

Jonathan Edwards: On Scripture & Salvation

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I. Edwards on Scripture¹

Jonathan Edwards was a Bibliциst. That is, Scripture was foundational to his entire world and life view. As a Bibliциst, Edwards maintained that one should never attempt to erect a system of thought by combining secular and Christian notions.² He held to the principle of *sola Scriptura*. The Bible alone is the Word of God, and it has a systematic monopoly on truth. All studies, regardless of the subject matter, are to be judged by Scripture alone.³ Nothing stands in judgment over the Word of God. Scripture is sufficient, not only to lead one to a sound and saving knowledge of God, through Jesus Christ, but also to justify all knowledge and to interpret every area of life. As one student of the Puritans put it: Edwards always operated within a “cage” – a biblical cage.⁴ For him, there was an absolute primacy and authority to the Word of God. According to David Brand:⁵

The Edwardsian legacy represents a call to re-establish theology as the queen of the sciences, not in terms of a rigidity that stifles scholarship or scientific inquiry, but rather in the form of a lucid and forceful assertion of the Holy Scriptures as the fountainhead of all human academic endeavor.

The *sola Scriptura* view of the Puritan Sage was no different than that of the Apostle Paul and the Westminster Assembly. In the words of the apostle: “All Scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16). And in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:6),⁶ to which Jonathan Edwards adhered,⁷ we read: “The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary

for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added.”

Notice the universal terms in these two statements: “all,” “complete,” “thoroughly,” “every,” “whole,” “all,” “nothing,” “at any time.” The Bible, infallibly, and the

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1. Portions of this article come from the author’s book, *Meet Jonathan Edwards* (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 2004). Hereafter *Meet Jonathan Edwards*.

2. Allen Guelzo commented that Jonathan Edwards was “the most consistently unsecular thinker in American history”; cited in Michael J. McClymond, *Encounters with God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (NY: Oxford U.P., 1998) 112.

3. Jonathan Edwards would not in any sense deny that persons without the Bible hold to certain truths. But what he would assert is that what makes these truths “true” is that they conform to the teaching of Scripture.

4. This statement was made by Peter Gay, as cited in John H. Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Powhatan, Virginia: Berea Publications; Orlando, Florida: Ligonier Ministries, 1991-1993) 1.102. Hereafter Gerstner. Gay made this statement as a criticism, but it reveals how much he believed that Edwards held tenaciously to the teachings of Scripture.

5. David C. Brand, *Profile of the Last Puritan* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1991) 146.

6. Quotations from the Scriptures are from the New King James Version. Citations from the Westminster Standards are from the version published by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (1994), and the author has modernized the spelling and usage.

7. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, revised and corrected by Edward Hickman (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1834, 1974) 1.cxxi. Hereafter Hickman. Edwards wrote: “As to my subscribing to the substance of the *Westminster Confession*, there would be no difficulty.” According to John Gerstner, the *Westminster Confession* was his “favorite creed” (Gerstner, 1.160). In this article we will see how much Edwards’ thought is in agreement with the Westminster Standards.

Westminster Confession, in compliance with the Bible, both teach the all-sufficiency of Scripture. According to the Reformed principle of *sola Scriptura*, there is no “two-source” theory of knowledge taught in the Word of God. The Bible is sufficient for all the truth we need and the all the knowledge we can have.

EDWARDS ON KNOWLEDGE

In the “Preface” of his greatest work, *The Freedom of the Will*, Edwards wrote:⁸

Of all kinds of knowledge that we can ever obtain, the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of ourselves, are the most important. As religion is the great business for which we are created, and on which our happiness depends; and as religion consists in an intercourse between ourselves and our Maker; and so has its foundation in God’s nature and ours, and in the relation that God and we stand in to each other; therefore, a true knowledge of both must be necessary, in order to true religion.

Without a knowledge of one’s self, there is no knowledge of God. But to know one’s self, God’s image bearer, there must first be a knowledge of God. The more man “knows of God,” preached Edwards, “the more he will know of himself. . . . Indeed, he who does not have the true knowledge of God has no true knowledge of anything.”⁹ God, then, must be the first object of knowledge. And as William Scheick explained, according to Jonathan Edwards, the only way for one to come to this knowledge of God and self is by “the exploration of the heart, in light of Scripture.” This is what “provides the saint with the best intimation of divine reality.”¹⁰ Like the Westminster divines before him, Jonathan Edwards

began his theological and philosophical enterprise with epistemology (the theory of knowledge).

As noted, the New England divine was a devotee of the principle of *sola Scriptura*. He believed that the indemonstrable axiom of biblical theism is that the Bible is the Word of God, and that it has a monopoly on truth. “Where is [there] any Word of God,” he asked rhetorically, “if it be not the Bible?”¹¹ “God has given us His Word to this very end that it might be our rule. . . . And strictly speaking, this is our only rule.”¹²

Moreover, he believed that the “the Scriptures themselves are an evidence of their own divine authority.”¹³ In the words of Michael McClymond, “in accordance with the Reformed tradition and such earlier figures as Calvin, Edwards saw the Bible as self-authenticating and asserted that its teachings and very words strike the mind as God-given” (McClymond, 97).

It is important to note here that according to Edwards, and the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:6, as cited above), the truth of Scripture is not restricted to the explicit statements of the Bible. Those things which can be logically deduced “by good and necessary consequence” are also God’s truth. As Edwards wrote in Miscellany 426 (*Works*, 13):

And if what the Scripture says, together with what is plain to reason, leads [us] to believe any doctrine, we are to look upon ourselves as taught this doctrine from Scripture. God may reveal things in Scripture, which way He pleases; if by what He there reveals the thing in any way clearly discovered to the understanding or eye of the mind, it is our duty to receive it as His revelation.

This is precisely why Brand’s comment is so very appropos. For Jonathan Edwards, “Holy Scriptures [are] the fountainhead of all human endeavor.” He took orders from the Bible alone.

At first glance, one may think that there are inconsistencies in Edwards’s thought here. (We will see that they are only apparent.) First, there is his empiricism. Broadly defined, empiricism is the belief that the source of all knowledge is to be found in sensation or experience. And indeed Edwards did hold to a form of empiricism, agreeing to some degree that there is nothing in the mind which is not first in the senses. But he did not believe that sensation produces any knowledge. Rather, taught the Puritan theologian, it is God who “immediately”¹⁴ produces knowledge in the mind of all who receive knowledge. In Miscellany 64 (*Works*, 13), he wrote: “Thus the matter is as to the Holy Spirit’s gracious

8. Jonathan Edwards, *The Freedom of the Will* (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1996) xi. Hereafter *Freedom of the Will*.

9. Jonathan Edwards, Sermon on Isaiah 6:5, *The Puritan Pulpit*, compiled and edited by Don Kistler (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 2004) 131-146.

10. William J. Scheick, *The Writings of Jonathan Edwards* (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 1975) 132.

11. Jonathan Edwards, *Selections From the Unpublished Writings of Jonathan Edwards*, edited by Alexander Grosart (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 1992) 192.

12. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 12, edited by David D. Hall, *Ecclesiastical Writings* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994) 319. Hereafter, *Works*.

13. *Works*, 13, edited by Thomas A. Schafer, *The “Miscellanies”* a-500. (1994) Miscellany 333.

14. When Edwards uses the word “immediately” in this sense,

operations on the mind. We have shown in philosophy that all natural operations are done immediately by God only in harmony and proportion.” And as he explained in his sermon on Matthew 16:17, when it comes to the grace of salvific knowledge there is “a divine and supernatural light, immediately imparted to the soul by the Spirit of God” (Hickman, 1.12). Further, as William Scheick and Gerald McDermott have pointed out, with spiritual maturation Edwards progressively placed less emphasis on reason, putting more and more emphasis on Scripture alone.¹⁵ Scripture was the rule by which all experience was to be judged. “Scripture,” wrote Edwards, “is the highest rule.” It “is a more sure guide ... than experience.”¹⁶

It is also noteworthy that Jonathan Edwards denied what empiricists usually maintain, that the mind of man is a *tabula rasa* (a “blank tablet”) at birth or conception. It was his belief that God created man as a rational creature, with innate propositional ideas from conception. The principles of logic are things that “the soul is born with.”¹⁷

Second, there is also the apparent inconsistency of Edwards’ use of the theistic proofs. For example, in *The Freedom of the Will* he wrote (p. 50):

[T]he way that mankind comes to the knowledge of God is that which the apostle speaks of, Romans 1:20: “The invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen; being understood by the things that are made; even His eternal power and Godhead.” We first ascend, and prove *à posteriori*; or from effects, that there must be an eternal Cause; and then secondly, prove by argumentation, not intuition, that this Being must be necessarily existent; and then thirdly, from the proved necessity of His existence, we may descend, and prove many of His perfections *à priori*.

Statements like this one convinced John Gerstner that Jonathan Edwards was an evidentialist, i.e., that he held to a form of natural theology, attempting to prove the existence of God and His Word from a series of theistic proofs. At the same time, however, Dr. Gerstner fully recognized that “there was this strain in Edwards that seemed to be utterly antithetical to natural theology” (Gerstner, 1.119; 2.347). For example, in (unpublished) Miscellany 1337 (Gerstner, 1.94), the Puritan divine claimed that “the light of nature is in no sense whatsoever sufficient to discover the Christian religion.” In another place he said that apart from special revelation, “the very notion of such a Being [God] is all mystery, involving nothing but incomprehensible paradoxes, and

seeming inconsistencies.” The same thought is expressed in his statement that “were it not for divine [special] revelation, I am persuaded, that there is not one doctrine of that which we call natural religion, which, notwithstanding all philosophy and learning, would not be forever involved in darkness, doubts, endless disputes, and dreadful confusion” (Hickman, 2.483, 462).

Norman Fiering, recognizing that many of Edwards’ writings showed this kind of antipathy to natural theology, asserted that the New England Puritan always made Holy Scripture the rule of judging all matters of the Christian faith, and not philosophical arguments. Edwards, said Fiering, is always setting forth his arguments from within the system of biblical Christianity, “within a dogmatic tradition.” This being so, the Puritan Sage used his “philosophical arguments” in an *ad hominem* (“to the man”) fashion, to show the logical consistency of biblical theism, and the logical inconsistency of non-Christian thought.¹⁸

This is the kind of “philosophic argument” that Edwards employed in his statement from *The Freedom of the Will* quoted above, where he cited Romans 1:20 just prior to his statement about an *à posteriori* “proof.” He is making his claim from within the “dogmatic tradition” of biblical theism, pointing out that an effect necessarily needs a cause. And he bases his argument on Scripture (Romans 1:20), where he rests his case. Said Edwards, in (unpublished) Miscellany 1297 (*Meet Jonathan Edwards*, 46): If men “are not led by [special] revelation and direct teaching into a right way of using their reason, in arguing from effects to causes, etc., they would forever remain in the most woeful doubt, and uncertainty concerning the nature and the very being of God.”

With these things in mind, we see that the apparent inconsistencies in Edwards’s *sola Scriptura* principle are simply that – they are merely apparent. The fact is that Edwards operated out of a “biblical cage,” and took orders from the Word of God alone. He argued from the Word of God, not to it. “For the New England divine,”

he is not referring to time, but to the fact that God does this without a mediator.

15. Scheick, 32; Gerald R. McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 60.

16. *Works*, 21, edited by Sang Hyun Lee, *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith* (2003) 505.

17. *Works*, 6, edited by Wallace E Anderson, *Scientific and Philosophical Writings* (1980) 370. See also Anderson’s comments regarding this on pages 105–125.

18. Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought in Its British Context* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1981) 49ff.

commented Stephen Stein, “the authority of the Bible was absolute.”¹⁹ He was a firm believer, wrote Gerald McDermott that “there is no true knowledge of God apart from Scripture” (McDermott, 57n.). This is quite evident from one of Edwards more extensive comments on how we know God and His works:²⁰

Now there is nothing else that informs us what this scheme and design of God in His works is but only the Holy Scriptures. Nothing else pretends to set in view the whole series of God’s works of providence from beginning to end, and to show how all things were from God at first, and what end they are for, and how they are ordered from the beginning, and how they will proceed to the end of the world, and what they will come to at last, and how all things shall be to God. Nothing else but the Scriptures has any pretense for showing any manner of regular scheme or drift in those revolutions which God orders from age to age. Nothing else pretends to show what God would by the things that He has done and is doing and will do, what He seeks and intends by them. Nothing else pretends to show with any distinctness or certainty how the world began at first, or to tell us the original of things. Nothing but the Scriptures sets forth how God has governed the world from the beginning of the generations of men on the earth in an orderly history, and nothing else sets before us how He will govern it to the end by an orderly prophecy of future events, agreeable to the challenge that God makes to the gods and prophets and teachers of the heathen in Isaiah 41: 22-23: “Let them bring forth, and show us what shall happen; let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods.”

The present author agrees with J. I. Packer, who summarized the matter as follows:²¹

It is clear from his [Edwards’s] private notes and memoranda that metaphysical speculation fascinated him and was, indeed, his hobby, but he never let philosophy teach him his faith, or lead him away from the Bible. He

philosophized from faith, not to it; he did not regard speculation as necessary to salvation, and no hint of his philosophical interests intrudes into his sermons. He took his convictions and concerns from the Bible, and it is as a Scriptural theologian that his true stature is to be measured.

Then too, as a Christian idealist, Jonathan Edwards believed that the sum total of all truth exists in the mind of God. Nothing exists outside of God’s mind. Accordingly, if man is going to know the truth, he must come to know the eternal propositions in the mind of the triune God. Some of these eternal propositions are implanted in man from conception or birth by God. The mind of man, as it were, is enveloped by the mind of God, who enlightens man to understand the eternal propositions which are in His mind. So it is God alone who reveals truth to His image bearer, man. Further, taught Edwards, God has created human beings with rational minds that use the same laws of thought as His own. The principles of reason (logic) and knowledge are innately given by God to mankind. Thus, whenever human beings know truth, they know that which exists in God’s mind. Wrote Edwards: Since “all truth is in the mind, and only there,” and since “God is truth itself,” then if we are going to know the truth there must be a “consistency and agreement of our ideas with the ideas of God.”²²

As we have already noted, this does not mean that Jonathan Edwards believed that reason is the source of truth. Scripture is the source of truth. But there is a perfect harmony between reason and biblical revelation. There “is the most sweet harmony between Christianity and reason.”²³ In the Scriptures, God has given us a rational revelation. Christian man, then, is to reason from Scripture, not to it. “Revelation,” claimed Edwards in (unpublished) Miscellany 1340 (Gerstner, 1.215), “is given as a rule to reason.”

EDWARDS ON GENERAL AND SPECIAL REVELATION

According to Jonathan Edwards, the God of the Bible is no *Deus absconditus*, i.e., no “hidden God” (Fiering, 343). The triune God has revealed Himself to man in both general and special revelation, which are in harmony. The former is general in audience (all mankind) and limited in content; whereas the latter, which is now found in Scripture alone, is more restricted in audience (those who read the Bible), and much more detailed in content. Due to its limited nature, general revelation must always be studied in light of special revelation.

19. Works, 15, edited by Stephen J. Stein, *Notes on Scripture* (Yale University Press, 1998) 33.

20. Works, 9, edited by John F. Wilson, *A History of the Work of Redemption* (1989) 520-521.

21. J. I. Packer, *A Quest For Godliness* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1990) 315.

22. Works, 6.202-207, 332-393. The quotes are from 340-342.

23. Works, 8, ed. Paul Ramsey, *Ethical Writings* (1989) 286-287.

“The book of Scripture,” wrote Edwards, “is the interpreter of the book of nature.”²⁴

Edwards taught that God has implanted an innate knowledge of Himself in all men (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 268). This knowledge, which includes the moral law of God, is propositional and ineradicable. It is this innate knowledge that enables man to see the rich revelation of God in creation. When man interacts with God’s creation, which demonstrates the attributes of God, man is, in some sense, forced “to think God.” “I am not ashamed,” wrote Edwards, “to own that I believe that the whole universe, heaven and earth, air and seas ... be full of images of divine things, as full as a language is of words” (*Works*, 11.152).

The visible creation, however, does not mediate knowledge to man, for the visible creation does not set forth any propositions (and knowledge can only be attained through propositions). Rather, by way of “exciting ideas” (or recollection), it stimulates the mind of man, who as a rational being is already in possession of *à priori*, propositional information about God and His creation. This *à priori* information is immediately impressed upon man’s consciousness. And it is God who does the impressing. God alone reveals truth to man.²⁵

All men, therefore, have a knowledge of God, which leaves them without excuse. But due to the noetic effects of sin, fallen man continually suppresses the knowledge of God which he has and knows to be true. General revelation reveals God as Creator, but it does not reveal Him as Savior. This being so, the propositional special revelation of Scripture is necessary for man to come to a sound and saving knowledge of God. “The light of nature [the innate moral law of God] teaches that religion which is necessary to continue in the favor of God that made us,” wrote Edwards, “but it cannot teach us that religion which is necessary to our being restored to the favor of God, after we have forfeited it” (Hickman, 2.51-57, 491).

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:1) explains it this way:

Although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for

the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which makes the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary; those former ways of God’s revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.

Jonathan Edwards, along with the Westminster Assembly, concluded that due to the inadequacy of general revelation, the “necessity” of divine, or special, revelation “plainly appears.” (Hickman, 2.253).

As seen, according to the New England divine, the Scriptures are self-authenticating and self-evident. The Word of God, he wrote, does not “go about begging for its evidence, so much as some think; it has its highest and most proper evidence in itself” (Hickman, 2.293). “The Scriptures themselves are an evidence of their own divine authority” (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 333).

Jonathan Edwards did not deny that there are a number of evidences that the Bible is the Word of God: “There are signatures of divine majesty to be seen in the Word, and signatures of divine wisdom and of divine holiness, and the evident marks of divine grace, that make it evident that the Word of God did proceed from a divine majesty and wisdom and holiness and grace” (Hickman, 1.189). Nor did Edwards deny that the evidences are useful in the area of apologetics. Even though Scripture is self-authenticating and self-evident, still “great use may be made of external arguments, [and] they are not to be neglected, but highly prized and valued; for they may be greatly serviceable to awaken unbelievers, and bring them to serious consideration, and to confirm the faith of true saints” (Hickman, 1.293). As stated by Stephen Nichols, for Edwards, “the fact that the Bible is self-authenticating does not mean that there are no external evidences that support its claims. Scriptures’ self-authentication and evidences are not mutually exclusive.”²⁶

Nevertheless, said the New England Puritan, apart from the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit, these evidences are vain. They “cannot be sufficient.... It is impossible that men ... should come at the force of arguments for the truth of Christianity” (Hickman, 1.292). The evidences, as “highly prized and valued” as they may be in refuting the arguments of non-believers and strengthening the faith of the saints, do not

24. *Works*, 11, eds. Wallace E. Anderson, Mason I. Lowance, Jr., and David Watters, *Typological Writings* (1993) 106.

25. *Works*, 6.346, 361-370; Miscellanies 199-200, *Works*, 13.267.

26. Stephen J. Nichols, *An Absolute Sort of Certainty* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2003) 134.

prove the Bible to be the Word of God. Again, if men, commented Edwards, “are not led by [special] revelation and direct teaching into a right way of using their reason . . . they would forever remain in the most woe-ful doubt, and uncertainty concerning the nature and the very being of God” (Unpublished Miscellany 1297, *Meet Jonathan Edwards*, 46) Edwards doctrine is that of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:4-5):

The authority of Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God. . . . We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to a high and reverend esteem of the Holy Scripture; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man’s sal- vation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it does abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing wit- ness by and with the Word in our hearts.

EDWARDS ON SCRIPTURE

From his early years, Jonathan Edwards devoted his life to the study of Scripture. Early on he resolved “to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive, myself to grow in the knowledge of the same” (Hickman, 1.xxi). Even while young he began to study with his pen in his hand. He studied prayerfully, developing thoughts which he wanted to preserve in writing. As witnessed by his lit- erary productivity, he continued this kind of study for the rest of his life. Later, as a minister of the gos- pel, he wrote (Hickman, 1.clxxiv):

My method of study . . . has been very much by writ- ing; applying myself, in this way, to improve every im- portant hint; pursuing the clue to my utmost, when anything in reading, meditation, or conversation, has

been suggested to my mind, that seemed to promise light in any weighty point; thus penning what appeared to me my best thoughts, on innumerable subjects, for my own benefit.

But all of Edwards’ “best thoughts, on innumerable subjects, for my own benefit,” even from his early years, were governed by his zeal to reconcile “all of life and learning to the dictates of God’s law as contained in Scripture.” Even with his “inquiring mind that knew no boundaries, scientific or literary,” the main goal of Jonathan Edwards was to be an “instrument in the cause of his Christ.”²⁷

Too, we have seen that he was an advocate of *sola Scriptura*, believing, as taught in the *Confession* (1:6), that “the whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.” For Edwards, not only is Scripture necessary for man to come to a sound and saving knowledge of God, but it is the sole source of truth, and the author- ity by which man is to interpret all of life. The Bible is the standard by which all things are to be judged. The numerous writings of the Puritan Sage fully attest to this fact. In Miscellany 350 (*Works*, 13), for instance, he wrote: “[Special] revelation is that light in the world from whence has beamed forth not only the knowledge of religion, but all valuable truth.” In the words of John Gerstner, “Jonathan Edwards’ life . . . centered around the Bible.” It was “the *sine qua non* of his rational bibli- cal theology” (1.140).

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

Jonathan Edwards, in the tradition of Reformed theo- logians throughout the centuries, held that biblical reve- lation was progressive in nature. In his *A History of the Work of Redemption*, which was originally set forth in a series of some thirty sermon-lectures, he taught that there was a continuous enlarging body of special reve- lation from the time of Adam in the Garden of Eden to the time of the apostles. In Eden, God revealed Himself to Adam in propositional revelation, and He continued to do so until the close of the canon of Scripture. And throughout the entirety of the progress of revelation, the revelation is infallible and inerrant at every stage.

Jonathan Edwards, as a covenant theologian, taught that one of the predominant ways that the progress of special revelation is recognizable in the Bible is in the various covenants that God has established with His

27. John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema, edi- tors, *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995) vii-x. Hereafter *Jonathan Edwards Reader*.

church, both in the Old and New Testaments.²⁸ There is a unity that exists between the Old and the New Testaments, a unity which is founded upon the covenant of grace. It is “the unity of [redemptive] history,” wherein we also see the unity of the Word of God (unpublished Miscellany 1353, as cited in *Meet Jonathan Edwards*, 49). As explained in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (7:6): “There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations.”

Jonathan Edwards maintained that when God created man (Adam), He entered into a “covenant of works” with him. As the *Confession* (7:2) says: “The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him [as the federal head or representative of the entire human race] to his posterity, upon perfect and personal obedience.” Or in Edwards’ own words, “perfect obedience is the condition of the first covenant [of works].”²⁹ If Adam had been obedient to God for a stipulated period of time, positive righteousness would have been imputed to him, and he would have been granted eternal life, along with his posterity: “If Adam our first surety had fulfilled the covenant [of works] made with him ... then [Adam and] his posterity ... would all have had the title to eternal life by virtue of the promises made to Adam their surety.”³⁰ Adam, however, broke covenant with God; thus, he and his posterity fell from the state of original righteousness.

Immediately subsequent to the Fall, God entered into a new covenant with His elect: the covenant of grace. In this covenant, as stated in the *Confession* (7:3): God “freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they might be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.” In the words of Edwards (Hickman, 2.599):

The first covenant [of works] failed of bringing men to the glory of God, through man’s instability, whereby he failed of perseverance. Man’s changeableness was the thing wherein it was weak through the flesh. But God had made a second covenant [of grace] in mercy to fallen man, that in the way of this covenant he might be brought to the glory of God, which he failed of under the other.... Therefore God introduces another better covenant, committed not to his [Adam’s] strength, but to the strength of one who was mighty and stable [Christ], and therefore is a sure and everlasting covenant.... The first was only to make way for the second.

The covenant of grace, taught Edwards, was made with Christ, and with all of the elect in Him: “God makes the covenant [of grace] with Christ, the second Adam, for Himself and all His posterity” (*Works*, 18, Miscellany 825). This covenant was initially revealed in Genesis 3:15, with the first Messianic or gospel promise; that is, that God would send His Christ to redeem fallen, elect sinners: “Presently upon this the gospel was first revealed on earth in ... Genesis 3:15.... But these words of God in the fifteenth verse of the third chapter of Genesis were the first dawning of the light of the gospel after this darkness” (*Works*, 9.32-133).

Moreover, said Edwards, this covenant promise is that from which all of the other biblical covenants flow: Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenant. With each covenant the body of redemptive, special revelation grew (“that gospel light which dawned immediately after the fall of man gradually increases”), until consummated in the supreme and final revelation of God to man in the person and work of Jesus Christ.³¹

Yet prior to the unfolding of the covenant of grace there was another supra-temporal covenant. This covenant, which Edwards (and Reformed theology in general) refers to as the covenant of redemption, was an intra-Trinitarian covenant. This covenant, in a supralapsarian fashion, purposed the salvation of elect sinners by the person and work of Jesus Christ, their covenant representative. Herein there is an “agreement which the persons of the Trinity came into from eternity as it were by mutual consultation and covenant” (*Works*, 20, Miscellany 993). The covenant of redemption is the foundation of the covenant of grace; and the covenant of grace is the working out of the covenant of redemption (*Works*, 9.117-119).

Special revelation in both the Old and New Testaments, then, is progressive and redemptive. And the New is superior to the Old, not so much in content or substance, as in administration and degree. The “state of things” under the Old Testament “was a typical state of things, and that not only the ceremonies of the law were typical, but that their [the Israelites] history and constitution of the nation and their state and circum-

28. See Carl W. Bogue, *Jonathan Edwards and the Covenant of Grace* (Cherry Hill, New Jersey: Mack Publishing Company, 1975) 141-163.

29. *Works*, 18, edited by Ava Chamberlain, *The “Miscellanies”* 501-832, (2000) Miscellany 786.

30. *Works*, 20, edited by Amy Plantinga Pauw, *The “Miscellanies”* 833-1152 (2002) Miscellany 1091.

31. *Works*, 9.127-386. The quote is from page 172.

stances were typical. It was, as it were, a typical world" (*Works*, 11.146).

Under the New Testament administration, this has changed. Here again Edwards is in agreement with the *Confession* (7:6), which maintains that whereas the covenant under the Old Testament was administered by "promises, prophecies, sacrifices . . . and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come," under the New Testament administration, "Christ, the substance" has come; and the covenant is now "held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles."

According to Jonathan Edwards, the unity of special revelation in both the Old and New Testaments is evident in a number of ways. In a sermon on Matthew 5:44, Edwards preached that "Christ did not give to the world any new moral precepts that were not either expressed or implied in the precepts of the Old Testament and in the Ten Commandments. He did not, as some have supposed, make by His rule some things duty which before were not duty but only revealed some things more fully" (Gerstner, 1.155).

Moreover, said Edwards, both Testaments have "the same salvation," the "same Mediator" (Jesus Christ), the same method of justification by faith alone in Christ alone, and the same application of Christ's redemptive cross work by means of the Holy Spirit with the Word of God. The two covenants "differ only in manner and circumstances" (unpublished Miscellany 1353). "The whole book, both Old Testament and New, is filled up with the gospel, only with this difference, that the Old Testament contains the gospel under a veil, but the New contains it unveiled, so that we may see the glory of the Lord with open face" (*Works*, 9.290). "For though the covenant of grace was in force before His [Christ's] death," said Edwards, "yet it was of force no other wise than by His death." This covenant of grace is "Christ's last will and testament" (Gerstner, 2.103-104).

CANONIZATION OF SCRIPTURE

According to Reformed theology, as taught in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:1-2, 6), the doctrine of progressive revelation maintains that the miraculous or charismatic word-gifts (e.g., tongues, prophecy) ceased at the end of the apostolic age, and the canon of Scripture was closed at that time. That is, because "those

former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people [has] now ceased," special revelation is now found in the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments alone; "unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men."

Jonathan Edwards agreed with this assessment. As noted by John Gerstner, even though this Puritan theologian nowhere "lists the sixty-six books of the Protestant canon, there can be no doubt that he had the very list in mind which was enumerated by his favorite creed, the *Westminster Confession*" (Gerstner, 1.160). In (unpublished) Miscellany 1358 (Gerstner, 1.146), Edwards wrote:

God took this care with respect to the books of the Old Testament, that no books should be received by the Jewish church and delivered down in the canon of the Old Testament but what was His Word owned by Christ. We may therefore conclude that He would still take the same care of His church with respect to the New Testament.

According to Edwards, the cessation of the charismatic gifts is explicitly taught in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. These gifts functioned as "childish things," and "they were adapted to the childish state of the church." They were a partial means of special revelation. And they are now supplanted by the perfect, complete Word of God, wherein we have "a perfect rule of faith and practice."³² In a sermon on this text, he preached: "The extraordinary influences of the Spirit of God imparting immediate revelations to men were designed only for a temporary continuance while the church was in its minority and never were intended to be stately upheld in the Christian church" (Gerstner, 1.160).

INSPIRATION

In a sermon on 2 Timothy 3:16 (and elsewhere), Jonathan Edwards posited that the entirety of the Bible is fully inspired by God and that it has been "kept [pure] all along" through the ages; "it has not been changed." It is "the verbally inspired and inerrant Word." "The Scripture is the Word of God," given to man in propositional statements (Grosart, 191-196). Man, taught the New England divine, was created in God's image, as a rational being, and God has given man a rational revelation in the Bible. Jonathan Edwards, then, held to the Reformed doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration. It is not merely the doctrine and/or content of biblical revelation that is inspired; it is the Scripture itself. In

32. Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1986) 304-322.

the words of John Smith: “Edwards accepted totally the tradition established by the Reformers with respect to the absolute primacy and authority of the Bible, and he could approach the biblical writings with the conviction of their inerrancy and literal truth.”³³

Scripture, said Edwards, was written through God’s prophets and apostles, who were moved along by the Holy Spirit so that they wrote nothing other than the infallible, inerrant Word of God: there was “an immediate inspiration that the prophets had when they were immediately inspired by the Spirit of God” (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 20). Commenting on 2 Peter 1:20, Edwards wrote that in the Scriptures, “it is not men’s speaking their own sense of things or interpreting their own minds but the mind of God” (Gerstner, 1.142). It is God alone who speaks creatively in Scripture. The words of Scripture are the very words of God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, what Scripture says, God says.

Jonathan Edwards did not hold to a mechanical and/or dictation theory of inspiration, wherein the human authors are to be seen as little more than stenographers.³⁴ Rather, he maintained that God the Holy Spirit acted upon the human authors in an “organic” way, in accordance with their own personalities, characters, temperaments, gifts, and talents. Each author wrote in his own style, and all the while it was the Holy Spirit moving him along to write infallible truth. The human authors were the “penmen” who wrote “by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit” (*Works*, 15.518-520). For example, in Miscellany 303 (*Works*, 20), Edwards spoke of Solomon, as the author of the Song of Songs as follows:

I imagine that Solomon when he wrote this song, being a very philosophical, musing man and pious man, and of a very loving temper, set himself in his own musings to imagine and to point forth to himself a pure, virtuous, pious, and entire love, and represented the musings and feelings of his mind that in a philosophical and religious frame was carried away in a sort of transport, and in that his musings and the train of his imaginations were guided and led on by the Spirit of God. Solomon in his wisdom and great experience had learned the vanity of all other love than of such a sort of one. God’s Spirit made us of his loving inclination, joined with his musing philosophical disposition, and so directed and conducted it in this train of imagination as to represent the love that there is between Christ and His spouse.

Then too, speaking of Moses as an author of Scripture in Miscellany 352 (*Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 13), Edwards wrote:

Moses was so intimately conversant with God and so continually under the divine conduct, it cannot be thought that when he wrote the history of the creation and fall of man, and the history of the church from the creation, that he should not be under the divine direction in such an affair. Doubtless he wrote by God’s direction, as we are informed that he wrote the law and the history of the Israelitish church.

Further (as noted), because the Bible is the infallible, inerrant Word of God, it is a rational revelation. In the words of the *Confession* (1:5), there is a “consent of all the parts.” Scripture is logically consistent throughout. The “alleged” discrepancies in the Bible are just that: they are “alleged,” and nothing more (Hickman, 1.89, 676ff.). Moreover, there are no contradictions or logical paradoxes in the Bible. There is no biblical assertion which is self-contradictory (or at least appears to be so), where one way or the other the assertion cannot possibly be reconciled before the bar of human reason. In Miscellany 139 (*Works*, 13), he suggested “that there are many things in [the Christian] religion and the Scriptures that are made difficult on purpose to try men, and to exercise their faith and scrutiny, and to hinder the proud and self-sufficient.” But ultimately the Bible shows itself to be completely rational, without contradictions or logical paradoxes. “Men are reasonable,” said Edwards, “and the Bible does not ask [them] to believe things against reason” (Gerstner, 1.113). It is the non-Christian theories, he claimed, which are composed of “a whole heap of inconsistencies” (Hickman, 1.30).

Jonathan Edwards also agreed with the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:8), that although only the original writings (“the Old Testament in Hebrew” and “the New Testament in Greek”) were “immediately inspired by God,” nevertheless, He has “by His singular care and providence” kept these texts “pure in all ages [so that they] are therefore authentic.” Therefore, what we have

33. John E. Smith, *Review of Metaphysics* (December 1976), as cited in R. C. Sproul, John H. Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984) 243.

34. Jonathan Edwards does use the word “dictate” (and its cognates) in his writings on this subject. But this usage speaks to the result (i.e., the end product), not the mode, of inspiration. For Edwards, the words of Scripture could be no more the words of God the Holy Spirit than if they were literally dictated (see Gerstner, 1.141-142).

in our Bible today is the very Word of God (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 358).³⁵

THE AUTHORITY AND SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

We have already seen, that according to Jonathan Edwards, the full authority and all-sufficiency of Scripture is due to its unique origin. The Bible is the Word of God and has a monopoly on truth. It is to be recognized as “a transcript of the divine perfections” (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 94). This is the Reformed principle of *sola Scriptura*. There is no other source of divine, special revelation. The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments are all-sufficient, not only for man to come to a sound and saving knowledge of God, through Jesus Christ, but also to justify all knowledge and to interpret every area of life. Scripture is the sole authority by which all is to be judged. Nothing stands in judgment over the Word of God. Not even the revered creeds and confessions of the church, as valuable as they may be, are to be placed on a par with Holy Scripture: “I believe that the Christians, soon after the apostles’ times, depended as entirely upon the holy Scripture, with relation to the doctrines they ought to believe, as we at this distance. I think that God never intended that we should ever have any other sure rule of faith but the holy Scriptures, and has left everything else uncertain, that we might prize and improve them” (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 72). Edwards, in accord with the prophet Isaiah (8:20), affirmed that our only rule in life is “the law and testimony.”³⁶

According to the New England theologian, “it is God’s design, when He gave the church the Scriptures, so to make and dispose them, and to put so much into them, and in such a manner, that they should be completely sufficient of themselves, that they should hold forth to us things sufficient for us to know, and they should be sufficiently there exhibited, and that in all important matters, whether in doctrine or practice, the Scriptures should sufficiently explain themselves” (*Works*, 18, Miscellany 535).

In good Calvinistic fashion, Jonathan Edwards taught that the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit is necessary to corroborate the authority of God’s Word to fallen man. “From the Fall of man, to our day,” he commented,

35. In Miscellany 358 Edwards clearly shows that he adopted the Received Text or Majority Text theory of New Testament textual criticism, and that he would have opposed the Critical Text theory. According to John Smith, “Edwards used the King James Version throughout.” See *Works*, 2, edited by John E. Smith, *Religious Affections* (1959) 82.

36. *Works*, 16, edited by George S. Claghorn, *Letters and Personal Writings* (1998) 102.

“the work of redemption in its effect has mainly been carried on by remarkable communications of the Spirit of God” (Hickman, 1.539). It is essential for man to have a knowledge of Scripture to be converted, but many men may have a sound knowledge of Scripture without being converted. Many non-believers have an understanding of the Scriptures, but without “the divine and supernatural light, immediately imparted to the soul by the Spirit of God,” they never attain a spiritual understanding of the message of Scripture. All natural and unregenerate men are destitute of this spiritual understanding of divine things. Only the Spirit is able to make them see the truth of God’s Word and embrace it as “truth.” In this process, however, the Spirit does not reveal any new information which causes the reader to believe. “This spiritual light is not the suggesting of any new truths or propositions not contained in the Word of God.” Rather, the Spirit produces belief in the mind of the elect sinner so that he can and does believe (Hickman, 1.12-17). According to John Gerstner (1.187):

Edwards’ theory of religious knowledge may be represented by the photographic developing process. When the picture is first taken on the emulsion nothing appears or can be seen. When the film is developed the picture is seen. The developer adds nothing to the picture that is not already present, but it makes the picture visible. Natural men [non-believers] have a religious picture on their mind; they may have many such pictures; they may have many more than regenerate persons and, indeed, much better pictures. But not one of these fine pictures is ever developed. The divine and supernatural light [the Holy Spirit] is the developer God uses to make the beauty and sweetness of divine truth apparent to the regenerate.

At the same time, said Edwards, the Holy Spirit is that member of the Godhead who further illuminates the teaching of Scripture for the believer. But again, in this process, the Spirit does not reveal any new information. Rather, the same Spirit progressively gives the Christian a greater understanding of the Scriptures. He sheds more light on the biblical texts so that the believer can more fully grasp the teaching of the Word of God (Hickman, 1.12-17).

SCRIPTURE AS A MEANS OF GRACE

These things being so, Jonathan Edwards stressed the importance of Bible study to his congregation. One cannot undergo spiritual growth without a knowledge of

the Word of God. The most acceptable way of showing respect to Christ, he taught, is by giving serious attention to His Word. In a sermon on Hebrews 5:12, Edwards preached:³⁷

Every Christian should make a business of endeavoring to grow in knowledge of divinity [theology].... Divinity comprehends all that is taught in the Scriptures, and so all that we need to know, or is to be known, concerning God and Jesus Christ, concerning our duty to God, our happiness in God.... There is no other way by which any means of grace whatsoever can be of any benefit, but by knowledge.... Christians ought not to content themselves with such degrees of knowledge in divinity as they have already obtained. It should not satisfy them that they know as much as is absolutely necessary to salvation, but should seek to make progress.... However diligently we apply ourselves there is room enough to increase our knowledge of divinity, without coming to an end.

In this sense, Scripture, along with the sacraments and prayer, functions as a “means of grace” (*Works*, 18, Miscellany 539). As explained by the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Q. 88), the means of grace are: “The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption, [and they] are His ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer; all of which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.” With this explanation, Jonathan Edwards was in agreement, teaching that these means are indispensable to the sanctification of the Christian. “God’s Spirit,” he wrote, “always attends His ordinances” (Hickman, 1.539). “All the stated means of grace,” he maintained, were established “in the apostolic age . . . and are to remain unaltered to the day of judgment.” God’s kingdom advances on earth (individually and corporately) not by extraordinary means, but “by the preaching of the gospel, and the use of the ordinary means of grace” (*Works*, 9.370, 459). The Holy Spirit conveys knowledge to the elect through the Word of God preached, and through the sacraments as explained and understood by the Word. (This is the reason Edwards advocated a weekly administration of the Lord’s supper [*Works*, 16.366].)

Edwards being the Puritan that he was, stressed the importance of preaching, for “in preaching” there is “the impressing divine things on the heart and affections of the hearers.”³⁸ As stated by Irvonwy Morgan:³⁹

The essential thing in understanding the Puritans was that they were preachers before they were anything else

... what bound them together, under girded their striving, and gave them the dynamic to persist was their consciousness that they were called to preach the gospel.

Here, once again, Jonathan Edwards was exemplary. Not only was he a master theologian and philosopher, “but for virtually his entire adult life Edwards was first and foremost a preacher.”⁴⁰ And he was a preacher *par excellence*. John Gerstner wrote (Gerstner, 1.480):

Jonathan Edwards was, in my opinion, the greatest preacher, from the standpoint of content of his messages, who has appeared in history since apostolic times.... From the standpoint of deep and solid exegesis, clear and profound articulation of doctrine, searching, thorough, and fervent evangelistic application, I have never found Edwards’ equal.... This [was] a preacher extraordinary of the Word of God.

Along this line of thought, Sereno Dwight, who wrote the *Memoirs of Jonathan Edwards*, once asked a man who had heard this Puritan Sage preach, whether or not Edwards was an eloquent speaker. The man responded (Hickman, 1.cxc):

He [Edwards] had no studied varieties of the voice, and no strong emphasis. He scarcely gestured, or even moved, and he made no attempt by the elegance of his style, or the beauty of his pictures, to gratify the taste, and fascinate the imagination. But, if you mean by eloquence, the power of presenting an important truth before an audience, with overwhelming weight of argument, and with such intenseness of feeling, that the whole soul of the speaker is thrown into every part of the conception and delivery; so that the solemn attention of the whole audience is riveted, from the beginning to the close, and impressions are left that cannot be effaced; Mr. Edwards was the most eloquent man I ever heard speak.

As far as the style of preaching of Jonathan Edwards is concerned, it is a common notion that he laboriously read every word of his sermons. This, however, is not the case. It is true that the majority of the extant manuscripts of Edwards’ sermons are those which are writ-

37. Jonathan Edwards, *To All the Saints of God* (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 2003) 212-241.

38. *Works*, 2.115.

39. Irvonwy Morgan, *The Godly Preachers of the Elizabethan Church* (London: Epworth Press, 1965) 11.

40. *Jonathan Edwards Reader*, xvi.

ten out in full. But there are numerous sermons which are in outline form. Likely, Samuel Hopkins correctly averred that even with the sermons which were written out in full, there was a freedom from dependence on the manuscript. Hence, Edwards “read most that he wrote: still he was not confined to them [the written sermons]; and if some thoughts were suggested to him while he was preaching, which did not occur to him when writing, and appeared pertinent, he would deliver them with as great propriety and fluency, and often with greater pathos, and attended with a more sensibly good effect on his hearers, than what he had written.” And with the sermons which were presented in outline form, he would have necessarily spoken from those outlines, using them as somewhat of a springboard for further elucidation of his thoughts.⁴¹

And the message preached, said Edwards, must be the truth of God’s Word, delivered with intensity. In a sermon on John 5:35, he preached (*To All the Saints of God*, 1-28):

It is the excellency of a minister of the gospel to be both a burning and shining light.... If a minister has light without heat, and entertains his auditory with learned discourses, without a savor of the power of godliness, or an appearance of fervency, of spirit, and zeal for God and the good of souls, he may gratify itching ears, and fill the heads of his people with empty notions; but it will not be very likely to reach their hearts, or save their souls. And if, on the other hand, he be driven on with a fierce and intemperate zeal, and vehement heat, without light, he will be likely to kindle the like unhallowed flame in his people, and to fire their corrupt passions and affections; but will make them never the better, nor lead them a step toward heaven, but drive them apace the other way.... But if he approves himself in his ministry, as both a burning and shining light, this will be the way to promote true Christianity amongst his people, and to make them both wise and good, and cause religion to flourish among them in the purity and beauty of it.

41. Cited in Ian H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Bibliography* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987) 190.

42. John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1990) 103.

43. Packer, 310, 314.

44. The following quotes are from various sermons that Edwards preached during his pastoral ministry. The texts of these sermons are 1 Corinthians 2:11-13, John 13:15-16, Deuteronomy 32:35, John 3:36, Matthew 2:10, Luke 14:26, Matthew 13:23, Matthew 15:26, Matthew 16:17, and Romans 9:18. See *Meet Jonathan Edwards*, 65-66.

John Piper correctly stated: “Edwards could no more imagine speaking in a cold or casual or indifferent or flippant manner about the great things of God than he could imagine a father discussing coolly the collapse of a flaming house upon his children.”⁴²

Commenting on the pastoral ministry of the New England divine, J. I. Packer wrote: “All his life he labored, fearlessly and tirelessly, to understand and apply the Bible.... All his life he fed his soul on the Bible; and all his life he fed his flock on the Bible.... As a Bible-lover, a Calvinist, a teacher of heart-religion,” Jonathan Edwards, being a “pure Puritan, indeed one of the purest and greatest of all the Puritans, [was] a gospel preacher of unction and power.”⁴³

When it came to preaching the Word of God, Jonathan Edwards, like the apostle Paul before him, “was innocent of the blood of all men,” for he did not shun “to declare” to his hearers “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27). “Ministers are not to preach those things which their own wisdom or reason suggests,” exhorted Edwards, “but the things that are already dictated to them by the superior wisdom and knowledge of God.”⁴⁴ Further, ministers of the gospel must not “reject any doctrine that is taught by divine revelation.” God “holds them [accountable] to go and preach the Word.” According to Edwards, “it is the duty of ministers of the gospel, in the work of their ministry, to follow the example of their great Lord and Master [Jesus Christ].”

This Puritan theologian, as an evangelist, did not hesitate to warn his hearers, that apart from Christ, they were “sinners in the hands of an angry God.” “He that does not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” preached Edwards, “the wrath of God abides on him.” But “when those that have been earnestly seeking Christ come to find Him they have reason to rejoice with exceeding great joy.” There are, however, warned this evangelist, those “that have seeming come to Christ that do not love Christ above their dearest earthly enjoyments; they are not Christ’s disciples.” “That which distinguishes the profitable hearers of God’s Word from all others is that they [spiritually] understand it and bring forth the fruit of it.” Indeed, “there is a great difference between converted and unconverted men.” Those who come to savingly believe in Christ, however, must never think that it is of their own doing. Rather, the grace of salvation is the work of God alone: It is “a divine and supernatural light immediately implanted to the soul by the Spirit of God.” It is God who “exercises His sovereignty in the eternal salvation of men.” “God’s Word always comes as conqueror,” commented Edwards; “those that are not

conquered by conversion shall be conquered by destruction and the execution of its threatenings.”⁴⁵

In 1750 Edwards was dismissed by his Northampton congregation for attempting to return to the Reformed view of the Lord’s supper, as taught in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Savoy Declaration*, and the *Cambridge Platform*, which maintains that the Lord’s supper is to be restricted to the Lord’s people. In his farewell sermon, which is one of the most “moving” sermons Edwards ever preached, we see the New England divine at his best. He reminded his congregation that he had faithfully served them for a period of twenty-three years. He addressed the various groups within the congregation at the time: “Those who are professors of godliness,” those “in a Christ-less state,” “those who are under some awakenings,” “the young people of the congregation,” and “the children of the congregation.” Appropriate words were spoken to each group. Edwards told them: “I have spent the prime of my life and strength in labors for your eternal welfare.... [I] have given myself to the work of the ministry, laboring in it night and day, rising early, and applying myself to this great business to which Christ has appointed me.” And he exhorted and warned them: “You and I are now parting one from another as to this world; let us labor that we may not be parted after our meeting at the last day.... This is a sorrowful parting, but that would be more sorrowful.” Then he reminded them that “God is the fountain of all blessing and prosperity, and He will be sought to for His blessing.” Finally, Edwards concluded (Hickman, 1.cc-ccvii):

Having briefly mentioned these important articles of advice, nothing remains, but that I now take my leave of you, and bid you all farewell; wishing and praying for your best prosperity. I would now commend your immortal souls to Him, who formerly committed them to me, expecting the day when I must meet you again before Him, who is the Judge of quick and dead. I desire that I may never forget this people, who have been so long my special charge, and that I may never cease fervently to pray for your posterity. May God bless you with a faithful pastor, one that is well acquainted with His mind and will, thoroughly warning sinners, wisely and skillfully searching professors [of Christ], and conducting you in the way to eternal blessedness. May you have truly a burning and shining light set up in this candlestick; and may you not only for a season, but during his whole life, that a long life, be willing to rejoice in his light. And let me be remembered in the prayers of all God’s people that are of a calm spirit, and

are peaceable and faithful in Israel, of whatever opinion they may be with respect to terms of church communion. And let us remember, and never forget our future solemn meeting on that great day of the Lord; the day of infallible decision, and of the everlasting and unalterable sentence.

THE LAW OF GOD

Reformed theology, as taught in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, does not separate the law and the gospel, though each is carefully distinguished from the other. Jonathan Edwards was of the same mind (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 343). Law without gospel is merely a dead letter. But there is no gospel without the law which reveals one’s sinful nature and his need for the grace of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Here the law is “exhibited to be as a school master to lead to Christ, not only for the use of that nation [Israel] in the ages of the Old Testament, but for the use of God’s church throughout all ages to the end of the world.” The law, then, serves “as an instrument that the great Redeemer [Christ] makes use of to convince men of their sin and misery and helplessness and God’s awful and tremendous majesty and justice as a lawgiver, and so to make men sensible of the necessity of Christ as a Savior” (*Works*, 9.180).

The moral law also functions as a pattern of life for the regenerate. It admonishes the Christian to seek God and obey His commandments. Here the law is not to be seen “as a covenant of works, but as a rule of life, so it is made use [of] by the Redeemer from that time [the giving of the law at Sinai] to the end of the world as a directory to His people, to show them the way in which they must walk, as they would go to heaven. For a way of sincere and universal obedience to this law is the narrow way that leads to life” (*Works*, 9.181).

Jonathan Edwards distinguished the three traditional categories of the law of God: moral, judicial (civil), and ceremonial. He agreed with the teaching of chapter 19 of the *Westminster Confession*, that the moral law, which comprises the Ten Commandments and the “general equity” of the judicial law which God gave to Israel as a nation, is continually binding on men and nations. He was of the opinion, for example, that the civil magistrate is obliged to uphold God’s law in its function as God’s minister. New England was under a covenant relationship with God. Therefore, as George Marsden correctly

45. *Works*, 5, edited by Stephen J. Stein, *Apocalyptic Writings* (1977) 105.

states, Jonathan Edwards (as with New England Calvinists in general) believed and taught that “nations and individuals were still blessed or punished according to that standard [God’s law]. Civil law accordingly should reflect God’s commands.”⁴⁶

Edwards taught that “magistrates,” as well as “ministers” of the gospel, and “every living soul, [are] now obliged to arise and acknowledge God in His work” of promoting His kingdom (Hickman, 1.389). God has given us His “written law,” which is a “universal law by which mankind are to be governed.” And in this law, the “sanctions,” i.e., “the rewards and the punishments” are also made known” (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 266). The same argument is found in his message series on 1 Corinthians 13, where Edwards contended that “it will dispose magistrates to act as the fathers of the commonwealth with that care and concern for the public good which the father of a family has for his household” (*Charity and Its Fruits*, 170). This includes the magistrate’s responsibility to execute murderers, in accordance with God’s law: “God established it as a rule, henceforth to be observed, that murder shall be revenged in a course of public justice” (*Works*, 15.328-329).

It is also evident from Miscellany 14 (*Works*, 13), that Edwards was in agreement with the teaching of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (23:3), that even though the civil magistrate is not to involve himself in matters of ecclesiastical concern, “yet he has authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; [and] that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed.”

Jonathan Edwards, as with Calvin before him, considered the work of the civil magistrate to be of great importance. In a sermon on Ezekiel 19:12, he preached that civil rulers are “strong rods” within a community. God tells us that there is a “need of government in societies.” God has ordained that good rulers are “vehicles of good to mankind.” Scripture even refers to these leaders as “gods.” The magistracy is a “great and important business.” And men serving in this capacity, should do so as God commands in His law (“as they ought to be”) (Hickman, 2.36-40). Magistrates are “heads, princes or governors, to whom honor, subjection and obedience should be paid” (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 336).⁴⁷

46. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003) 29.

47. According to Gerald R. McDermott, Edwards believed that the Bible taught a Republican form of government; see McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992) 137, 155, 157, 176.

As far as the ceremonial law is concerned, it was given to Israel as a “typical law.” These laws “prescribed the ceremonies and circumstances of the Jewish worship and their ecclesiastical state.” They are no longer binding (*Works*, 9.181). These “things of the Old Testament,” wrote Edwards in (unpublished) Miscellany 1439 (Gerstner, 1.146), “are types of things appertaining to the Messiah, His kingdom, His salvation made manifest from the Old Testament itself.” “When Christ died, then there was an end to those types and shadows, because they were then all fulfilled” (*Works*, 15.325). Edwards, then, was in agreement with the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (19:3), which states:

God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the New Testament.

This being so, we are to recognize that the elect of the Old Testament economy, which constituted the church “being in its minority” (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 138a), were saved in precisely the same way as those in the New. The elect realized that the ceremonial law pointed beyond itself to the coming Messiah: “All the people of Israel, if they exercised consideration, must suppose and understand that these things pertaining to the ceremonial law were appointed and used as representations and symbols of something spiritual, and not for the sake of any innate goodness in them or any value God had for them” (*Works*, 11.307). “The Messiah and the redemption which He was to work out by His obedience unto death, was the foundation of the salvation of all the posterity of fallen man, that ever were saved.... The saints of old trusted in the promises of a future redemption to be wrought out and completed by the Messiah, and built their comfort upon it” (*Freedom of the Will*, 164-165).

Summarizing Jonathan Edwards’ doctrine of Scripture, John Gerstner wrote (Gerstner, 1.190):

What shall we say? For him [Edwards] it [the Bible] was nothing other than the verbally inspired and inerrant Word, and he always, as Isaiah advised, “trembled” at His Word. It had free course in him as he studied it day and night and preached it throughout his ministry. It was certified internally and confirmed by external credentials as well. It was an “awful” [“awe-inspiring”]

book” with its dread warnings to the wicked and wondrous promises to the humble penitent. So Edwards, “boxed in” as he was by its authority, preached it in season and out of season, laboring to make its unique and saving message plain and powerful while fully aware that no sinner in Northampton or anywhere would ever see and receive it as God’s very Word until God Himself cast His divine and supernatural light upon its pages and its proclamation.

CONCLUSION

Jonathan Edwards began his theological and philosophical study with epistemology. His starting point was divine, special revelation. Throughout his writings, he posited the infallible, inerrant Scriptures as foundational to all else. He strongly adhered to the principle of *sola Scriptura*, believing, as taught in the *Westminster Confession* (1:6), that “the whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.” The Puritan Sage operated out of a “biblical cage.” In the words of John Gerstner: “Jonathan Edwards’s life ... centered around the Bible.” It was “the *sine qua non* of his rational biblical theology” (Gerstner, 1.140).

II. Edwards on Salvation

The doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (*sola fide*) was the central doctrine of the Reformation. Martin Luther considered it to be the article by which the church stands or falls. John Calvin declared it to be “the main hinge on which religion turns” and “the sum of all piety.”⁴⁸ Jonathan Edwards, as a staunch defender of this doctrine, agreed. As Carl Bogue stated: “Jonathan Edwards reflects the essence of the Scriptures when he attributes salvation to the absolute sovereign grace of God. The Reformation cry of *sola gratia* [by grace alone] and *sola fide* [by faith alone] reverberates through his writings.”⁴⁹ In this article, we will look at this Puritan Sage’s teaching on *sola fide*, within the context of his overall doctrine of soteriology.

According to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (3:3, 5-6; 11:1-2; 14:1-2):

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life.... Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto: and all to the praise of His glorious grace.... As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation.

Those whom God effectually calls, He also freely justifies: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous, not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.... Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love.

The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts; and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word: by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.... By this faith, a Christian believes to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein; and acts differently upon that which each particular passage thereof contains; yielding obedience to the com-

48. Cited in Robert L. Reymond, *The Reformation’s Conflict with Rome* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2001) 18-19.

49. Bogue, 209.

mands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

Herein we have perhaps the best synopsis of the doctrine of justification by faith alone that is available in creedal form. It is not only the view taught by the Reformers, but it also is the view espoused by Jonathan Edwards. The New England theologian endorsed this doctrine as taught by the Westminster divines, not only because it was taught in his “favorite creed,”⁵⁰ but also because he was convinced that it was the teaching of the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God.

Like the Westminster Assembly before him, Edwards believed that the eternal destiny of every man, woman, and child is determined by the eternal decree of Almighty God. In a sermon on Romans 9:18, he preached that God’s attribute of sovereignty necessitates “His absolute, independent right of disposing of all creatures according to His own pleasure.” God decrees, and even delights in, the election of some and the damnation of others. And He does so for His own glory.⁵¹ Moreover, divine election and reprobation are not determined by God’s foreknowledge of the thoughts and choices of man: “God’s loving some and not others [is] antecedent to any manner of difference in them.”⁵²

For His own free and sovereign good pleasure, God shows mercy to some in election, and He hardens others through reprobation. “Absolute sovereignty,” claimed Edwards, “is what I love to ascribe to God” (Hickman, 1.xiii).

But like the *Westminster Confession* (3:6; 14:2), Edwards also maintained that even though God “has appointed the elect unto glory” in His eternal decree, He has also “foreordained all the means thereunto.” There-

fore, those who are “fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, [and] are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation ... by virtue of the covenant of grace.”

Jonathan Edwards taught that when God created Adam, He entered into a covenant of works with him, wherein Adam acted as the federal head or representative of the entire human race. In this covenant, God promised eternal life to Adam, and his posterity, upon condition of Adam’s perfect, personal obedience to God’s commands. Adam, however, disobeyed God. And when he fell, by virtue of the “constituted oneness or identity of Adam and his posterity in this affair,”⁵³ all mankind (with the exception of Christ, the second Adam) fell with him: “The beginning of the posterity of our first parents was after the Fall, for all his [Adam’s] posterity by ordinary generation are partakers of the Fall and the corruption of nature that followed from it.”⁵⁴

All men are judicially guilty in this first sin. Man is now in an ethical state of total depravity, unable to do anything that pleases God. “The nature of man,” taught Edwards, “is so corrupt that he is become a very evil and hurtful creature” (John Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 2.272). He “stands in absolute need of a Redeemer.”⁵⁵ Men are “polluted with sin; every step they take is attended with sin, so all the works that they do are polluted. They can perform no service, no business, but they contract their guilt and defilement, that they need the renewed washing of the blood of Christ.”⁵⁶ Here again the New England Puritan theologian is in agreement with the *Westminster Confession* (9:3): “Man, by his fall into a state of sin, has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”

Immediately subsequent to the Fall, however, God entered into another covenant with elect man: the covenant of grace (which covenant itself is founded upon the supra-temporal intra-Trinitarian covenant of redemption⁵⁷). In the covenant of grace, as stated in the *Confession* (7:3): “God freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they might be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.” In the words of Edwards (Hickman, 2.599):

50. Jonathan Edwards said that he had “no difficulty” subscribing to the “substance of the *Westminster Confession*”; see Hickman, 1.cxxi. Edwardsian scholar Dr. John Gerstner is the one who said that the *Westminster Confession of Faith* was Edwards’ “favorite creed”; see Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 1.160.

51. *To All the Saints of God*, 68-95.

52. *Works*, 13, Miscellany 273.

53. Hickman, 1.220.

54. *Works*, 9.116.

55. *Works*, 18, Miscellany 814.

56. *Works*, 11.124.

57. In the view of Jonathan Edwards, as with Reformed theology in general, the covenant of redemption is the foundation of the covenant of grace; and the covenant of grace is the working out of the covenant of redemption.

The first covenant [of works] failed of bringing men to the glory of God, through man's instability, whereby he failed of perseverance. Man's changeableness was the thing wherein it was weak through the flesh. But God had made a second covenant [of grace] in mercy to fallen man, that in the way of this covenant he might be brought to the glory of God, which he failed of under the other.... Therefore God introduces another better covenant, committed not to his [Adam's] strength, but to the strength of one that was mighty and stable [Christ], and therefore is a sure and everlasting covenant.

The covenant of grace, taught Edwards, was made with Christ, and with all of the elect in Him: "God makes the covenant [of grace] with Christ, the second Adam, for Himself and all His posterity" (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 825). This covenant was initially revealed in Genesis 3:15, with the first Messianic or gospel promise; that is, that God would send His Christ to redeem fallen elect sinners: "Presently upon this gospel was first revealed on earth in ... Genesis 3:15.... But these words of God in the fifteenth verse of the third chapter of Genesis were the first dawning of the light of the gospel after this darkness" (*Works*, 9.132-133). Herein, Christ, as the federal head of God's elect, fulfilled the covenant of works in their behalf, and merited their salvation (*Works*, 9.117-119). So great is the grace of God manifested in the covenant of grace, that He has "become bound to us [the elect] by covenant" (Sermon on Romans 9:18).

Furthermore, Edwards said, there is one covenant of grace for all ages, and salvation is the same for those under the Old Testament administration as it is under the New. Both testaments have "the same salvation," "the same Mediator" (Jesus Christ), and the same method of justification by grace alone, in Christ alone, through faith alone. The two covenants "differ only in manner and circumstances."⁵⁸ Old Testament believers were saved, said Edwards, by believing in Christ (even though under the name the "Angel of the Lord," or the "Messenger of the covenant"), just as are their New Testament counterparts.⁵⁹ They are all aware that "the Messiah was the Son of God" (*Works*, 11.228). "The whole book, both Old Testament and New," he contended, "is filled up with the gospel, only with this difference, that the Old Testament contains the gospel under a veil, but the New contains it unveiled, so that we may see the glory of the Lord with open face." Jesus Christ is the Savior of the saints in all ages from the beginning of the world. Thus, concluded the Puritan theologian, "the religion of the church of Israel was essentially the same religion

with that of the Christian church," both being "built on the holy Scriptures" (*Works*, 9.290, 443).

There can be little question that Jonathan Edwards was a Christian exclusivist. He maintained that Jesus Christ is the only Savior, and that it is essential for one to believe in Him in order to be saved. Even under the shadows of the Old Testament, it was always "the second person of the Trinity" who appeared to His people, and those who were saved put their trust in Him (*Works*, 18, Miscellany 663). Of course, this does not mean that the Old Testament saints knew as much about Christ as do those in the New Testament era, but they knew Christ. Even those in foreign lands who were saved, were saved by believing in the Christ they had heard of through the special revelation brought to them by the people of God.⁶⁰

According to the New England divine, then, the salvation of the elect ultimately begins in God's eternal plan. God, for His own glory and according to His own good purpose, eternally decrees the election of some and the reprobation of others: God fully exercises His sovereignty in the affairs of men's eternal salvation. Salvation, from beginning to end, is based on God's divine initiative.

This does not, however, deny the fact that God uses means in His sovereignty in salvation. He is sovereign over the means as well as He is in His decree. Preached Edwards: "The things which God does for the salvation and blessedness of the saints are like an inviolable chain"; "God is the sole author of salvation of those that are saved even from the very first beginning of it in the eternal covenant of redemption even to the end and consummation of it in the glory of the saints."⁶¹ And even "though means are made use of in conferring grace on men's souls, yet it is of God that we have these means of grace, and it is He that makes them effectual" (Hickman, 2.4).

THE ORDER OF SALVATION

Soteriology is the study of the work of redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ, as it is applied to the elect. Although all three members of the Trinity are involved in the salvation of the elect, taught Edwards, it is the Holy Spirit who applies this grace. The Father elects;

58. Jonathan Edwards, Unpublished Miscellany 1353.

59. Cited in Gerald R. McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 159.

60. *Works*, 15.369-372, 535-537.

61. Sermon on Romans 8:29 (Gerstner, 3.151), and Hosea 13:9 (Gerstner, 3.366).

the Son redeems those whom the Father elects; and the Spirit applies Christ's redemptive work to the elect (Hickman, 2.288). Moreover, not only is the Spirit the member of the Godhead who applies the work of redemption, preached Edwards in a sermon on Galatians 3:13-14, He "is the sum of the blessings that Christ purchased for us in the work of our redemption." He effectually unites the elect to Christ through faith (Bogue, 224-225).

The salvation of the elect (both Old and New Testaments), then, has to do with their relationship with Christ. He is the federal head of His elect people; He is their representative, and they are in union with Him. According to Jonathan Edwards, this union with Christ is foundational to the entirety of the order of salvation. In Miscellany 1091 he stated: "God the Father makes no covenant and enters into no treaty with fallen man distinctly by themselves. He will transact with them in such a friendly way no other way than by and in [union with] Christ Jesus as members and as it were parts of Him."⁶²

In another Miscellany he wrote (Gerstner, 3.222-23):

By virtue of the believer's union with Christ, he does really possess all things.... I'll tell you what I mean by possessing all things. I mean that God, three in one, all that He is, and all that He has, and that He does, all that He has made or done, the whole universe, bodies and spirits, light, heaven, angels, men and devils, sun, moon, stars, land, sea, fish, fowls, all the silver and gold, kings and potentates, as well as mere men, are as much the Christian's as the money in his pocket, the clothes he wears, or the house he dwells in, as the victuals he eats; yea, more properly his, more advantageously, more his than if he commands all those things mentioned to be just in all respects as he pleased, at any time, by virtue of the union with Christ, because Christ who certainly

does thus possess all things is entirely his, so that he possesses it all ... only he has not the trouble of managing of it but Christ to whom it is no trouble, manages it for him, a thousand times as much as to his advantage as he could himself, if he had the managing of all.... And who would desire to possess all things more than to have all things managed just according to his will.

And in his famous sermon on Romans 4:5, "Justification by Faith Alone," which (incidentally) triggered the first great awakening, Edwards preached that "this relation or union to Christ, whereby Christians are said to be in Christ ... is the ground of their right to His benefits."⁶³

As noted, the Puritan sage taught that salvation is not to be viewed as a one step event. One is not converted and immediately glorified. There is a process involved. As cited in the *Confession* (3:6), "they who are elected ... are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation." But even as we study the process, we must keep in mind that some of the parts may be synchronous, and the parts can in no way be separated. They are, said Edwards, like "strings in concert, if one is struck others sound with it" (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 315).

Jonathan Edwards nowhere wrote out in systematic form an *ordo salutis* (order of salvation), but from a study of his various writings it is evident that he would basically agree with the *Westminster Confession of Faith*,⁶⁴ that the logical order in which redemption is applied to the elect sinner is as follows:

Universal Call

Jonathan Edwards believed that men enter into this world in a fallen condition; they are "sinners in the hands of an angry God." And if they are going to come to know God savingly, through Jesus Christ, they must hear the gospel preached. When the gospel is proclaimed, there is a "universal call" which goes out to all men who come under the hearing of the Word of God (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 216). This general call, said Edwards, is "to sinners universally," inviting them to come to Christ for their salvation. It is a genuine and universal call, and all who hear the message are called on to respond to it. "When we have heard the Word of God we ought to give earnest heed that we don't lose what we have heard."⁶⁵ Many who hear this message, however, reject it to their everlasting destruction.

62. *Works*, 20, Miscellany 1091.

63. Jonathan Edwards, *Justification by Faith Alone* (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000). "Justification by Faith Alone," based on Romans 4:5, was preached as a series of sermons in 1734. Interestingly, in this series Edwards argues against an 18th century version of the "New Perspective on Paul," which averred that the apostle Paul's polemic against the Judaizers' view of the "works of the law" had to do, not so much with grace versus works, but with the Jewish "works" of the ceremonial law of Israel. Edwards sets forth a number of irrefutable arguments against such a notion, showing how it is not possible that when Paul refers to the "works of the law" that he is referring simply to the ceremonial law. The first century Jews may not have been Pelagian, but they were surely (at best) semi-Pelagian.

64. The *ordo salutis* is set forth in WCF 10-18, 32-33.

65. Cited in John H. Gerstner, *Jonathan Edwards: Evangelist* (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 1995) 18-23.

Effectual Calling

The universal call is not efficacious. According to the New England divine, it is not possible for a person to come to a saving knowledge of God without sound doctrine, but sound doctrine is not enough. It is only when the Holy Spirit applies the Word to the heart of the elect sinner that the call becomes “effectual.” In a sermon on John 16:8, Edwards preached: “Whatever in the work of redemption is done immediately or upon men’s souls is the work of the Spirit.” And “the work of the Holy Ghost [is] to make men understand the way of sinners’ reconciliation and acceptance with God through Christ.” He is the one who gives “divine light” “into the heart of converts” (Bogue, 221).

It is important to understand that there is no new revelation given in this work of the Spirit; there are no new propositions revealed to the elect sinner. The Spirit merely opens his heart to understand “spiritually” the teachings of Scripture. In Miscellany 397, Edwards wrote (*Works*, 13): “The first act of the Spirit of God is in spiritual understanding or in the sense of the mind, its perception of glory and excellency, etc. – in the ideas it has of divine things.”

Regeneration

Although effectual calling and regeneration stand in the closest possible relationship, there is a difference in the two. Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit as a result of the effectual call, wherein He prepares the heart of the elect sinner to respond to the call of God. Citing the words of Christ to Nicodemus, Edwards told his hearers: “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth is internal and supernatural. This is true of both the Old and New Testament eras. “It is no wonder that Christ said that we must be born again” (*Jonathan Edwards: Evangelist*, 126). This work of divine assistance is always efficacious. It is “irresistible grace” (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 15).

Conversion

Although Jonathan Edwards sometimes used the terms “effectual calling,” “conversion,” “repentance,” and “regeneration” as approximate synonyms, he also did distinguish them. Regeneration ushers in conversion, in which the elect sinner is brought into a filial and intimate relationship with God through Christ: “There is such a thing as conversion.” And this “work of conver-

sion is a great affect of God’s power and grace in the heart” (*Jonathan Edwards: Evangelist*, 128-130).

The Puritan divine believed and taught that conversion is the work of God the Spirit whereby He graciously acts upon the regenerate individual, causing him to respond to the effectual call in faith and repentance. Faith and repentance, although separate acts, are so closely related that they cannot be temporally separated: “So saving repentance and faith are implied in one another. They are both one conversion of the soul from sin to God through Christ.”⁶⁶ Or said another way: “Repentance is often spoken of as the special condition of remission of sins,” and “remission of sins is by faith in Jesus Christ,” so “that faith and repentance are not to be looked upon as properly two distinct things”; rather, we should recognize “that evangelical repentance is a certain exercise of faith in Jesus Christ.” “Repentance is implied in faith” (*Works*, 20, Miscellany 943; 18, Miscellany 504).

Edwards properly maintained that whereas in effectual calling and regeneration, the elect sinner is passive, in the case of conversion he is active. Conversion is the believer’s response to the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Herein the Spirit infuses grace into the soul of the elect sinner, enabling him to turn away from sin in repentance, and to turn to God, in Christ, in faith (Hickman, 2.12-17).

Repentance (*metanoia*),⁶⁷ wrote Edwards, “signifies a change of mind.” The repentant sinner changes his attitude toward sin, and turns from it with a holy hatred to serve God. There is “a change or turning from sin to God.... The change of mind in repentance is that in which saving faith is attained” (Hickman, 1.213). The New England theologian agreed with the *Shorter Catechism* (Q. 87) that biblical repentance “is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does with grief and hatred of sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.”

Edwards also agreed with the *Shorter Catechism* (Q. 86) definition of saving faith: “Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the gospel.” He wrote (Hickman, 2.590):

The definition [of saving faith] might have been expressed in these words: faith is the soul’s entirely adhering and acquiescing in the revelation of Jesus Christ

66. *Works*, 8.331.

67. The Greek word *metanoia* means “a change of mind.”

as our Savior – Or thus: faith is the soul’s embracing that truth of God, that reveals Jesus Christ as our Savior – Or thus: faith is the soul’s entirely acquiescing in, and depending upon, the truth of God, revealing Christ as our Savior.

In his sermon on Matthew 13:5, on “the Parable of the Sower,” Edwards explained that there are several kinds of non-justifying faith spoken of in the Bible. Only one kind of faith justifies. The kind of spurious faith, i.e., belief, which “rises only from superficial impressions is wont to wither away for want of root when it comes to be tried by the difficulties of religion” (Hickman, 2.585). In Miscellany 218, he wrote (*Works*, 13): “Though unregenerate man may in some measure believe the gospel, yet they don’t believe it so that they dare to trust to it; they are not willing to perform its prescriptions, trusting to its offers, which is true believing in Christ.”

Saving faith is “essentially” different from these various kinds of non-justifying faith. Genuine faith involves knowledge, assent, and trust. It is not enough to know the truth about Jesus Christ as presented in the gospel; nor is it sufficient to understand the message and merely assent to it in verbal agreement, as essential as these are. Saving faith “is the whole soul’s active agreeing, according, and symphonizing with this truth.” It is an “adhering to the truth, and acquiescing in it” (Hickman, 2.580). Here again, Edwards is in agreement with the Westminster Standards. In *Larger Catechism* (Q. 72), we read that “justifying faith” is a faith that “not only assents to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receives and rests upon Christ and His righteousness, therein held forth for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.”

Faith involves union with Christ, not a mere recognition of His existence. In his well known sermon on Matthew 16:17 (“A Divine and Supernatural Light Immediately Imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God”), Edwards preached: “There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense [taste] of its sweetness.” The same is true with regard to saving faith: There is “a true sense of the divine and superlative excellency of the things of religion; a real sense of the excellency of God and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God.” There is “a true sense of the divine excellency of things of God’s Word [which] does more directly and immediately convince us of their truth.” When one has

this “sense,” he acquiesces to the “light of the glorious gospel of Christ” (Hickman, 2.12-17).

Moreover, as noted above, at his conversion the elect child of God has new desires, new habits, infused into him by the Spirit: “But man when he is changed from a sinner to a saint has new principles of perception and action; principles which are entirely diverse and not arising merely from [a] new disposition of the old or contracted habits as those changes that are wrought by education do. They are principles that are vastly superior to those he had before” (*Jonathan Edwards: Evangelist*, 129-130). These principles are divinely infused by the Spirit of God, and they affect the whole man. The Spirit “unites Himself with the mind of the saint . . . as a new supernatural principle in life and action” (Sermon on Matthew 16:17, *Meet Jonathan Edwards*, 113). In fact, there is a sense in which we may even say that the Holy Spirit is the new principle Himself: “The Holy Spirit or the third person of the Trinity in His operations and fruits is the sum of the blessings that Christ purchased for us in the work of our redemption” (Sermon on Galatians 3:13-14, *Meet Jonathan Edwards*, 113). Herein is true virtue. God now becomes the very best portion of the Christian; he prefers God above all else (*Works*, 18, Miscellany 567):

If a man has any true love to God, he must have a spirit to love God above all, because, without seeing something of the divine glory, there can be no true love to God; but if a man sees anything of divine glory, he will see that He is more glorious than any other; for where-insoever God is divine, therein He is above all others. If men are sensible only of some excellency in God that is common with Him to others, they are not sensible of anything of His divine glory. But so far as any man is sensible of excellency in God above all others, so far must he love Him above all others.

Further, Edwards contended, a genuine love for God must be a love, not primarily for what one receives from God, but for God Himself. “We are obliged,” he wrote, “not only to love Him with a love of gratitude for benefits received; but true love for God primarily consists in a supreme regard to Him for what He is in Himself. . . . If we love not God because He is what He is, but only because He is profitable to us, in truth we love Him not at all.”⁶⁸ And again: “The first objective ground of gracious affections, is the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things, as they are in themselves, and not any conceived relation they bear to self, or self-interest” (Hickman, 1.317). This does not mean

68. *Works*, 3, ed. Clyde A. Holbrook, *Original Sin* (1970) 144.

that there is not a proper type of self-love. Because a biblically based self-love will see God as the highest good for the self, and will rejoice in and embrace God as the greatest good (*Works*, 18, Miscellany 530).

Justification

Justification, taught Edwards, immediately follows conversion. He averred with the Larger Catechism (Q. 70) that “justification is an act of God’s free grace unto sinners, in which He pardons all their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in His sight; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.” Justification is a legal act, wherein God pardons the elect sinner and accepts him as righteous “for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ” which is imputed to him. Theologians refer to this as the doctrine of “double imputation.” That is, not only were the sins of the elect imputed to Christ (in His atoning cross work), but His righteousness was also imputed to them. In defense of the Edwardsian doctrine of justification, Robert Jenson correctly stated:⁶⁹

Edwards knows that the language of “justification” is juridical language in Paul’s use and in the use of the Reformation, and he adheres to the rules of the metaphor. So also the justice given by God’s justification is strictly “imputed” justice, in the purest style of ... Calvinistic teaching: God chooses to reckon Christ’s righteousness to the sinner, and so the sinner is judged righteous.

To be justified is to be approved of God as a proper subject of pardon, with a right to eternal life. In Miscellany 812 Edwards wrote (*Works*, 18):

Justification is not only pardon of sin ... but in an act or sentence approving of him as innocent and positively righteous, and so having a right to freedom from punishment, and to the reward of positive righteousness.... But the pardon we have in Christ is a freeing persons from the punishment of sin, as an act of justice, and because they are looked upon and accepted as having that which is equivalent to innocence, viz. satisfaction.... Justification consists of imputing righteousness. To pardon sin is to cease to be angry for sin. But imputing righteousness and ceasing to be angry for sin are two things; one is the foundation of the other. God ceases to be angry with the sinner for his sin because righteousness is imputed to him.

As stated above, the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, was the central doctrine of the Reformation. And Edwards was a staunch defender of it. In his sermon on Romans 4:5 he preached: “We are justified only by faith in Christ, and not by any manner of goodness of our own.... God, in justification, has no regard to any godliness of ours” (*Meet Jonathan Edwards*, 115).

When Edwards taught that justification is by faith alone, he did not mean that one’s faith is in any sense meritorious. Neither faith nor repentance justify “as a work, for the nature of the one [repentance] is to renounce works, and the nature of the other [faith] is to depend on the work of another [Christ]” (*Works*, 18, Miscellany 620). “God does not give those that believe a union with or an interest in the Savior as a reward for faith, but only because faith is the soul’s active uniting with Christ” (Sermon on Rom. 4:5). “We must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and accept of Him as offered in the gospel for a Savior. But, as we cannot do this of ourselves, Christ has purchased this, also, for all the elect. He has purchased, that they shall have faith given them; whereby they shall be united to Christ, and have a title to His benefits.”⁷⁰ In fact, “there is no good work before conversion” (*Works*, 18, Misc. 797).

Faith means trusting in Christ alone, who justifies. The ground of justification is Christ’s vicarious righteousness and sacrifice, i.e., His works. Ultimately, therefore, said Edwards, salvation is by works, but it is by Christ’s works, not the believer’s. “If it is inquired what we must be saved for or on account of the answer is it must be for works, but not our works; nor any works that we have done or can do but works that Christ has done for us.”⁷¹ As stated by Conrad Cherry, according to Jonathan Edwards, “both the salvation of the saints (their objective good) and their title to salvation (faith as an inherent good) are gifts freely given by God in Christ” (Cherry, 95).

Jonathan Edwards did teach, along with a number of other Reformed theologians, including the Westminster divines and John Calvin,⁷² that faith and other graces (such as obedience and perseverance) are ‘conditions’

69. Robert W. Jenson, *America’s Theologian* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 58.

70. Cited in Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) 95.

71. Jonathan Edwards, Sermon on Genesis 6:22, *Pressing Into the Kingdom*, compiled and edited by Don Kistler (Morgantown, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 1998) 218-247.

72. See the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (7:3) and the *Larger Catechism* (Q. 32). See also John Calvin, *Sermons on Deuteronomy* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987) 322; John Calvin *Com-*

of salvation. But they are non-meritorious ‘conditions,’ because they all come as a gift of God. And they are only ‘conditions’ in the sense that “without which it shall not be, and that with which it shall be” (Miscellany 315).⁷³

In an (unpublished) sermon on Romans 4:16, he preached: “In one sense of the word Christ alone performs the condition of our salvation.... And in another sense of the word there are other graces besides faith that are conditions of justification.” But then he went on to say that “faith is that in them which God has respect to upon the account of which God judges it meet that they should be looked upon as Christ’s righteousness belonging to them.” And in his sermon on Romans 4:5 (Hickman, 1.641), he stated that even faith itself is a gift of God, as is the saint’s perseverance in a way of holiness unto glory. It is only by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God that the saints are enabled to persevere, and perseverance is so “contained in the first act of faith” that it cannot possibly fail. By God’s grace, saving faith ushers in a certain “natural fitness” or “suitableness” whereby the elect sinner is granted the grace to persevere to the end and be saved.⁷⁴ As necessary as these graces are in order to salvation (and they are absolutely necessary), they are nevertheless gracious gifts from almighty God, and therefore non-meritorious, non-causal, and non-justifying; they are in no sense instrumental in justification. According to Jonathan Edwards, “that which makes our obedience the matter of our justification ... [is] contrary to the gospel doctrine of justification” (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 474). The good works, then, are works of necessity, not of merit; the works will “necessarily” follow saving faith.

Jonathan Edwards’ view here on the relationship between faith and good works is the same as that taught by

mentaries, Volumes I-XXII (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1981) Commentary on Micah 2:10.

73. Editor’s Note: In this context, the term *obligations* is perhaps less subject to misunderstanding than is the term *conditions*.

74. Space does not permit us to develop Edwards’ teaching on “natural fitness,” but basically, he distinguishes between “natural fitness” and “moral fitness.” A person is morally fit when his own holiness or excellency would commend him to salvation. In this sense, only Christ is morally fit. Natural fitness, on the other hand, is that fitness that exists when a person is united to Christ through faith. In the eyes of God it is “fitting” that these two things, i.e., salvation and union with Christ through faith, belong together. In fact, the concept of “fitness” and “harmony” pervade Edwards’ thought. All of God’s providential dealings in His created universe “fit” together, in perfect “harmony.” And Jesus Christ is central to all. See Edwards’ sermon on Romans 4:5; Cherry, 94ff; and Samuel T. Logan, Jr., “The Doctrine of Justification in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 46 (1984) 48-52.

the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (16:2; 14:2): “These good works, done in obedience to God’s commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith.” A converted person is one who, not only “believes to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word [of God],” but he is also one who is found “yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come.” God calls us, said the New England divine, to a “universal obedience,” i.e., an obedience that seeks to keep God’s commandments in every area of the Christian life, not just some parts (*Works*, 18, Miscellany 790). Such obedience “is the proper evidence of our acceptable state” with God. Those who are unwilling “to live universally in obedience to God’s commands, it is not best that they should ... treat themselves as if they were godly” (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 462).

As taught in the Epistle of James, said Edwards, good works are a “sign” of “manifestative justification,” rather than “causal justification.” And the reason God accepts them as “good works” is that they are works done “in Christ.” In fact, he goes so far as to say that every act of godliness is to be considered as a “new act” of justifying faith. These acts are continual “acts” of saving faith, of the reception of Christ, in which faith is working through love. Thus, the works do not by themselves contribute anything to salvation: “All evangelical works are works of that faith that works by love; and every such act of obedience, wherein it is inward and the act of the soul, is only a new, effective act of reception of Christ” (Sermon on Rom. 4:5). “Evangelical obedience ... is an expression of [saving] faith” (*Works*, 18, Misc. 670). It is clear, then, wrote Samuel Logan, that whereas “evangelical obedience is thus fully a condition of justification,” in the teaching of Jonathan Edwards, it is clearly “not a cause of justification” (Logan, “The Doctrine of Justification in the theology of Jonathan Edwards,” 39).

On the other hand, the Puritan Sage denounced the Arminian concept of “conditions,” wherein such conditions are in some degree meritorious. Arminianism, he taught, is a form of neonomianism, wherein faith is a kind of good work, and the gospel is a new kind of law. Hence, he strongly opposed “the Arminian scheme of justification by our own virtue” (*Works*, 18.13). This view is “fatal.... [It is] another gospel” (Sermon on Romans 4:5). In a sermon on 1 Corinthians 1:29-31, Edwards preached: “Whatever scheme [i.e., Arminianism] is inconsistent with our entire dependence on God for all, and of having all of Him, through Him, and in Him, is repugnant to the design and tenor of the gospel and robs it of that which God accounts its luster and glory”

(Hickman, 2.3-7). According to C. C. Goen (cited in Bogue, 88):

Convinced that the doctrine of human ability which underlay the gradual shift to Arminian principles was a dangerous heresy, he [Edwards] preached a series of five sermons on justification by faith alone. These messages were broadsides of pure and uncompromising Reformed doctrine that all men justly deserve instant and total damnation, that none has a claim upon God's mercy, that salvation is a gracious gift of God through Jesus Christ who dies to save sinners, that it is appropriated through faith which itself is a gift of God – all these points were hammered home with a relentless force that scarcely can be appreciated by the reader today.

Adoption

Like justification, adoption is a judicial act of God, wherein He brings the justified sinner, as “partaking with Christ,” into a filial relationship with Himself. All persons are not children of God, said Edwards. He would have nothing to do with the false teaching of the brotherhood of all men, and the universal fatherhood of God. It is only those who savingly receive Christ that are God's children. They are the ones who have intimacy of fellowship with the Father as His children.⁷⁵

Sanctification

John Gerstner claimed that “of the twelve hundred plus sermons which Edwards wrote, I estimate that sanctification was the central and most emphasized theme” (3.224). In fact, so thorough and penetrating is the New England divine's exposition and analysis of this aspect of soteriology, that some scholars, such as Thomas Schafer, have suggested that Edwards confuses and conflates justification and sanctification.⁷⁶ But such is not the case. As Conrad Cherry points out, “it is indeed true that Edwards makes faith and justification by faith dependent on a type of sanctification,” but the “sanctification upon which the act of faith (through which one is justified) is dependent, is the gift of God's Spirit which resides within man as the principle of his act” (Cherry, 41). In actuality, the Puritan Sage is saying nothing different than Calvin, who averred that “Christ justifies no one whom He does not sanctify at the same time”;⁷⁷ and A. A. Hodge, who wrote “you cannot take Christ for justification unless you take Him for sanctification.” These two, “justification and sanctification; they go together, and they constitute one life. If there was ever one who

attempted to receive Christ with justification and not with sanctification.... He was no more justified than he was sanctified.”⁷⁸

Jonathan Edwards, in contradistinction to the antinomianism of his day, boldly stood for the biblical doctrine of the inseparable relationship between justification and sanctification, both of which are dependent upon the grace of God, in Christ. Whereas in justification, Christ's righteousness is imputed, in sanctification grace is infused. As taught in the *Westminster Larger Catechism* (Q. 77), “although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification imputes the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification, He infuses grace, and enables to the exercise thereof.” In Edwards own words:⁷⁹

There is a two-fold righteousness that the saints have: an imputed righteousness, and it is this only that avails anything to justification; and an inherent righteousness, that is, that holiness and grace which is in the hearts and lives of the saints. This is Christ's righteousness as well as imputed righteousness: imputed righteousness is Christ's righteousness accepted for them, inherent holiness is Christ's righteousness communicated to them.

We have seen that the New England divine taught that there are several non-meritorious, non-causal, non-justifying conditions of salvation. What he meant by this is that even though salvation is by faith alone, that faith is never alone. Genuine faith is always accompanied by good works, in the process of sanctification. Sanctification is a necessary corollary to justification. Even though Edwards chose to use different verbiage, his view is in basic agreement with the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (16:2), which states: “Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet it is not alone in the person

75. Jonathan Edwards, Sermon on Romans 2:10, *The True Believer*, edited by Don Kistler (Soli Deo Gloria, 2001) 230-315.

76. Thomas Schafer, “Jonathan Edwards and Justification by Faith,” *Church History*, XX (December 1951) 55-67.

77. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John T. McNeill, editor, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1960) 3.16:1.

78. A. A. Hodge, *Evangelical Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976) 310-311.

79. *Works*, 14, ed. Kenneth P. Minkema, *Sermons and Discourses: 1723-1729* (1997) 340-341. Calvin also taught that in sanctification the saint has an infused or inherent righteousness from God: “We are never reconciled to God without being at the same time presented with inherent righteousness.” See John Calvin, *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, edited by Henry Beveridge and Jules Bonnet (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983) 3.244.

justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love.”⁸⁰

In a sermon on Galatians 5:6, Edwards preached (Gerstner, 3.225-226):

There is no room left for anyone to say that they have faith which justifies and that they need take no care about works and so to give themselves the liberty in sinning because they are not under the law but under grace; for though it is only faith that justifies yet there is no faith that justifies but a working faith; so that it is impossible for any person should be saved without works as if they were justified upon the account of their works. It is as impossible that men should be saved without an evangelical, universal, and sincere obedience under the second covenant [of grace] as it was that they should be saved without a perfect obedience under the first covenant [of works] [albeit, not for the same reason].

Or said another way: “Men cannot be saved for any works of theirs, and yet they are not saved without works” (Sermon on Genesis 6:22).⁸¹ In complete agreement with the Westminster divines, he taught that “a true trust in Christ is never infused without other graces with it” (Gerstner, 3.228). A genuine, justifying faith will necessarily produce good works. Because this kind of faith is a “sense of the heart”; it “reaches the bot-

80. Edwards was more comfortable with calling faith a “condition” of justification than he was with calling it the “instrument” of justification. In his sermon on Romans 4:5, regarding this matter he preached: “But yet it must be owned, that this is an obscure way of speaking [calling faith the “instrument” of justification], and there must certainly be some impropriety in calling faith an instrument, wherewith we receive or accept justification; for the very person that thus explains the matter, speaks of faith as being the reception or acceptance itself; and if so, how can it be the instrument of reception or acceptance?...If faith be an instrument, it is more properly the instrument by which we receive Christ, than the instrument by which we receive justification.” But as John Gerstner commented: “There seems to be no great difference here between Edwards and the Reformed tradition” (*Jonathan Edwards: Evangelist*, 142).

81. Sermon on Genesis 6:22, *Pressing Into the Kingdom*, 225. John Calvin made a very similar statement in his Commentary on Ezekiel 18:14-17: “But although works tend in no way to the cause of justification, yet when the elect sons of God were justified freely by faith, at the same time their works are esteemed righteous by the same gratuitous liberality. Thus, it still remains true, that faith without works justifies, although this needs prudence and a sound interpretation; for this proposition, that faith without works justifies, is true and yet false, according to the different senses it bears. The proposition that faith without works justifies by itself, is false, because faith without works is void.”

82. Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1984) 157ff.

tom of the heart”; it “gains the heart.” And “when the heart [is] gained,” then the “will is gained,” and “when the will is gained the practice is gained,” and good works will follow (*Works*, 20, Miscellany 868). It is not enough to know the truth; one must practice the truth.

Further, as noted, the good works of the justified saint must be “universal” if true conversion is involved, because a genuine conversion affects every area of the Christian’s life. In the words of the *Shorter Catechism* (Q. 35), “sanctification is a work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the *whole man* after the image of God, and enabled more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.” And although all of the believer’s good works are tainted with sin, they are “universal” in scope; there is a “beautiful symmetry and proportion” of “holy affections,” wherein the practice of godliness is the whole “business” of one’s life. All is consciously done for the glory of God. Godly men have a spirit to be perfectly holy.⁸²

The process of sanctification, said Edwards, involves a constant warfare. There is a “mutual opposition and strife” that exists “between grace and corruption in the hearts of the saints during their continuance in this world.” The struggle in the life of the believer is likened to the struggle that went on in the womb of Rebecca between Jacob and Esau. This process involves the chastisement of God, who uses sickness and affliction to cause His saints to confess and forsake sin in their lives, that they may draw closer to Him (*Jonathan Edwards: Evangelist*, 156-159).

Here the New England divine is distinguishing between one’s initial “conversion” and later “conversions.” There is only one “conversion” in the life of any Christian, which occurs when he responds in faith and repentance to the call of the gospel. At the same time, there must be numerous “conversions” in a believer’s life, which occur when he progressively confesses and forsakes the remaining sin in his life. “Those who have true grace in their hearts [i.e., Christians], may yet stand in great need of being converted” (Gerstner, 3.231). One of the “signs of godliness,” said Edwards, is that of “humility, a broken and contrite heart, a being poor in spirit, sensibleness of our own vileness and unworthiness, self-abasement, disclaiming all worthiness and glory, mourning for sin” (*Works*, 18.169n.).

This is why, stressed Edwards, men must continue to “seek” subsequent to their conversion. Now, however, they are not seeking for conversion, but for their continual growth in the Lord. In a sermon on Philippians 3:17, he used “the Apostle Paul [as] an example” in this regard (*To All the Saints of God*, 155-211):

The apostle did not only thus earnestly seek salvation before his conversion and hope, but afterwards [as well]. What he says in the third [chapter] of Philippians of his suffering the loss of all things, that he might be found in Christ, and its being the one thing that he did to seek salvation; and also what he says of his so running as not uncertainly, but as resolving to win the prize of salvation, and keeping under his body that he might not be a castaway; was long after his conversion and after he had received hope of his own good estate.

If being already converted excuses a man from seeking salvation any more, or makes it reasonable that he should leave off his earnest care and labor for it, certainly the apostle might have been excused, when he had not only already attained true grace, but such eminent degrees of it. To see one of the most eminent saints that ever lived, if not the most eminent of all, so exceedingly engaged in seeking his own salvation – it ought for ever to put to shame those that are a thousand degrees below him, and are but mere infants to him, if they have any grace at all; that yet excuse themselves from using any violence after the kingdom of heaven now, because they have attained already, easing themselves of the burden of going on earnestly to seek salvation with this, that they have got through the work, they have got a hope.

The apostle, as eminent as he was, did not say within himself, “I am converted, and so am sure of salvation. Christ has promised it to me; what need I care any further about obtaining salvation? Yea, I am not only converted, but I have obtained great degrees of grace.”

The apostle knew that though he was converted, yet there remained a great work that he must do, in order to his [final] salvation. There was a narrow way to eternal glory, that he must pass through and never could come to the crown of glory any other way. He knew that it was absolutely necessary for him earnestly to seek salvation still; he knew that there was no going to heaven in a lazy way.

According to Robert Jenson, Jonathan Edwards would have us know that “the whole life of sanctification” can be synopsized “by two principles.” The first is a “holiness of heart,” which will “keep men from errors in judgment about religion.” The reason being, “that the sanctified mind is let into the spiritual world,” where it “perceives what ideas are harmonious” with the things of God, and which are not. The second is the realization

that “the motives to believers to perform the commands of God, are not because salvation is [upon] the condition of doing them..., but the amiableness of God..., the loveliness of virtue, and its natural tendency to happiness” (*America’s Theologian*, 87).

Holiness, taught Edwards, is both the desire and the goal of the saint. He delights in holiness out of a love for God, who is the ultimate producer of holiness: “Holiness is ... the highest beauty and amiableness.... It makes the soul a little sweet and delightful image of the blessed *Jehovah*.... What a sweet calmness, what calm ecstasies, does it bring to the soul.... It makes the soul like ... a garden planted by God ... where the sun is Jesus Christ, the blessed beams and calm breeze, the Holy Spirit” (*Works*, 13, Miscellany a).

Jonathan Edwards firmly believed that the process of sanctification must of necessity involve the use of the means of grace: Scripture, the sacraments, and prayer (*Works*, 18, Miscellany 539). It is not possible for a Christian to grow spiritually apart from a knowledge of the Word of God. Therefore, he preached in a sermon on Hebrews 5:12, “every Christian should make a business of endeavoring to grow in knowledge of divinity.... There is no other way by which any means of grace whatsoever can be of any benefit but by knowledge.... Christians ought not to content themselves with such degrees of knowledge in divinity as they have already obtained. It should not satisfy them that they know as much as is absolutely necessary to salvation, but should seek to make progress.... However diligently we apply ourselves, there is room enough to increase our knowledge of divinity, without coming to an end” (*To All the Saints of God*, 212-241). Christians must grow in knowledge. And, as he pointed out in Miscellany 539, all knowledge is conveyed by the Spirit of God to the elect of God, by means of the Word and sacraments (as they are explained and understood in accordance with the Word). “God’s Spirit,” said Edwards, “always attends His ordinances” (Hickman, 1.539).⁸³

Then too, taught Edwards, prayer is essential to the process of sanctification. In His Word, God speaks to His people; in prayer, they speak to Him. Herein is the communion between God and the elect (unpublished Miscellany 1338). Prayer, of course, is the duty of all men, but only the elect can truly pray. Genuine prayer

83. Edwards taught that the means of grace, by themselves, “have no influence to produce grace.” Rather, they supply the mind of man “with matter for grace to act upon when God [the Holy Spirit] shall be pleased to infuse it.” It is “the Spirit of God” alone who “causes acts of grace in the soul; and that grace [comes] immediately from Him” (*Works*, 18, Miscellany 539).

is God's children talking to their heavenly Father. Therefore, for God's people, there is "the great duty of secret prayer" (*To All the Saints of God*, 46-67). "The true spirit of prayer is no other than God's own Spirit dwelling in the hearts of the saints. That being a Spirit that comes from God, does naturally tend to God in holy breathings [and] pantings.... True prayer is nothing else but faith expressed.... True prayer is the faith and reliance of the soul breathed forth in words" (*The True Believer*, 50-79). And for prayer to be proper, it must be prayer in accordance with the teaching of Scripture (*Works*, 13, Miscellany 492).

Finally, even though there will be no more sin to wage war against in the final state, said Edwards, the process of sanctification (increasing in holiness) will continue forever (Hickman, 1.101):

There are many reasons to think that what God has in view, in an increasing communication of Himself in eternity, is an increasing knowledge of God, love to Him, and joy in Him. And it is to be considered that the more those divine communications increase in the creature, the more it becomes one with God; for so much the more it is united to God in love, the heart is drawn nearer and nearer to God, and 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 for ever nearer and nearer to an identity to 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 for ever come nearer and nearer to that strictness and perfection of union which there is between the Father and the Son.

Perseverance

According to the New England divine, the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is not one and the same thing with the assurance of salvation. Whereas perseverance teaches that no Christian will finally fall away from the state of salvation to which God has brought him, assurance has to do with the individual Christian's confidence of his own state. A justified man may doubt

his salvation, but this does not deny the doctrine of perseverance.

Jonathan Edwards contended that perseverance is a condition of salvation: "Perseverance in holiness is absolutely necessary to salvation," because a genuine saving faith is a persevering faith. "Persevering in the way of duty is ... a necessary concomitant and evidence of a title of salvation, but also it is a necessary prerequisite to the actual possession of eternal life." Perseverance "is the only way to heaven, [it is] the narrow way which leads to life" (*Jonathan Edwards: Evangelist*, 165).

And yet, it is certain that a genuine Christian will persevere. The reason being that "God, in the act of justification, which is passed on a sinner's first believing, has respect to perseverance, as being virtually contained in that first act of faith" (Sermon on Romans 4:5, Hickman, 1.641). God's "promise of acceptance is made only to a persevering sort of faith." The believer is in union with Jesus Christ, and he cannot ever permanently fall away from the faith. A true Christian may indeed fall into sin, but God will keep him from continuing in it. "That the saints shall surely persevere, will necessarily follow this," that "the righteousness by which they have justification unto life," has "already been performed for them [by Christ] and imputed to them" in Christ (Hickman, 2.596-597).

Assurance

As stated by John Gerstner: "It may be clear enough that, according to Edwards, if you have it [salvation] you cannot lose it, but the great question still remains, How do you know if you have it?" (*Jonathan Edwards: Evangelist*, 166). The answer to this question is that this Puritan Sage believed that there were certain marks of a work of the Spirit of God that reveal a genuine work of conversion. Herein "true grace [is] distinguished from the experience of devils" (*The True Believer*, 16-49).

Even though assurance is not necessary for salvation,⁸⁴ there is, said Edwards, "an absolute sort of certainty" that one can have.⁸⁵ It consists in an immediate witness of assurance given to the elect by the Holy Spirit. There is a new sense, an inner sense, of divine things. And it is most clearly recognized by the practice of holiness in the Christian life. Assurance is mostly to be obtained by action, not self-examination.⁸⁶ "Christian practice then is the evidence above all other evidence that confirms and crowns a proof of godliness" (*Religious Affections*, 183). Good works "are as much the proper evidence of the act of the soul in receiving Christ, as the act of the soul in receiving Christ is the

84. *Works*, 16.330.

85. *Works*, 6.346.

86. See Nichols, *An Absolute Sort of Certainty*.

proper evidence of the principle of faith" (*Works*, 20, Miscellany 859).

On the other hand, maintained Edwards, if one is relying on his good works for his assurance of salvation, rather than looking to Christ, who is the Author and Finisher of the faith, then he is practicing a form of self-reliance which is the antithesis of saving faith (*Religious Affections*, 67ff.). Edwards preached a series of sermons on "The Parable of the Ten Virgins" on this very subject. In this series he showed, from the Word of God, both wherein true and false Christians agree, and wherein they differ. And the difference is literally a difference between heaven and hell (Gerstner, 3.337).

Religious Affections is undoubtedly Edwards' fullest treatment of this subject. And, said Erroll Hulse, it is "probably the most penetrating analysis of Christian inward experience ever written."⁸⁷ As John Piper wrote:⁸⁸

This book [*Religious Affections*] is the mature, seasoned reflection of Edwards, and the most profound analysis of the difference between true and false Christian experience that emerged from the season of the Great Awakening. In fact, it is probably one of the most penetrating and heart-searching biblical treatments ever written of the way God works in saving and sanctifying the human heart.

A reading of *Religious Affections*, along with his other teaching on the subject of assurance, reveals that Jonathan Edwards was in agreement with the *Westminster Larger Catechism* (Q. 80-81), which states that:

Such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavor to walk in all good conscience before Him, may, without extraordinary revelation, by faith grounded upon the truth of God's promises, and by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made, and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God, be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and shall persevere therein unto salvation.... Assurance of grace and salvation, not being the essence of faith, true believers may wait long before they obtain it; and after the enjoyment thereof, may have it weakened and intermitted, through manifold distempers, sins, temptations, and desertions; yet are they never left without such a presence and support of the Spirit of God as keeps them from sinking into utter despair.

Glorification

In a sermon on Revelation 5:5-6 ("The Excellency of Christ"), Edwards preached that "Christ has brought it to pass, that those whom the Father has given to Him should be brought into the household of God; that He and His Father, and His people, should be as one society, one family, that the church should be as it were admitted into the society of the blessed Trinity" (Hickman, 1.680-689).

Glorification is the final phase of the *ordo salutis*, which according to Jonathan Edwards, comes in two stages. The first stage begins at the death of the individual Christian, when he enters into the disembodied, intermediate state. Stage two occurs at the time of the resurrection of the dead (Hickman, 2.888-905).

Stage one begins at the death of the saint, when he is ushered into the presence of God, in Christ (Hickman, 2.891):

Death is not only no death for them, but is a translation to a more glorious life, and is turned into a kind of resurrection from the dead. Death is a happy change to them, and a change that is by far more like a resurrection than a death. It is a change from a state of much sin, and sorrow, and darkness, to a state of perfect light, and holiness, and joy. When a saint dies, he awakes, as it were, out of sleep. This life is a dull, lifeless state; there is but a little spiritual life, and a great deal of deadness; there is but a little light, and a great deal of darkness; there is but a little sense, and a great deal of stupidity and senselessness. But when a godly man dies, all this deadness, and darkness, and stupidity, and senselessness are gone forever, and he enters immediately into a state of perfect life, and perfect light, and activity, and joyfulness.

According to Edwards, there is nothing on earth that will fully suffice to represent the glory of heaven. In the heavenly state, the saints will fully realize the blessings of the communion of the saints; they will recognize one another, and enjoy fellowship throughout eternity. But the *summum bonum* of glorification is that "the saints in heaven will see God. They shall not only see that glorious city [the heavenly Jerusalem], and the saints there, and the holy angels, and the glorified Christ; but they shall see God Himself ... with the eye of the soul"

87. Erroll Hulse, *Who Are the Puritans? And What Do They Teach?* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2000) 143.

88. John Piper, *God's Passion For His Glory* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1998) 59.

(Hickman, 2.892ff, 900). “If God and Christ were not in heaven, however beautiful the place, and whatever excellent creatures are there, yet heaven would be but an empty and lonely place.”⁸⁹ In heaven the people of God will see Him face to face. This is the “beatific vision,” which surpasses all other blessings that the saints will have in their heavenly state.

Moreover, preached Edwards, in a sermon on Revelation 18:20, the saints in heaven will not grieve over the lost; rather, it will be just the opposite: “When the saints in glory see the wrath of God executed on ungodly men, it will be no occasion of grief to them, but of rejoicing.”⁹⁰ Even Christian parents will delight in the punishment of their incorrigible children. The reason being, that the saints will rejoice that God’s justice is being perfectly carried out, and His majesty revealed. They will rejoice over the fact that God is righting all wrongs, and making His power known. The saints will love God as He is worthy to be loved, and honor Him as He is deserving to be honored; and they will do so with sinless hearts and sinless love.

The second stage of glorification begins at the time of the final resurrection (Hickman, 2.893-894):

As the wicked have not their full punishment until after the resurrection, so neither have the saints their complete happiness. Though they have attained to such exceeding glory, yet they are not yet arrived at its highest degrees, for that is reserved for their final state. The reward which the saints receive after the resurrection, is often spoken of as their chief reward.... So the happiness, that they shall be given at Christ’s second coming, is spoken of as the principal happiness.

It is natural for us to want to be embodied, taught Edwards. The non-corporeal state, in this sense, is unnatural: “Redemption is not complete till the resurrection.... So long as the separation between soul and body remains, one of those evils remains that is a part of the penalty of the law.... To be without the body is in itself an evil, because it is a want of that which the soul of man naturally inclines to and desires” (*Works*, 18, Miscellany 644).

89. Jonathan Edwards, Sermon on Psalm 73:25, *The Puritan Pulpit*, 176-191.

90. Cited in John H. Gerstner, *Heaven & Hell: Jonathan Edwards on the Afterlife* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980; Ligonier Ministries edition, 1991) 33ff.

91. In Miscellanies 806 and 809 (*Works*, 18), Edwards, in agreement with the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (32:2) taught that the bodies of Christians in the final state will be the same bodies which they had prior to their death, only now glorified.

The bodies of Christians will be raised both “in an exceeding strength” and “in a wonderful beauty,” “for we are told that their bodies shall be like to Christ’s glorious body” (Hickman, 2.894-895).⁹¹ These same resurrected and glorified saints “shall sit on thrones with Christ, to judge wicked men and angels.” And “Christ shall pronounce the blessed sentence upon them [the elect]: ‘Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’” (Hickman, 2.895-896). In this glorified state, the saints will see that “the eternal heaven surrounds Christ not merely as an house surrounds an inhabitant..., but rather as plants and flowers are before the sun, that have their life and beauty and being from the luminary” (*Works*, 20, Miscellany 1122).

There are degrees of blessedness in heaven, preached Edwards, in a sermon on John 14:2. There are “many mansions” in God’s heavenly kingdom. All of the saints are like vessels that are filled to the brim with joy; yet the vessels are of different sizes (*Heaven & Hell*, 19-20). And “the happiness of the saints shall never have interruption.” And the degree of blessedness of the saints “will be according to the degree of their holiness and good works” (*Works*, 18, Miscellany 671).

Then too, there will be continual growth in purity, with “no sin or corruption” to interfere in any way. “It is certain,” wrote Edwards, “that the inhabitants of heaven do increase in their knowledge” (*Works*, 18, Miscellany 701). And “there shall never be any end to their [the saints] glory and blessedness. Therefore it is so often called eternal life, and everlasting life.... The pleasures which are at God’s right hand, are said to be for ever more (Psalm 16:11).” “As God is eternal, so their happiness is eternal; as long as the fountain lasts, they need not fear but they shall be supplied” (Hickman, 2.902). God’s “saints will be progressive in knowledge and happiness to all eternity” (*Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 13, Miscellany 435).

At this time, when the body of Christ’s church is “perfect and complete,” then “will be the marriage supper of the Lamb.” This day will be glorious, not only for the church, but for Christ as well: “It will be the day of the gladness of Christ’s heart; [and] the feast, and pomp, and holy mirth, and joy in this marriage day, will be continued to all eternity.” The bride will then be presented by Christ to God the Father, “and the glory of His Son shall be displayed in heaven in a more abundant manner than ever before” (Hickman, 2.896). This, taught Edwards, is the end for which God created the world, i.e., that He be glorified. And “if God’s chief end is the manifestation of His glory,” as Edwards maintained,

wrote John Gerstner, “where is that fully realized as well as in heaven” (*Heaven & Hell*, 41).

CONCLUSION

In our study we have surveyed Jonathan Edwards’ teaching on the cardinal doctrine of the Reformation, “Justification by Faith Alone,” in the context of his overall view of soteriology. We have seen that the New England divine’s doctrine is in agreement with that of the Westminster Standards (his favorite creed). The salvation of the elect is rooted in the eternal purpose of God. But even though God has elected some men to glory in His eternal decree, He has also appointed all of the means whereby those persons will be saved and glorified. All of the elect, who are fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ through the covenant of grace, and the salvation merited by Christ in their behalf is applied to them by the Holy Spirit.

We have also seen that Jonathan Edwards believed that there is a logical order in which the eternal purpose of God is carried out in redemptive history. This logical order, which is known as the *ordo salutis*, begins in election and concludes in glorification. And at the very heart of the *ordo salutis* is the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone: *sola fide*. Man is justified by grace, through faith – a faith which will necessarily produce good works. According to the New England divine, “it is manifest that the Scripture supposes that if ever men are turned from sin, God must undertake it and He must be the doer of it, and that His doing must determine the matter (Works, 21.294). Nevertheless, a saving faith is an active faith. “In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do all, and we do the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is what He produces, *viz.* our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive and wholly active” (Hickman, 2.557). There is a perfect harmony involved, because God is “the supreme Harmony of all” (Works, 13, Miscellany 182).

Soli Deo Gloria.■

In Brief: Two Good Anecdotes

The value of an anecdote depends upon three things—the truth illustrated, the person who is concerned in it, and the aptness of the expression used, or the method employed. An anecdote may be good which involves only one of these conditions; it will be the best when it unites them all. It is for this purpose that we venture to use the names of two of our most venerable ministers, one of whom lately entered into his rest, and the other of whom is waiting for the salvation of God at the verge of four-score years.

1. Every Princeton student remembers with affection the venerable Samuel Miller. One of them, before leaving the Seminary to enter upon the work of the ministry, lingered behind a day to receive the parting word of instruction and blessing. He went to the dwelling of his revered instructor, then emaciated with disease and almost in the act of laying down his tabernacle, and he was received with that benignant and sympathizing courtesy which graced that noble specimen of a Christian man. After a brief interval of edifying conversation, the patriarch offered up a fervent prayer for the young student; and then, taking him by the hand, said to him with the solemnity and sweetness so characteristic: “Brother Paxton,[†] *live near to the throne of grace*, that you may be filled with the love of Christ; and *take care of the lambs of the flock*, the hope of the Church.”

2. A venerable Elder, formerly connected with the Pine Street church, Philadelphia, had not seen his former pastor for several years. During the last summer, Providence enabled him to visit Princeton; and the two servants of Christ had a most refreshing interview. They talked over those good old times, when the two used to visit the neighbouring churches to dispense the word of life, as well as go from house to house in their own congregations. And it was remarked by a person present how the former pastor seemed to remember men, women and children, with the freshness and interest of yesterday, as they two traveled around old scenes and discoursed of the wonderful works of God. Finally the Elder must needs depart; and as he shook by the hand the venerable pastor of his early days, whom he scarcely expected to see again in the flesh, said, “Well, Dr. Alexander, we shall have plenty of opportunity in heaven to talk over these things.” “Yes,” replied the Doctor, with his pleasant, Matthew-Henry, vivacity, “Yes, brother Nassau, and plenty of *time* too!”

[†]The Rev. William M. Paxton, recently [circa 1851] called to the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh.

[Excerpted from *The Presbyterian Magazine*, 1.3 (March 1851) 103.■