such a disposition less of a direct tendency to the creature's benefit. Nor is this disposition in God to diffuse his own good the less excellent, because it is implied in his love to himself. For his love to himself does not imply it any otherwise, but as it implies a love to whatever is worthy and excellent. The emanation of God's glory is in itself worthy and excellent, and so God delights in it; and this delight is implied in his love to his own fullness, because that is the fountain, the sum and comprehension of every thing that is excellent.

*God's acting from delight in his glory
does not diminish the freedom of his action*

[118] Nor does God's inclination to communicate good from regard to himself, or delight in his own glory, at all diminish the freeness of his beneficence. This will appear, if we consider particularly in what ways doing good to others from self-love, may be inconsistent with the freeness of beneficence. And I conceive there are only these two ways,

*Free benevolence consists in acting benevolently
from delight in it*

[119] When any does good to another from confined self-love, which is *opposite* to a general benevolence. This kind of self-love is properly called *selfishness*. In some sense, the most benevolent, generous person in the world seeks his *own* happiness in doing good to others, because he places his happiness in their good. His mind is so enlarged as to take them, as it were, into himself. Thus when they are happy, he feels it; he partakes with them and is happy in their happiness. This is so far from being inconsistent with the freeness of beneficence that, on the contrary, free benevolence and kindness consists in it. The most free beneficence that can be in men is doing good, not from a confined selfishness, but from a disposition to general benevolence or love to being in general.

*God's self-love cannot be selfishly confined
because the whole of creation is an expression of himself*

[120] But now, with respect to the Divine Being there is no such thing as confined selfishness in him, or a love to himself *opposite* to general benevolence. It is impossible, because he comprehends all entity and all excellence in his own essence.⁵⁶ The eternal and infinite Being is, in effect, *being in general*, and comprehends universal existence. God, in his benevolence to his creatures, cannot have his heart enlarged in such a manner as to take in beings who are originally out of himself, distinct and independent. This can-

⁵⁶ Before jumping to the conclusion that Edwards is a pantheist, one must ponder what he says a few lines later at the end of this chapter: "I confess there is a degree of indistinctness and obscurity in the close consideration of such subjects and a great imperfection [!] in the expressions we use concerning them, arising unavoidably from the infinite sublimity of the subject and the incomprehensibility of those things that are divine" (§ 124). What does "comprehend" mean in this sentence? And what about the next sentence: "The eternal and infinite Being is, in effect, *being in general* and comprehends universal existence"—do these words only allow a pantheistic interpretation? What does "in effect" signal? Does the use of the word "creatures" in the next sentence affect the way we think of all being *comprehended* in God? Moreover, we must keep many other things in mind that Edwards has said elsewhere, especially footnote 45, where we argued against the merging of creation and Creator in a final metaphysical sense. It seems to me that Edwards is trying to come to terms with at least two things here. One is the philosophical implication that "an infinite Being, who exists alone from eternity" (read further in § 120) cannot confront being except what comes from his own being and is absolutely dependent on him. In this sense he comprehends all being. The other thing he is trying to come to terms with is the Biblical witness in texts like Acts 17:28, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being," Colossians 1:17, "By [in] him all things consist," 1 Corinthians 15:28, "That God may be all in all."

not be in an infinite Being, who exists alone from eternity. But he, from his goodness, as it were, enlarges himself in a more excellent and divine manner. This is by communicating and diffusing himself; and so, instead of *finding*, he *makes* objects of his benevolence—not by taking what he finds distinct from himself, and so partaking of their good, and being happy in them, but—by flowing forth, and expressing himself in them, and making them to partake of him, and then rejoicing in himself expressed in them, and communicated to them.

God's beneficence is free because it is not constrained by anything outside himself

[121] Another thing, in doing good to others from self-love, that derogates from the freeness of the goodness is acting from *dependence* on them for the good we need or desire. So that in our beneficence we are not self-moved, but, as it were, constrained by something without [i.e., outside] ourselves. But it has been particularly shown already that God making himself his end argues no dependence, but is consistent with absolute independence and self-sufficiency.

[122] And I would here observe that there is something in that disposition to communicate goodness that shows God to be independent and self-moved in it, in a manner that is peculiar and above the beneficence of creatures. Creatures, even the most excellent, are not independent and self-moved in their goodness, but in all its exercises they are excited by some object they find; something appearing good, or in some respect worthy of regard, presents itself, and moves their kindness. But God, being all and alone, is absolutely self-moved. The exercises of his communicative disposition are absolutely from within himself; all that is good and worthy in the object, and its very *being*, proceeding from the overflowing of his fullness.

Therefore, we are no less obliged to feel gratitude to God, though his beneficence is for his glory

[123] These things show that the supposition of God making himself his ultimate end does not at all diminish the creature's obligation to gratitude for communications of good received. For if it

lessen its obligation, it must be on one of the following accounts. Either that the creature has not so much benefit by it; or that the disposition it flows from is not proper goodness, not having so direct a tendency to the creature's benefit; or that the disposition is not so virtuous and excellent in its kind; or that the beneficence is not so free. But it has been observed that none of these things take place, with regard to that disposition, which has been supposed to have excited God to create the world.

Finally, revelation is the surest guide

[124] I confess there is a degree of indistinctness and obscurity in the close consideration of such subjects and a great imperfection in the expressions we use concerning them, arising unavoidably from the infinite sublimity of the subject and the incomprehensibleness of those things that are divine. Hence revelation is the surest guide in these matters, and what that teaches shall in the next place be considered. Nevertheless, the endeavors used to discover what the voice of reason is, so far as it can go, may serve to prepare the way by obviating cavils insisted on by many, and to satisfy us that what the word of God says of the matter is not unreasonable.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Here he states what the two main functions of rational apologetics are: 1) to remove objections ("obviating cavils") and 2) to satisfy us that what the Scriptures teach are not unreasonable. But he makes plain that the "surest guide" in these great matters is "revelation," that is, Scripture, because of "the incomprehensibleness of those things that are divine" and because of the defect of reason by itself. He ends where he began in the first paragraphs of the Introduction concerning the inadequacy of reason alone.