

Which Comes First, The Intellect or the Will?

Alvin Plantinga and Jonathan Edwards on a Perennial Question

By Jeffrey C. Waddington

INTRODUCTION

In 2000, distinguished Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga offered an account of how Christian belief acquires warrant (if, in fact, Christian belief is true) in the culmination of his warrant series, *Warranted Christian Belief* (hereafter *WCB*).¹ Key to his discussion of warranted Christian belief is the presentation and explanation of what Plantinga calls the Aquinas/Calvin model (hereafter A/C model) and the *extended* A/C model.² The A/C model is initially comprised of Plantinga's version of the *sensus divinitatus*,³ which is then extended to include explicitly Christian belief with three elements: the Bible, the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit, and faith.⁴ Faith, for Plantinga, involves both the intellect and the will. In chapters eight and nine of *WCB*, he details the cognitive and volitional elements of faith and how they relate to one another.

My interest in this discussion centers on Plantinga's examination of Jonathan Edwards' understanding of the relationship between the intellect and the will that occurs in chapter nine of *WCB*, where Plantinga examines the "testimonial model." In that chapter Plantinga's concern is to hypothesize how the intellect and will interrelate, and so he asks: which of the faculties of the mind has priority? Which comes first? While his discussion is interesting in its detail and consideration of several possible angles, it seems to neglect a key factor

in the reading of Jonathan Edwards. Plantinga himself doesn't think that there is any good reason to believe that either faculty has priority or primacy,⁵ but he does see Edwards as having affirmed some type of priority for the intellect.⁶ Although Plantinga undoubtedly offers one of the more intricate discussions of the matter, I think he misconstrues Edwards. He appears to read Edwards as some sort of "intellectualist."⁷

Thesis

Developing a suggestion made by K. Scott Oliphint in his review of *WCB*,⁸ I propose to demonstrate that Edwards' concern to tread a new path (i.e., to move away from the hierarchical faculty psychology of his day) by affirming the unified, mutually interrelated operations of the human soul (the "dispositional complex") may account for the missing element in Plantinga's assessment

2. Discussions of these can be found on 168–90 and 199–323 respectively in *WCB*.

3. Plantinga's treatment of the *sensus* is problematic, but need not detain us here. See K. Scott Oliphint's review of *WCB* which will be referenced below.

4. See Plantinga's discussion on 242ff in *WCB*.

5. On 308 of *WCB* Plantinga indicates that he can't determine, due to the complexity of the interrelationships of the intellect and will (or, to use his terminology, "dependency relationships") which, if either, has priority. He has reiterated this viewpoint in personal email correspondence with me as well.

6. Plantinga, *WCB*, 301.

7. I say "appears" since Plantinga does not directly affirm faculty psychology as such.

8. K. Scott Oliphint, "Review: Epistemology and Christian Belief," in *Westminster Theological Journal* 63/1 (Spring 2001): 151–82. See especially 159–60. See also Oliphint's fuller treatment of these issues in "Jonathan Edwards: Reformed Apologist," *WTJ* 57/1 (Spring 1995): 165–86 (especially 170–75) and "Jonathan Edwards on Apologetics" in *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards: American Religion and the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. D. G. Hart, Sean Michael Lucas, and Stephen J. Nichols (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 131–46.

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1. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). The previous two volumes in the trilogy are *Warrant: The Current Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) and *Warrant and Proper Function* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

of Edwards on the intellect and will. In other words, while Plantinga's examination of the relationship between the will and intellect is to be commended, he nevertheless misses Edwards' major point, which was a *rejection* of a hierarchical faculty psychology. Additionally, Plantinga seems to think that the "affections," which Edwards frequently speaks about, are something akin to emotions. As it turns out, the affections, as I hope to show, involve *both* the intellect *and* the will. My goal in this article is *not* to reject Plantinga's use of Edwards altogether, but to correct, to enhance, and more carefully to nuance what he has accomplished. What I hope to offer here is a *suggestive* correction. I happen to think that Plantinga's assessment of Edwards is slightly askew and I hope to show *how* and *why*. Plantinga reads Edwards as a more or less straightforward intellectualist when in fact Edwards stressed the unity and harmony of the distinct powers of the dispositional complex (the human soul). The center of this dispositional complex, if I may put it that way, just *is* the affections. So it is this that stands at the heart of Plantinga's misunderstanding of the relation of the intellect and will. Plantinga's instincts, though, are sound in looking to Jonathan Edwards to provide helpful insights into the discussion of this relationship.

What is so important about asking about whether the intellect or will comes first? It seems to me that the issue of priority involves three elements: (1) Recognizing the *distinction* of powers within the dispositional complex. (2) Making a *value judgment* or creating a *hierarchy* out of these distinctions. Do we have any reason to set one power above another? (3) *Reifying* the powers or faculties so as to create *de facto* autonomous individual agents within a single soul.⁹ In the end, with the corrections suggested here kept in mind, it just may be

that Plantinga is closer to Edwards' own position than he realizes.

Methodology

My method will be to examine Plantinga's assessment of the intellect/will issue and to consider his use of Edwards, given Edwards' own historical context. After looking at Plantinga's assessment of Edwards, I will examine some possibilities as to how we can understand the relation of the intellect and will, by providing some parameters for a proper understanding of Edwards. Then I will look at the historical context in which Edwards formulated his statements on the intellect and will, and from that I will suggest how Edwards is best understood given the categories I have previously examined.

After my assessment of Jonathan Edwards in light of possible categories that scholars have put forward for discussions of this matter and the historical context in which Edwards wrote (including a proper understanding of the affections), it will be shown that Jonathan Edwards and Alvin Plantinga *may not be that far apart in their understanding of how the intellect and will function together*. The difference between Plantinga and Edwards may be merely one of degree. Edwards can be understood as either a concurrentist, a functional intellectualist, or an Augustinian voluntarist because of his move away from faculty psychology and his stress on the unified powers of the dispositional complex.¹⁰ In fact, Edwards is none of the foregoing—although his perspective embraces elements of each. I hope to bring to bear on Plantinga's discussion an assessment of Edwards that more carefully considers his views on the subject.¹¹

PLANTINGA'S OWN ASSESSMENT OF THE INTELLECT AND WILL

Alvin Plantinga discusses the relationship of the intellect and will in chapters eight and nine of *WCB* with regard to the occurrence of faith that he outlines in the extended A/C model. According to Plantinga, faith involves both cognitive and affective aspects. What does this mean? Faith is more than strictly an intellectual exercise (i.e., faith is more than just knowledge *that* God exists and assent to that knowledge). If sin has both cognitive and affective elements, then so too does faith.¹² It is not necessary to reproduce Plantinga's discussion of the relationship of the intellect and will here except to note that he explores various "dependency relations"

9. The third element, faculty reification, was raised by John Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (Chicago: University of Chicago/Encyclopedia Britannica, 1991), II.XXI.5, 6. It is not, as far as I can tell, directly germane to my discussion here. I do, however, think it is involved in Edwards' rejection of autonomous faculties in his *Freedom of the Will*.

10. Edwards will refer to the dispositional complex as the "whole soul" at places in his corpus. One such place is his M.A. *Quaestio* where he discusses the nature of the faith that justifies. Edwards' definition of justifying faith raises a whole host of questions, but that is a study for another day. See *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: Vol. 14/ Sermons and Discourses, 1723–1729*, ed. Kenneth J. Minkema (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 60–66.

11. Plantinga fails to indicate any awareness of the historical context in which Edwards developed his views of faculty psychology nor does he demonstrate familiarity with the long standing scholarly discussion of the issue.

12. See chapter seven of *WCB* on sin and its cognitive effects.

between the intellect and will and he concludes that he cannot determine which has priority.¹³ In light of this I would label Plantinga a “concurrentist” with regard to the relationship between the intellect and will. Neither intellect nor will has priority.

PLANTINGA’S ASSESSMENT OF JONATHAN EDWARDS ON
THE INTELLECT AND WILL

Plantinga rightly sees that Edwards is in harmony with Calvin in his assessment that true religion is more than correct belief.¹⁴ Plantinga quite properly recognizes Edwards’ emphasis on the religious affections. As Edwards puts it, “True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections.”¹⁵ He then examines how Edwards understood the relationship of the intellect to the will.¹⁶ He sets up the question in terms of “which, if either, is primary?”¹⁷ Is it the case that someone first sees that God is altogether lovely, and then comes to love him afterwards? Or is it that a person loves the things of God and God himself and then comes to see that they are lovable? Does the Holy Spirit reveal truth to our intellects and then conform our affections to the truth perceived? Or does our failure to love the gospel require correction before we can see the truth of it? Is it a matter of the Holy Spirit simultaneously correcting both the intellect and will, so that we come to see the loveliness of the “great things of the gospel” and God himself—and come to love him—all at once? Plantinga rightly connects this with the question of the nature of sin. “This question, of course, is connected with a correlative question... is sin primarily a matter of intellect, of blindness, of failing to see or believe the right things, thus leading to wrong affection and wrong action, or is it primarily a matter of the wrong affections, of loving and hating the wrong things?”¹⁸

Initially, Plantinga reads Edwards as affirming the priority of the intellect. The believer first perceives the beauty and amiableness of God, and then the affections follow in natural order. Edwards says that “[k]nowledge is the key that first opens the hard heart and enlarges the affections, and so opens the way for men into the kingdom of heaven.”¹⁹ He makes similar remarks to the effect that the affections arise “from the mind’s being enlightened.” But Plantinga finds this problematic, in that this priority of the intellect doesn’t mesh well with Edwards’ view that “what lies at the bottom of sin is *hardness of heart*.”²⁰ Hardness of heart is having the wrong affections and failing to have the right ones. “It is less a failure to see something than to feel something.”²¹ This suggests to Plantinga that the gift of

faith and regeneration involves the redirection of the will *and then* the acquisition of knowledge, although he concedes that acquiring faith could still be seen as a kind of knowledge that is *prior*.

Plantinga goes on to consider whether sin in *indeed* a malfunction or dysfunction of the will that requires a repair by being granted a kind of knowledge. Sin is indeed and “fundamentally” a malfunction of the will, but what comes “first” in regeneration is enlightenment. If so, “then revealing would be prior to sealing, with respect to faith, even though what needs repair is, at bottom, will rather than intellect.”²²

On this question, Plantinga notes some diffidence in Edwards. While he sees in Edwards some sort of priority of the intellect to the will in regeneration (even though at bottom, it is the will that needs correction), Plantinga elsewhere sees Edwards as holding to the priority of neither the intellect nor the will. He notes Edwards’ notion of the “sense of the heart” is not limited to the will, since it involves understanding as well. Indeed, with the “sense of the heart,” Edwards does not clearly demarcate between understanding and the will “as acting distinctly and separately, in this matter.”²³

Related to the above, Plantinga discusses Edwards’ notion of the “new simple idea” and he understands this to be a form of cognition or perception. The “new simple idea” spawns spiritual understanding which Plantinga sees as a form of *experiential* understanding. The analogy is often used of the difference between knowing *that* honey is sweet by learning about it, and tasting the sweetness of honey and then understanding *how* or *in what way* it is sweet. The first form of knowledge is second-hand. The second form, the tasting of honey, is first-hand knowledge.

Even though Jonathan Edwards is known as the master of the “interior life,”²⁴ Plantinga ultimately reads him as an intellectualist of sorts:

...according to Edwards, which comes first, affection

13. Plantinga, *WCB*, 303.

14. Plantinga, *WCB*, 294.

15. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: Vol. 2/A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, ed. John F. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 95. Cited in Plantinga, *WCB*, 294.

16. Plantinga devotes nine pages to his discussion of Edwards on the intellect and will, *WCB*, 295–304.

17. Plantinga, *WCB*, 295.

18. Plantinga, *WCB*, 295.

19. Edwards, *Affections*, 266 and cited in Plantinga, *WCB*, 296.

20. Plantinga, *WCB*, 296, emphasis his.

21. Plantinga, *WCB*, 297.

22. Plantinga, *WCB*, 297.

23. Edwards, *Affections*, 272, cited by Plantinga, *WCB*, 297.

or intellection? Love of God or knowledge of God? I think Edwards' answer is that it is knowledge. I think he thinks that one first perceives the beauty and loveliness of the Lord, first comes to this experiential knowledge, and then comes to develop the right loves and hates—what he means here, I think, is that this experiential knowledge of God and his qualities comes first; and then there is a consequent raising of the affections—his idea, I think, is that the regenerated person perceives the beauty and loveliness of the Lord and of the great things of the gospel and then, naturally enough, comes to love them. It is the perceiving that comes first; in this respect, therefore, intellect is prior to will.²⁵

It would be good for us to ask whether Plantinga has completely and accurately understood Edwards here. Does Edwards hold to the priority of the intellect? And if he does, what does *he* mean by this? Or, is it, as the discussion of the sense of the heart seems to suggest, that Edwards affirms the priority of neither? Because he misunderstands the nature of the affections, Plantinga seems to understand Edwards as an intellectualist. But the affections cannot be reduced to emotions or passions.²⁶ As John Smith tells us in his introduction to the Yale edition of Edwards' *Religious Affections*:

24. Plantinga, *WCB*, 294.

25. Plantinga, *WCB*, 301. Plantinga may indicate his misreading of Edwards on the nature of the affections here. The affections ought not to be understood apart from intellection. The affections involve both the intellect and the will in tandem or simultaneously.

26. Plantinga may be setting up a false antithesis here. The affections are, as I understand them, by definition, the will either in response to or in concurrence with the intellect.

27. Smith, introduction, *Affections*, 14–15.

28. Norm Fiering illustrates the complexity of the problem by referring to a 1703 *Athenian Oracle* article entitled “How Does the Understanding Move the Will?” in which eight different variations are discussed. See his *Jonathan Edwards' Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 267. See also Allen Guelzo's *Edwards on the Will* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989); John Smith's introduction to Edwards' *Religious Affections* in the Yale edition of that work, 1–83; Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Alan Heimert and Perry Miller's *The Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1967); Allyn Lee Ricketts' “The Primacy of Revelation in the Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards” (PhD diss. Westminster Theological Seminary, 1995); Steven Studebaker, “Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism: A Criticism of and an Alternative to Recent Interpretations” (PhD diss. Marquette University, 2003); and the two previously noted articles by Scott Oliphint.

29. Fiering, *Edwards' Moral Thought*, 264–67.

30. Fiering, *Edwards' Moral Thought*, 264.

31. Fiering, *Edwards' Moral Thought*, 264.

There is a further preliminary distinction; and although it occupies but a paragraph, it is of pivotal importance. ‘The *affections* and *passions*,’ he says, ‘are frequently spoken as of the same,’ but there are good grounds for distinguishing them. Passions he describes as those inclinations whose ‘effects on animal spirits are more violent’ and in them the mind is overpowered and ‘less in its command.’ The self becomes literally a ‘patient,’ seized by the object of passion. With the affections, however, the situation stands quite otherwise. These require instead a clear understanding and a sufficient control of the self to make choice possible. This distinction enabled him to criticize and reject a great many revival phenomena, especially those of a pathological sort, and to dissociate the heart religion he advocated from hysteria, the excesses of bodily effects and enthusiasm. His contemporaries paid insufficient attention to his distinctions. They thought he was defending revivalism in the sense of religious passions at the expense of the intellect, whereas he was developing a conception of affections accompanied by understanding.²⁷

Various Ways of Understanding the Relationship between the Intellect and Will

Before I endeavor to answer the question of whether Plantinga has properly understood Edwards, it might be helpful to consider various ways in which the intellect and will are understood to relate to one another in the literature on the subject.²⁸ What I discuss here is not intended to be exhaustive. Putting the matter as simply as possible, there are two general ways to understand the relationship between the intellect and will. These two categories are *intellectualism* and *voluntarism*.

Intellectualism

The first way to understand the relationship between the intellect and will is in terms of either an *absolute* or a *functional* ‘intellectualism.’ In absolute intellectualism, the intellect or reason is the *governing* faculty or power of the human soul. The will is considered blind, and is seen as a slave of sorts to the intellect. Historically, this kind of thinking can be seen in what Norman Fiering has labeled “Thomistic-Intellectualism.”²⁹ Traced back to Thomas Aquinas, this position held that the will was blind and followed the last dictate or judgment of the “practical intellect.”³⁰ It is the intellect or judgment that shows the will what is to be accepted or rejected. As such, the will itself can never be guilty of moral error or corruption.³¹ “The will itself is never culpable in

the case of moral error, since it only follows the judgment of the intellect. The will as the rational appetite is supposed to govern the lower sensitive appetites, although it may happen that unruly vehement appetites from below will obscure rational judgment and thus influence choice wrongly.³² Accordingly, without information from the intellect, “the will is not the will, but a confused appetite.”³³ The will, then, must be ruled, governed, or directed by the faculty of the understanding.

Another possibility within this tradition would be something like *functional* intellectualism.³⁴ While it is recognized that the will is dependent upon the intellect to provide an object to which it is either attracted or repulsed, the will is neither blind nor enslaved to the intellect. According to functional intellectualism, neither the intellect nor the will has an ontological priority or primacy over the other, but in operations, the intellect provides the idea or object to which the will responds. In many ways the relation between the intellect and will³⁵ reflects the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Trinity. As Calvin so clearly pointed out, while the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equally divine as to their being, the Son and the Spirit are functionally subordinated or differentiated in the history of redemption.³⁶ Therefore, ontological equality *and* functional or economical subordination or differentiation are both true. Applying these qualifications to the working of the human soul, one could say that the intellect and will (or intellect, will, and emotions) are ontologically equal while each has different functions. Therefore, the priority of the intellect is one of functional order and not a primacy of importance.

In contrast to absolute intellectualism, functional intellectualism sees sin as affecting both the intellect and the will. Whereas absolute intellectualism sees regeneration as correcting the will, bringing the affections into line, functional intellectualism understands regeneration as correcting both the intellect and the will so that there is a proper functioning of both and neither will end up governing the other. Ultimately, absolute intellectualism denigrates the will. Functional intellectualism, on the other hand, recognizes a *taxis* to the unified powers of the dispositional complex, but not a *superiority* of one power over another.

Voluntarism

The other broad tradition regarding the relation of the will to the intellect is voluntarism. Norman Fiering, in his book *Jonathan Edwards' Moral Thought and Its British Context*, has divided voluntarism into two streams.

The first stream he labels “Scholastic-Voluntarism.” The Scholastic-Voluntarists held to a *self-determining* will, a will not influenced even by the faculty of understanding. In comparison to the Thomistic-Intellectualist position, the Scholastic-Voluntarist school advocated a *primacy of the will*.

The second form of voluntarism delineated for us by Fiering is labeled “Augustinian-Voluntarism.” For this school of thought, the will involved the tendency, trajectory, or “orientation” of the whole human personality and not just the “mental faculty” in abstraction.³⁷ According to this scheme, the will is *oriented* either to God or to self.³⁸ Here we find a *primacy of orientation*. In the case of the regenerate, it is a primacy of grace. For the unregenerate, it is a primacy of sin.

This description of possible ways of understanding the relationship of the intellect to the will is not exhaustive. Yet it does provide the reader with an introduction to some of the different ways in which this relation has been conceived.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF JONATHAN EDWARDS' DISCUSSION OF THE INTELLECT AND WILL

Before answering the questions raised earlier in this chapter—Can Edwards properly be understood as an intellectualist? Has Plantinga understood the affections correctly?—it would be wise now to examine the historical context in which Edwards discussed the relationship between the intellect and the will.

32. Fiering, *Edwards' Moral Thought*, 264.

33. Fiering, *Edwards' Moral Thought*, 265.

34. I owe a debt to Cornelius Van Til for his formulation of this perspective in his *Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1974), 31–36. There he discusses the relationship of the intellect to the will in humans as an analogue to the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity. Interestingly, while Van Til does not mention Edwards at this point, they both agree in their assessment of the unified operations of the soul (i.e., the dispositional complex) reflecting Trinitarian analogues.

35. Or the intellect, will, and emotions. Van Til recognized that his Trinitarian insight was still legitimate whether one embraced a bipartite or tripartite division of the powers of the soul. See *IST*, 36.

36. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1961), 1.13.18. See the helpful discussion of the matter in Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine of God* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1993), 197–224. Sang Lee also addresses Edwards' approval and expansion of Calvin's views in his introduction to *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: Vol. 21/Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 20f.

37. Fiering, *Edwards' Moral Thought*, 268.

38. Fiering, *Edwards' Moral Thought*, 269.

The Great Awakening and Its Factions

A grasp of Edwards' own historical context will enable us clearly to see the contours of his views as they are compared and contrasted with those of his theological opponents. The social context into which Edwards spoke was, of course, the age of the Great Awakening. But what was it about the Great Awakening that could be of interest to our discussion? It is the fact that the nature of the human soul and all its various powers was at the heart of many of the debates of that era.

The basic question regarding the Great Awakening in its day was whether the Awakening was a legitimate work of God, the work of excited passions, or (worse still) the work of the Devil. Edwards, in endeavoring to defend the awakenings that occurred in his parish in Northampton and across the colonies, attempted to plow a middle row between the two extremes (the "two great armies") of arid rationalism and unbridled enthusiasm. What this meant was that he challenged the regnant faculty psychology of his day in order to pioneer a path toward a better understanding of the human personality. Edwards was not conducting an abstract examination of the human soul. He was endeavoring to deal with two extremes in the Awakening that he deemed problematic:

Edwards was deeply embroiled in the religious controversies of his day, many of which related in one way or another to the Great Awakening. His position on saving faith separated him from both the rationalists and the enthusiasts—what Cherry calls the parties of

neonomianism and antinomianism. In the 1740s Edwards struggled to define a theological position that embraced both the mind and the affections. He rejected the efforts of those who wanted to dismiss the widespread religious stirrings as the product of deluded imaginations and manipulative ministers, declaring instead that the revivals represented the genuine work of God's spirit. At the same time he chided those driven by the awakening to extreme ecstatic behavior and censoriousness, calling rather for continued commitment to the principles of order and intellect.³⁹

Jonathan Edwards was trying to develop an approach to the interaction of the various powers of the soul which emphasized their harmonious or unified operations. He neither conflated the intellect and the will, nor did he hermetically compartmentalize them.⁴⁰ The intellect and will worked together. The human soul comprised a "dispositional complex." Edwards was dealing with rationalists like Charles Chauncey on the one hand, and enthusiasts like James Davenport on the other. Yet true religion comprised neither light without heat nor heat without light.⁴¹ Edwards was trying to break new ground, by fashioning a new way to understand the human soul that would avoid the faculty psychology he had inherited.

What was so bad about the faculty psychology after all? The kind of faculty psychology that Chauncey defended, in support of rationalism and his criticism of the Great Awakening, posited a hierarchical gradation of the faculties in which the most valued (reason) was at the top of the hierarchy and those less valued (such as the emotions) were at the bottom. The reason controlled the will and the passions and any effort to appeal to the will by bypassing the reason was deemed wrong. For Chauncey, the pastors of the Awakening were preaching so as to appeal merely to the emotions while skirting the intellect.⁴² But for him, true religion consisted in the supremacy of reason. On the other hand, enthusiasts such as James Davenport saw true religion as residing in the passions apart from the use of reason.⁴³ Edwards had to respond to both groups by fashioning a new understanding of the human soul—all the while using language that seemed more at home in the context of traditional faculty psychology.

Didn't Edwards himself make distinctions among the various powers of the human soul? Yes, he did. This is partly because distinctions are not problematic in themselves and because distinguishing language is hard to avoid if we are going to talk meaningfully about the soul or anything whatsoever. Yet to make distinctions is not

39. Fiering, *Edwards' Moral Thought*, 269.

40. Stephen J. Stein, introduction to Cherry's *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, xii.

41. John Smith tells us, "The first point to be stressed is that Edwards, for all his ability to draw clear distinctions, nevertheless struggled to preserve the unity and integrity of the self and to avoid compartmentalizing the human functions and powers. This means that despite his rather sharp distinction between the understanding, affections, and will, we must not overlook the extent to which these initial distinctions are overridden in the course of the argument. The entire discussion shows a moving back and forth between analysis and synthesis; clarity demands distinctions within the self and between its powers, but the integrity of the self requires that its faculties or capacities be related to each other so as to preserve unity." Introduction, *Affections*, 11–12.

42. This assessment is the point that is challenged by Edwards with his definition of the affections involving both the understanding and the will. See Chauncey's sermon "Enthusiasm Discovered and Caution'd" in Heimert and Miller, *Great Awakening*, 228–256.

43. See Davenport's "Confession and Retractions," Heimert and Miller, *Great Awakening*, 257–262. See especially 260 where Davenport addresses impressions or impulses.

to necessarily make one part of a distinction more significant than another.

To recognize difference in function is not to value one function over another. We make a distinction between our right leg and our left, but to ask which is more important seems either mistaken or silly. To examine something closely involves the act of making distinctions. *This* thing is different from *that* thing. Yet to say that *A* is different from *B* is not the same thing as to say that *A* is more important than *B*. So it seems to me that to make distinctions is legitimate, and there are legitimate distinctions to be made regarding the powers of the soul.

Thinking and willing are different kinds of powers, although by no means are they to be separated. It is impossible to avoid this kind of language if we are going to talk specifically about the soul doing *this* or doing *that*. So Edwards had to speak in terms of the relations of the intellect and the will, even if he didn't conceive of them in terms of a hierarchical faculty psychology. The issue for Edwards was not distinction, but the problem of separation and valuation. The powers of the soul worked together. It was one soul, one dispositional complex, one self that did these different things.

WAS EDWARDS AN INTELLECTUALIST, A VOLUNTARIST, OR A CONCURRENTIST?

Edwards was not pioneering the avoidance of the use of distinctions, but he was trying to look at the powers of the soul as *working together*. He was trying to move away from the valuation of one faculty over another. In the proper operation of the powers of the soul, it was possible for the intellect to be enlightened with little or no impact on the will (perhaps some forms of speculative science might fall into this category), and conversely it may have been possible to move the will with little or no impact or engagement of the understanding.⁴⁴ Edwards recognizes these possibilities. Yet he insisted that in the exercise of true religious affections, *both* the intellect *and* the will were involved. In conversion, it is not a matter of the intellect working without the will, nor is it a matter of the will working without the intellect. They work *together*. Each is necessary and both are essential. After all, how could the will be attracted to or repulsed by something without that something being held in view?

The issue, then, is not about the making of distinctions. The problem is not the making of distinctions, but rather the separation of powers to such an extent that they become *compartmentalized*. Additionally, the

problem involves the *hierarchical valuation* of the intellect over the will as can be found in Chauncey—or the converse elevation of the will over the intellect in the enthusiasm of a Davenport. True affections involve an idea to which the will responds with heightened awareness. Edwards is not attempting to abolish the proper distinctions made between the intellect and the will. He is not trying to *conflate* or *confuse* them. He is simply attempting to show their unity. And unity implies *harmonious* difference and *harmonious differentiation*.

Edwards' distinction between speculative understanding and spiritual understanding (another name for the "sense of the heart") may help us get at his concern to stress the unity (but not *identity*) of the powers of the human soul. One could understand Edwards in an intellectualist sense since true religious affections, or spiritual understanding, or the sense of the heart, involve an object being perceived by the understanding and then the will being attracted to or repulsed from it (i.e., manifesting affections). While there may be priority in some sense, it is *not* a priority of value nor is it a primacy that implies more significance or importance. To use Plantinga's language, there are "dependency relations" between the intellect and the will. It is possible to have speculative knowledge of the great things of the gospel without having a spiritual knowledge of them. But it is not possible to have a spiritual knowledge, the sense of the heart, or true affections, without speculative understanding. To the rationalists, Edwards would say that you can't have *true* religion without the will engaged. To the enthusiasts he would say that you can't have true *religion* without the intellect engaged. In order to make Edwards into an intellectualist in a way that conflicts with his *perceived* emphasis on the affections, one must presuppose some sort of faculty psychology – a psychology that Edwards was himself trying to avoid.⁴⁵

Jonathan Edwards could also be understood as a voluntarist. Indeed, he has been so understood by many scholars who recognize his desire to transcend faculty psychology. Both Allen Guelzo and Norman Fiering see him in the voluntarist tradition, albeit qualified in an Augustinian way. The will is neither blind nor is it

44. This seems to be the position of the enthusiasts in their understanding of true religion, whereas the former was the understanding of religion from the perspective of the rationalists.

45. Plantinga seems to think that Edwards' emphasis on the *heart* is in contradistinction to the intellect, but for Edwards the heart includes both the intellect and the will—and true religious affections appear to me to be synonymous with spiritual understanding and the sense of the heart. The heart is not the source of emotions only. The heart *just is* the dispositional complex.

obligated to follow the dictates of the understanding. With his own Augustinian and Reformed tradition, it is argued that Edwards understood that it was the orientation of the individual that determined what was primary: grace or sin.

Yet Edwards could be understood to conform to the concurrentist model that Plantinga seems to embrace. Edwards sometimes finds it hard to distinguish the acts of the intellect and will in his sense of the heart. This would seem to suggest the same view Plantinga comes to at the end of his own discussion of the subject.

So which model best describes Jonathan Edwards on this issue? I myself have changed my view on the subject. I have not changed my conviction that Edwards moved away from the hierarchical faculty psychology of his day, and that he wanted to emphasize the unified powers of the dispositional complex that comprises the human soul. Where I have changed my assessment of the situation is in my satisfaction of classifying Edwards as a voluntarist, Augustinian or otherwise.

We can see, I think, how Edwards could be understood as a functional intellectualist, or an Augustinian voluntarist, or maybe even as a Plantingian concurrentist. Each view is attractive in turn because each touches upon an element of truth in Edwards' own position. While Edwards makes room for the use of the intellect that moves the will a little or not at all, and while he recognizes that the will can be moved without the light of understanding, true religion consists in both functioning together. If one must use the intellectualist label, he would certainly *not* be understood as an absolute intellectualist—since *that* is best exemplified in the person of Charles Chauncey, whom Edwards clearly opposed. Given Edwards' Trinitarian views and the analogical nature of the human soul or personality to the Trinity, he could be classified as a functional or economic intellectualist—so long as we keep in mind what that entails.

However, Edwards can also be seen as a voluntarist—but most definitely not of the Scholastic variety. The will is not free from the influences of the whole personality of the individual. While Edwards, along with the Augustinian-voluntarist tradition, recognized that the will did not necessarily follow the last dictate of the intellect, it does in the exercise of true religion—since true affections arise at the sight of the loveliness of God and the great things of the gospel. With the Augustinian-voluntarist school Edwards most assuredly affirmed that there was a primacy of the orientation in an individual human being. There is neither primacy of the intellect nor of the will in the practice

of true religion, where true religious affections are in evidence.

Yet it is also possible for Edwards to be described as a concurrentist. He sometimes found it hard to distinguish between the intellect and the will in the sense of the heart. However, he didn't *always* find that distinction hard to make.

Edwards, as I see him, doesn't fit comfortably into either the intellectualist or the voluntarist school as we have understood them up to this point. To label him as either a functional intellectualist or an Augustinian voluntarist seems to assume the very priority (in one direction or another) that I think he would reject. Jonathan Edwards, rather, affirms elements of both. He affirms the functional priority of the intellect in the rising of true religious affections *and* he affirms that the will is not enslaved to the intellect, since both the intellect and the will reflect their orientation in sin or grace. They either work properly under the rule and reign of grace or improperly under the rule and reign of sin. To affirm the functional priority of the intellect in perceiving an object or in holding an idea to which the will then responds is not to imply that one is more important than the other. In a highly significant way, to try to affirm the greater significance of the intellect *viz-a-viz* the will or vice versa is closely akin to trying to affirm the greater significance of unity over diversity (one or threeness) or vice versa in the Holy Trinity. Neither properly comes first nor last in importance, even though we do recognize the distinction.

As I have repeatedly noted throughout this essay, Edwards affirms the dispositional complex. The dispositional complex involves *both* distinction *and* unity, difference in function and equality of importance. It is not wrong to make distinctions. If we can't make distinctions, learning grinds to a halt before an amorphous undifferentiated mass or a blooming, buzzing chaos. Edwards talked meaningfully about the human soul, affirming *both* the distinction of powers (i.e., in Trinitarian language, diversity) *and* unity of powers.

CONCLUSION: HOW PLANTINGA MISSES THE POINT

Plantinga seems unaware of Edwards' effort to transcend faculty psychology with its hierarchical valuation of faculties. He seems to be unfamiliar with the fact that Edwards was trying to walk a middle road between the two extremes of rationalism and enthusiasm that valued one of the powers of the soul to the detriment of the other. Or perhaps he is aware of it and disagrees with

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listens, for his is the voice that spoke the heavens and the earth into existence. This is the God who empowers his people. May he be blessed forever.

FINAL REMARKS

This psalm tells a story, but not by means of a narrative. Instead we are given a succession of images, drawn from both the history of Israel in her experience with God, and from her prophetic future. The psalm shows by means of these images that God will not have his people from one people only, but will own all the kingdoms of the earth. To him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord.■

Let's Do Presbyterianism: The Trinitarian Foundations of Biblical Church Polity. Continued from Page 76.

have independent and non-denominational churches in which the one is splintered into the many and eventually lost. By far, the latter is the predominant form of evangelical ecclesiology today. It is generally characterized by emphasis on the individual and personal to such an extent that the covenantal and corporate nature of the church is lost, or at least marginalized. Because of our history, here in America independency is the most attractive and popular form of church government. Now, in the early church there were many forms of Trinitarian errors floating around. To the one extreme, there were those who emphasized the unity of God such that the persons became mere apparitions. This was the error that was known as modalism. On the other hand, the persons were so emphasized that each person of the Trinity were given their own independent status as divine such that the unity of God was compromised. This is known as tritheism—a heresy repopularized today in the theology of post-modern theologians like Jürgen Moltmann.

The answer to these errors is a balanced view of the Trinity in whom unity and diversity, the one and the many, are equally ultimate. I would argue that our ecclesiology should, because it does in the Bible, reflect and imitate God by making unity and diversity, the one and the many, the individual and the corporate, equally ultimate. And I believe I have shown that that balance is reflected in Presbyterianism.

Now, that does not mean Presbyterianism can never go bad. It can, and it has. Sin still pollutes the church because the church is made up of sinners who still war against the flesh. And so, any church government will only function well if its members are faithful to their Lord and his Word. But, that does not change the fact that Presbyterianism (though corrupted in the past and the present) reflects its Triune God and is modeled on the teaching of the Bible as a whole.

Yes, it remains a counter-cultural ecclesiology. It is

completely contra mundum. But that is why it's also refreshing. It is refreshing because it is so different from what everyone else is doing. Radical independence, or tyrannical corporate solidarity, is the order of the day. For once, as Christians, let's do something different. Let's do Presbyterianism.■

Which Comes First, The Intellect or the Will? Continued from Page 128.

Edwards—or finds him unconvincing or misguided. Yet how would Edwards come across this way if he isn't already being read through the lens of faculty psychology—as he surely was in the eyes of Charles Chauncey?

Plantinga reads Edwards as a sort of intellectualist with the priority of the intellect in the workings of true affections. That would be true after a fashion, as long as it was understood that Edwards was trying to move away from faculty psychology and *not* away from making legitimate distinctions of the powers of the human soul. We can speak of a “priority” of the intellect in Edwards only so long as that priority is understood in terms of taxis or functional order—and not primacy of importance.

Plantinga also seems to equate the affections with emotions. Plantinga recognizes that sin, for instance, can be understood as *blindness*, as a not seeing God or the great things of the gospel as the truly lovely things they are. But sin is also a *willful* blindness. It is a hatred of the loveliness of God and his attributes. We are responsible for our failure to see. We can distinguish the powers of the soul, but we cannot separate them. And we should not consider the intellect or the will more important than the other. After all, God made us with both. Admittedly, sin has wreaked havoc in this area just as it has in others. We sinful human beings tend to prize one power over the other. We still struggle with the same extremes Edwards faced.

So What?

So what is the difference between Edwards and Plantinga? It *may* be minimal in practical effect. Plantinga's discussion would have benefitted from an historical awareness of the context of the Great Awakening, from a knowledge of Edwards' desire to transcend faculty psychology, and from a correct definition of the religious affections. The way Plantinga asks the question, “which comes first” suggests to me that he doesn't realize that for Edwards, the affections involved both the intellect and the will. Either option is possible for Edwards as long as both are understood to be involved in the exercise of true religious affections.

Is there much difference between Plantinga the concurrentist and Edwards? Sometimes I get the impression that he

thinks Edwards should have been a voluntarist given his emphasis on the affections and is then surprised with Edwards' functional priority of the intellect. But Edwards admitted that even he could not always distinguish the acts of the intellect and will in the sense of the heart. So I would have to say that he and Plantinga come within a hair's breadth. I can't help but think that he could have saved himself a lot of trouble had he been fully aware of the trajectory of Edwards' thought and the historical context in which that was articulated. ■

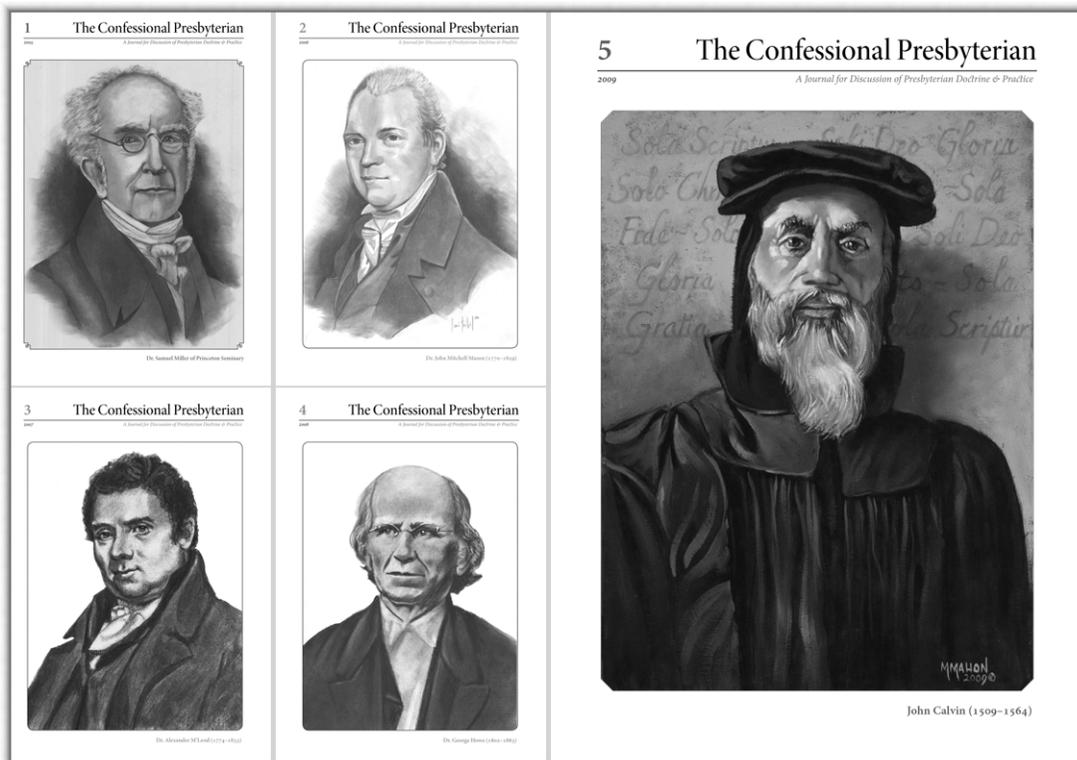
Psallo. Continued from Page 227.

The thoughts of the Lord are a great deep, and it is to behave like an untamed beast to doubt of His justice and righteousness on account of the temporary advance of the wicked. The confident assertion of the Psalmist is that he will be exalted by the Lord, and all the benefits of the Lord's grace are continually with him, and will be brought to their fullness in due time. Those that are planted in the Lord's house grow strong, tall, fruitful.

Such meditations are fitting for the Sabbath Day. That "one whole day in seven" in which these meditations rise to the forefront of our conscious thoughts, and have opportunity to remain there throughout the day, untrammelled from the labors, responsibilities, and recreations of the other days. In the heavenly environment that a properly "remembered and hallowed"⁵ Sabbath-Day facilitates, these meditations remind us of the fullness of that eternal Sabbath yet to come, and these temporal Sabbaths become steps to glory. In closing, hear Richard Baxter:

Christians, let heaven have some share in your sabbaths, where you must shortly keep your everlasting sabbath. As you go from stair to stair, till you come to the top, so use your sabbaths as steps to glory, till you have passed them all, and are there arrived.⁶

Todd L. RUDELL ■



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5. See Exodus 20.11; Isaiah 58.13-14; Jeremiah 17.22-24; Ezekiel 20.20; 22.26; 44.24.

6. Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter* ed. William Orme (London: James Duncan, 1830) 23.325-326.