

JONATHAN EDWARDS'S THEOLOGY OF PROVIDENCE:
A TRINITARIAN ACCOUNT

by

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ABSTRACT

“Jonathan Edwards’s Theology of Providence: A Trinitarian Account”

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Jonathan Edwards firmly embraced divine providence, shaping his spiritual, pastoral, and theological life. He yearned for revival, a glorious and wonderful working of divine providence. As a Puritan preacher in New England, Edwards devoted himself to highlighting the significance of divine providence to the congregations of his day. Edwards also considered God’s being and providence as fundamental concepts in his theological works. Edwards located his doctrine of providence within the doctrine of God (e.g., God as a communicative being), not as a subsection of the doctrine of creation, particularly emphasizing it with a trinitarian concept of deity. To him, providence comprised all divine activity *ad extra* and reflected the dynamic inner life of the Trinity. This dissertation argues that the triune Redeemer is the centre of reflection in Edwards’s theology of providence. The redemptive work of the Trinity was closely integrated into his understanding of providence, thereby maintaining the distinctive Christian meaning and character of the doctrine of providence. This trinitarian-redemptive concept of providence in Edwards’s theology is a historically extended and socially embodied argument. Retrieving Edwards’s trinitarian theology of providence offers a remedy for the concept of providence in contemporary theology that has lost its

trinitarian and redemptive dimension due to its failure to interface the work of the Trinity in redemption with that of providence.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CD* Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Translated by G. T. Thomson et al. 14 vols. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1936–1977.
- WJE* Edwards, Jonathan. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, edited by Paul Ramsey and John E. Smith et al. 26 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957–2008.
- WJEO* Edwards, Jonathan. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*. The online edition of Jonathan Edwards's *Works* is located and available at the Jonathan Edwards Center and Online Archive at Yale University. No Pages. Online: <http://edwards.yale.edu>.

INTRODUCTION

That God takes care of and governs the world is evident, because “the same ends, designs, and motives (whatever they were) that induced God to create the world, will oblige him forever to take care of it and look after it,” as Abp. Sharp observes.

Jonathan Edwards¹

Confidence in divine providence was a central aspect of the life of Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758).² His spirituality and passion for revival were rooted in his understanding of divine providence. As an eighteenth-century New England minister, Edwards devoted himself to preaching divine providence and its significance to the congregations of his day. Furthermore, Edwards’s interest in God’s providence in the world had an ongoing influence on his developing theology. He regarded the ideas of God’s being and providence as “first principles” of all sacred human knowledge, and he believed that these principles would “appear more and more as philosophy appears.”³ In his theology, the study of divine being and providence holds a significant place as well.

For Edwards, the study of theology was synonymous with the study of God’s providence in history. On October 19, 1757, Edwards was called to be President of the

¹ Edwards, *WJE* 18:68.

² See Stein, “Editor’s Introduction,” 51. He writes as follows: “Edwards was unbending in his commitment to the doctrine of providence, the natural extension of God’s creative power through time.”

³ Edwards, *WJE* 13:425. Edwards further wrote that God’s being and providence are “the basis of all true philosophy, as appears more and more as philosophy improves.”

College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), and in his letter to the trustees, Edwards wrote that he had a major writing project, which he called “*A History of the Work of Redemption*, a body of divinity in an entire new method,” in his mind and plans.⁴ From the letter, one can glimpse what Edwards intended to write and what this *magnum opus* would have looked like if he could have completed it before his sudden death. The letter discloses that it was Edwards’s plan to summarize the events of the history of redemption by Jesus Christ, which is the “grand design of all God’s designs, and the *summum* and *ultimum* of all the divine operations and decrees,” in their historical order.⁵ Edwards claimed that he would write a body of divinity on the subject of God’s redeeming history for humankind in the structural scheme of providence.⁶ Despite these considerations, his understanding of providence has received relatively little attention among Edwards scholars and other theologians when compared to other theological topics.⁷

From Edwards’s early years, divine providence had been an indispensable foundation for his spirituality. In his famous resolutions, Edwards resolved to build a life according to God’s providential directions. The young Edwards pledged: “Resolved, when I fear misfortunes and adversities, to examine whether I have done my duty, and resolve to do it; and let it be just as providence orders it, I will as far as I can, be

⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 16:727 (emphasis original).

⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 16:728.

⁶ William Scheick calls Edwards’s *History of the Work of Redemption* (published posthumously in 1773) as “a series of discourses on the continuity of divine providence as disclosed by history.” See Scheick, “The Grand Design,” 300.

⁷ For instance, there is one entry-level monograph that comprehensively covers the substance of Edwards’s theology of providence. See Stahle, *Great Work of Providence*. The following are recently published chapters that deals with Edwards’s views on providence and history. See McClymond and McDermott, “Providence and History.” Also, refer to Stievermann, “History, Providence, and Eschatology.”

concerned about nothing but my duty and my sin. *June 9, and July 13, 1723.*”⁸ This resolution was generally aligned to the Protestant understanding of meticulous providence grounded in the confession of the Heidelberg Catechism that “all things come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand.”⁹ Edwards saw God’s providence as all-wise, powerful, good, and just, so he tried to fit and be agreeable to it at every moment of his life.¹⁰ Seeing and enjoying God in providence was a great joy and refreshment to his spiritual life; he thus eagerly sought it.¹¹ In his diary, Edwards also wrote that “there is no guessing out the ends of providence, in particular dispensations towards me” when he was spiritually languishing and dull.¹² Divine providence was an inevitable trajectory and necessary condition for his spiritual life. His soul was ready to obey and surrender itself to the care of divine providence. For Edwards, his true soul was fulfilled when it was consistent with divine providence in any circumstances. That is to say, divine providence augmented his personal piety, or his spirituality was marked by a devotion to divine providence.

During a midweek service on March 13, 1737, for example, the Northampton meeting house collapsed. Edwards recorded the accident as follows:

In the midst of the public exercise in the forenoon, soon after the beginning of sermon, the whole gallery—full of people, with the seats and timbers, suddenly and without any warnings—sunk, and fell down, with the most amazing noise, upon the heads of those that sat down to the astonishment of the congregation. The house was filled with dolorous shrieking and crying; and nothing else was expected than to find many people dead, or dashed to pieces.¹³

⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 16:757.

⁹ See Cochrane, “Heidelberg Catechism,” 309–10.

¹⁰ See Edwards, *WJE* 13:192. Edwards argued that the four living creatures and the wheels full of eyes are “an emblem of divine providence” in Ezekiel’s first vision (1:4–21) and the wheels of providence are “managed exactly according to these four, divine wisdom, power, goodness, and justice.”

¹¹ Edwards, *WJE* 16:797. See also *WJE* 13:427.

¹² Edwards, *WJE* 16:760.

¹³ Edwards, *WJE* 16:65.

According to his further account, no one died in this horrific accident by “the care of a providence” of God.¹⁴ Even though the collapse was a terrible event, Edwards called his congregation to praise and give thanks to the name of God for the life-preserving work of providence for the church.¹⁵ He wrote, “Such an event, may be a sufficient argument of a divine providence over the lives of men.”¹⁶ Yet, for Edwards, not only the preservation of life but also the presence of death in individual life and its process was one of the special and remarkable disposals of God’s providence. In consideration of the final moment of the life of David Brainerd (1718–1747), Edwards wrote that Brainerd’s last illness and death were God’s particular providential dealings and disposals.¹⁷ While the death of a young missionary, who had devoted himself to the mission of God, is difficult to comprehend, Edwards believed that human life and death are under the providential control of God. Just as the numerous streams flowing along the river seem different, he said that “God’s providence is variable toward all persons.”¹⁸ He further explained the nature of God’s providential exercises in lives of people as follows:

Sometimes they are in prosperity and sometimes they are brought to sorrow and mourning by this variety. God by turns is striving with men’s hearts, and these changes give opportunities of speaking for the salvation of the soul of our fellow creatures.¹⁹

Edwards accepted the limit of epistemic access to God’s providence, recognizing that humans were certainly not able to comprehend all the outworking of divine providence

¹⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 16:66.

¹⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 16:66.

¹⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 16:66.

¹⁷ See Edwards, *WJE* 7:534. See also, *WJE* 16:57. Edwards wrote that the depression and suicidal death of his uncle Joseph Hawley was “by the ordering of a sovereign providence.” See also Edwards *WJE* 4:148–49. The sudden deaths of two young persons in the town led people to think deeply about soul concerns and conversion and became the trigger for a minor revival in the town.

¹⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 10:334.

¹⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 10:334.

in the world. Nevertheless, he argued that God spoke to people through providence and that it was in fact God's divine speech or preaching aloud to his creaturely beings.

Edwards argued:

There is *God's providential voice*. The providence of God preaches aloud to us our duty, and warns us of sin and danger; God so orders all his dispensations towards us, that his voice may be heard in them, to which it behooves us to listen and hearken. There is a voice of God in mercies which aloud call us to love and thankfulness to God; there is also the voice of God to be heard in judgement, evidently reproofing and rebuking of us for our sins and misdeeds, and warning of us to flee from the wrath to come, and calling to us to return unto the Lord that he may have mercy on us, and to our God that he may abundantly pardon us.²⁰

Along with (1) creation, (2) the Word, and (3) the Spirit, Edwards believed that (4) providence was one of the fourfold mediums through which human beings could listen to God's preaching.

Theology of Providence

How did Edwards understand the doctrine of providence? He provided the following definition for providence: "God's providence taken summarily, or in general, is an operation and work of his, superior to the work of creation: for providence may in some respect be called the end of the work of creation, as the use and improvement any artificer makes of an engine, or the work he intends with it, is superior to his making the engine."²¹ Throughout his writings and entries in "Miscellanies," Edwards compared the work of providence to that of creation, arguing that the former was greater than the latter.²² To support the claim, Edwards illustrated an analogy of architecture and argued

²⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 10:440 (emphasis added). See also *WJE* 22:251.

²¹ Edwards, *WJE* 18:283–84.

²² Edwards, *WJE* 9:118; 18:283–84, 406.

that the greater telos for building a house was not placed in creating the house per se but its use.²³ In other words, no matter how well the house is made, it would be of no use if it is not well administered. He further argued that scriptures support the claim: “As providence is a *far greater* work than the work of creation, and its end, so the history of Scripture is much more taken up in works of providence, than in the work of creation.”²⁴ This dissertation uses *providence* to describe Edwards’s understanding of God’s activity in relation to the world, particularly within the triune context of divine working reality, which encompasses creation, providence, and redemption.

The doctrine of providence is more fundamental than that of creation in Edwards’s theology, although there is no conflict between the two in his thought. Given the modern theological atmosphere where the doctrine of providence has been treated as a subsection of the doctrine of creation, Edwards’s preoccupation with divine providence may sound perplexing.²⁵ For Edwards, providence is not limited merely to ruling and governing things previously created. R. C. De Prosopo points out: “He considers Providence much more expressive of Divinity than Creation, so he devotes much greater effort to its study.”²⁶ For Edwards, in other words, God cannot be God

²³ Edwards, *WJE* 9:118. An analogy also favoured by Edwards was creation as engine created by God, and the end of creation is not design itself—but its use for the glory of the creator. See Watson, *Body of Divinity*, 120. Similar to Edwards, Thomas Watson (1620–1686), an English Puritan, noted that “God is not like an artificer that builds a house, and then leaves it, but like a pilot he steers the ship of the whole creation.”

²⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 18:406 (emphasis added).

²⁵ See Fergusson, “Divine Providence and Action,” 153. He claims that “the standard presentation of providence as a subsection of the doctrine of creation frequently results in too rapid a consideration of the many problems and themes in traverses.” According to Fergusson, one of the problems with this presentation is that the doctrine is “too easily identified with the prevailing world order” without being “attached to the covenantal purposes of God enacted in the history of Christ Jesus.” See Barth, *CD* 3/3:3. According to Barth, “Medieval scholasticism treated it as part of the doctrine of the being of God. Post-Reformation dogmatics brought it into very close relation with the doctrine of creation.” Barth himself followed the latter approach to understanding the doctrine of providence.

²⁶ De Prosopo, *Theism*, 102.

without providence and providence takes a wider picture than creation into account in his theology.

Edwards described the work of providence as the *telos* of creation; he also wrote that providence pointed creatures to God himself as “a kind of voice or language of God, to instruct intelligent beings in things pertaining to himself.”²⁷ He believed that God’s works of providence are typological or the means of God’s self-communication to intelligent creatures; thus, human beings are able to perceive and read them.

Furthermore, it is Edwards’s view that knowledge of God’s dispositions and actions drawn from the work of providence refers specifically to God’s attributes.²⁸ In his interpretation of the prophet’s vision of God and the chariot (Ezek 1:1—3:15), the wheels appear as “an emblem of divine providence,” which is propelled for the progress of history to move towards its ultimate fulfilment.²⁹ According to him, it is God’s fourfold attributes, “divine wisdom, power, goodness, and justice,” that move the providential wheels from the beginning to the end.³⁰ For him, the whole providential system progresses and develops in a particular manner or direction according to his divine attributes:

These are the four that manage all things; these are the four that have the management of the wheels of providence. Where these go, the wheels follow; when these stand still, the wheels stand still; when these are lift up from the

²⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 11:79.

²⁸ See Edwards, *WJE* 13:284. He wrote: “And very much of the wisdom of God in the creation appears in his so ordering things natural, that they lively represent things divine and spiritual, [such as] sun, fountain, vine; as also, much of the wisdom of God in his providence, in that the state of mankind is so ordered, that there are innumerable things in human affairs that are lively pictures of the things of the gospel, such as shield, tower, and marriage, family.”

²⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 13:192. See also *WJE* 11:86. Edwards wrote: “Tis because the providence of God is like a wheel, as a machine composed of wheels, having wheels in the midst of wheels, that ‘tis so ordered in the constitution of nature and in the disposition of God’s providence, that almost all the curious machines that men contrive to do any notable things or produce any remarkable effect, are by wheels, a compage of wheels, revolving round and round, going and returning, representing the manner of progress of thins in divine providence.”

³⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 9:518. See also *WJE* 13:192.

earth, the wheels are lift up. That is, providence always managed exactly according to these four, the divine wisdom, power, goodness, and justice.³¹

Edwards believed that providence was an extension (or overflow) of those divine attributes *ad extra* so that they permeated everything, from the smallest atomic particle to the vast amounts of energy in the form of light and heat from the Sun, revealing images or shadows of divine things.³²

We ought to conceive of God as being omnipotence, perfect knowledge, and perfect love, and not extended any otherwise than as power, knowledge, and love are extended, and not as if it were a sort of unknown thing that we call substance, that is extended.³³

That is, Edwards's conception of providence is grounded in his understanding of God (*theologia*) first and then God's relation to the world.

Trinitarian Theology of Providence

In the context of Christian theology, providence usually refers to the divine creator who upholds, governs, and sustains the world. According to Karl Barth's critique, however, many Christian theologians have unduly relied on a general model of deity (e.g., God as supreme ruler, master, workman, and artist) who has nothing to do with the self-revelation of God in Christ Jesus in their theological notions of providence.³⁴ As a result, the Christian meaning and character of divine providence has been abstracted

³¹ Edwards, *WJE* 13:192

³² See Edwards, *WJE* 13:184, 434–41; See also *WJE* 8:551.

³³ Edwards, *WJE* 13:335.

³⁴ Barth, *CD* 3/3:115–17. For further information on Barth's critique against the post-Reformation doctrine of providence within the Protestant theological circle, see Kim, *Deus providebit*, 1–23. See also Schweitzer, *God Is a Communicative Being*, 11. He explains the interconnectivity of the nature of providence with that of a deity: "The clockwork universe of uniform natural causation imagined by the English Deists, for instance, was implicit in the nature of their clockmaker Deity. So it is that the pattern for any coherent system of theology is set by its doctrine of God." See also Webber, *Foundations*, 513. Also, refer to Wood, *Question of Providence*, 71–91.

from the specifically Christian understanding of God as the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Spirit and God's redemptive work.³⁵ It is surely the doctrine of the Trinity that most sharply distinguishes the Christian theology of providence from all other theologies.³⁶ Hence, the neglect of trinitarian reflection in the doctrine of providence is a serious drawback to the Christian understanding of God's providence. For example, Maurice Wiles raised a significant question regarding a distinctively Christian understanding of providence in a pluralistic society like today:

In Islam, the most strikingly theistic of the three, Allāh might sometimes seem too transcendent a deity for the concept of providence to flourish; but Allāh is also the Compassionate Compassionator. In Hinduism the doctrine of Karma might seem to exclude any understanding of providence, yet the Gītā points in a very different direction. Even in so-called atheistic Buddhism, the Buddha can come to be regarded as "Father of the World, the Refuge, Healer, and Protector of all creatures." Even in the apparently most unpromising soil, a religious faith in providence will be found to grow.³⁷

Is there a distinctively Christian doctrine of providence? Edwards treated divine providence on Christian grounds in the way that he applied the redemptive work of the Trinity to the doctrine of providence and hence preserved the Christian meaning and character of the doctrine of providence.³⁸ For him, *Deus providebit* is God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

³⁵ See Webster, "Providence," 205. Also, see Fergusson, "Divine Providence and Action," 157. See also, Wood, *Question of Providence*, 73–74.

³⁶ See Webster, "Providence," 218. According to Webster, "the doctrine of the Trinity...determines the entire corpus of dogmatics...including the doctrine of providence." For Webster, that is, all Christian doctrines are functions of the doctrine of the Trinity. If any doctrine makes Christianity Christian, then it is the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is fundamental to determining the character of all Christian doctrines.

³⁷ Wiles, "Introduction," 10.

³⁸ See Edwards, *WJE* 11:81. Edwards exemplified the connection between the Christ the redeemer and divine providence in the following manner: "The sap in the roots is like the water of a river, gathering from small branches into a common body; and this, as was said before, represents the course of divine providence during the times of the Old Testament, when the designs of providence as they related to Christ and the work of redemption—which is as it were the summary comprehension of all God's works of providence—was hid as it were underground." See also Edwards, *WJE* 9:518–20; 14:379.

This dissertation argues that the triune redeemer is the centre of reflection in Edwards's theology of providence, and it is not possible for him to disassociate the doctrine of providence (i.e., God's relatedness to the world, such as "how and what goes on in the world?") with the Trinity as the subject-matter of all Christian doctrine (i.e., God as triune, such as "who is the One who has to do with what goes on in the world?").³⁹ Therefore, retrieving Edwards's trinitarian-redemptive providence offers responses to two challenges: (1) the trend to generalize the doctrine of divine providence within the Reformed theological tradition and (2) the challenge to disregard the distinctively Christian concept of divine providence in a religiously pluralistic context.

Edwards set forth a trinitarian-shaped and redemptive-focused providence from his theological reasoning. To use contemporary trinitarian terminology, the economic Trinity reflects the immanent Trinity and vice versa.⁴⁰ To know Edwards's understanding of providence, one must begin with his view of the triune God. To him, providence comprised all divine activity *ad extra* and reflected the inner life of the Trinity. Sang Hyun Lee points out: "An important consequence of Edwards's doctrine of the immanent Trinity for his treatment of God's redemptive activities is that the latter will be thoroughly trinitarian. Edwards sees God's activities *ad extra* as the external extensions or repetitions of God's inner-trinitarian life."⁴¹ Simply speaking, his doctrine

³⁹ Wood, *Question of Providence*, 12–17. See Edwards, *WJE* 18:297, 406. See also Berkouwer, *Providence of God*, 43. Berkouwer writes that the Christian doctrine of providence is to be a faith-matter or pure article of faith (not a mixed confession of faith with pagan beliefs) because it uniquely touches "the heart of the problem" of human beings and God's saving plan for them in Christ. Thereby, God's providence without redemption cannot be a Christian theology of providence.

⁴⁰ Rahner, *Trinity*, 22.

⁴¹ Lee, "Editor's Introduction," 34. On the Trinity revealed *ad extra* in Edwards's thought, see also Studebaker and Caldwell, *Trinitarian Theology*, 85–101.

of providence is a discourse of divine self-emanation or self-repetition pointing to the trinitarian God in a broad sense. Hence, Edwards's notion of providence has a trinitarian character because it derives from the immanent trinitarian relations of the Father, Son, and Spirit. In this manner, God's creation, redemption, and providence are not separate but a coherent *ad extra* work of the same God as the Father, Son, and Spirit.⁴²

Edwards anticipated the onslaughts against the doctrines of providence and the Trinity by the Enlightenment and the deistic and mechanistic philosophies of nature.⁴³ In response to the new intellectual challenge, Edwards thus developed his trinitarian understanding of the God-world relation and focused attention on God's ongoing providential care of creation in the trinitarian framework. This research project engages Edwards's thought through a detailed examination of his theological corpus, sermons, and entries in "Miscellanies" to present a constructive proposal of the Edwardsean theology of providence. This dissertation aims to be faithful to Edwards's distinctive theological and historical tradition and also place that tradition within the broader Western traditions of Christianity. By retrieving Edwards's trinitarian theology of providence, this dissertation further argues that it contributes to contemporary discussions of God's providence that have lost their trinitarian and redemptive dimensions due to their failure to integrate the work of the Trinity in redemption with that of providence.

⁴² See Edwards, *WJE* 18:296.

⁴³ According to McDermott, Edwards thought of the Deist challenge, not that of Arminianism, as the greatest enemy to Calvinist Christianity, and for this, he wrote a great number of polemical miscellanies to it. See McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 39. He wrote that: "An astonishing twenty-five percent of the 1412 entries in the Miscellanies relate directly and indirectly to issues related by the deist challenge." For further information on the decline of the doctrine of the Trinity during the age of Enlightenment, see Placher, *Domestication of Transcendence*, 164–65.

Outline

Before discussing Edwards's trinitarian providence in subsequent chapters, Chapter 1 interprets Jonathan Edwards primarily as a theologian and examines his theological approach and sources concerning his doctrine of divine providence. In response to Perry Miller's contribution to the crowning achievement of Edwards's Renaissance, recent Edwardsean scholars have raised concerns regarding his interpretation of Edwards as a child of the Enlightenment and his thought as Lockean. This dissertation concurs with the notion that Edwardsean study has been unduly coloured by Miller's interpretation. After critically reviewing Miller's interpretation and examining some of the scholarly criticisms towards it, this chapter argues that Edwards was a retrieval theologian and his theology was a type of retrieval theology. He acknowledged the notable place and role of the Christian theological tradition in doing theology, especially in developing his theology of providence. In the midst of an emerging context where God's providence was being challenged by new ideas, Edwards drew upon theological insights and wisdom from various Christian traditions through his theological predecessors and faced new challenges with them. By undergoing such a historical and contextual process, Edwards accomplished two significant aspects in his theology: (1) attaining historical depth and (2) achieving ecumenical width.

Chapter 2 discusses the role of the Puritan heritage, the Enlightenment, and the eighteenth-century Great Awakening as the immediate historical contexts for Edwards's theology of providence. As he interacted with those religious and cultural milieus, Edwards developed a distinctive theology of providence. For eighteenth-century New England Puritans, divine providence was the springboard for their identity (e.g., God's

new Israel) and their vision for a new society (e.g., the new Canaan).⁴⁴ Intimately familiar to Puritans, history was the chronicle of “God’s Wonder-Working Providence” on earth.⁴⁵ It was within a prominent Puritan cultural and religious background that Edwards developed his theology of providence.

Edwards, as a Puritan mind, thus stood in sharp contrast to Enlightenment philosophy and its mechanistic naturalism, for it dismissed the traditional understanding of God’s relationship to the world. In conjunction with the mechanical worldview, moreover, the Enlightenment contributed to the emergence of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) who inspired materialism, the belief that all substance is material. Consequently, people became less interested in divine interventions and spiritual signs in worldly affairs. In response, Edwards underlined God’s continuing operation in the world with divine providence being superior to His work of creation.⁴⁶ The Great Awakening was for him a providential sign for the continuing work of God’s redemptive work in the world. He saw revivals as “the key element in the drama of redemption,” conceiving them as “the engines that drive redemption history.”⁴⁷ Edwards’s dynamic pneumatology, emphasizing the prominent role of the Spirit in redemptive history, was also formed and evolved by his experience of the power of the Spirit in the Great Awakening.⁴⁸ Consequently, the aim of Chapter 2 is to investigate how Edwards elaborated and refined his notion of divine providence in meaningful interactions with

⁴⁴ For example, see Winthrop, “Model of Christian Charity.” In his famous sermon, Winthrop preached that the colony is “a city upon a hill” and “the eyes of all people are upon us.”

⁴⁵ Stout, “Jonathan Edwards’ Tri-World Vision,” 27.

⁴⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 18:283–84. See also Stout, “Jonathan Edwards’ Tri-World Vision,” 31. Harry Stout writes: “It was, Edwards stated, a far more important history than creation, for creation was the means to a greater end.”

⁴⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 9:113.

⁴⁸ Ross, “Jonathan Edwards,” 598.

the overlapping worlds of Puritanism, the Enlightenment, and the Great Awakening. Edwards's theology of divine providence was an argument that was "socially embodied" within the specific context of the eighteenth century.⁴⁹

Chapter 3 proceeds to a historical examination of the doctrine of providence in deeper Christian thought. Christian theologians have traditionally affirmed an ongoing divine action and providence in the world, even though they have expressed the doctrinal locus in various ways. In classical Christian thought throughout the Patristic, Medieval, and Reformation periods, the doctrine of providence occupied a pivotal status among other doctrinal loci. The doctrine owned a scholarly and pastoral interest among great theologians, such as Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin. The chapter describes certain theological views in the Christian tradition that were indispensable for forming Edwards's notion of divine providence.

In this chapter, a practice of theological exchange (comparative theology) is particularly employed to highlight Edwards's theology of providence as "historically extended" by comparing his theology with theologies of providence in these three theologians, Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin.⁵⁰ It also argues that Edwards's theological understanding of God's providence was a part of the dynamic Reformed-Augustinian tradition. Their primary theological source was the scripture; their theological method was biblical reasoning. They were exegetes and scriptural theologians who primarily perceived the scripture as an unfolding historical reality of divine economy and taught this to their students and congregations. Thus, for all of those theologians, the doctrine of providence is not a subsection but the subject of the scripture as a whole. After

⁴⁹ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 222.

⁵⁰ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 222.

comparing their treatises and exegetical works, such as commentaries and sermons, with Edwards's works, this chapter argues that divine providence was an overarching and central theme to Edwards and his theological predecessors alike. Thus, they considered providence in relation to broader theological topics, such as theology proper, soteriology, and eschatology, not just as a subsection within creation.⁵¹

Chapter 4 examines Edwards's doctrine of the Trinity in detail and its relation to his understanding of providence in the doctrine of the Trinity. This chapter shows that an indivisible connection between the nature of the triune God and the character of providence pervades Edwards's thought. The proper starting point for exploring Edwards's theology of providence must be his perspective on who God is. Hence, the chapter asks the question: "What kind of God was Edwards's God?"⁵² There is a scholarly consensus that for Edwards, God was inarguably triune, and his theology was thus fundamentally trinitarian.⁵³ This chapter demonstrates that the Trinity was central to Edwards's theology of providence. It further argues that the integration of the Trinity with a vision of redemptive history was the most distinctive theological theme in Edwards's theology of providence.⁵⁴ For him, divine providence is neither an after-work nor a secondary subsection of the work of creation. Instead, it is first grounded in the very life of the triune God *ad intra* in eternity, and it is the *ad extra* unfolding reality of that triune life in history and its consummation. To Edwards, the triune God is a communicative provider.

⁵¹ See Fergusson, "Divine Providence and Action," 153, 247.

⁵² Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards's Theology*, 23.

⁵³ Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards's Theology*, 4, 25. See Edwards, *WJE* 16:800. Edwards confessed that "God has appeared more glorious to me, on account of the Trinity. It has made me have exalting thoughts of God, that he subsists in three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

⁵⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 9:117–18.

The doctrine of the Trinity is a demonstrably dynamic part of Edwards's providentialism. In his "Miscellanies," no. 702, for example, he argued that the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son "should be in the greatest and supreme work of God to which all other works are subordinate."⁵⁵ Here, for Edwards, all other works included the work of providence as well as others, such as the work of creation and that of redemption. Edwardsean scholars, such as Sang Hyun Lee, Robert Jenson, and Amy Plantinga Pauw, all agree on a fundamental interrelatedness of the eternal life of God *ad intra* with the whole work of God *ad extra* in Edwards's theology.⁵⁶ Lee further argues that for Edwards, the immanent Trinity is the very ground and pattern for what God does *pro nobis* in history, which means providence extends God's inner triune life.⁵⁷ For the sake of clarity of argument, this chapter gives an account regarding Edwards's understanding of (1) the identity of God; (2) the character of his providential act; (3) the providential relation of God and the world; and (4) the end of his providence.

Chapter 5 argues that Edwards's theology of providence derives from his trinitarian concept of God, and it thus has a trinitarian logic.⁵⁸ God the Father provides, sustains, and governs the individual, the church, and the universe through the Son and the Holy Spirit in history. The *finis* of providence is God's trinitarian glory shined forth *ad extra* in the process and culmination of salvation by Christ and through the

⁵⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 18:284, 298, 308.

⁵⁶ See Jenson, *America's Theologian*, 93. He writes: "Of a metaphysical break between God's triune history with us and God's own immanent being, Edwards knows nothing." See also Pauw, *Supreme Harmony*, 91. Lee, "Edwards," 20.

⁵⁷ Lee, "Jonathan Edwards's Dispositional Conception," 445–46.

⁵⁸ See Schwöbel, "Introduction," 3. According to him, one's renewed and growing interest in the Trinity can influence the shape of one's worldview. He writes that "it has to be acknowledged that one of the factors operative in the increased in trinitarian theology is an acute awareness of the interrelationship between theological concepts and the conceptions that inform our views of the natural and social world."

communication of divine light and life to the creature through the Holy Spirit.⁵⁹ This chapter then argues that by framing the doctrine of providence in a trinitarian-redemptive way through the Son (Word) and the Spirit, not the Father's will alone (i.e., omni-causality), Edwards's theology of providence achieves a more nuanced redemptive notion of providence, providing the answer to the ultimate problems of all created reality.

Within this trinitarian framework, the chapter divides his theology of providence into three parts according to three components of providence, which are *conservatio*, *gubernatio*, and *concursus*, and examines them systematically. The chapter constructs Edwards's understanding of how God is explicitly bringing to completion his purpose and plan for the natural, historical, rational, spiritual dimensions of life by preserving of, governing over, and concurring with his created working reality. Albeit distinct, Edwards affirmed that all these providential streams shall surely come together in "an orderly series of events, all wisely ordered and directed in excellent harmony and consistency, tending all to one end," so does it become three-in-one.⁶⁰ Moreover, this chapter points out that while Edwards's thinking on the aspects of the doctrine of providence has peculiar and creative substances, they do not lead to parting the way between Edwards and the Reformed-catholic theology.

Chapter 6 places Edwards in conversation with modern and contemporary theologians on divine providence across a broad theological spectrum.

⁵⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 18:284, 298; 16:801.

⁶⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 9:519–20. Here Edwards described the beauty and mystery of divine providence in the following way: "God's providence may not unfitly be compared to a large and long river, having innumerable branches beginning in different regions, and at a great distance from another, and all conspiring to one common issue. After their very diverse and contrary course which they hold for a while, yet all gathering more and more together the nearer they come to their common end, and all at length discharging themselves at one mouth into the same ocean."

Methodologically, following an ecumenical and dialogical mode, the chapter argues that Edwards's theology of providence can be stretched extensively, serving a valuable "theological bridge" between modern theological perspectives on the God-world relation in general and God's providence in particular.⁶¹ This arises because Edwards actively confronted the notable socio-historical and intellectual shifts of the eighteenth century, rather than avoiding them. First, Edwards's theology of providence shall be in conversation with a new deistic theological model of providence by Maurice Wiles, a modern liberal scholar, and his non-interventional providentialism. Second, the second partner is Karl Barth, a leading theologian of new modernism, whose theology of providence was trinitarian and christocentric. Third, the last partner with whom Edwards has a theological dialogue in terms of providence is Clark Pinnock, an Evangelical Baptist Charismatic theologian, who led a new theistic theological movement called the openness of God.⁶²

Those theologians, including Edwards, have formulated their peculiar theologies of providence in response to their specific circumstances and challenges against the Christian faith. The last chapter engages in dialogues with those three theologians of providence to gain a clearer understanding of Edwards's theology of providence and

⁶¹ McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 718–28. According to the authors, Edwards's theology serves as a theological bridge between West and East, Protestant and Catholic, Liberal and Conservative, and Charismatic and Non-Charismatic theologies.

⁶² Labeling the theologies of Wiles, Barth, and Pinnock as new does not signify that their theologies are in complete discontinuity with the previous theological traditions to which they belong. Defining theologies of providence as new is an attempt to emphasize the aspects and contents of their theologies of providence that set them apart from their theological traditions. For example, Wiles' theology is distinct from classical deism; there is a fundamental discontinuity between the thought of Barth and that of liberal theology in the broader sphere of modern theology and Pinnock's open theism opposed classical theology.

explores its potential as a theological bridge in future ecumenical dialogues on divine providence.

CHAPTER 1

METHODOLOGY—INTERPRETING EDWARDS AND HIS THEOLOGY

Too many of our leaders look no further than Edwards and Wesley, if indeed they look that far, for ministerial resources. But one of the reasons why these men remain such helpful models today is that their own Christian leadership was funded heavily by classical orthodoxy and early Protestantism. We must recall, as they did, that we evangelicals have never had a theology of our own. Precisely because we committed ourselves to multicultural partnership, we have always had to rally around a sparse doctrinal platform. We have always been dependent on much older Christian sources of doctrinal, especially ecclesiological, substance.

Douglas Sweeney¹

The main methodological task in this dissertation is how to interpret Edwards as a Christian theologian. Douglas Sweeney argues that among contemporary Evangelicals, Edwards's theology has been one of the greatest resources for navigating the future of Evangelicalism; he says that it is possible because of his theological depth in the Christian theological tradition, classical orthodox and early Protestant theology.² This argument suggests to the reader that Edwards was neither an isolated nor a thinker who was free from the earlier theological tradition, but rather encouraged an appropriation of

¹ Sweeney, *American Evangelical Story*, 185.

² Sweeney, *American Evangelical Story*, 185. Sweeney points out that one of the problems of evangelicalism today lies in its restless for rootedness in the Christian theological tradition.

the theological wisdom of the tradition.³ Although he is one of the greatest American thinkers, Edwards's theological genius lays in his ability to summarize the useful parts of traditional ideas and add them to new and creative ways of doing theology.⁴ As William Morris points out, Edwards's theology was original and creative in the way that he "took the very best from his inherited past and related it critically and constructively to the newly emerging ideas of the Enlightenment."⁵ That is, tradition formed a backdrop that shaped significant aspects of Edwards's theological work.⁶ Consequently, the first methodological step of this dissertation is to place Edwards in light of his connection to the Christian tradition; it assesses ways that scholars have understood his relationship to the Christian theological tradition, especially as it relates to his trinitarian theology of providence and redemption.

The Statement of the Problem: After Miller

Tradition is probably not the first word that comes to many readers' minds when they think of Edwards.⁷ To most readers, modernity is a more appropriate modifier to describe him than tradition. If anyone has influenced the notion, it is Perry Miller (1905–1963), an American intellectual historian, who led scholarly interest in Edwards in the twentieth century. His biography *Jonathan Edwards* (1949) is still a landmark work for the studies of Edwards's intellectual life. Miller contributed to the re-emergence of

³ See Edwards, *WJE* 16:277–78. In his letter to Joseph Bellamy, Edwards emphasized the significance of ecclesial doctrines and confessions in matters of the Christian faith.

⁴ For instance, see Brown, *Jonathan Edwards*, xvii. In terms of Edwards's exegesis, Brown argues that Edwards's biblical interpretation was neither pre-critical nor critical; his approach to the Bible was indeed "hybrid traditional," in which he "modified in significant ways by accommodation to the new learning."

⁵ Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards*, xvi. Also, see Brown, *Jonathan Edwards*, 128.

⁶ See McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 142–48.

⁷ See Withrow, *Becoming Divine*, 4.

scholarly interest in Edwards in the latter half of the twentieth century by leading the project of publishing *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (henceforth *WJE*) at Yale University. Notwithstanding his contribution to the renewal of the studies of Edwards in the field of the religious history of America, his portrayal of Edwards as an intellectual avant-garde influenced by Lockean philosophy has lately been seriously critiqued.⁸ Miller argued that Edwards was “not only a scion of the Enlightenment but also in some ways a prophet of the subsequent romantic movement and even twentieth-century thought.”⁹ In his view, Edwards was a thinker far ahead of his time.¹⁰ Even though Miller’s investigation of Edwards’s relations to John Locke (1632–1704) and Isaac Newton (1643–1727) is valuable, he exaggerated the degree of influence these Enlightenment thinker had on Edwards.¹¹

After Miller, Edwardsean scholars have challenged his interpretation of Edwards.¹² For instance, Miller viewed Edwards’s *History of the Work of Redemption* (1739) as “a pioneer of work in American historiography.”¹³ However, John Wilson dismissed Miller’s claim, arguing that it dealt with the traditional Christian narrative of the God-world relation and faithfully remained within the Christian tradition.¹⁴ Avihu

⁸ See Crisp and Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards*, 223.

⁹ Hall, “Enlightenment,” 199.

¹⁰ Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 268. See Anderson, “Editor’s Introduction” 47. Anderson follows Miller, arguing that Edwards’s understanding of the physical world belonged heavily to the modern, drawing exclusively from modern sources, rather than the medieval.

¹¹ See Bombaro, *Jonathan Edwards’s Vision*, 295. Unlike Miller’s hypothesis of Edwards as an Enlightenment thinker, Bombaro argues that “Edwards was not the thoroughgoing Enlightenment rationalist one might suspect, at least not in the last two decades of his life.” He draws the conclusion from the fact that Edwards preferred a historical method to a rationalist one in doing theology.

¹² See, for example, Holmes, *God of Grace*, 28. Holmes argues that Miller projected himself onto Edwards. He writes: “Miller is still a child of the Enlightenment and tries to make Edwards, too.”

¹³ Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 311. For different evaluative thoughts on Edwards’s *History of the Work of Redemption*, see Neele, *Before Jonathan Edwards*, 185–86.

¹⁴ See Wilson, “Editor’s Introduction,” 2, 37, 73. Edwards related sacred history to secular one in *A History of the Work of Redemption* and integrated them into the history of salvation. See also McDermott, “Was Jonathan Edwards an Evangelical,” 247. He writes that “his [Edwards] largest iteration

Zakai also points out that albeit distinctive, Edwards's redemptive vision of history is aligned to the Christian theological tradition, writing:

Furthermore, it is important to place Edwards's philosophy of history in the wider context of sacred ecclesiastical history as a Christian mode of historical thought. Edwards was an heir of the Christian theological teleology of history—salvation history—though he transformed it radically in order to proclaim God as the author and lord of history.¹⁵

Edwards developed his theological understanding of history in ways that “stand out against his eighteenth-century Enlightenment background more sharply than his other writings.”¹⁶ Specifically, Edwards saw the rise of mechanistic naturalism as a pernicious idea that conceived of the world as a machine operated by natural principles and laws alone. He could not allow the mechanization of God's providential activity in the world.¹⁷ In this historical-polemical context, Edwards retrieved the classical and medieval notion of the God-world relationship and the great chain of being to defend *sacrum historia*, in which God is intrinsically related to the world, and the reality of nature is ontologically subordinated to a higher spiritual reality.¹⁸

of a particular way of reading the biblical story—the *History of the Work of Redemption*—can be understood only within the tradition of the early fathers and the much-larger tradition of typological exegesis.”

¹⁵ Zakai, “Jonathan Edwards's Vision,” 28.

¹⁶ Ahlstrom, “Theology,” 251. Edwards's writing of *History of the Work of Redemption* is often compared to St. Augustine's *City of God* in a way that both works were *apologias* to the challenges of their days. There exist a significant number of affinities between Edwards and Augustine. See Niebuhr, *Kingdom of God*, xvi. He calls Edwards America's Augustine, writing: “Hence my greatest hope is that such a work as this may serve ‘even as a stepping stone’ to the work of some American Augustine who will write a *City of God* that will trace the story of the eternal city in its relations to ancient Rome, or of Jonathan Edwards *redivivus* who will bring down to our own time the *History of the Work of Redemption*.” See also Beeke and Jones, *Puritan Theology*, 161. They write that “Augustine wrote *The City of God* in part to teach the providence of God over nations and civilizations, especially in light of the crisis caused by the fall of Rome to the barbarians.³ He said that events did not happen by luck or by fate but by the will of God.”

¹⁷ Zakai, “Jonathan Edwards,” 30.

¹⁸ Zakai, “Jonathan Edwards,” 38–39. See Zakai, “Medieval and Scholastic Dimensions,” 16. He writes that Sang Hyun Lee is among the first to point out to “crucial role of Classical, Medieval and Scholastic thought in Edwards' philosophical theology.”

Unlike Miller's attribution of Locke's decisive impact on the formation of Edwards's thought, William Morris and Norman Fiering prefer a broad range of intellectual and theological influences on his thought. Morris suggests the significance of Edwards's indebtedness to the concepts and methods of the Dutch scholasticism of Franco Burgersdijck (1590–1635) and his disciple Adriaan Heereboord (1614–1661) that Locke tried to refute.¹⁹ Fiering also contends that if anyone exerted a significant influence on Edwards, then it would be Nicholas Malebranche (1638–1715), the seventeenth-century French Jesuit priest and thinker, and his eighteenth-century English student, John Norris (1657–1711).²⁰ Edwards's intellectual education was strengthened by studying Locke during his college years at Yale, but this study did not lead him to copy from Locke. Instead, he creatively synthesized the old (e.g., Scholastic logic, Calvinist theology, and Puritan piety) with the new (e.g., the Cartesian, Lockean, and Newtonian teachings). According to Morris and Fiering, Edwards's excellence lies not in his advance in thought per se but in his ability to comprehensively retrieve different ideas from the past to give relevant answers to the condition of his present time. What emerges from placing Edwards in the living Christian tradition is a figure whose mind was not merely attuned to progress but seeking renewal by retrieving the wisdom that belongs to the Christian theological tradition.²¹

¹⁹ Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards*, 537.

²⁰ Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards*, 496–97. Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 40. Fiering further argues that Miller's "dramatic picture of the relationship between Edwards and Locke must be rejected" (37). Also, refer to Paul Copan, "Jonathan Edwards's Philosophical Influences," 108. See also, Reid, "Trinitarian Metaphysics," 152–53. Without ignoring the relative influence of Locke on Edwards, Jasper Reid also points out some crucial affinities of Edwards with Malebranche in terms of (1) trinitarian metaphysics; (2) the union with God; (3) epistemology; (4) God's continuous creation of the world; and (5) ethics. Yet, Reid does not over-stress the influence of Malebranche on Edwards, not like Miller over-emphasized the Lockean influence over Edwards.

²¹ Other key scholars who refute Miller's reading of Edwards are Janice Knight and Brad Walton. In her book *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, she challenges Miller's monolithic reading of the landscape of Puritanism in New England and argues that Edwards was influenced by the group of "Spiritual Brethren"

A Case Study: Contra Miller

A recent body of literature has attempted to rehabilitate Edwards's thought within the long-standing and more extensive Christian theological tradition of which Edwards's Reformed-Puritan theology was a part. This section briefly reviews some of the works that have employed the historical-theological method for interpreting Edwards and his theological works.

Richard Lovelace wrote an evangelical manual of spiritual theology titled *Dynamics of the Spiritual Life*. In this book, Lovelace combines “the history and the theology of Christian experience” of the Spirit in and through spiritual renewals.²² Even though the composition and source of wisdom in the book is mainly, not exclusively, Edwards's theology of revival, it also includes the works of the following theologians: St. Augustine, Martin Luther (1483–1546), John Calvin (1509–1564), Nikolaus Zinzendorf (1700–1760), George Whitefield (1714–1770), and John Wesley (1703–1791).²³ George Marsden evaluates Lovelace's work as a “wonderfully ecumenical book” that “presents an Edwardseanism that combines dynamic Augustinian theology with zeal for active evangelism.”²⁴

More recently, Adriaan Neele also argues that Edwards's spiritual theology was a recipient of two streams of the Christian tradition, the medieval Scholastic tradition (i.e., *theologia speculativa et practica*) and the monastic tradition of bridal mysticism (i.e.,

(or the so-called Cambridge Group), which emphasized Augustinian voluntarism and its piety. In *Jonathan Edwards*, Brad Walton finds the points of discontinuity between Edwards's spiritual sense and Lock's empiricism, rather he highlights the similarity of Edwards with Puritan fathers on the true piety, spiritual sensation, and heart-religion.

²² Lovelace, *Dynamics*, 11.

²³ Lovelace, *Dynamics*, 11–12.

²⁴ Marsden, “Old, Rested, and Reformed,” 125–26.

affective piety).²⁵ He writes, “Both traditions would resurface together in early modern Protestant theology, the immediate background of the spirituality of Jonathan Edwards.”²⁶ Those works allow the reader to grasp how the living Christian tradition shaped Edwards’s spiritual theology.²⁷ Brandon Withrow’s *Becoming Divine* (2011) is another source to show a macro perspective of Edwards’s spiritual theology, especially incarnational and participatory, within the broad and long-standing Christian tradition, spanning from the ancient Judeo-Christian to the early modern eras.²⁸

In *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation*, which is a controversial work on Edwards’s understanding of soteriology and grace, Anri Morimoto places his thought within a more extensive context of the Reformation and Roman Catholic theological tradition than that of New England Puritanism.²⁹ In Morimoto’s view, Edwards’s soteriology has two concerns, Protestant and Catholic, fused into one organic form.³⁰ In *Fullness Received and Returned*, Seng-Kong Tan also locates Edwards’s soteriology as participation in God in “both from his own Puritan-Reformed-Augustinian tradition and the larger Western theological traditions.”³¹ Through this method, Tan aims to concentrate on the “creative retrieval and synthesis” of Edwards’s soteriology from the Christian theological tradition.³²

In *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, Gerald McDermott shows an extended analysis of Edwards’s response to the Deists in the eighteenth century, proving that he

²⁵ Neele, “Prelude,” 1.

²⁶ Neele, “Prelude,” 1.

²⁷ On Edwards’s understanding of affections and its location within the Christian theological heritage, see Martin, *Understanding Affections*.

²⁸ Withrow, *Becoming Divine*, 3.

²⁹ See Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards*.

³⁰ Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards*, 7–8.

³¹ Tan, *Fullness Received*, 2.

³² Tan, *Fullness Received*, 2.

was actively engaged in constructing an apologetic against deism by retrieving the ancient theological tradition.³³ According to McDermott, Edwards was the first American theologian who retrieved the idea of *prisca theologia* (i.e., ancient theology) developed first by Clement of Alexandria (150–215), Origen (185–254), Lactantius (240–320), and Eusebius (265–339) in early Christianity.³⁴ The *prisca theologia* affirmed that God revealed truth to his people by oral tradition from the time of antiquity, and thus all rational philosophical and non-Christian religious truth derived from the traditions of Adam and the ancient Jews, including Moses and Noah. Therefore, all true knowledge among other religions was from revelation rather than the light of natural reason.³⁵ To counter the Deists who believed that natural religion was the product of reason alone, Edwards retrieved the *prisca theologia* tradition.³⁶ McDermott states: “Edwards perpetuated what scholars thought had been lost—the *prisca theologia*, a tradition dating back to the early church fathers that looked for elements of true religion in non-Christian traditions and thinkers—in his efforts to defend revelation against its detractors.”³⁷ According to him, Edwards was a theologian of retrieval who creatively integrated his unique circumstances of eighteenth-century colonial America with an understanding of the significant Christian historical and classical ideas.

Using Edwards’s metaphor of a “large and long river, having innumerable branches” to describe God’s providence in history, Amy Plantinga Pauw defines tradition as a dynamic category in the preface before discussing Edwards’s

³³ See McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*.

³⁴ McDermott, “Jonathan Edwards,” 224. See also McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 93.

³⁵ See Edwards, *WJE* 15:370.

³⁶ Studebaker, “Jonathan Edwards’ Trinitarian Theology,” 288–93.

³⁷ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 8.

trinitarianism: “The flow of a living tradition is fascinatingly unpredictable. Sometimes it broadens and merges with other streams; sometimes it constricts or takes sharp bends.”³⁸ Then, Pauw argues in *The Supreme Harmony of All* that Edwards employed and correlated two significant models of the Trinity: the psychological model (i.e., the Augustinian Western perspective) and the social model (i.e., the Eastern/Victorine perspective), which both have deep roots in the Christian tradition.³⁹ Although her thesis is controversial among Edwardsean scholars, she correctly points out that Edwards inherited trinitarian thinking from the extramural Reformed and larger Augustinian tradition.⁴⁰ Studebaker and Caldwell, moreover, argue:

Edwards is well-known as a major figure in the Reformed Puritan tradition, which in turn had its roots in the sixteenth-century Protestant reform movement associated with Geneva and John Calvin. He was a key defender and promoter of eighteenth-century Reformed theology in New England. Yet, he was also the benefactor of an additional tradition of thought: the Augustinian mutual love tradition.⁴¹

Overall, Edwards’s trinitarianism did not transcend but belonged to the Christian tradition, and his trinitarian legacy conforms to the living tradition.

On Edwards’s interpretation of Scripture, George Marsden emphasizes the important role of the Christian tradition in his biography of Edwards titled *Jonathan Edwards*.⁴² According to Marsden, “When Edwards studied the Scripture, he did not simply sit in his study with the Bible and try to discern its meaning. Rather, he worked

³⁸ Pauw, *Supreme Harmony*, 1.

³⁹ Pauw, *Supreme Harmony*, 11.

⁴⁰ For objections to Pauw’s two model hypothesis, see Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards’ Social Augustinian Trinitarianism* and “Jonathan Edwards’s Social Augustinian Trinitarianism.” See also, Caldwell, *Communion in the Spirit*.

⁴¹ Studebaker and Caldwell, *Trinitarian Theology*, 105.

⁴² Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 474.

directly within a tradition of interpretation.”⁴³ When Edwards was practicing biblical reasoning, it was a Puritan Reformed tradition, both immediate and earlier, from which he learned. For instance, Edwards was an heir to his immediate Puritan exegetes and commentators, such as Matthew Poole (1624–1679), Matthew Henry (1662–1714), and Moses Lowman (1680–1752), and earlier Puritan Reformed divines, such as John Calvin, William Perkins (1558–1602), and Francis Turretin (1623–1687).⁴⁴ According to Stephen Nichols, Edwards was a creative heir within that tradition, for his typological interpretation of the biblical text went beyond the Reformed heritage of plain and literal interpretation.⁴⁵ Recent evangelical scholars, such as Douglas Sweeney and David Barshinger, have also published significant research on the important field of Edwards and the Bible as the foundation of his pastoral and theological activities.⁴⁶

In *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of Nature*, Avihu Zakai challenges the modernizing interpretation of Edwards's philosophy of nature chiefly pioneered by Miller, who presented Edwards as the first modern American intellect. Against Miller's view of Edwards, Zakai presents sound evidence of his considerable affinities with some main features of “Medieval, Scholastic, and Renaissance thought” as he engaged with modern philosophy.⁴⁷ Those affinities are as follows: (1) philosophy as the handmaiden of theology; (2) typological and emblematic view of nature; and (3) the Great Chain of

⁴³ According to Samuel Hopkins (1721–1803), the first biographer of Edwards, he was first and foremost the student, interpreter, and preacher of the Bible who studied the Bible more than all other sources and thinkers. Stephen Nichols indicates a neglect of the central role of the Bible in Edwards's theology among Edwardsean scholars after Miller.

⁴⁴ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 474. See Nichols, “Jonathan Edwards' Principles,” 40–41.

⁴⁵ Nichols, “Jonathan Edwards' Principles,” 49–50.

⁴⁶ See Sweeney's *Edward the Exegete*, Barshinger's *Jonathan Edwards and the Psalms*, and their co-edited *Jonathan Edwards and Scripture*. See also, Stephen Stein, “Edwards as Biblical Exegete,” 192.

⁴⁷ Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy*, 12–13.

Being.⁴⁸ Zakai argues: “Only in this broad context, I would argue, can Edwards’s philosophy of nature and his response to mechanical philosophy be fully understood and appreciated.”⁴⁹ According to Zakai, it is Sang Hyun Lee who was one of the first scholars to mention the significant role of Classical, Medieval, and Scholastic schools of thought in Edwards’s philosophical theology and place it within its broader context.⁵⁰ Building upon Lee’s initiative, Zakai develops a constructive and historical approach to Edwards’s natural philosophy, concluding that it had an affinity with the views of “physico-theology,” a genre (or alternative term) of natural theology that aimed to show how the new science could be plunged into long-standing Christian theology proper and providence alike.⁵¹

In *Seeing Good*, Hans Boersma locates Edwards’s beatific vision within the Christian tradition and specifically compares it with Aquinas’s understanding of the beatific vision. According to him, the beatific vision was once a critical dogmatic element throughout much of the Christian tradition but has been gradually marginalized from Christian theology since the modern period. In responding to this atmosphere, Boersma aims to retrieve its riches for the church today. Boersma specifically comments on Edwards’s beatific vision as follows: “It has been the argument of the chapter that Edwards built on these Platonic insights in his articulation of the doctrine of the beatific vision. Concretely, this means that Edwards presented a Reformed articulation of this

⁴⁸ Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards’s Philosophy*, 12–13.

⁴⁹ Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards’s Philosophy*, 10. On page 13, he again emphasizes the importance of locating Edwards in the proper ideological, theological, and scientific context to understand Edwards’s writings on nature and history.

⁵⁰ Zakai, “Medieval and Scholastic Dimensions,” 16.

⁵¹ Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards’s Philosophy*, 13. Also, see Zakai, “Medieval and Scholastic Dimensions,” 16.

doctrine remarkably similar to premodern and Eastern expression of it.”⁵² Like all of the Edwardsean scholars listed so far, Boersma employs the concept of tradition as key to grasp how Edwards retrieved his doctrine of the beatific vision in light of the Great Tradition, and his version of the vision of God (*visio Dei*) became a continual part of the flow of the living tradition of the church.⁵³

In *Covenant of Redemption*, Reita Yazawa advances a study of Edwards’s trinitarian theology and its nexus with his covenant of redemption. He attempts to retrieve the theological relevance of the immanent Trinity and its relatedness to the Reformed understanding of the covenant of redemption, for contemporary theologies tend to underrate the practical implications of both the immanent Trinity and the covenant of redemption.⁵⁴ “Far from being abstract and speculative, the doctrine of the Trinity is practical because salvation of the church elect is impossible without the Trinity,” as he wrote.⁵⁵ Then, Yazawa argues that without denouncing the practical relevance of the immanent Trinity, Edwards held a Puritan-Reformed thought of the eternal redemptive pact between the Father and the Son within a fully trinitarian context. According to Yazawa, this Edwardsean focus on the eternal divine plan of redemption within the triune life of God *ad intra* was a theological inheritance from a seventeenth-century continental Reformed theological thought within the broader Reformed tradition.⁵⁶

⁵² Boersma, *Seeing God*, 383.

⁵³ For the relation of the Great Tradition with Christian Platonism, see Boersma, “All One in Christ,” [n.d.].

⁵⁴ Yazawa, *Covenant of Redemption*, 11–12.

⁵⁵ Yazawa, *Covenant of Redemption*, 13.

⁵⁶ Yazawa, *Covenant of Redemption*, 12. For the proposed methodology of Yazawa’s studies on Edwards’s covenant thinking, see the same book, 207. It is clearly written in the latter part of the book. He writes: “Edwards appropriated his Reformed legacy but creatively articulated it for his time of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Conversely, Edwards may have innovatively updated his Reformed

In summary, even though Miller led the re-emergence of Edwards in American academic studies, the findings of scholars after Miller listed above have challenged his reading of Edwards. They have re-discovered the theological continuity between Edwards and wider Christian theological tradition in general and in particular of the dynamic Augustinian tradition of which Edwards's Puritan-Reformed theology was part.⁵⁷ This project contributes and extends this trajectory of research that shows Edwards's relation to the theological traditions. It does so by identifying the traditional elements of Edwards's thought, specifically by placing his theology of providence, redemption, and the Trinity at the intersection of the deep and broad theological traditions of Christianity.

Proposed Method: Theological Retrieval

The first methodological step of this research is to situate Edwards's theology within a contemporary theological method of retrieval, especially, approaching his theology of providence with a Reformed and catholic sensibility.⁵⁸ The main impetus of retrieval theology is an attempt to claim the significant place and role of tradition in doing

tradition, but he did so deeply rooted in his own Reformed legacy. Past scholarship tended to stress Edwards's modernity sometimes to the extent of indicating his departure from his Puritan and Reformed tradition. This study has tried to redress the balance by situating Edwards squarely in convenient theology in the Reformed tradition he inherited from previous generation."

⁵⁷ For further information on those scholarly works which render objections to Miller's interpretation of Edwards, excluding Morris and Fiering, see also Cherry, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts* and Walton, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Affections*. Crisp and Strobel also point out the problem of Miller's one-dimensional interpretation of Edwards as thoroughgoing Lockean and Newtonian in their co-work *Jonathan Edwards*.

⁵⁸ A Reformed-catholic sensibility, by its definition, refers to a Reformed theology that remains faithful not only to scriptures as the church's sacred text but also to the catholic church tradition in the claiming of Christian doctrine.

theology.⁵⁹ Theological retrieval is, of course, nothing new. Theologies have always been received (reception) and transmitted (transmission) from one generation to another.⁶⁰ Stephen Holmes is right to argue that “there have been interactions with the theological tradition for as long as theology has been done.”⁶¹ Stanley Grenz also remarks that tradition is the theological heritage of the church and provides a hermeneutical trajectory for theology.⁶² A premise of the approach of theological retrieval is that by working at the border between the past and the present, retrieval theologies attempt to build a bridge between them by constructively interacting with earlier traditions for the renewal of Christian theology today. Retrieving the past in the present unveils a whole new set of constructive possibilities, expanding the horizons within which one can reflect on various issues.⁶³ In other words, it ventures into learning from the Christian tradition to clarify and revitalize the present in light of the past.

In Edwards’s theological works, discussions of the Trinity, redemption, and providence are compelling historical examples of the possibility of renewal by retrieval. Edwards’s theological retrieval neither anachronistically looked at the theological thinkers and resources of earlier ages nor simply relocated ideas from the past into the present. For Edwards, theological retrieval was more of a creative translation of the past, not a simple repetition of it. He sought to hold the possibility of fruitful interactions with

⁵⁹ To borrow from Alasdair MacIntyre, the term tradition means “an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental arguments are defined and redefined.” See MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 12.

⁶⁰ Buschart and Eilers, *Theology as Retrieval*, 14.

⁶¹ Holmes, *Listening*, 1. See Cole, *Faithful Theology*, 40–41.

⁶² Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, 93.

⁶³ Sarisky, “Tradition II,” 202. See also Tanner, *Jesus*, xviii. She comments, “Knowledge of Christianity in other times and places is a way, then, of expanding the range of imaginative possibilities for theological construction in any one time and place, a way of expanding the resources with which one can work.”

the past in ways that helped Christian theology renew itself in the midst of the threat of emerging ideas of the day. In other words, Edwards looked back in order to move forward through theological retrieval of the Christian tradition that was catalyzed by scriptures, carried in practices and experiences, and articulated in creeds.⁶⁴

The dissertation argues that Edwards's theological practice was a type of what today is called retrieval theology.⁶⁵ In the changing socio-cultural and intellectual climate of the eighteenth century, he faced the dilemma of whether to hold on to the old or adopt the new. In the face of perplexing change, Edwards turned into neither "intellectually the most modern man of his age" (Perry Miller)⁶⁶ nor anachronistically "the last medieval American" (Peter Gay).⁶⁷ Miller and Gay represent the two extremes. They both fail to understand that Edwards was a theologian of retrieval whose theological works were historically embedded yet creatively responsive to contemporary problems and challenges in terms of eighteenth-century thought. This dissertation argues that Edwards practiced a theology of retrieval and expounds this point by reviewing literature that attempts to interpret Edwards's theologies within the living Christian tradition as a whole.

⁶⁴ See Long, *Theology and Culture*, ix. Long explains how theological retrieval could work by analogy: "Theology is like rowing a boat. You can only move forward when you are looking backwards." See Crisp, *Retrieving Doctrine*, ii. Similarly, he comments, "In order to make progress in doctrine, theologians must expend a great deal of time and effort listening to what thinkers of the past have to say about matters touching the divine, quizzing them on the views they espouse. Only then will they be in a position to make some contribution of their own. See also, Buschart and Eilers, *Theology as Retrieval*, 12. As they put it, theological retrieval is "*a mode or style of theological discernment* that looks back in order to move forward" (emphasis original).

⁶⁵ See Tan, *Fullness Received*, 2. His approach to Edwards is "while not denying Edwards's philosophical originality, concentrates on his creative retrieval and synthesis of theological motifs both from his own Puritan-Reformed-Augustinian tradition and the larger Western theological tradition."

⁶⁶ Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, xxxii.

⁶⁷ Gay, *Loss*, 116.

In contemporary Christian theology, theological retrieval has arisen in various ways as an alternative to correlational theologies undertaken for the sake of cultural relevance. Theological retrieval as a method of theology is an intentional reaction to the perceived crisis within theological scholarship that has neglected the voices of the past in doing theology.⁶⁸ Different theological traditions and thinkers have deployed this methodology to retrieve the Christian faith by studying theological discourse within the theological heritage of the past.⁶⁹ In all circles, Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant alike, retrieval theologies have arisen in recent decades.⁷⁰

Reformed Catholicity as Theological Retrieval

Reformed catholicity is one of the retrieval theologies that has developed among Protestants in recent years. Reformed catholicity retains commitment to the Reformed tradition and its theological rootedness in *Sola Scriptura*, while drawing on the profound pre-Reformation catholic heritage for *Semper Reformanda* (“always being reformed”). In other words, a Reformed-catholic sensibility, by its definition, refers to a Reformed theology that remains faithful not only to scriptures as the church’s sacred text but also to the catholic church tradition in the claiming of Christian doctrine for the one, holy,

⁶⁸ Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” 584. See Darren Sarisky, “Tradition II,” 194. There is a recent body of literature in this field from scholars, such as John Webster, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Oliver D. Crisp, Michael Allen, Scott R. Swain, David Buschart, Kent D. Eilers, Gavin Ortlund, and Darren Sarisky.

⁶⁹ Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” 584.

⁷⁰ Key figures in the method of theological retrieval are Georges Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky, Jean Daniélou, Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Karl Barth, Thomas Oden, Carl Braaten, and Robert Jenson. See Allen and Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*, 4–12. They categorize contemporary theological retrievals into thirteen key movements and explain each in brief. See also Levering, “Retrievals,” 723–37. Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” 583–99. Fergusson, “Theology Today,” 108. For example, *Nouvelle Théologie* is a well-known Catholic retrieval movement particularly associated with several Roman Catholic theologians such as Henri de Lubac (1896–1991), Jean Daniélou (1905–1974), and Yves Congar (1904–1995). The purpose of this movement is to engage and renew the contemporary Catholic Church’s teachings by way of retrieval or through the *ressourcement* of patristic theology.

catholic, and apostolic church.⁷¹ As a mode of theology, it is a distinctively Reformed way of retrieving patristic and medieval theology without abandoning its Reformed theological identity. Two leading scholars of the Reformed catholic movement, Michael Allen and Scott Swain, believe that the *ressourcement* of the catholic heritage is compatible with a Reformed identity. Allen and Swain explain their manifesto: “There are Reformed theological and ecclesiological warrants for pursuing a program of *retrieval*, that we can and should pursue catholicity on Protestant principles, and that pursuing this path holds promise for theological and spiritual *renewal*.”⁷² They further explain that “to be Reformed means to go deeper into true catholicity, not to move away from catholicity.”⁷³ In other words, being Reformed does not require opposing the retrieval of the patristic and medieval theological traditions, not apart from them. Some proponents particularly give attention to William Perkins (1558–1602), John Owen (1616–1683), John Williamson Nevin (1803–1886), Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), Benjamin B. Warfield (1886–1902), Karl Barth (1886–1968), and more recently Thomas F. Torrance (1913–2007) as prominent Reformed catholic examples.⁷⁴

Carrying on this theology of retrieval, this dissertation presents Edwards as an eighteenth-century Reformed catholic theologian, and it further argues that his theologies of the Trinity and providence are invaluable resources for a historical-theological example of Reformed catholicity. Edwards was indeed an eighteenth-century Reformed theologian who celebrated the glory of God manifested in divine sovereignty.

⁷¹ Barrett, *Reformation as Renewal*, 2–3.

⁷² Allen and Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*, 13 (emphasis added).

⁷³ Allen and Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*, 4.

⁷⁴ See Allen and Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*, 3–4. See also Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval*, 28. Sarisky, “Tradition II,” 201.

While his hostility toward Roman Catholicism remained strong throughout his whole life, he did not reject all the theologians and sources of the entire catholic tradition of the church.⁷⁵ Without adopting the Roman Catholic ecclesial and theological system, he gleaned from the rich catholic theological tradition of the church. Edwards was against the Roman Church, not the catholicity of the church. Scholars also confirm theological and philosophical consonances between Edwards and medieval thinkers, including Augustine of Hippo (354–430), Anselm of Canterbury (1034–1109), Peter Lombard (1096–1160), and Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).⁷⁶ They also find catholic affinities in Edwards’s theological interests and writings in areas such as the Trinity, beauty, grace, soteriology, and typology.⁷⁷

In his case for the ecumenical Edwards, Kyle Strobel claims that the excellence of Edwards’s theology is found in “this form of Reformed Catholic theology,” which can be “utilized by the Church Catholic.”⁷⁸ He argues that Edwards certainly had a “catholic spirit” of Christianity on the grounds of his Reformed-Calvinistic confessions.⁷⁹ Strobel explains the necessity of interpreting Edwards within a Reformed and catholic tradition, writing that:

⁷⁵ See Edwards, *WJE* 13:186. Edwards describes the Church of Rome as “the more anti-Christ, against Christ,” “a viper or some loathsome, poisonous, crawling monster.” That is, Edwards’s particular deployment of the Catholic theologians and teachings does not mean that he systematically endorses the Catholic Church. See Jenson, *America’s Theologian*, 98. See also Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards*, 2.

⁷⁶ It is unlikely that Edwards read those medieval theologians’ works; his source of knowledge about their theologies indirectly came from the writings of those Reformed theologians, such as Francis Turretin (1623–1687) and Petrus van Mastricht (1630–1706).

⁷⁷ Koefoed, “Roman Catholicism,” 502–3. For more information on Edwards and the Catholic theological tradition, see McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 695–705. For further information on Edwards and his affinities with Catholic thoughts, see McDermott, “Was Jonathan Edwards an Evangelical,” 233–48.

⁷⁸ Strobel, “Introduction,” 2–3. Recently, it is evident that ecumenical approaches to Edwards have arisen through the publication of books. For example, see Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards*; Studebaker, *Trinitarian Vision of Jonathan Edwards*; Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards among the Theologians*; Strobel, *Ecumenical Edwards*, and Yong and Studebaker, *Pentecostal Theology and Jonathan Edwards*.

⁷⁹ Strobel, “Introduction,” 3. See also Edwards, *WJE* 14:121.

To understand Edwards well, therefore, he must be received as part of this tradition and, as such, within the living Christian tradition as a whole. Our goal is thus to recognize Edwards's greatness within the movements of this tradition, not apart from them; that is, we are seeking to highlight the theological and philosophical trajectories he found himself in, grounding them deeply in ancient Christian reflection.⁸⁰

Morris also supports this argument and aptly outlines what modern theologians could learn from Edwards's theology. The first two lessons are worth noting for this thesis:

Firstly, he teaches us that while we need to understand the historical in terms of the contemporary, we nonetheless need to estimate the contemporary in terms of the historical. *Edwards was deeply grounded in the thought of the past*; it is the dimension of the historical which is often lacking in contemporary philosophical and theological thought. Secondly, Edwards illustrates that in our ecumenical discussions, *the divisions between Protestant and Catholic are often artificial and conceal larger agreement of outlook and concern*. Edwards's background of Suarezian scholastic thought determines his fundamental theological outlook. He has "a practically Roman conception of the place of love in justifying faith," while echoing Luther's faith active in love. There would be more hope of mutual understanding if our debates were more historically grounded.⁸¹

Taking this perspective into account, this research project places the theology of Edwards at the intersection of (1) historical depth and (2) ecumenical width in a more detailed manner.

The Historical Depth

This dissertation provides a detailed account of Edwards's trinitarian theology of providence that is deeply grounded in the dynamic Augustinian tradition of which Edwards's Puritan-Reformed theology was part. His providential and redemptive understanding of history was also deeply indebted to the larger Augustinian teleological

⁸⁰ Strobel, "Introduction," 4.

⁸¹ Morris, "Genius," 64 (emphasis added). See also Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards*, 219. As he puts it, Edwards was "Protestant in his convictions and direction," but he was "genuinely Catholic in his sympathies and understanding." See also Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards*, 7. Morimoto also argues that Edwards's soteriology combined a "Protestant concern" that grace is solely initiated by God and a "Catholic concern" that grace is perfected into the divine likeness in humans.

theological tradition rather than modern sources.⁸² He firmly stood on the basis of a founding faith in divine providence in all of history, both sacred and secular, moving toward the ultimate finalization of redemption in Christ.⁸³ This historical pole also considers the narrower setting of Edwards's life and thought in eighteenth-century colonial America. His theology of providence did not evolve in a vacuum. The thesis shows that Puritanism, the Enlightenment, and the Great Awakening provided much of the intellectual context for his trinitarian theology of providence. Edwards had to spill much ink to articulate a more nuanced theology of providence, such as theology of revival, in his day and defend the orthodox Christian faith in providence against all opposition from Deists, Rationalists, and Arminians. Retrieving an Edwardsean trinitarian theology of providence must take account of his historical and theological context.

The Ecumenical Width

This research project also has an ecumenical-catholic approach to Edwards's trinitarian theology of providence. Being rooted in and from his particular Puritan Reformed theology, the second agenda attempts to bring Edwards's theology of providence into conversation with other theologians, historical/past (e.g., Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin) and ecumenical/modern (e.g., Maurice Wiles, Karl Barth, and Clark Pinnock) alike. This ecumenical-catholic agenda is designed neither to simply compare nor identify the overlap between them but, first and foremost, to reach an understanding of

⁸² Holifield, *Theology*, 122. See also Zakai, "Jonathan Edwards's Vision," 28.

⁸³ See Edwards, *WJE* 13:483. He wrote: "All things in heaven and earth and throughout the universe are in a state of preparation for the state of consummation; all the wheels are going, none of them stop, and all are moving in a direction to the last and most perfect state."

the full theological potential of Edwards's theology of providence in a constructive way. To achieve the aim, the dialogue must not remain within an intramural Calvinist Reformed tradition. As Strobel points out, whereas Edwards was rarely seen as ecumenical in any sense up until recently, his theology has "real ecumenical import."⁸⁴ Another expectation with this catholic-ecumenical approach is that Edwards's theology of providence offers a fruitful alternative to contemporary models of divine providence by bringing a trinitarian and redemptive focus into the conversation with a wide spectrum of theologians.

⁸⁴ Strobel, "Introduction," 2. See also McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 720.

CHAPTER 2

EDWARDS'S THEOLOGY OF PROVIDENCE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

GOD ALMIGHTY in His most holy and wise providence, hath so disposed of the condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in submission.

John Winthrop¹

Introduction

This chapter explores the role of the Puritan heritage, the Enlightenment, and the Great Awakening in the eighteenth century as the major historical and intellectual contexts for Edwards's theology of providence. To understand Edwards's theology of providence and fully appreciate its significance, this chapter reviews his eighteenth-century historical situation. Hence, the chapter's emphasis falls on the historical location of Edwards, in which he worked and developed his theology of providence. The chapter shows the ways Edwards developed his distinct notion of divine providence from (1) his reception of the Puritan theological heritage, (2) his interaction with the Enlightenment, and (3) his encounter with the Great Awakening in eighteenth-century New England. This chapter presents Edwards's understanding of the God-World relation in general and that of

¹ Cf. Hall, *Puritans*, 165.

divine providence in specific on his own terms and times before any sort of assessment and comparison can be made in the next chapter. Thus, this chapter examines Edwards's vision of divine providence from historical and theological perspectives.

Covenant Theology in the Puritan Providential Tradition

According to Herman Bavinck, a Dutch Reformed theologian, the Puritan “belief in God’s providence” is based on “his covenant and promises.”² Conrad Cherry explains this covenantal relation to providence in the Puritan tradition, noting that: “In its theological essence the Puritan doctrine of the covenant represented a history of the manner in which God dealt with his people.”³ According to Cherry, Edwards, a Puritan pastor-theologian, identified himself with this covenant theme as “a central, if not *the* central, theme in Puritan thought and experience.”⁴ Edwards conceived God’s providence in the world as the history of covenantal relationship. By situating Edwards within the Puritan covenantal theological tradition, this section argues that covenantal thinking was central to Edwards’s understanding of God’s historical providence. To grasp the New England Puritan providential tradition, within which Edwards’s theology of providence was embedded, it is crucial to trace its roots in the Puritan legacy and the impact it had on religious and socio-political developments in England.⁵

² See Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:594. Bavinck, a Dutch Reformed theologian, points out the indivisible link between covenant and providence. The original full quote is as follows: “In Scripture belief in God’s providence is absolutely not based solely on God’s revelation in nature but much more on his covenant and promises.”

³ Cherry, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 108 (emphasis original).

⁴ Cherry, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 107, 126. According to Cherry, Edwards was a practical theologian-preacher whose theology has an “overwhelmingly practical bent.” In other words, Edwards was always keen to draw out the practical applications of Christian doctrines in his ministries, pastoral, missional, and revival.

⁵ Beeke and Jones, *Puritan Theology*, 775. For the Puritan impact on America, see Goen, “Puritanism and American Experiment,” 5–21.

The Puritan Theology of Providential Destiny in Old and New England

In England, William Tyndale (1494–1536) translated Hebrew and Greek texts into the first English Bible, and it obtained a significant circulation among literate English people.⁶ In the second and revised edition of his New Testament (1534), Tyndale gave his fullest statement of covenant teaching to his readers, writing as follows: “Here hast thou, most dear reader, the new Testament, or covenant made with us of God by Christ’s blood.”⁷ Jens Møller writes that Tyndale’s New Testament (or the Bible under the name of Matthew’s Bible) “played an important part in the development of English Protestant thought” because he contributed to the spread of covenant theology among the young in England.⁸ He further argues that it is to Tyndale that “the Puritans owe their general and particular covenants.”⁹ According to Richard Hughes, the Protestant reformer proposed that “the central theme of scripture is the covenant God has made with his people” and passed “the possibility that God had extended His covenant to England as well” to his heirs.¹⁰ Tyndale did not explicitly promote a providential symbolism proposing that England was God’s chosen nation. Yet it becomes noticeable that the theme of the national covenant received greater attention and support under Protestant and Catholic tensions and conflicts as the church continued to reform in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century England after Tyndale.

⁶ Hughes, *Myths*, 33. See Craig, “Growth of English Puritanism,” 35.

⁷ Cf. Møller, “The Beginnings of Puritan Covenant Theology,” 53. Tyndale, *Works*, 1:403.

⁸ Møller, “The Beginnings of Puritan Covenant Theology,” 53.

⁹ Møller, “The Beginnings of Puritan Covenant Theology,” 67.

¹⁰ Hughes, *Myths*, 33. See Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism*, v–xvi, 3. He relates the beginning of Puritanism with the year when Tyndale left England for Germany for his English Bible translation project. See also Wilson-Kastner, “Jonathan Edwards,” 208.

During the reign of Mary Tudor (1553–1558), who was resolute in restoring Roman Catholicism in England, for instance, English Protestants found themselves in exile and fled to Protestant countries away from the rule of the Roman Catholic queen. They started pondering the cause of their abandonment in light of Tyndale’s idea of the covenantal relationship with God. They presumed that it was their failure to restore the pure Christian church in England that made God annul the covenant.¹¹ After Mary’s reign ended in 1558, Elizabeth I (1533–1603) restored Protestantism in England. Those refugees who returned to the country from the Marian exile were eager to seek the pure church by eradicating all traces of Catholic practices from the Church of England. They taught, preached, and published their propaganda for further purity of the church from within.¹² However, what Elizabeth cared for was not a radical reformation but ecclesiastical unity (*via media*).¹³ The Puritans, firm in their opposition to Roman Catholic traditions, held the belief that the Church of England, under Elizabeth’s leadership, had not undergone adequate reform and advocated for further measures to be enacted. As Edmund Morgan writes: “It was too plain to the Puritans that the visible church in England stood too far from the invisible; it indiscriminately embraced the flagrantly wicked along with the good or sincerely repentant.”¹⁴ During Elizabeth’s reign, William Perkins (1558–1602), one of the most influential Puritans in England, claimed a hopeless future for England in which God would withdraw his divine grace from the land.¹⁵ Later under the successive reigns of James I (1566) and his son Charles

¹¹ Hughes, *Myths*, 37.

¹² Beeke and Jones, *Puritan Theology*, 775. See Hughes, *Myths*, 38.

¹³ Beeke and Jones, *Puritan Theology*, 776.

¹⁴ Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 10.

¹⁵ Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 207. See Perkins preached in his sermon “Explosion of Christ’s Sermon Upon the Mount” that, “Religion hath been amongst us this thirty-five year, but the most it is published, the more it is contemned and reproached of many, etc. Thus, not profaneness nor wickedness

I (1600–1649), the English Puritans were subjected to various policies that were specifically aimed against them. England gradually showed hostility toward them, so that they turned their eyes toward America and decided to set sail for a new land where they could create a pure church.¹⁶

As Thomas Hooker (1586–1647), the founder of Connecticut, departed for the New World in 1633, he preached that “God is going, his glory is departing” from England to the New World.¹⁷ Hooker proclaimed: “God begin to ship away his Noahs, which prophesied and foretold that destruction was near; and God makes account that New England shall be a refuge for his Noahs and his Lots, a rock and a shelter for his righteous to run into.”¹⁸ As they migrated from England to the new colony, the early Puritan settlers in America used typology as “a form of prophecy,” which set two or more historical events into “a reciprocal relation of anticipation and fulfillment” to understand their location or significance in the course of history.¹⁹

Also, it is known that John Winthrop (1588–1649) delivered his famous sermon before his crews reached New England. The sermon, “A Model of Christian Charity,” is most well-known for its use of the phrase “a city upon a hill” to describe the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a truly godly society.²⁰ Winthrop delivered a message about divine providence toward their settlement in the New World, and he preached that they were entering into a new covenant. If they lived according to their obligations and

but religion itself is a byword, a mockingstock, and a matter of reproach; so that in England at this day the man and woman that begins to profess religion and to serve God, must resolve with himself to sustain mocks and injuries even as though he lived amongst the enemies of Religion.”

¹⁶ Beeke and Jones, *Puritan Theology*, 776.

¹⁷ Hudson, *Nationalism*, 25.

¹⁸ Cf. Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 209.

¹⁹ Brumm, *American Thought*, 18, 27.

²⁰ See Hall, *Puritans*, 169. On Winthrop’s “City on a Hill,” see Studebaker, *Pentecostal Political Theology*, 15–19. See also Gamble, *In Search of the City*, 17–18.

duties, then the Lord would be their God and delight in them as God's redeemer nation.

The early Puritan settlers in America saw their identity and vision in the course and progress of divine providence for the ultimate fulfillment of the history of salvation.

They considered themselves to be a new Israel, and their migration to America was regarded as a new exodus.²¹ Avihu Zakai explains the New England Puritan understanding of history and how they came to think that God had a special plan for their nation:

They drew on the ideology of salvation history to explain the ultimate necessity of God's saints to depart from sinful England, to justify the meaning and significance of their migration to America, to construe the sacred, redemptive and revelatory meaning of the American wilderness, and last but not least, to interpret their life and experience in New England.²²

The Puritans believed that their migration to and experience in America were ordained and guided by God's special providence for the further progress of salvation for the rest of the world. Zakai argues that the history of the New England Puritans was ultimately providential history, in which "God's providence selected, elected, and predestined certain people to restore humanity and reconcile it with its Creator."²³ For them, the notions of covenant and providence went hand in hand. That is, if the covenant was the invisible backbone of providence, then the execution of providence was the visible faculty of the covenant within history.

According to Cheryl Peterson, American Puritan providentialism would set the foundation of establishing a *Magnalia Christi Americana* (the glorious works of Christ

²¹ Brumm, *American Thought*, 27.

²² Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 2

²³ Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 5. See also Beeke and Mark, *Puritan Theology*, 779. Beeke and Mark also write that for the Puritans, their emigration to America was "a major event that they believed was led by the providence of God." The Puritan migration was a divine mission in which God's will, rather than a human initiative, was the sole determining force.

in America).²⁴ The Puritan idea of a peculiar society based on their national covenant with God was largely seen in Cotton Mather (1663–1728), the grandson of John Cotton (1585–1652), who was a preeminent minister and theologian of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.²⁵ According to Mather, God had directed the providential settlement of New England as a “Report the *Wonderful Displays* of His Infinite Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and Faithfulness, wherewith His Divine Providence hath *Irradiated an Indian wilderness*.”²⁶ The covenant showed the remarkable blessings that America as the “Elect Nation” would receive as a result of faithfulness to God.²⁷ However, if God’s covenant people failed to keep the covenant, God also would break out in wrath and retribution to make them know the price of the breach of their covenant.²⁸ The idea of the covenant played a formative role for the New England Puritans. It directly influenced the shaping of their ethical, rational, and religious thoughts that created “the process of successfully transforming the wilderness into a society” that would fulfill divine providence in their

²⁴ Peterson, *Who is the Church*, 18. She explains Christian America as follows: “The Puritans arrived in the colonies with the hope of establishing a Christian society based on biblical laws and spoke of American’s election through the covenant and role in God’s providence.” See also Noll, *America’s God*, 33. Noll writes that even though the Puritans opposed much of the Roman Catholic summation in the Church of England, they still believed “an English Protestant extension of Christendom” that God’s sovereignty should prevail over all, private and public alike.

²⁵ See Cotton, “God’s Promise to His Plantation (1630).” He described their migration to the New World as divinely ordained and emphasized the importance of the covenant that they were called to keep, preaching that: “If you rebel against God, the same God that planted you will also root you out.”

²⁶ Mather, *Selections*, 89.

²⁷ Haller, *Elect Nation*, 224–25.

²⁸ See Withrow, *Becoming Divine*, 94. He explains the Puritan concept of the national covenant as follows: “The nation in covenant would therefore consist of numerous churches whose members were personally committed to, and in covenant with, the God they worshipped. This affirmation of the covenant between God and the people meant that they could hope for his blessings on the nation as a whole, so long as the people did not forsake the church.” See also McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society*, 12. He defines the national covenant as follows: “In a tradition stretching back to the Reformation and before, God was conceived as entering into covenant with a people or nation, and blessing or punishing that people in proportion to their fidelity to the terms of the covenant.”

land.²⁹ Like those of his Puritan forebearers, Edwards was a covenant theologian who affirmed the special place of New England in God's providential history.³⁰

New England as the Covenanted Society in Edwards's Thought

A century after his earlier Puritan predecessors, Jonathan Edwards carried on the idea of New England's unique role in God's providential involvement in history. Edwards believed that God established the terms of the covenant with New England as his Puritan predecessors did. Some scholars, however, disagree with this argument for continuity and see Edwards departing from his Puritan ancestors.³¹ In his *Jonathan Edwards*, for example, Perry Miller writes that: "Every New Englander before Edwards was a 'Federalist,' and because he put aside all this sort of thinking, he became a new point of departure in the history of the American mind."³² Miller argues that the logic of covenant/federal theology, in which God enters into a covenant with a nation, either blessing or punishing that nation by its allegiance to the terms of the covenant, was a thoroughly "legalistic bent of primitive Calvinism."³³ Miller believes that Edwards was unlike New England Puritans in that he completely abandoned the covenant theme.³⁴

However, Harry Stout disagrees with the Miller's revisionist attempt to distance Edwards from his Puritan tradition, arguing that "Edwards was even more a Puritan than

²⁹ Forrer, "Puritan Religious Dilemma," 617.

³⁰ Studebaker, *Pentecostal Political Theology*, 20.

³¹ See Ryu, "Federal Theology," 786.

³² Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 76.

³³ Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 76.

³⁴ Miller, *Errand*, 98. See also Conrad Cherry, *Jonathan Edwards*, 107–23. He points out that the covenant between God and man was a pervasive idea in Edwards's thoughts, yet he agrees with Miller that the main interest of Edwards was not a national or federal covenant, but a covenant of grace for those individuals who come to salvation by grace and a covenant of redemption among the persons of the Trinity.

Miller or his revisionists concede. In fact, he was every bit the federal theologian that his Puritan predecessors were.”³⁵ According to Stout, Edwards’s utilization of the national covenant was evident in the occasional (or weekdays, not regular Sunday) sermons that he had delivered in times of great public trial, crisis, urgency, and his thanksgiving sermons.³⁶ They show that the Puritan heritage of the national covenant had a long-lasting impact on Edwards. Stout concludes that: “When his fast and thanksgiving sermons are examined in their entirety it becomes apparent that Edwards, together with his rationalist counterparts, approached New England as a ‘peculiar’ nation who, like Israel of old, enjoyed a special covenant relationship with God.”³⁷ Stout argues that Edwards was not an abstract thinker but “a child of New England’s inherited covenant” in that he understood “New England’s attendant identity as a special people with a messianic destiny.”³⁸ For Edwards, New England was a spiritual group of people or a society, upon whom God bestowed special favours and hence duty-bound responsibilities, too.³⁹ Sacvan Bercovitch also offers the crucial connection between

³⁵ Stout, “Puritans and Edwards,” 143.

³⁶ For the major distinctions in form, content, and function between Sunday regular sermons and weekday occasional ones in the Puritan preaching tradition, see Stout’s monograph titled *New England Soul*, 13–31.

³⁷ Stout, “Puritans and Edwards,” 144. New England parishioners in the 1600s and early 1700s occasionally practiced public renewal of their covenant with God. In 1741, Edwards led his congregation into a public renewal of their covenant with God and proposed a copy of a covenant.

³⁸ Stout, “Puritans and Edwards,” 157. As a close example to Edwards, his father Timothy Edwards inherited the Puritan notion of the national covenant, and he was widely recognized as a jeremiad preacher. See Stout, “Puritans and Edwards,” 144. Stout argues that “Edwards absorbed the logic and terminology of federal covenants from an early age, when he sat under the ministry of his father.” See also Yazawa, *Covenant of Redemption*, 116.

³⁹ Edwards’s concept of the national covenant does not imply that God disregards individuals or places outside of his own country and people. According to his theology of providence, God’s providence extends beyond his relationship with New England and the specific covenant community, encompassing his involvement in broader actions and encounters.

Edwards and his Puritan predecessors on the New England concept of covenant and its special status of the nation in God's providential history.⁴⁰

In Edwards's sermon titled "Indicting God," for example, his view of the national covenant is clear. He preached: "We are a *covenant people*. Every professing people is so, but we are so in a special manner; for God has dealt with the people of this land in many respects much as he did with the children of Israel, when he entered into covenant with them."⁴¹ Not only that, but Edwards also echoed Winthrop's famous phrase. He added:

*We are as a city set on an hill. We have made an high profession of religion, and the eyes of the world are upon us to observe. And if we lose what we seemed to gain, and depart from what we made an appearance of, and at last prove no better than others, it will be the more abundantly to our reproach. Any ill qualities that are seen in any person or people, is looked upon by the world so much the more to their shame, according as their professions and pretenses of the contrary were higher.*⁴²

In his introduction to Edwards's sermon "Indicting God," M. X. Lesser highlights the fact that Edwards shifted "the narrative voice from the third to the first person (plural) in an anthem to America's exceptionalism and Northampton's."⁴³ From a theological perspective, Reita Yazawa is insistent that like his Puritan theological predecessors, Edwards's view of *pactum salutis* would indirectly impact the formation of his view of America as a covenant nation, since the national covenant represents the earthly manifestation of the eternal covenant of redemption.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 105. See Stein, "Editor's Introduction," 28. See also Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 350. Marsden points out: "Puritanism and its Reformed-pietist successors constantly vacillated between whether they were rebuilding Christendom by making towns and eventually nations into virtually Christian societies, or whether they were advocating a pure, called-out church. Edwards had strong commitments to both ideals."

⁴¹ Edwards, *WJE* 19:759 (emphasis added).

⁴² Edwards, *WJE* 19:767 (emphasis added). See Edwards, *WJE* 19:547.

⁴³ See Edwards, *WJE* 19:747.

⁴⁴ See Yazawa, *Covenant of Redemption*, 147–61.

Even though Edwardsean scholars have conflicting opinions regarding his view of the future millennial vision of America, it has been evident since Stout that, like his Puritan predecessors, Edwards believed in the status of the American colony as a chosen nation and covenant partner with God.⁴⁵ He indeed maintained the essence of covenant theology that God distinguished New England from all others as spiritual Israel.⁴⁶ He also preached a covenant formula that predicted the destiny of the nation on the basis of keeping of the covenant.⁴⁷ The Puritan “Deuteronomic view” of history that God would send either a judgement or prosperity depending upon their response to the covenant was evident in Edwards’s thoughts.⁴⁸ Even though God might have first chosen New England regardless of the people’s moral and social pre-qualities, their covenant relationship could stand or fall by her faithfulness in keeping the laws. For Edwards, if New England were obedient, then she would not only be God’s treasured possession, but God would

⁴⁵ Edwards Morgan also calls this idea “Puritan Ethic.” See Morgan, “Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution,” 6. See also McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society*, 14–25. McDermott also concedes that Edwards’s notion of the national covenant was seen in many of his occasional sermons. Yet it was nothing more than Edwards’s pastoral/prophetic device that employed the American jeremiad to alert and discipline people in the godly way of life. According to McDermott, Edwards instead believed that New England was closer to the biblical cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, rather than New Israel. Therefore, for Edwards, the status of New England was a prodigal society rather than a peculiar one, and he presumed that its covenant with God might end shortly. See also Rosario, “Edwardsean Roots,” 103–19. In this recent article, Rosario refutes McDermott’s claim by tracing the Edwardsean roots of the providential and millennial vision for America passed down through Timothy Dwight (1752–1817), an Edwards’s grandson, to Lyman Beecher (1775–1863), a Presbyterian minister, leading revivalist, and social reformer in America. For further information on Edwards’s discourse about the future destiny of America, see Yazawa, *Covenant of Redemption*, 117. According to him, Edwards’s lamentations about New England’s ungodly state and its pessimistic future destiny had a dual purpose. Edwards’s American jeremiad sermons were a form of corrective or pedagogical rhetoric for New England as the chosen people as the New Israel.

⁴⁶ Stout, “Puritans and Edwards,” 157. For example, see Edwards, “Sermon on 2 Chr 23:16,” in *WJEO* 52. In this sermon, Edwards pointed to the people of New England as “a People that have been distinguished of G. as a Covenant People for a long time and have been distinguished in the means that G. has used with you.”

⁴⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 25:722–26.

⁴⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 5:362–69.

also use New England as the special seed/land for initiating and advancing the future Kingdom of God on earth.

Moreover, Edwards, as a Reformed-Puritan theological successor, viewed the advancement of the kingdom from a militant perspective. The accession of Constantine, which Edwards interpreted in terms of divine providence, led to the destruction of the heathen Roman empire.⁴⁹ He further believed that all enemies, such as Roman Catholicism, Islam (“Mahometanism”), and heathenism, would be rendered gradually powerless by the global expansion of the Reformed-Protestant religion.⁵⁰ This biblical-apocalyptic warfare motif between the Kingdom of God and that of Satan conjoined with “Roman Catholicism, Islam, and the political powers aligned with them” in post-Reformation thought was a prevalent worldview for interpreting historical circumstances around America and beyond it.⁵¹ Don Schweitzer points out: “Edwards’s theology was developed in the service of this struggle: to defend Reformed Protestantism against its critics, and to give it guidance and understanding by illuminating what he believed to be the truth and refuting what he believed to be pernicious errors.”⁵² His prospect for the coming millennium was the final completion of the Protestant Reformation on earth through “a vastly more glorious propagation of the true religion” leading up to the gradual fall of Christ’s enemies simultaneously.⁵³

⁴⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 9:351.

⁵⁰ See Edwards, *WJE* 13:186. Edwards described the Church of Rome as “the more anti-Christ, against Christ,” “a viper or some loathsome poisonous, crawling monster.” See also “Miscellanies,” no. 613 in Edwards, *WJE* 18:416. In the entry, Edwards wrote that the global expansion of the Christian church will “swallow up Mahometanism and root it out of the world.” For more discussion on this subject, see McDermott, “Islam,” 338. McDermott writes that for Edwards, Roman Catholicism and Islam were “the devil’s two world-historical forces stalking the earth in the latter days.”

⁵¹ Schweitzer, “Jonathan Edwards,” 244.

⁵² Schweitzer, “Jonathan Edwards,” 244.

⁵³ See Edwards, *WJE* 18:145–46. Edwards wrote as follows: “It seems probable there will be a time wherein the gospel will prevail so far, as to be a very great defeat and glorious disappointment of Satan in his design of making man miserable.”

In a similar vein, Edwards expounded in *Humble Attempt* (1748) as follows: “As the power of Antichrist, and the corruption of the apostate church, rose not at once, but by several notable steps and degrees; so it will in the like manner fall: and that divers steps and seasons of destruction to the spiritual Babylon, and revival and advancement of the true church, are prophesied of under one.”⁵⁴ Within this eschatological framework, Edwards understood the location and telos of New England as a covenanted society; he employed the American jeremiad to highlight the role of New England and lead her to look at what lay ahead within the redemptive history of God. Historical eschatology never played a peripheral role in the theology of Edwards in general and his theology of providence in specific.⁵⁵ Schweitzer also discusses the function of Edwards’s eschatological vision and its application for the covenanted saints: “Edwards’s eschatology looked for the coming of a future that would be greater than the present, and so this eschatology could be a source of *critique* as well as *encouragement* to colonial New England.”⁵⁶ His eschatological vision helped New England have the “panoramic or

⁵⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 5:408.

⁵⁵ See McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 579. They write as follows: “For many thinkers in the Reformed tradition, eschatology was a theological appendage. But for Edwards eschatology was both central and integral to this thought. His philosophy of history presumed that God directed every atom in the universe toward a cosmic conclusion. His biblical typology suggested that all of nature and history teem with types of future, end-time realities.” The ground-breaking element in Edwards’s doctrine of providence was that he acknowledged it as thoroughly eschatological in the glorious work of God’s Spirit, the millennial kingdom, and new heavens and new earth. See McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 366. For more information on Edwards’s eschatology, see also C. C. Goen “Jonathan Edwards,” 151–65. He made a pioneering work for the importance of eschatology in Edwards’s thought. Also, Stein, “Eschatology,” 239. For more information on the work of the Holy Spirit and eschatology in Edwards’s thinking, see Schweitzer, “Jonathan Edwards,” 247. The Holy Spirit remained the primary agent for the progress of divine providence in history in Edwards’s eschatology. Edwards believed that the day of Pentecost was not an exclusive outpouring of the Spirit, but the history of the church was driven towards its climax, which is the millennium, by subsequent outpourings of the Holy Spirit. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit had an eschatological character in Edwards’s theology of providence.

⁵⁶ Schweitzer, “Jonathan Edwards,” 247 (emphasis added). In contrast to McDermott’s dichotomous approach to Edwards’s public theology and his interpretation of it as a source of critique or the prophetic, not the priestly type, in his words, Schweitzer highlights a dual function of Edwards’s eschatology, both critique (prophetic) and encouragement (priestly) for the people of New England. For

synoptic” sight of providence. Without the sight, New England would have been blind to fail to trust in God’s unfolding providence within the course of history:⁵⁷

Things will look as though one confused revolution came to pass after another merely by blind chance, without any regular design or certain end. But if we consider *the events of providence in light*...they appear far from being jumbled and confused, but an orderly series of events, all wisely ordered and directed in excellent harmony and consistence, tending all to one end.⁵⁸

Likewise, through Edwards’s use of the image of a river, one can assume that it is the eschatological vision that enables the people of God to discern and obey God’s providence within history:

God’s providence may not unfitly be compared to a large and long river, having innumerable branches beginning in different regions, and at a great distance from another, and all conspiring to one common issue. After their very diverse and contrary course which they hold for a while, yet all gathering more and more together the nearer they come to their common end, and all at length discharging themselves at one mouth into *the same ocean*.⁵⁹

Though the river of history seems catastrophic and afflictive, there is an ultimate direction. All the streams and branches of the river are making their way to the ocean, the final destination of history, by the sovereign providence of God.

As to the destiny of New England within such flow of the river of history, Edwards was not overly optimistic. Even though Edwards held an eschatological and progressive view of history, he believed in the afflictive progress of history, which

more information on McDermott’s classification of Edwards’s public theology, see McDermott, *One and Happy Society*, 36.

⁵⁷ McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 240. See Flavel, *Mystery of Providence*, 20. According to John Flavel (1627–1691), one of the most influential scholars on Edwards, “It is our duty of the saints, especially in times of straits, to reflect upon the performances of providence for them in all the states, and through all the stages of their lives.” He believed that the meditation upon providence is what God commands to the saints and the neglect of it is a sin. Generally, the Puritan thinkers were highly practical and experimental in their preaching and writing, and the doctrine of providence was not ever expounded without a good measure of application. Edwards’s doctrine of providence also inherited this Puritan tradition.

⁵⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 9:519–20 (emphasis added).

⁵⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 11:77–80 (emphasis added). See also *WJE* 2:176.

always arises from confusion, evil, disorder, affliction, and conflict before moving into the next phase of history.⁶⁰ Michael McClymond and Gerald McDermott argue that for Edwards, “history as a whole” was a type of “the pattern of Jesus’ career—suffering and death followed by resurrection.”⁶¹ Edwards expounded the idea:

The glorious power of God appears in conquering his many and mighty enemies by that person that was once an infant in manger, and appeared as a poor, weak, despised man. He conquers them and triumphs over them in their own weapon, the cross of Christ. The glorious majesty of God appears in conquering all those mighty enemies of his church one age after another.⁶²

According to him, the christological (i.e., afflictive-progressive) pattern of history “shows the wisdom of divine providence in it that he brings such great good out of such great evil, in making the fall and ruin of mankind.”⁶³ In “Miscellanies,” no. 804, Edwards insisted that the millennial kingdom is the future glorious reward/promise that God gave to Christ for his righteous suffering and death.⁶⁴ Hence, Edwards’s eschatological view of history is indivisible from his christology, for it is a type of the Christ event and thus christologically informed anticipation. For Edwards, the eschaton was an act of God’s redemption through Christ; therefore, his eschatology should be understood as a function of trinitarian soteriology.

In conclusion, Puritans in both England and New England had developed an elaborate covenant theme that defined their roles as God’s chosen people in the drama of divine providence. The long Puritan providential tradition was discovered in Edwards’s theology of providence. It became the basis of his understanding of redemptive and eschatological history, including the millennial reign of God. Contrary to Miller, who

⁶⁰ See McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 242.

⁶¹ McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 242.

⁶² Edwards, *WJE* 9:523.

⁶³ Edwards, *WJE* 9:524.

⁶⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 18:506–7.

argued that Edwards broke with his Calvinistic predecessors by throwing the entire framework of the covenant, this section has proved that Edwards was an heir to the Puritan-Calvinistic covenant theological tradition.⁶⁵

Disenchanted Providence in the Era of Enlightenment

The next contextual horizon that Edwards and his theology of providence faced was the religious transition of New England from pre-enlightenment to modern thought with the rise of the Enlightenment. Throughout the seventeenth to the eighteenth century (or the long eighteenth century), the Enlightenment as a philosophical mechanism was no longer limited to a special field of knowledge. Rather, it became a dominant field formulating meaning across many domains, such as religion, science, history, and politics.⁶⁶ Ernst Cassirer writes that the Enlightenment became “the atmosphere in which they can exist and be effective.”⁶⁷ In the emerging intellectual climate, Christian thinkers were challenged to fuse traditional theological dogmas with natural reason or philosophy.⁶⁸ Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) aptly summarized “the motto of Enlightenment” as follows: “Have courage to use your own reason.”⁶⁹ In eighteenth-century New England, Edwards faced such Enlightenment challenges that promoted “man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage,” as Kant said.⁷⁰ So, he thus attempted to

⁶⁵ Miller, “Marrow of Puritan Divinity,” 98.

⁶⁶ See Grenz, *20th-Century Theology*, 22–3.

⁶⁷ Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, xiii.

⁶⁸ During the beginning of the new intellectual movement, many Enlightenment thinkers were not anti-Christians. They were rather trying to combine theological reasoning with new philosophical and scientific knowledge. See McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 41–42.

⁶⁹ Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics*, 85.

⁷⁰ Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics*, 85.

defend the Christian orthodox view of God's providence against the self-autonomy of creatures apart from God and its role in the Enlightenment.

The Rise of Deism and the Abandonment to Divine Intervention

Edward Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648), the father of English deism, accepted the existence of the creator God but rejected religion based on the revelation of God to humans.⁷¹ Publishing *Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), John Locke also stated that human sense, experience, and reason alone could discover the true God and the goodness and justice of God. He believed, "Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything," including matters of religion.⁷² John Toland (1670–1722), Locke's disciple, popularized deism, arguing that Christianity is not a mysterious religion, neither contrary to human reason nor above it. With the emergence of devout Enlightenment thinkers, such as Matthew Tindal (1657–1733) and Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), God's providential history was gradually replaced by *Historia Humana*. Human rational-moral nature became the key parameter of God's providential activity.⁷³

In other words, deism rejected God's continuous providence in general and the Puritan-Reformed understanding of God's meticulous providence in particular by

⁷¹ See Hudson, *English Deists*, 2. See also McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 17–18. By definition, the English deists in the eighteenth century undermined revealed religion, while promoting natural religion. Thus, the primary theological debate was over the nature of God, not the existence of God as such. See Schweitzer, "Rage against the Machine," 72. He explained the Enlightenment's principle of knowing God: "For the deists, everything we need to know about the universe and the god who made it can be learned through the exercise of reason and the scientific method... There is therefore no need for God to send us anything like a spoken word, for everything is plain to the eyes of the enlightened observer in the possession of almighty reason."

⁷² Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 589.

⁷³ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 32.

excluding the necessity of an interventionist God.⁷⁴ God is reduced to a distant and passive being in any particular historical event. Thomas Hankins writes that the Enlightenment called into question the idea that history unfolds according to divine providence : “*History lost its providential character*, and historians strove to present an objective account of past events. In the hands of David Hume (1711–1776), history led not to an understanding of God’s will but to an understanding of human nature. This critical revolution in literature found strong support from the new and rapidly growing natural philosophy.”⁷⁵ Hume noted that the traditional Christian narrative of providential history is ignorant and fictional.⁷⁶ Subsequently, the Enlightenment thinkers significantly contributed to the dichotomy of the divine and the human and the migration of the idea of divine providence from the centre to the periphery.

Previously, John Calvin, the father of the Reformed-Puritans, was well aware of the grave implications of the loss of divine providence. “Ignorance of providence is the ultimate of all miseries.”⁷⁷ Quoting from Ps 115:3, he preached that “nothing happens without [God’s] counsel, for there is no random power, nor does God distantly observe and preserve.”⁷⁸ Such a model of meticulous providence has been traced back to medieval theology before him and widely accepted by Christian thinkers before the advent of the Enlightenment. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, the Enlightenment turn resulted in a significant shift in the Christian doctrine of

⁷⁴ See Fergusson, *Providence of God*, 1. David Fergusson puts the definition of meticulous providence as such: “Everything that happens is willed by God and serves some end—nothing lies outside the scope of divine volition and intentionality.” See also Crisp, “Meticulous Providence,” 21.

⁷⁵ Hankins, *Science and the Enlightenment*, 8 (emphasis added).

⁷⁶ See Miller, *David Hume*, 62–3.

⁷⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.17.11.

⁷⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.16.3. See further *Institutes* 1.16.1. Calvin said that God “drives the celestial frame as well as its several parts by a universal motion, but also that he sustains, nourishes, and cares for, everything he has made, even to the least sparrow.”

providence.⁷⁹ The paradigm accepted the general providence of God but excluded God's special (or particular) providence.⁸⁰

The God of Enlightenment religion is often portrayed with the watchmaker analogy (or “a placeholder for First Cause or Designer”), metaphorically stating that once God created and started the universe and then left it to operate according to its pre-established mechanisms, (i.e., natural laws).⁸¹ For instance, Robert Boyle (1627–1691) and Isaac Newton (1643–1727) contributed to mechanical natural philosophy by posing God as a cosmic lawmaker (or engineer) and the world as a great automated machine.⁸² Hence, God's special providence is now redundant for needs of the world. People denied Calvin and his Reformed successor's belief that the world is the sacred theater of God's glory, the mirror of the providence of God, and a witness to a covenant-making, keeping, and fulfilling God. The world was separated from the Sacred One.⁸³ Bavinck explains the problem of the mechanical-deistic view of divine providence:

This position is one that, in total or in part, separates the creatures from God, once they have been created; and then, again in larger or smaller part, it allows them to exist and function on their own power, a power received at the time of creation...The relation between God and the world is like that between a mechanical engineer and a machine. After making it and starting it, he leaves it to its own device and only intervenes if something has to be repaired.⁸⁴

Hence, deism progressively led to a detachment of God from the world and eventually replaced the relational and communicative God of the Bible with “Nature's God” as

⁷⁹ Fergusson, *Providence of God*, 111.

⁸⁰ Fergusson, *Providence of God*, 111. A distinction is usually made between general and special providences. The former refers to God's ordinary overseeing of the existence and natural order of the universe; the latter refers to God's extraordinary intervention in chosen people, communities, and nations.

⁸¹ Fergusson, *Providence of God*, 115. See McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 17–18.

⁸² Stuart, *Selected Philosophical Papers*, 191. Newton, “General Scholium,” 11:544.

⁸³ See Harrison, “*Religion and the Religions*,” 5. He writes that “the physical world ceased to be a theatre in which the drama of creation was constantly re-directed by divine interventions.”

⁸⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:600.

impersonal, far-removed, and thus ahistorical god.⁸⁵ As a result of this shift, large numbers of Christians shifted their allegiance to the new deistic god from their Christian faith in the God who reveals himself as the Father, Son, and Spirit in a mystical manner.⁸⁶

In summary, it is within the intellectual context of the Enlightenment that Edwards's understanding of providence should properly be analyzed. As an eighteenth-century Puritan-Reformed theologian of God's sovereignty, Edwards could not ignore the deistic challenge but actively engaged with it by defending the strong providence of God.⁸⁷ The next part will provide the principle of Edwards's response to the Enlightenment's abandonment of divine providence. His apologetics of God's providence will also be relevant to contemporary Christian theology one way or another because deism never dies but prospers today in Western, particularly North American, cultures.⁸⁸

Edwards's Response to the Idea of Providential Deism

Edwards's unique and valuable place as a thinker stems from the period in which he lived, between the waning of the classic and the dawn of the Enlightenment.⁸⁹ So

⁸⁵ Thompson, *America's Revolutionary Mind*, 59. See Schweitzer, "Rage against the Machine," 67. He summarizes the nature of the god of deism as follows: "What then, did the deists believe? As far as a theology proper, the deists tended to think of the creator as impersonal and essentially absent. God was theoretically powerful as the original creator, yet he was now reticent to interfere in human affairs, whether in word and deed."

⁸⁶ On the decline of the doctrine of the Trinity and the succeeding rise of deism, see Placher, *Domestication of Transcendence*, 164–65; Babcock, "Changing of the Christian God," 134.

⁸⁷ See van der Kooi, "Creation and Providence," 429. He writes that God's sovereignty is one of the central elements of the Reformed theological tradition.

⁸⁸ Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 41, 166, 171. See Jenson, *America's Theologian*, 3–7. According to Jenson, a mutual accommodation or co-existence with the spirit of the Enlightenment within the church has shaped a specific form of American Christianity.

⁸⁹ Schweitzer, "Rage against the Machine," 61.

Edwards's thought was uniquely reflective both of elements of the Reformed orthodoxy and the Enlightenment. At the junction of the two great eras, Edwards became a remarkable example of the attempt to retrieve traditional Christian doctrines afresh against the ever-increasing challenges of the Enlightenment philosophy of religion. This new intellectual movement was a radical challenge to Christianity, and its roots lay to some extent in English Deism.⁹⁰ Deism is of critical importance to this research, not least because it championed the historical critique of the Christian doctrine of providence.⁹¹

According to a recent sociological study by Christian Smith and Melina Denton, deism is still one of the most dominant functional/operative religious and spiritual beliefs today among North American teenagers from diverse religious, geographical, and social backgrounds.⁹² As Smith and Denton write: "We have come with some confidence to believe that a significant part of Christianity in the United States is actually only tenuously Christian in any sense that it is seriously connected to the actual historical Christian tradition but has rather substantially morphed into...Christian Moralistic Therapeutic Deism."⁹³ According to Kenda Dean, this Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is not just an opinion of a single generation but also the popular worldview among generations in America.⁹⁴ Robert Jenson points out that the mutual accommodation (or

⁹⁰ McGrath, *Historical Theology*, 184.

⁹¹ See Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 41. According to Noll, the movement of deism was never officially formed and organized. Instead, the movement was widely sporadic through the ideas of several well-known figures, such as John Toland, Anthony Collins (1676–1729), Thomas Woolston (1733), and Matthew Tindal.

⁹² Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 41, 166, 171.

⁹³ Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 262.

⁹⁴ Dean, *Almost Christian*, 18. See Billings, "Afterword," in *Reformed Catholicity*, 146. See also Schweitzer, "Rage against the Machine," 76–77. As Schweitzer points out: "deism has never flourished as a conventional religious system," but "it has been working insidiously from within mainstream religion, in a way not unlike a guerrilla insurrection." In other words, deism has been an enemy against the Christian faith that grows inside the church. See also Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:602. He also writes that:

correlation) with the spirit of the Enlightenment within the church has shaped the main feature of the American religious landscape.⁹⁵

Edwards sensed the emergence of this god of deism as an overriding threat to orthodox Christianity, for he believed that deism unlocked a properly secular realm that remains essentially opposed to divine providence. He thus dealt with deism as one of his great theological antagonists. McDermott writes that, “Edwards considered this the gravest threat facing Christian faith and marshaled his prodigious powers to combat it. More than twenty-five percent of his private notebook entries (357 of 1412)—and many entries comprise thousands of words—are devoted to explicit consideration of challenges raised by *the deist agenda*.”⁹⁶ For Edwards, deism was “a more radical attack on the Reformed tradition” than Arminianism.⁹⁷ In “Miscellanies,” no. 97, Edwards expressed that God is distressed by deism: “So he suffers even the Christian church to be brought down wonderfully by Antichrist, to raise it again, immensely more glorious. And after the reformation from popery, he suffers it, in a great measure, to be destroyed by *deism*, heresies and cold, dead formality; that he may make way for an immensely greater and more glorious reformation.”⁹⁸ For Edwards, New England was a covenanted society and the principal nation of the Reformation, and her biggest enemy was the deism disguised as a Christian religion. Thus, he tried to drive the deistic impulse and influence out of the Christian nation.⁹⁹ His theology of providence was formed and employed as a critique of the deistic understanding of divine providence.

“Deism indeed belongs to the past. But in substance in both theory and practice it still holds sway in wide circles.”

⁹⁵ Jenson, *America's Theologian*, 3–7.

⁹⁶ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 5 (emphasis added).

⁹⁷ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 16.

⁹⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 20:162 (emphasis added).

⁹⁹ See Edwards, *WJE* 9:432.

Edwards's theology of providence was also a form of *disputatio* in a way that he actively entered into dialogue with some of the deists. The purpose of such an effort was to turn the best thought of his time to his theo-centric theological vision. The particular perception of the nature of God that the deists held was grounded in Newton, whose physics led them to understand the created world that ran with machine-like form and precision.¹⁰⁰ Newtonian metaphysics was a recurrent theme in the culturally defining spirit of deism. For the deists, God created the universe and the laws of nature but allowed the self-developing, preserving, and governing process of the world by producing the initial matter and implanting laws within the creation.

Edwards borrowed the popular image of the machine-like world and the notion of progress from some deists and Enlightenment rationalists in his theology of providence. Edwards argued that "the providence of God is like a wheel, as a machine composed of wheels."¹⁰¹ Contrary to the conclusion of the deistic philosophy, however, it was not the natural laws running and upholding the world, but "God does, by his immediate power, *uphold* every created substance in being."¹⁰² He believed that nothing could have the exercise of providence but God himself with the fourfold divine attributes, wisdom, power, goodness, and justice.¹⁰³ In other words, God's exercise of divine plan *ad extra* expresses these attributes. For Edwards, these attributes are most

¹⁰⁰ Schweitzer, "Rage against the Machine," 67.

¹⁰¹ Edwards, *WJE* 11:86. See also *WJE* 13:496. Edwards wrote that "God's being the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. God made all things; and the end for which all things are made, and for which they are disposed, and for which they work continually, is that God's glory may shine forth and be received." See also *WJE* 9:525. He used the image of machine for the works of God's providence in his Sermon Thirty, preaching: "And how glorious is the wisdom of God appearing in that long course and series of great changes in the world, in bringing such order out of confusion, in so frustrating the devil, and so wonderfully turning all his most subtile *machinations* to his own glory and the glory of his Son, Jesus Christ" (emphasis added).

¹⁰² Edwards, *WJE* 3:400 (emphasis original).

¹⁰³ See Edwards, *WJE* 13:192

adequately expressed and communicated through God's work of redemption in the Son and the Spirit.¹⁰⁴ Unlike the god of deism (the so-called clockmaker), Edwards argued that God's providence is a fatherly care. That is, God is capable of communicating, continuously sharing those communicable attributes for creatures to participate in and enjoy God's excellent and happy life.¹⁰⁵ Edwards's God was not static but inherently dynamic, and this God's nature as a communicative being was the foundation for his theology of providence. For him, the meaning and existence of the created world depend entirely on God's continuously communicative providence.¹⁰⁶

In his *Sermon 30* on Isa 51:8, Edwards preached the providence of God in a trinitarian-redemptive mode. First, the telos of providence is the glory of God shined forth and eminently manifested *ad extra* in the redemptive work of history. In the works of divine providence, wrote Edwards, "God eminently appears as the first and the last by considering the whole scheme of divine providence," which is "reducible to that one great Work of Redemption."¹⁰⁷ Second, Edwards's notion of the trinitarian-redemptive providence is the work of Christ, a communication of God himself for the world. He affirms that "the great Redeemer," who has fulfilled the work of redemption, is "the sum of God's works of providence."¹⁰⁸ For Edwards, last but not least, divine providence is

¹⁰⁴ Bombaro, *Jonathan Edwards's Vision*, 88.

¹⁰⁵ See Shafer, "Editor's Introduction," 92. See Edwards, *WJE* 13:190–91, 256, 263–64, 281.

¹⁰⁶ See Edwards, *WJE* 8:434–35. Edwards wrote that "because an inclination in God to communicate himself to an object, seems to presuppose the existence of the object, at least in idea. But the diffusive disposition that excited God to give creatures existence was rather a communicative disposition in general, or a disposition in the fullness of the divinity to flow out and diffuse itself."

¹⁰⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 9:516, 525.

¹⁰⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 9:518. See also *WJE* 9:281. For Edwards, Christ is truly the sum of all providential exercises and meanings, writing: "From what has been said we may strongly argue that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Son of God, and the savior of the world, and so that the Christian religion is the true religion, seeing that *Christ is the very person so evidently pointed at in all the great dispensations of God's providence* from the very fall of man, and was so undoubtedly in such a multitude of instances foretold from age to age, and shadowed forth in a vast variety of types and figures" (emphasis added).

the Spirit's on-going concern for and activity in the world for the completion of the redemptive history. As Edwards preached: "The wheels of providence are not turned round by blind chance, but they are full of eyes round about, as Ezekiel represents and they are guided by the Spirit of God, where the Spirit goes they go."¹⁰⁹ As shown clearly in the sermon, providence is ascribed to each member of the Godhead. Stephen Holmes writes that "the Father's perfections are only and precisely the Son and the Spirit" in Edwards's theology of salvation.¹¹⁰ It is the Son, for he is Alpha and Omega in the course of redemptive history, who is the sum of all the works of God's providence. All the same events of divine providence are also ascribed to the Spirit as the immediate deity, who turns the on-going wheels of God's providence within history. Accordingly, Edwards linked the doctrine of providence to the doctrine of the Trinity and that of redemption. Hence, belief in God's providence was not just a doctrine for him to argue about, but an all-encompassing truth and faith in the triune God and redemption. This Christian content of providence, which is soteriologically focused, prevented Edwards's theology of providence from being a providence theology mixed with or fused into the deistic version of it.

In summary, against the deists who believed in a sole creator but denied God as a purposive divine agency, Edwards strongly defended the continuous providential care for the created world by God as a communicative, relational, and dynamic being. Edwards's theology of providence did not evolve in a vacuum but was part of the Deist controversy in the eighteenth-century context. It was a polemical response to critical attacks on the traditional understanding of providence. In its context, he affirmed divine

¹⁰⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 9:519.

¹¹⁰ Holmes, *God of Grace*, 69.

providence as a more vital doctrine than that of creation. Despite the deists' criticism of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, Edwards taught the Christian meaning and character of divine providence that corresponds with God's being as the triune redeemer.¹¹¹

Divine Providence Perceived in the Extraordinary Works of the Spirit

Edwards is famously known as an eighteenth-century revivalist, and his theology is the inspiration and touchstone of all revival theologies.¹¹² During the ten years from 1737 to 1747, his five revival writings were published and introduced to an international readership beyond the British American colonies.¹¹³ The goal of this section is to trace the developments of Edwards's theology of providence and apocalypse within his specific context during the Great Awakening, which played an important part in advancing God's kingdom in his thoughts and practice.¹¹⁴

The Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Awakenings

Edwards's revival theology began with the First Great Awakening of the early 1740s. This is not to say that there were no revivals before and after the Awakening. In the international context, the revivals spread through England and Germany in Europe to the British American colonies between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Douglas

¹¹¹ For further information on Edwards and the Enlightenment trinitarian controversies, refer to Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards's Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 207–54.

¹¹² See Studebaker, "Introduction: Tongues of Pentecost," 1–20.

¹¹³ See Minkema, "Chronology of Edwards' Life and Writing," xxv–xxvi.

¹¹⁴ See McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 424–25. According to their suggestion, the reader should read Edwards's revival writings in a chronological order as follows: *Faithful Narrative of a Surprising Work of God* (1737), *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741), *Some Thoughts Concerning the Revival* (1743), *Religious Affections* (1746), and *Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer* (1748).

Sweeney identifies two important religious movements as preludes of the Great Awakening in Edwards's time and place. The first one was rooted in the Puritan movement that emerged in England, which called for further reformation of their nation's state church.¹¹⁵ It is true that promoting experimental religion (or experiential Christianity) in the movement was one of the major contributions to the rise of awakenings. It sought to transform one's heart (or "the sense of the heart" in Edwards's terms) through personal encounter with Christ, rather than *via* Catholic external ceremonies and practices.¹¹⁶

Also, the second root of the Great Awakening could be found in the Pietist movement by Johann Arndt (1555–1621), Philip Jacob Spener (1635–1705), and August Hermann Francke (1663–1727), who were the most famous early leaders of the Pietism in Germany.¹¹⁷ Their ideas and writings played a role in preparing Europe for the Awakening and raising its prominent leaders, such as Nikolaus von Zinzendorf (1700–1760). Zinzendorf and the Moravians stimulated an ecumenical Protestant pietism and mission in Europe, focusing on the religion of the heart. Soon, they deeply influenced John Wesley (1703–1791), a leader of the Methodist movement within the Church of England, as well as the rise of British Great Awakening.¹¹⁸ Sweeney points out the dynamics of connecting Pietism with the Awakening movements in the eighteenth century, saying that "most of the time the revivals occurred in regions of relative Pietist strength."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Sweeney, *American Evangelical Story*, 30–31.

¹¹⁶ Sweeney, *American Evangelical Story*, 31. On the close interrelation between Puritanism and Pietism, see Marsden's brief statement, *Short Life*, 41–42.

¹¹⁷ Sweeney, *American Evangelical Story*, 34–35.

¹¹⁸ Sweeney, *American Evangelical Story*, 36–40.

¹¹⁹ Sweeney, *American Evangelical Story*, 36. See also Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 156.

In the colonial context, Thomas Kidd places the Great Awakening led by Edwards in New England within a broader revival atmosphere of the colonial America, “the *long* First Great Awakening,” which started before his 1734–1735 Northampton revival and lasted right through the Revolutionary period.¹²⁰ Before Edwards, his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard (1643–1729), a renowned Northampton minister, had led revivals since the seventeenth century; his father, Timothy Edwards (1668–1759), was also known as a revivalist, leading the East Windsor Awakening.¹²¹ From an early stage of his life, therefore, Edwards witnessed various awakenings and experienced several revivals through parishes led by his close family.¹²² Other revival movements also took place in various locations throughout the American colonies, too, led by Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen (1691–1747), William Tennent (1673–1746), and Gilbert Tennent (1703–1764) in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and Samuel Davies (1723–1761) and Shubal Stearns (1706–1771) primarily in Virginia and North Carolina.¹²³

Not only to those colonial revivalists and evangelists, but it was George Whitefield (1714–1770) and his itinerancy that led to the most dramatic revival phenomena of the early 1740s in America.¹²⁴ Before Whitefield, no other revivalist had achieved the level of popularity like him and succeeded in an inter-colonial revival movement across multiple regions.¹²⁵ Harry Stout points out the importance of Whitefield within the framework of eighteenth-century Great Awakening in America. First, Whitefield contextualized his revival ministry in a new colonial American context,

¹²⁰ Kidd, *Great Awakening*, xix (emphasis original).

¹²¹ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 25, 33, 117.

¹²² See Edwards, *WJE* 4:154.

¹²³ Sweeney, *American Evangelical Story*, 44.

¹²⁴ Caldwell, *Theologies of American Revivalists*, 11.

¹²⁵ Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 92. Stout presented Whitefield as Anglo-America’s first religious celebrity.

cultural and religious (e.g., using the rhetoric of the jeremiad that was familiar to Americans).¹²⁶ Stout writes: “Whitefield’s revival was peculiarly American in other ways as well. At base, his outdoor appeal and legitimacy rested on public opinion.”¹²⁷ Whitefield did not rely on the traditional institutional authority of religion but focused on the authority of public audiences and their shared religious experience.¹²⁸ Second, as an English Anglican minister, Whitefield could foster a peculiar culture of revival that was international in scope and contributed to the emergence of the Anglo-American awakening network of association and exchange.¹²⁹ Kidd writes:

George Whitefield was the key figure in the first generation of Anglo-American evangelical Christianity. Whitefield and legions of other evangelical pastors and laypeople helped establish a new interdenominational religious movement in the eighteenth century, one committed to the gospel of conversion, the new birth, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the perching of revival across Europe and America.¹³⁰

Whitefield’s role held significance within the context of the Great Awakening, deriving from the aforementioned reasons.

On October 17 in 1740, Whitefield had a historic meeting with Edwards, another famous leader of the Great Awakening. Whitefield visited the congregation, at Edwards’s invitation, with hopes of the return of God’s revival, when many of the people drifted away from the revival fervor.¹³¹ Unlike Whitefield the English itinerant, Edwards never travelled far outside of his region and the American colonies in his life. Nevertheless, his

¹²⁶ Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 97.

¹²⁷ Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 91.

¹²⁸ Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 91–92.

¹²⁹ Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 88.

¹³⁰ Kidd, *George Whitefield*, 3.

¹³¹ Kidd, *George Whitefield*, 106. See Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 283. Ahlstrom argues that the reason why Edwards was keen to invite Whitefield to Northampton was due to his conviction of coming the future Kingdom to America. This was why Edwards invited “the great Whitefield to preach in Northampton.” As such, Edwards’s national covenant and revival theologies were interwoven albeit distinct.

fame as revivalist was greatly appropriated within and beyond the colonies in some divergent ways. Through Edwards's involvement, the Great Awakening continued to intensify after Whitefield left in 1740. On July 8, 1741, for instance, Edwards's best-known sermon titled "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" was delivered in Enfield, and intense reaction, physical and emotional manifestations of repentance, and ecstatic outbursts followed.¹³² And beyond the colonies, his writings on the colonial revivals caught the interest of Anglophone Evangelicals and German Pietists.¹³³ Considering this eighteenth-century Great Awakening context, the next part examines some salient aspects of Edwards's understanding of revival that impacted the formation of his theology of providence.

The Providence of God in Edwards's Theology of Revival

The Great Awakening was a formative religious revival in the history of Evangelicalism. In *Theologies of the American Revivalists*, Robert Caldwell argues that the Great Awakening was uniquely significant in a way that "it helped widely disseminate a common revival theology throughout the American colonies through the solidification of an evangelical identity."¹³⁴ Among scholars, however, there have been scholarly debates on what it means to be evangelical.¹³⁵ For the sake of clarity of further discussion, Bebbington's classic quadrilateral description of evangelicalism—(1) conversionism; (2)

¹³² Marsden, *Short Life*, 81–82.

¹³³ Stievermann, "Faithful Translations," 325.

¹³⁴ Caldwell, *Theologies*, 11. See Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 323. He writes that the reason why the Great Awakening can be considered as particularly "great" is that it created the evangelical movement. See further, Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 76. Mark Noll also interprets the Great Awakening in terms of the rise of evangelicalism, writing that "from beginning, both revivals and the longing for revival were central" to evangelicalism.

¹³⁵ For scholarly debates on defining evangelicalism, see Sweeny, *American Evangelical Story*, 17–25.

activism; (3) biblicism; and (4) crucicentrism—is deployed here as a brief description of central theological ideas of Evangelicalism.¹³⁶ In his *Great Awakening*, Kidd points out that pneumatocentrism (“new attention to the person of the Holy Spirit”) is a missing element in Bebbington’s definition of evangelicalism.¹³⁷

As discussed so far, Edwards was a promoter of revivals in the colony. Among early American Evangelicals, the role of the Holy Spirit was one of the most contested topics. In this context, Edwards defended the role of the Spirit and argued that revival (also, conversion) was the product of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, not the result of human means. The Holy Spirit, in his view, is the primary agent whereby God’s redemptive work advances in the history of human salvation and nations through seasons of revival. Edwards’s pneumatology thus characterized the eighteenth-century’s revival movements, and it continues to describe the distinctive character of the North American Evangelical religion today.

In *Personal Narrative*, Edwards wrote that there were “remarkable seasons of *awakening*” with the “new sense” (or “new sort of affection”) that was “quite different from anything I [Edwards] ever experienced before.”¹³⁸ In his last years of Master’s degree at Yale, Edwards was “brought to seek salvation, in a manner” that he never did before, while meditating on 1 Tim 1:17, he experienced the inward personal spiritual “new sense” or “sweet delight in God and divine things.”¹³⁹ With such affection and delight diffused into his soul, Edwards could finally confront the Calvinist doctrine of

¹³⁶ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 2–3. See Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 323. Kidd suggests the need to add revivalism to Bebbington’s famous quadrilateral definition of the evangelical religion.

¹³⁷ Kidd, *Great Awakening*, xiv.

¹³⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 16:790 (emphasis added).

¹³⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 16:792.

God's sovereignty, which had been a stumbling block to him, but now he could devote himself to that doctrine.¹⁴⁰ In his famous sermon titled "A Divine and Supernatural Light" (1733), Edwards preached that it is the Spirit who immediately imparts "spiritual and divine light" to the soul in conversion.¹⁴¹ Mark Valeri comments that in Edwards's view, "natural reason or any other human means alone cannot be said to convey spiritual knowledge."¹⁴² Hence, Edwards believed that conversion entirely rested on God's self-disclosure by imparting a new spiritual sense to the soul by the Spirit. According to D. G. Hart, it is likely that Edwards's religious experience (i.e., personal awakening) would help him develop his peculiar understanding of conversion that is essentially rooted in experience.¹⁴³

Two leading scholars from different parties, Edwards from the New Lights and Charles Chauncy (1705–1787) from the Old Lights, had a public division and debated with one another regarding the role of the Spirit in one's religious experience. Chauncy was the most notable critic of the evangelical revivals by Whitefield and Edwards, believing that a reasonable and moral faith is a more genuine sign of conversion than a new sort of holy and passionate affection. Robert Smart points out the difference between Chauncy and Edwards in terms of the work of the Spirit: "He [Chauncy] had little appreciation of the inward activity of the Spirit with regard to the affections, which Edwards identified as the essence of true Christianity and equated with the fruit of the

¹⁴⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 16:792.

¹⁴¹ Edwards, *WJE* 17:409.

¹⁴² Edwards, *WJE* 17:405.

¹⁴³ Hart, "Jonathan Edwards," 163. Hart argues that "Jonathan Edwards' views on religious experience were not entirely original, but they did establish a significant beachhead for Reformed pietism in the New Word."

Spirit.”¹⁴⁴ Whereas Chauncy limited the work of the Spirit, Edwards applied it to the foundation of one’s religious experience. In his response to Chauncy, Edwards supported the immediate action of the Spirit upon the heart, arguing that its purpose is not just for exciting one’s emotional enthusiasm per se but for planting a new sense to taste the beauty and excellence of divine things.¹⁴⁵ Without the action of the Spirit working directly on persons, Edwards believed that fallen man can neither know divine things nor actually fulfill all the outward laws and actions. For Edwards, religious affection thus seeks spiritual understanding and becomes the only foundation for holy actions or good works.¹⁴⁶ He argued that the Spirit breathes into the souls so that the elect could resist the gravity of indwelling sin that keeps pulling them so that advancing pure, not formal, evangelical piety and religion on earth.¹⁴⁷

The Great Awakening also had a public character, carrying out remarkable changes in the public domain. According to Miller, the Great Awakening was understood as a unique socio-historical crisis for New England Puritans to reconfigure their roles (i.e., a crisis of identity) in terms of their relation to higher authorities, both political (state) and religious (church).¹⁴⁸ Then, he associated the religious movement with the coming of American Revolution.¹⁴⁹ Miller further argues that Edwards undertook his

¹⁴⁴ Smart, “Is Revival from God,” 298. In addition to his critique of religious affection, Chauncy opposed radicals’ condemnations of formally educated ministers, lay ministry, itinerant preaching style, bodily effects, and anti-intellectualism. He also criticized Edwards and pro-revivalists for opening the way to reject the law and abandon outward signs of the law. Moreover, he thought that Edwards misread the signs of the times, rejecting the view that the awakening is the prelude of the future millennial kingdom on earth and instead believing order, peace, and obedience as the signs of the kingdom of God.

¹⁴⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 2:33.

¹⁴⁶ Hart, “Jonathan Edwards,” 163.

¹⁴⁷ Lovelace, *Dynamics*, 40.

¹⁴⁸ Miller, *Errand*, 153. See also Heimert, *Religion*, 355. Heimert, who was a student of Miller, holds that Edwards and the Great Awakening caused a pre-revolutionary fervour, writing that Edwardsean revivalist Calvinists were more politically and religiously revolutionary than those liberals.

¹⁴⁹ Miller, *Errand*, 163.

missional errand leading American colonial people to sharper formulations of their experience in the crisis of the wilderness Awakening.¹⁵⁰ Stout argues that unlike Chauncy, Edwards promoted and defended the revivals because he believed that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Great Awakening would be the prelude of the millennium in his nation.¹⁵¹ John Gerstner also says that the millennial idea of “the latter days was a controlling concept in Edwards’s thinking.”¹⁵²

Notably, George Marsden demonstrates that Edwards’s scheme of redemption history is a critical framework for his views of the Spirit and revival. He writes:

At the center of history was Christ’s work through the Holy Spirit in saving souls. The revival of 1734–35 may have solidified Edwards’s thinking concerning the characteristic form of the Holy Spirit’s work in redemptive history. Ever since his early notebooks on the Apocalypse, Edwards had viewed the spread of the Gospel as the center of redemptive history. Now he was seeing more clearly the role of periodic awakenings as pivotal in that historical process. Biblical history was punctuated by revivals of God’s people.¹⁵³

In the years 1734–1735, Edwards witnessed “little awakenings” with regional effects. As a close observer, he wrote a report of this first revival, under the title *Faithful Narrative*. This publication brought international notice concerning Edwards and his small town of Northampton, and it became a significant textbook of revival. In his letter of May 30, 1735, to Benjamin Colman, Edwards described a series of local revivals in terms of God’s providence, writing that: “[t]his work seems to be upon every account an

¹⁵⁰ For McDermott’s case for Edwards’s theology as a public theology, see McDermott, “Jonathan Edwards and the Culture Wars,” 268–80. See Bolt, *Free Church*, 187–226. See also Heimert, *Religion*, viii.

¹⁵¹ Stout, *New England Soul*, 204. See also Lovelace, *Dynamics*, 42–43. Even though all scholarly interpretations of the Great Awakening cannot be covered in this part, it becomes evident that the Great Awakening impacted immediately and radically on the broad landscapes of the American colonial individuals and communities.

¹⁵² Gerstner, *Jonathan Edwards*, 95.

¹⁵³ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 197–98.

extraordinary dispensation of providence.”¹⁵⁴ The extraordinary providence was by the work of the Spirit:

’tis extraordinary as to the degrees of gracious communications, and the abundant measures in which the Spirit of God has been poured out on many persons; ’tis extraordinary as to the extent of it, God’s Spirit being so remarkably poured out on so many towns at once, and its making such swift progress from place to place.¹⁵⁵

Edwards explicated the essence of revival by incorporating the outpouring of the Spirit of God into the advancement of the gospel by providence. For him, the day of Pentecost in the Bible was not an exclusive event of the outpouring of the Spirit. Instead, the advancement of the kingdom of God was progressively driven towards its climax by subsequent outpourings of the Spirit, who is “the prime agent whereby Christ’s kingdom on earth advances.”¹⁵⁶ Schweitzer points out the scheme of Edwards’s pneumatological theology of revival:

His apocalyptic vision linked political powers to spiritual realities: the empires of his day were but instruments in God’s hand. Political alliances and military engagements were a means by which God worked, and Edwards paid attention to them. But they were not as powerful or important as the outpourings of the Holy Spirit that occurred in revivals and awakenings. In his view, the central locus of God’s redemptive activity in history lay in the converting and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of common people.¹⁵⁷

Edwards interpreted the work of the Spirit of God in the context of providential history. “For Edwards, revival was the product of providence, not the result of human religious means,” as Steven Studebaker points out.¹⁵⁸ As such, the two, the Spirit of God and the providence of God, are indivisible in Edwards’s thoughts.

¹⁵⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 4:107.

¹⁵⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 4:107.

¹⁵⁶ Stein, “Eschatology,” 239. See Lloyd-Jones, “Jonathan Edwards,” 361, 368. He refers to Edwards as “preeminently the theologian of Revival.” He also points out Edwards’s frequent use of the term “the outpouring of the Spirit” when discussing revival.

¹⁵⁷ Schweitzer, “Jonathan Edwards,” 247.

¹⁵⁸ Studebaker, “Introduction: Tongues of Pentecost,” 14.

When the fervour and spark of the little awakenings were fading away from the town, however, Edwards started elaborating his theology of revival. In “Miscellanies,” no. 702 (1736), Edwards wrote that “God’s providential disposals of the material part of the world are all subordinate to his providence towards the spiritual and intelligent part of it.”¹⁵⁹ Even though for Edwards, continuity existed between physical and the spiritual realities, the physical realities were always shadows of the greater and more encompassing spiritual realities.¹⁶⁰ Like Calvin, Edwards also held the sacramental view of the world in relation to God’s glory. Zakai argues that: “Edwards thus believed that the *Theatrum Mundi* was created by the Deity to be the mirror of divinity, and his theology of nature conceived of the world as a grand theatre for the contemplation of divine beauty; the world was the theatre of God’s glory—*Theatrum Dei Gloria*.”¹⁶¹ By retrieving Calvin’s sacramental view of the world, Edwards transcended the demarcation of the deistic worldview that placed natural and supernatural in separate domains.¹⁶² Furthermore, during the intermediate period between the little and the Great Awakening, Zakai argues that Edwards had found a mature theological foundation for the mutual relationship between God’s creation, providence, and redemption. In “Miscellanies,” no. 702, Edwards argued:

And that work of God’s providence to which all other works of providence, both in the material and immaterial part of the creation, are subservient, is the work of redemption. All other works of providence may be looked upon as *appendages* to this great work, or *things* which God does to subserve that grand design. The work of redemption may be looked upon as the great end and drift of all God’s

¹⁵⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 18:284.

¹⁶⁰ Pauw, *Supreme Harmony*, 126.

¹⁶¹ Zakai, “Medieval and Scholastic Dimensions,” 20

¹⁶² See Zakai, “Medieval and Scholastic Dimensions,” 20. The Enlightenment thinkers rejected the sacramental view of the world, in which the natural world carries a hidden meaning. Instead, they preferred to conceive of the world at face value.

works and dispensations from the beginning, and even the end of the work of creation itself; yea, the whole creation.¹⁶³

The “grand design” (or the sum) of God’s work in the world is the work of redemption, upon which the works of God’s creation and providence are dependent. Similar to the Great Chain of Being in the Classical and Medieval metaphysical concept, there seems a hierarchical and logical structure in Edwards’s vision of redemptive history, whereby it has the work of redemption at the top, that of providence at the next, and that of creation at the bottom.¹⁶⁴ To Edwards, the order is yet, first and foremost, teleological in that works serve a higher end of the work of redemption in harmony and order. Using the image of the motion of the machine, Edwards made this relationship clear: “The various dispensations of God that are in this space do belong to the same work, tend to the same design, and have all one issue and therefore are all to be reckoned but as several parts of one work, as it were several successive motions of one machine to strike out, in the conclusion of one great event.”¹⁶⁵ That is, Edwards understood each revival as one piece of the grand mosaic picture of God’s redemptive design; revival was understood as a wheel within a wheel revolving in the mighty machinery of redemption that God had built.

The whole scheme of Edwards’s redemptive discourse is ultimately related to God, whose providence runs the historical course of events or dispensations by the effusion of the Spirit. Edwards believed that “God advances his work of redemption through successive effusion of his Spirit.”¹⁶⁶ Within this historical advancement, he

¹⁶³ Edwards, *WJE* 18:284.

¹⁶⁴ See Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards’s Philosophy of Nature*, 213.

¹⁶⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 9:119. See also *WJE* 9:517–8; 13:483; 18:505.

¹⁶⁶ Stein, “Editor’s Introduction,” 22.

conceived of the Great Awakening as a fruit of the remarkable outpouring of the Spirit's agency. To him, advocating revival was thus the same as promoting the work of redemption. Furthermore, it was also the outpouring of the Spirit in the 1740s that lifted Edwards's hope for the millennium, which is the latter-day glory of the church on earth. The revivals during the Great Awakening were perhaps a visible sign (or symbol) of the anticipation of the coming millennium, which might be initiated in the near future.¹⁶⁷ As an heir to the Protestant Reformed tradition, Edwards had a strong faith in the victory of God over the kingdom of Satan through the outpouring of the Spirit. In his view, the Holy Spirit remained the prime agent for the advancement of the kingdom of God in his eschatology.¹⁶⁸ Whereas socio-political and techno-scientific successes could be adopted as a means by which God would advance the work of redemption in history, Edwards believed that "they were not as powerful or important as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that occurred in revivals and awakenings."¹⁶⁹ As for Edwards, hence, the Spirit never played a peripheral role in Edwards's theology of revival and providence.¹⁷⁰

Conclusion

The chapter has demonstrated Edwards's religious and intellectual contexts to investigate how he formulated his own understanding of God's relation to the world. The chapter has explored how the Puritan covenant tradition, the Enlightenment, and the Great Awakening in Edwards's eighteenth-century colonial circumstances provided

¹⁶⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 4:353. See Stein, "Eschatology," 239; Smolinski, "Apocalypticism in Colonial North America," 56; Lowance, "Typology and Millennial Eschatology," 262 and Rosario, "Edwardsean Root," 103.

¹⁶⁸ See Edwards, *WJE* 4:280, 9:460.

¹⁶⁹ Schweitzer, "Jonathan Edwards," 247. See Edwards, *WJE* 13:369. Also, refer to Stein, "Eschatology," 239.

¹⁷⁰ See Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards*, 2. See also, Reeves, *Theologians*, 244.

much of the theological foundation for his understanding of God's providence. Like his Puritan predecessors, divine providence was a fundamental article of Christian faith in Edwards's thought. He believed in God's meticulous and continuous providence that everything in the universe is subject to and dependent upon the two hands of God the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

Edwards could not tolerate the deist worldview that reduces all historical events to the purely natural and human. Instead, Edwards argued that God is not bound but can intervene directly. He then specifically showed how the course of history advanced through God's providing grace upon his covenant people and societies, focusing on the importance of the relational/redemptive context of providence. As a Reformed-Puritan mind, he stood in sharp contrast to Enlightenment philosophy and its deistic providentialism that promoted the idea of a distant god. Edwards was also aware of the danger that the deists and Enlightenment rationalists were leading to the systematic disenchantment of the world. Thus, he tried to integrate the secular and the sacred world into one unified whole, arguing that the world is a mirror for displaying God's providential work.

Through his experience of the Great Awakening, Edwards could develop and form his peculiar theology of revival that is deeply rooted in eschatological redemption. In Edwards's thought, the Holy Spirit remained the primary agent for the progress of divine providence towards the end of history, which is the future glorious millennium. In summary, the reader should not understand Edwards's theology of providence in an abstract and detached manner for it was deeply rooted in his eighteenth-century New England context. Looking at the eighteenth century, this chapter has argued that Edwards's theology of providence was closely intertwined with his time and culture in

the Puritan tradition of New England during the newly emerging Enlightenment and Great Awakening movements.

CHAPTER 3

EDWARDS'S THEOLOGY OF PROVIDENCE AMONG TRADITIONAL THEOLOGIES OF PROVIDENCE

A living tradition then is an historically extended, socially embodied argument...the history of a practice in our time is generally and characteristically embedded in and made intelligible in terms of the larger and longer history of the tradition through which the practice in its present form was conveyed to us.

Alasdair MacIntyre¹

Introduction

This chapter argues that Jonathan Edwards stands in continuity with the tradition of Western thought regarding the doctrine of providence. This chapter offers a balanced portrayal of Edwards's theology of providence within the long Christian theological tradition. It does so by examining Edwards's theology of providence in relation to historic theologians. This part compares Edwards primarily to Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin regarding God's providence. The reason for selecting them is that they were determinative in shaping the providential tradition in Western theological thinking.² This chapter aims to suggest to the reader that what emerges from this form of theological comparison is that Edwards's theology of providence is a type of

¹ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 222.

² The use of Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin as theological representatives of the tradition yet does not ignore the diversity within the Western providentialism.

theology that, for the most part, retrieved from and followed the line of those earlier historical thinkers in the tradition. In other words, there is the continuing presence of the theological past in Edwards's providential thinking.

Moreover, this chapter argues that Edwards's theology of providence was historically extended with the Augustinian ecclesial tradition and socially embodied in his eighteenth-century New England. Accurately placing Edwards in the tradition is inevitable to the task of retrieving his theology for contemporary theology of providence. Therefore, this chapter encourages the reader not to understand Edwards's theology of providence in isolation from his theological predecessors within the Christian tradition (the so-called "school of Christ").³ This chapter finally attempts to use biblical reasoning and its two modes, (1) exegetical and (2) dogmatic reasoning, as a toolkit in comparing Edwards's theology of providence with those theologies of Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin. By doing so, the chapter shows the reader that those theologians thought from and attuned their theologies faithfully to the scriptures and with their own biblical exegesis they produced dogmatic judgements and concepts on divine action in the world. Thus, biblical reasoning enables them to receive and transmit broad ecumenical consensus on the triune God's action in the world from one generation to another and extend it in their sociohistorical-cultural context.

Biblical Reasoning for the Traditional Doctrine of Providence

Though there is no single technical term for providence in the scripture, the message that God is provident is at the centre of the Bible, for both the Old and the New Testaments.⁴

³ See Allen and Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*, 18.

⁴ Vanhoozer, "Providence," 642. See Blocher, "Yesterday, Today, Forever," 201.

The biblical reasoning (or simply the Christian theology) of divine providence was widely acknowledged as an integral part of the Christian faith and theology until the dawn of the modern age.⁵ Vernon White says that both pre-critical and critical minds cannot ignore that “providence in some sense is inescapably scriptural.”⁶ Even if divergent concepts and voices exist concerning divine providence (e.g., divine decree, foreknowledge, predestination, and *oikonomia*), what unites both testaments is an indication that God acts and exercises sovereignty on behalf of the world.

In the Old Testament, God works in and with creation and for creation’s sake, and this is concretely manifested in the covenant between God and Israel, his chosen people. Subsequently, in the New Testament, the continuous vision of God’s sovereign ruling over the world is found in and through his salvific economy for the New Israel (i.e., the church) through the Messiah. In addition to God’s special providence for the chosen ones, God is also provident and directive over worlds and creatures (i.e., general providence), physical and spiritual, in both Testaments.⁷ David Fergusson describes the multiple facets of providence in Scripture in an outline:

providence in Scripture is *general* (it signifies the way the world is made), *universal* (it is neither occasional nor intermittent but pervasive in all societies through the agency of wisdom), *particular* (it determines the individual circumstances of people and communities, including Israel and the church, where

⁵ The phrase “biblical reasoning” derives from John Webster (1955–2016) and his journal article titled “Biblical Reasoning.” See also Webster, “Biblical Reasoning,” 733, in the *Anglican Theological Review*, 90.4. By definition, biblical reasoning refers to Christian theology. More specific, it is “an activity of the created intellect, judged, reconciled, redeemed, and sanctified through the redemptive works of the Son and the Spirit.” For further information on Webster’s biblical reasoning, see also, Jamieson and Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning*, xvii–xxii.

⁶ White, *Purpose and Providence*, 75. See Farley, *Providence of God*, 15. Benjamin Wirt Farley also argues that the doctrine of providence is a biblical doctrine, writing that “the providence of God is truly scriptural kerygma, a message proclaimed throughout the Bible, and therefore a message deserving a central place in Christian faith and practice.”

⁷ Though general and special providences are neither separable nor competing, they need to be distinguished for the sake of conceptual clarity. The former is the general divine work preserving all created things in the whole world after the work of creation was completed. The latter is the particular divine work governing his covenant people, such as the patriarchs, Israel, the church, and every believer.

some patterns and shapes can be discerned), *hidden* (it requires the discernment of faith and even then is often inscrutable), *contested* (the present of evil, suffering and misfortune create obstacles and crises for our more naïve intuitions) and *incomplete* (an eschatological resolution is promised and anticipated).⁸

In the traditional teaching of Christian theologians on divine providence, there is an emphasis upon finding the answer in and through divine revelation. In other words, theologians in the tradition reasoned and responded to the Christian teaching regarding providence in the scriptures as they were written and spoken through the prophets and apostles. Thus, providence is surely not an invention of church fathers and later theologians but rather rests on biblical accounts.⁹

Also, Herman Bavinck notes: “Scripture in its totality is itself the book of God’s providence.”¹⁰ The scriptures indeed have been an authoritative resource for the discourse of divine providence in the church.¹¹ It becomes evident that with biblical reasoning, Christian theologies of providence have been received and transmitted from one generation to another despite challenges by rival intellectual traditions. Indeed, Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin found their theological basis for divine providence in the revelation of God in Christ Jesus in Scripture. Edwards, as a scriptural theologian, also sided with them. In other words, they practiced biblical reasoning when they made their theological claims on the work of God in providence. Their theologies of divine providence were formed by the outworking of what is seen in the light of the revealed event(s) in Scripture in their contexts. The chapter treats in chronological order the

⁸ Fergusson, *Providence*, 41. For further information on the biblical basis for providence, see Davies, *Vigilant God*, 14–18. See also, Elliott, *Providence*, 8–18.

⁹ White, *Purpose and Providence*, 75.

¹⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:595.

¹¹ See Schildgen, *Divine Providence*, 4.

biblically reasoned providential theology of these key Christian theologians, along with the impact they had upon Edwards's formulations of divine providence.

Augustine's Theology of Providence

Augustine's *Tolle lege*

Augustine of Hippo, one of the major Latin theologians of the church, served as an authoritative figure for all the succeeding Western theologians, from Aquinas to Martin Luther (1483–1546), John Calvin, and also to Edwards. After spending some years in Manichaeism and subsequent time in Neoplatonism, Augustine converted to the Christian faith and was baptized by St. Ambrose (397), Bishop of Milan.¹² According to his *Confessions*, Augustine described his conversion to Christianity, stating he heard a mysterious child's voice chanting that "*Tolle lege* (Take up and read)." As he obeyed the voice and opened the Bible, it opened to Rom 13:13–14 and seemed to be a message straight from God to him. It was his reading of the Bible which was to mark the beginning of his conversion.¹³ From that time, Augustine regarded scripture as the ultimate authority for his thoughts.

Contrary to Faustus of Mileve, the Manichean, who rejected the Old Testament (also some parts of the New Testament), Augustine defended the unity and authority of the whole scriptures on the grounds that it was handed down to us by an apostolic

¹² Davies, *Vigilant God*, 11.

¹³ See Harrison, "Augustine," 682–83. He writes that, "having become a Christian, Augustine almost immediately began to reread, rethink, study, and comment on the scriptures." Some years after his conversion, then Augustine spent "the rest of his life reading and interpreting scripture not just as a Christian but a priest and bishop." It was the apostle Paul and his message on the incarnation (e.g., Phil 2:6–7) that saved Augustine's mind from the Manichaeism and the Platonists. See Robert, "Augustine's Questions," 40–41.

tradition.¹⁴ For Augustine, scripture as the Word of God was the sacred norm, particularly for communicating divine providence that is manifested in the life and work of Christ and those of the church.¹⁵ According to his rules for interpreting the Word (i.e., the double love of God and neighbor), the exegete ought to pay tribute to the divine, whose love is creative and redemptive in the whole dispensation, but especially in the incarnation of Christ, that was arranged by divine providence for our salvation.

Like Edwards, the New England Puritan revival pastor, Augustine was a priest (392–396) and bishop (396–430) of Hippo of North Africa. He read and took up scripture in order to communicate with his congregation from the pulpit. For both preachers, their presentations of scripture primarily aimed to function in the formation of their congregations, mostly, by teaching divine truth and persuading people of the Christian truth. Both were indeed pastor-theologians who studied and wrote commentaries on the scriptures. Edwards's interpreting and preaching sacred scripture followed the similar exegetical rule of Augustine, the double-commandment of love. As one of the America's greatest sensationalists, Edwards in his reading and preaching sought and promoted holy religious affections toward God.¹⁶ Like Augustine, Edwards understood that true knowledge of divine things is affective knowledge.¹⁷ Edwards wrote: "Thus there is a difference between having an opinion that God is holy and gracious, and having a sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having

¹⁴ Harrison, "Augustine," 681.

¹⁵ Harrison, "Augustine," 681.

¹⁶ Perry Miller called Edwards a rhetoric of sensation and his pulpit oratory as "sensational preaching." See Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 158. For further information on Edwards's affectionate preaching, see Richard Bailey, "Driven by Passion," 64–78.

¹⁷ Crisp, "Excellency of Jesus Christ," 156.

a sense of its sweetness.”¹⁸ Moreover, they share a common typological heritage in terms of figuring out the meaning of a text. Both theologians, as exegetes, did not prefer one fixed and definitive interpretation. Even if they did not oppose the literal and plain sense of a text, their exegeses were figurative (typological and spiritual), finding figurative layers to the text beyond the plain and literal meaning. Both were very interested in types. They understood the literal and figurative senses as historical and spiritual at one and the same time. That is, Augustine and Edwards regarded the Old and New Testaments as Christian Scripture, reading it figuratively to comprehend the history under God’s providence in his two hands, the Son and Spirit.

To borrow from Gianni Vattimo’s words, for Augustine as for Edwards, “salvation and interpretation are joint in the Christian tradition.”¹⁹ This means that both thinkers thought that the salvific event of God is revealed through Christ in history and on the other hand, it demands the necessity of interpretation of the meaning and significance of the salvific work of Christ in history.²⁰ Hence, the history of salvation continues as the history of interpretation because they are not two discrete entities but stand in a deep and conjoined relationship with each other, and both are being linked to the event of Jesus as a hermeneutical occurrence.²¹

¹⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 17:414.

¹⁹ Vattimo, *After Christianity*, 59.

²⁰ Similar to the idea, H. Richard Niebuhr says, “The history of the idea of the kingdom of God leads on to the history of the kingdom of God.” See Niebuhr, *Kingdom of God*, xxvi. In this sense, Niebuhr holds that Augustine’s *City of God* and Edwards’s *History of the Work of Redemption* are monumental theological works of history.

²¹ Vattimo, *After Christianity*, 59. What I mean by Christ as “a hermeneutical occurrence” is that Christ’s event allows us to see true reality of God and the world being freed with our renewed mind and heart by the Spirit. This christological hermeneutical occurrence would be the shared conversion experience (or spiritual enlightenment) of Paul, Augustine, and Edwards, even though term “hermeneutics” was not common in their worlds.

As a result, both Augustine and Edwards understood history primarily as the providential history of the God of Jesus Christ, whose history alone represents the right historical vision, namely, redemption.²² In their own transitional contexts—such as the crisis and potential collapse of the Empire for Augustine and the rise of the Enlightenment for Edwards—both responded to the disenchantment of the historical world and the growing hostility, political and intellectual, to sacred history with their unique theological works.²³ Avihu Zakai writes, “Augustine’s *City of God* and Edwards’s *History of the Work of Redemption*, then, may be regarded as an integral part of their apology for the Christian church.”²⁴ Just as Augustine responded to the Romans, Edwards defended the Christian theory of history against the Enlightenment philosophers of his day, who rejected divine agency in history and found the Christian faith a great enemy to the progress of human history.²⁵ It is obvious that Edwards understood “the human saga as the production of a play that God had authored.”²⁶ As a few scholars have already argued, all those affinities can best be put together by describing the eighteenth-century Northampton minister as the “American Augustine.”²⁷

²² See Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 164. Langdon Gilkey says that for Augustine’s providence, the divine redemptive activity was “the ultimate basis for his philosophy of history.” Brenda Deen Schildgen argues Augustine replaced the secular history of Rome with God’s sacred history, and this re-interpretation of history draw from “his allegorical reading of Scripture.” See Schildgen, *Divine Providence*, 76.

²³ Both Augustine and Edwards opposed the dominant worldviews of their time. Augustine challenged the imperial view of history; Edwards opposed the mechanical theory of history.

²⁴ Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards’s Philosophy of History*, 15. See Levering, “Linear and Participatory History,” 195. He says that Augustine was “a critic of pagan historical consciousness” who contrasted the history of Rome with that of God.

²⁵ Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards’s Philosophy of History*, 8.

²⁶ Wilson, “Editor’s Introduction,” 2, 37, 73.

²⁷ See Marsden, “Jonathan Edwards, American Augustine,” [n.d.]. Niebuhr, *Kingdom of God*, xxvi. For further information on some theological affinities between the two, see McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 695–97. The authors compare Edwards’s writings with Augustine’s ones: “*Freedom of the Will* and *Original Sin* correspond to Augustine’s anti-Pelagian writings. *Personal Narrative* is something like the *Confessions*. The *History of Redemption* might be compared with *City of God*. Edwards’s *Discourse on the Trinity* mirrored Augustine’s *On the Trinity* both in theme and argument. Edwards’s sixteen-lecture volume on divine and human live, *Charity and Its*

Augustine's Theological View of History: Linear, Participatory, and Teleological

Augustine composed *De civitas Dei* (*The City of God*) to defend Christianity against the criticism that the Christian religion had weakened Rome after her sack by the barbarians in 410.²⁸ In such a polemical context, Augustine had to gradually define and defend the Christian view of providence against challenges posed by non-Christian critics, and he “established a divine providence which operates in a linear irreversible time beginning with God’s act of creation.”²⁹ One of the contributions of Augustine’s *City of God* in terms of the formation of the historical doctrine of providence is that it was the very earliest sophisticated *corpus* of the doctrine among the works of the church fathers. According to Langdon Gilkey, even though belief in *Deus providebit* has been accepted by the early church fathers, it was Augustine who initiated to write an explicitly Christian understanding of history and started to understand history in a new way “by the economy of the divine salvation.”³⁰ In that, Gilkey called Augustine “the father of historical consciousness.”³¹ Fergusson also says that “a stronger historical reading of God’s providence” is found in Augustine than in the early church fathers.³² This would be comparable to Edwards’s robust interest in history, as expressed in his letter to “the Trustees of the College of New Jersey,” wishing to write “a body of divinity in an entire

Fruits, expounded a major theme of Augustine’s writings. Both the content of their theologies and the genre of their works show analogies.”

²⁸ Augustine’s book of title *Civitate Dei* is derived from Pss 87 and 48.

²⁹ Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 12

³⁰ Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 161, 174–75, 380. See Mark Elliot, *Providence Perceived*, 37. Elliot holds the view that Augustine’s *City of God* is concerned with the economy of salvation.

³¹ Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 175. See Davies, *Vigilant of God*, 42. Davies calls Augustine as “one of the first philosophers of history.”

³² Fergusson, *Providence of God*, 48. See Loi and Drobner, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, s.v. “Providence,” 3:340. They write “The commemoration of providence in the development of human history is one of the driving motifs of Augustine’s treatise *De civitate Dei*.”

new method, being thrown into the form of an history.”³³ Also as in Augustine’s time, Edwards defended fundamental doctrine in a polemical context in which hostility against this doctrine was becoming more challenging.

The following are key characteristics of Augustine’s theology of history. First, Augustine’s theology has a *linear* conception of history. Augustine saw history not as a cycle but as a straight line.³⁴ He believed that history began at a particular point, which is creation, and it continues to the goal of history, *eschaton*.³⁵ For Augustine, first, God is the creator of history. God created the world, visible and invisible, out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), so that the whole created world has a temporal beginning of Gen 1:1.³⁶ In between the beginning and the end, second, there are divine providential activities, most notably, *via* the coming of Jesus into history. The course of history is continuously guided by God’s providential activity, and it moves forwards to its goal. From a redemptive-historical perspective, he believed that Christ’s advent, a new eschatological reality, counters to cyclical worldviews of history.³⁷ Third, even though there are eruptions of evils and afflictions in a sinful history, Augustine believed that God permits them not because of his powerlessness but his providential plan for saving creatures.³⁸

Secondly, as Matthew Levering points out, Augustine’s view of history was not merely linear but also *participatory* in the sense that history has its completion in

³³ Edwards, *WJE* 16:727.

³⁴ See Augustine, *City of God*, 12.14.269. Augustine wrote that believing in cyclical history was a great error and false doctrine for Christians. See also Bebbington, *Patterns in History*, 17. David Bebbington provides two ancient representatives in terms of the linear history of the Judeo-Christian tradition: first, Augustine and second, Joachim of Fiore. For further information on the worldviews of history, especially, both cyclical and Christian history, see Bebbington, *Patterns in History*, 21–66. See also, Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 12.

³⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 12.14.267.

³⁶ Knuuttila, “Time and creation in Augustine,” 103–4.

³⁷ Oort, “The end is now,” 7.

³⁸ Levering, “Linear and Participatory History,” 186. See Augustine, “Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil,” 300.

relationship to the transcendent (eternal) creator of history.³⁹ Augustine explains the dual nature of history as irreducibly linear and participatory: “All this, indeed, is history, but it is also prophecy; it happens on earth, but heaven directs it; men are the agents, but God inspires them.”⁴⁰ Viewed in terms of the linear dimension, history is finite, temporal, and progressive; it is similar to the body of Jesus, according to Augustine. Yet, as the Son (Word) took human nature to enable humans to participate in his divine nature, history can also participate, by the operation of divine grace, in relationship to the life of the eternal God. Edwards also understood history as linear motion, and then he argued for the interconnected aspects of heavenly and earthly histories, advancing a grand view of the history of the tri-worlds by which earth, heaven, and hell intersect together. According to him,

This history will be carried on with regard to all three worlds, heaven, earth, and hell: considering the connected, successive events and alterations, in each so far as the Scriptures give any light; introducing all parts of divinity in that order which is most scriptural and most natural: which is a method which appears to me the most beautiful and entertaining, wherein every divine doctrine, will appear to greatest advantage in the brightest light, in the most striking manner, showing the admirable contexture and harmony of the whole.⁴¹

In sum, Augustine and Edwards advocated the Judeo-Christian conception of history as linear. Both repudiated the cyclical theory of history in their times (i.e., the case of Augustine contra the Manichean-Gnostic view, and that of Edwards contra mechanical philosophy).⁴² Yet based on their theological creativity derived from scriptural and Neo-

³⁹ Levering, “Linear and Participatory History,” 195.

⁴⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, 16.37.555.

⁴¹ Edwards, *WJE* 16:727–28. For further information on Edwards’s understanding of history from the redemptive perspective, see Stout, “Jonathan Edwards’ Tri-World Vision,” 27–46.

⁴² From the cyclical view of history, there could be no final meaning and fulfillment because its time is in an infinitely endless cycle. Thus, the doctrines of creation and eschatology are hardly meaningful to those who conceive time as cyclical.

Platonic insights, the two theologians affirmed the existence and intermeshing of two realities, earthly (temporal) and heavenly (eternal).

Last but not least, Augustine shares the *teleological* conception of history with Edwards. That being said, both believed that God moves history towards his eschatological *telos*—which is the fulfillment of final salvation. For Augustine, simply speaking, the *telos* was presented as God’s will (divine voluntarism), so that it can be applied to individuals and the entire course of history.⁴³ For Augustine, history has a double dimension, present and future, since the eschatological reality, which is the *telos* of God’s plan of creation, has already started with the advent of Christ Jesus. From the historical perspective as fulfilled in Christ, he perceived history proceeding through the following periods (*aetates*): (1) from Adam until the Flood (Noah); (2) from Noah to Abraham; (3) from Abraham to David; (4) From David to the Babylonian Captivity; (5) from the Captivity to Christ; and (6) the period from Christ until the end of the world.⁴⁴

This linear-teleological narration of history is responsible for the most popular interpretation of history among theologians throughout the medieval period and even to the time of Edwards. Edwards also defined history as a synthetic series of three major periods: (1) the Fall; (2) the Advent; and (3) the Resurrection.⁴⁵ Then, he once again divided post-resurrection history into four Christ-centered end times as follows: (1) the

⁴³ For example, Jonas Grethlein points out that Augustine’s *Confessions* is his narrative of seeking and finding the *telos* of his journey set by God after conversion. See Grethlein, *Experience and Teleology*, 313–52. See also White, *Purpose and Providence*, 77. Then, in the same manner, his *City of God* is said to be a metanarrative seeking the *telos* of history set by God in the wider context. See also Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 171. Gilkey says that “the work of providence in the life of the individual is the central subject of the *Confessions*.”

⁴⁴ See Bebbington, *Patterns in History*, 56.

⁴⁵ See Bombaro, *Jonathan Edwards’ Vision*, 272. John Bombaro proposes a holistic view of Edwards’s three major division of redemptive history: (1) “Preparation” (From the Fall to the Incarnation); (2) “Accomplishment/Achievement” (From the Incarnation to the Resurrection); and (3) “Application/Realization” (From the Resurrection to the Consummation).

Apostles' period; (2) the Constantinian period; (3) the millennial period; and (4) the final consummation. In these various ages, Edwards said that "the kingdom of Christ is gradually prevailing and increasing by these several great stages of *its fulfillment* from the time of Christ's resurrection to the end of the world."⁴⁶ Both Augustine and Edwards viewed history not just as a history but a history as possessing teleological-theological meaning.

It becomes apparent that there would be conflicting views on history between the two theologians. Unlike Edwards, Augustine rejected any millennial (or chiliastic) expectation, for instance, and for Augustine, the end times remained more inscrutable than Edwards. However, both theologians generally agreed with the teleological direction of history (i.e., describing history as what must be done) as eschatologically coursed and flowed by God's providence and guidance. In his way of interpreting history as the narrative of a God-given providential plan, Edwards was an Augustinian heir of Christian theological teleology of history. The teleological axiom penetrates the very heart of both theologies of Augustine and Edwards.

Aquinas's Theology of Providence

Providence in Aquinas's Expositio super Iob ad litteram

To modern readers, Aquinas has been recognized as a dogmatician (the *Doctor Angelicus*) or philosophical theologian, rather than an exegete of Scripture.⁴⁷ That said,

⁴⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 9:351 (emphasis added). See also *WJE* 9:352–54.

⁴⁷ Prügl, "Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture," 387. See Nicholas Healy, "Introduction," 1.

Aquinas has mostly been known by his *Magnum Opus Summa Theologiae* and “Five Ways” (or five proofs) for the existence of God, rather than his “exercise on Holy Scripture” and scriptural commentaries.⁴⁸ However, the importance of Scripture to the Doctor cannot be treated as peripheral. Thomas Prügl describes Aquinas as thoroughly a scriptural theologian, writing that, “Lecturing on Scripture was in fact his main task as a university professor—the technical designation of the theology professor was, indeed, “master of the sacred page.”⁴⁹

One of Aquinas’s exegetical writings that would show his understanding of *Deus providentia* with clarity is the *Expositio super Iob ad litteram* (henceforth *Expositio*), written between 1261 to 1265 at Orvieto. John Yocum explains what the main substance or theme of the *Expositio* is: “In this remarkable work, Thomas adumbrates a theology of providence that aims to show the coherence of the Christian doctrine that God cares for all rational creatures individually, bringing them through this present life toward the life to come, an eternal life in which they will be justly punished or rewarded.”⁵⁰ According to Yocum, Aquinas thought that the doctrine of providence could be grasped by natural reason. Yet, once the reader has perceived the coherent New Testament narrative of the Christ coming in the form of Jesus of Nazareth by an act of God, he or she would receive wisdom mapping the nature and operations of divine providence more clearly.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Prügl, “Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture,” 386.

⁴⁹ Prügl, “Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture,” 386–87. See DiNoia, “American Catholic Theology,” 499–518.

⁵⁰ Yocum, “Aquinas’ Literal Exposition on Job,” 21–23.

⁵¹ Yocum, “Aquinas’ Literal Exposition on Job,” 21.

In the *Expositio*, Aquinas developed his theology of providence within reference to particular christological narratives, and it was further discussed in relation to the external extent of providence, that is, eschatological. This dual understanding of God's providence, both christological and eschatological, has a great affinity with Edwards's providential theology it in his sermons on Job.⁵² This section briefly reviews Aquinas's and Edwards's thoughts concerning God's providence and argues that they offer a helpful theological alternative to the modern belief in the doctrine of providence.

In the *Exposition*, Aquinas started with the clear intention to write the book on Job, that is, aiming at "showing how human affairs are ruled by divine providence."⁵³ Then, he made the point that God exercises providence (often *via* mediums, including spiritual beings) over all individuals and events.⁵⁴ For instance, even Satan worked only by divine permission and served divine providence: "For it was permitted to him by God that he be able to harm Job in order to manifest his virtue."⁵⁵ While living in Stockbridge, Edwards preached to the Indians from the Book of Job, and his messages sounded almost Thomistic. Edwards preached that God's providence is infinitely strong and wide so that he can govern all things (e.g., stars, clouds, winds, and trees) and "all the affairs of all mankind;" God is the "orderer of affliction (Job 5:6)" and he can even turn it to "a benefit."⁵⁶ In their theological works, there appear the three common

⁵² When interpreting Scripture, both Aquinas and Edwards practiced literal and spiritual exegesis. For both exegetes, the literal sense is the first meaning which is conveyed by the words, and the meaning can be interpreted either properly or figuratively. What then amount to the spiritual exegesis is a threefold extension of the literal sense into (1) tropological, (2) allegorical, and (3) anagogical. For Aquinas's literal interpretation of Scripture, see Prerus, *From Shadow to Promise*, 46–60. For Edwards's interpretation, see Brown, "The Bible," 97–99.

⁵³ Aquinas, *Literal Exposition on Job*, 71.

⁵⁴ Aquinas, *Literal Exposition on Job*, 67.

⁵⁵ Aquinas, *Literal Exposition on Job*, 84.

⁵⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 25:644. See also *WJE* 25:648.

contexts of the exercise of divine providence over (1) individuals, (2) the elect/chosen, and (3) the creation in common, and thus they emphasized the universal scope and sovereignty of God's providential works over all.⁵⁷

In assessing Aquinas's theology of providence in the *Expositio* in light of the Edwardsean doctrine of providence, it is important, first of all, to assume that christology plays a central role in their theologies. Frankly Harkins argues: "The God who reveals Himself in the book of Job, according to Thomas, the Triune God whose second person, without loss of His divinity, assumed a human nature in time, a nature in which He Himself endured excruciating suffering and death before rising again, thereby definitely deafening sin, death, and the devil."⁵⁸ Christ is the bright and penetrating light from God, the source of light, that shines into the sea of whirlwinds, which seemingly looks like the sea of chance (i.e., the realm of fate or chance by the Stoics).⁵⁹ Through Christ alone, God's providence for the world is properly and intelligibly observed and perceived. By contrast, apart from relation to Christ, experiencing divine providence (also affliction) vis-à-vis human affairs is never fully possible. In his *Expositio*, Aquinas wanted the reader to find transcendent hope and heavenly reward for the soul beyond this world that Job found out in Christ's life, passion, and resurrection. First, Aquinas explained that Christ possessed all upright virtues "in most perfect excellence."⁶⁰ Second, he overcame suffering and sadness with "every fullness of virtue and

⁵⁷ Those contexts of God's providence are well shown in *Cavin's Defense of the Secret Providence of God*. See Davies, *Vigilant God*, 98. Davies explains the substances of Calvin's views on divine providence in order: "There is first God's General Providence in which He is demonstrated as Creator and Ruler of all things; second, God's Special Providence for all creatures; third, God's Providential care of all Humanity; fourthly and finally, God's Providential Care of the Church in which He demonstrates that He is the Father of His family."

⁵⁸ Harkins, "Christ and the Eternal Extent," 162.

⁵⁹ See Edwards, *WJE* 10:543.

⁶⁰ Aquinas, *Literal Exposition on Job*, 81.

wisdom.”⁶¹ Third, having descended to hell, Christ yet rose from the dead “by the power of God” so that “the life of the risen Christ, moreover, will be poured out to all men in the common resurrection.”⁶² Edwards also interpreted the narrative of Job in a christological way. Phil Smith points out that Edwards understood the main theme of the Book of Job as a “shadow of death” in his sermon “The Nakedness of Job.” He then argues that Edwards continually used the phrase as a literary device for his audiences to interpret Job (especially, his suffering and endurance) in and with Christ.⁶³ In his commentary on Job 19:25, Edwards interpreted the Hebrew word *go'el* in some christological ways, that is, the word signifies Christ as (1) bride; (2) inheritance; (3) redeemer; and (4) avenger/slayer.⁶⁴

In their interpretation of Job, second, they both read it in light of redemptive history. Aquinas wrote in the *Expositio* 19:25 that “from this sin, of course, the human race had to be redeemed through Christ, a redemption which Job foresaw through the spirit of faith.”⁶⁵ Harkins points out three christological themes within a redemptive historical framework in Aquinas’s interpretation of Job 19:25–27, that is, (1) “Christ’s redemptive death;” (2) “Job’s faith and hope in this redemption through Christ;” and (3) “Christ’s “bodily resurrection.”⁶⁶ Susan Schreiner argues that one of Aquinas’s goals in the *Exposition* was to reveal his teleological view of history that “there is a higher, though indiscernible, order and purpose by which God is governing human events.”⁶⁷ According to her, Aquinas thought that Job indeed believed in “the redemptive purpose

⁶¹ Aquinas, *Literal Exposition on Job*, 99.

⁶² Aquinas, *Literal Exposition on Job*, 269.

⁶³ Smith, “A Shadow of Death,” 104.

⁶⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 24:441.

⁶⁵ Aquinas, *Literal Exposition on Job*, 269.

⁶⁶ Harkins, “Christ and the Eternal Extent,” 184.

⁶⁷ Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found*, 88.

of God's action in human history."⁶⁸ Edwards also interpreted the Book of Job (also, the whole Bible) within a redemptive historical framework with a christological focus.⁶⁹ In his exposition of Job 19:25, Edwards expressed in his commentary that:

“For I know that my redeemer lives.” Job mentions this because he is about to express his hope of what would be after he was dead. He should die, and the worms should destroy his body, but his redeemer lived. And hence he hoped that he would redeem his body from the power of the grave. The resurrection of the body, and that glorification of the whole person that will then be, is especially called “redemption” in the New Testament. And because his redeemer lived, he hoped that though he died, he should live again by his redemption, for in that he lives, we shall live also.⁷⁰

Christ's redemptive work in history, especially its culmination in the resurrection, appears clearly in both of Aquinas's studies of Job 19 in *Expositio* and Edwards's commentary on Job in the “Blank Bible.”⁷¹

Last not but least, both theologians extended teleological providence to the eschatological realm. When speaking of providence, for Aquinas, it meant “the ordering of things to their end.”⁷² For him, the end of history is not located within the present life but transcends it. In other words, God's true providence for Job has been extended from this earthly life to eternal life by resurrection through Christ. On this eschatological aspect of divine providence in the *Expositio*, Eleonore Stump says that Aquinas's Job found the ultimate end/fulfillment of his life in another life.⁷³ Hence, Aquinas wrote that Job trusted divine providence rather than denied it since “rewards and punishments are

⁶⁸ Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found*, 90.

⁶⁹ See Sweeney, *Edwards the Exegete*, x. In this book, Sweeney summarizes Edwards's four main approaches to the Bible as (1) canonical exegesis, (2) christological exegesis, (3) redemptive-historical exegesis, and (4) pedagogical exegesis.

⁷⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 24:440. See also Edwards' sermon on “Job 28:28” in *WJEO* 42. He preached that the wise would foresee the evil and hide themselves in Jesus Christ, the “Refuge” and the “strong Tower.”

⁷¹ See Edwards, *WJE* 18:516.

⁷² Yocum, “Aquinas' Literal Exposition on Job,” 23.

⁷³ Stump, “Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job,” 343–45.

being prepared by God for man even after this life.”⁷⁴ Similarly, Daria Spezzano points out the nature of Job as a scholastic *disputatio*, writing: “In this pedagogical exercise, God, the Master-Teacher, permits Job’s suffering to teach a lesson to others about the eschatological extent of providence.”⁷⁵ In Edwards’s interpretation, Job’s affliction also had the same pedagogical value that could live a life with eternal value and perspective.⁷⁶ In his sermon “God’s Use of Affliction,” Edwards explained the meaning of suffering in a soteriological and eternal perspective:

[God is] able to do all things for us, if we yield to him under affliction and comply with his will. [He can] support [and] strengthen [us under chastisement, and so] cause [it] to work for good. [God can] abundantly more than make up [for our sufferings; he can] deliver [us from it, and] make [us] happy. [He can] give the blessed fruit of affliction, [and] bestow that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.⁷⁷

As readers compare the *Exposition* to the sermon *God’s Use of Affliction*, they can see that both theologians defended divine providence against the problem of evil with eschatology. Aquinas and Edwards seemed to understand the belief in God’s justice eternally extended to the life after death, that is, an eschatological perspective, as a most scriptural answer to the problem with evil.⁷⁸ In sum, both theologians believed that God’s providence brings the good news of salvation, but it can only be understood eschatologically. Divine providence will only be known in full in the last days.

⁷⁴ Aquinas, *Literal Exposition on Job*, 271. See Aquinas, *Literal Exposition on Job*, 270. Aquinas reminded the reader of the ultimate destiny of humans, that is, seeing the glory of God shining in the *City of God*.

⁷⁵ Spezzano, “The Hope and Fear of Blessed Job,” 273–74.

⁷⁶ Smith, “A Shadow of Death,” 106.

⁷⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 25:651.

⁷⁸ Yet for Aquinas and Edwards, their primary intention of the book and sermons was not to deal with a philosophical question of how to reconcile the existence of evil and suffering with the God of the Bible though they are still relevant and profitable to say something about that theological issue such as theodicy.

As a result, the scriptures indeed formed Aquinas's and Edwards's theologies of divine providence. Both theologians were chiefly biblical exegetes and teachers. Both loved the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament, especially Job among many.⁷⁹ Their interpretations of Job shared remarkable similarities. Both thinkers saw Job as a treatise about divine providence and the human perception of it.⁸⁰ The Christian faith in divine providence appeared to be of the highest importance to them. They also shared a style of exegesis that makes sense of the text in both literal and spiritual sense within the canon though both emphasized the hermeneutical priority of the historical above the spiritual.⁸¹ As a result, what stands out of their exegetical works on Job is a redemptive-eschatological history, in which God's providence in Christ and the final destiny of the world play central roles.

Providence in Aquinas's *Summa contra Gentiles*

The *Summa contra Gentiles* (henceforth *SCG*), Book III, was written during the period 1261–1264 when Aquinas composed the *Expositio*; he treated divine providence chiefly

⁷⁹ For Aquinas's assessment of Job, see Prügl, "Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture," 387. According to Prügl, Aquinas intended to publish only the commentaries on Job, Romans, and Isaiah. And only these books are called *exposition*, but the taking of notes is called as *lectura*. For Edwards's understanding of Job, see Stein, "Editor's Introduction," 33–34. Stein writes that Edwards "may have seen certain striking parallels to his own life experiences in these books, in particular, in the trials of Job."

⁸⁰ See *Misc.*, no. 359 in *WJE* 13:433. Edwards spoke of the theme of Job as follows: "And how excellently has infinite wisdom contrived to give us that sort of instruction, relating to God's perfections, his sovereignty, his wisdom and his providence, and our duty relating thereto, so exceeding useful and needful, in the book of Job."

⁸¹ Aquinas's and Edwards's understanding of the literal sense may not be consistent with modern historical-critical biblical scholarship. Both exegetes took the literal sense of a text from their pre-critical assumptions about what constitutes literal interpretation. Edwards faced Enlightenment critics and was well aware of the rise of critical biblical scholarship in his time. Yet he took a literal reading of Scripture traditionally. Both theologians were theological giants; on the other hand, they were men of their time.

in the *SCG*, Book III, chapters 64–113.⁸² Taken side by side, Prügl points out the affinity between the two works:

As is the case of the *Exposition super Iob* the entire third book of the *Summa contra Gentiles* also deals with the final destiny of the world and God's providence. This thematic correspondence not only testifies to the fact that both works were written contemporaneously, but also illustrates that Aquinas assigned a central place to *providentia divina* within the whole horizon of this theology.⁸³

The providence of God was “of the highest importance” to Aquinas, according to Prügl.⁸⁴ Considering their different genres, the significant difference between those works lies in style. In other words, Aquinas's understanding of divine providence is more systematically articulated in the *SCG* than in the *Expositio*.

Aquinas started his *SCG* 64 with a bold theological statement as follows:

“God is the end of all: whence we may further conclude that by His providence He governs or rules all. For whenever certain things are ordered to a certain end, they are all subject to the disposal of the one to whom chiefly that end belongs.”⁸⁵ Christopher Holmes elaborates Aquinas's account of God as the end as follows: “Thomas, in agreement with our Reformed interlocutors, defends the notion that God guides all things back to God. Participated—created—being is directed being, for God is the “order” of all things and their “last end.”⁸⁶

This Thomistic discourse—namely, “God is the end of all” or “God is their last end”—may sound familiar to Edwards readers. God himself—that is, for God to glorify and enjoy himself for all eternity—is the end for which God created the world. The general

⁸² Harkins, “Christ and the External Extent of Divine Providence,” 165.

⁸³ Prügl, “Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture,” 404.

⁸⁴ Prügl, “Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture,” 404. Not only with those treatises, God's existence and providence are the two major themes in Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*.

⁸⁵ Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 3:151.

⁸⁶ Holmes, “The Shape of God's Providence,” 202.

thesis of his *Concerning End for Which God Created the World* (henceforth *End of Creation*) is as follows: “That if God himself be in any respect properly capable of being his own end in the creation of the world, then it is reasonable to suppose that he had respect to *himself* as his last and highest end in this work; because he is worthy in himself to be so, being infinitely the greatest and best of beings.”⁸⁷ For God’s own sake, Edwards believed that God created the world, governing all things to be accomplished for that end and bringing all to pass by his providence to that purpose. For Aquinas and Edwards, their theologies of providence were strongly theocentric in two ways: (1) God himself is the ultimate end of his working in all things by providence and (2) God is the prime operating agent/source in moving all things to the consummation. In this sense, Aquinas and Edwards followed the Augustinian teleological tradition in that without a teleological framework, there can be no way to propose a meaning to the world, and providence is a key to making and preserving all things.⁸⁸

Then, how does God exercise his providence in the world for the ultimate end? According to Aquinas, God does so only by his providential operation. Therefore, “all the species of things would cease, were the divine operation to cease,” said Aquinas.⁸⁹ He further added:

Accordingly the divine operation stands in the same relation to the existence of things, as the movement of a corporeal mover to the *being made* and the *being*

⁸⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 8:421.

⁸⁸ The study on Edwards the Augustinian has been discussed in the first part of the Chapter. As for Aquinas, the theological influence of Augustine on Aquinas has recently come to scholarly attention. See Dauphinais et al., *Aquinas the Augustinian*. See also Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions*, 115. According to him, Albert the Great (1280) was Aquinas’s most famous teacher, and he was an Augustinian theologian by whom Aquinas was significantly influenced. Servais Pinckaers understands Aquinas as Augustine’s disciple, arguing Augustine’s strong influence on Latin theology, including the theology of Aquinas, is undeniable. See Pinckaers, *Sources of Christian Ethics*, 212. However, the Augustinian root does not negate other roots from Scripture, Aristotle, and the Greek Fathers within Aquinas’s thoughts.

⁸⁹ Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 3:156.

moved of things made or moved. Now it is impossible that a thing continue to be made or to be moved if the movement of the mover cease. Therefore a thing cannot possibly continue to exist except through the divine operation.⁹⁰

God is the unmoved mover (*immutabiliter*) who must operate in all that moves

(*mutabilitatem*). For Aquinas, God must be immutable, omnipotent, and omniscient.

Without these divine attributes, God is not a perfect being. Aquinas located his account of providence within the doctrine of God, according to Fergusson, so that it was neither subordinated to creation nor replaced with predestination.⁹¹ God is also the first cause of all things, who brings about the ultimate end *via* his immediate providence and his use of causal series—namely, by means of secondary causes.⁹² Aquinas once said that God is a cosmic artist, and all things were created as his artistic masterpieces. By using the metaphor of art, he explained God’s providential exercise as follows: “because art takes its matter from nature, and nature receives its matter from God through creation.”⁹³ By God’s intellect and will, all things are ordered and directed to their appropriate end. According to Aquinas, God is the source of all natural things, and he empowers them with “the power to perform their operations according to their natures.”⁹⁴ Hence, from Aquinas’s perspective, the divine exercise of will and powers enables, not disables, the actualization of creaturely freedom at maximum and makes things be “what they *truly* are.”⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 3:156 (emphasis original).

⁹¹ Fergusson, *Providence of God*, 63.

⁹² Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 14.

⁹³ Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 3:156.

⁹⁴ Silva, “Revisiting Aquinas,” 284.

⁹⁵ Davies, *Thomas Aquinas’s Summa Contra Gentiles*, 264 (emphasis added).

Similar to this Thomistic tradition, for Edwards, divine providence is something God makes things to be what they *originally* are. This is the end of divine providence, according to him:

Sixthly, it may be further observed that the original ultimate end or ends of the creation of the world is *alone* that which induces God to give the occasion for consequential ends by the first creation of the world, and the original disposal of it. And the more original the end is, the more extensive and universal it is. That which God had primarily in view in creating, and the original ordination of the world, must be constantly kept in view, and have a governing influence in all God's works, or with respect to everything that he does towards his creatures.⁹⁶

How then did Edwards suppose that God will fulfill the end of providence? The reader can find the answer in his doctrine of God, especially *via* perfect-being theology, as found in Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. Oliver Crisp and Kyle Strobel insist that Edwards echoes the medieval theological understanding of God the perfect being.⁹⁷ Edwards said that God is the “eternal, infinite, most perfect being.”⁹⁸ For Edwards, God, first of all, is all-knowing (divine omniscience): “the immutability of knowledge makes his knowledge to be without succession.”⁹⁹ That is, God's knowledge does not change; nothing is either added to or omitted from his knowledge. Second, God is also all-powerful (divine omnipotence). His decree does not change but sovereignly stands forever. Edwards expounded: “The sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between him and mankind, is gone out against them and stands against them.”¹⁰⁰ Third, God is perfectly good (divine

⁹⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 8:413.

⁹⁷ Crisp and Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards*, 83.

⁹⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 1:182. See *WJE* 50:41. On God, Edwards spoke, he is “an absolutely and infinitely perfect being.” See also *WJE* 23:371. Edwards wrote, “The notion of an infinite Eternal implies absolute immutability. That which is all respects infinite, and so absolutely perfect, and to the utmost degree and at all times, can't be in any respect variable.”

⁹⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 1:268.

¹⁰⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 22:406.

goodness). God's unchangeable goodness and love is well manifested in his covenantal relationship with people.¹⁰¹ Edwards wrote that there is "a constant immovable trust in God through Christ, with a great sense of his strength and faithfulness, the sure-ness of his covenant, and the immutability of his promises."¹⁰² God is a perfect being without any unrealized potential, and he is the source of all truth, power, and beauty/goodness. Once one knows this classical picture of the divine nature, there is comfort in trusting God's exercise of providence over the world. If so, then her or his response to issues such as how to trust the providence of God would be that of Job, trusting in a reliable God despite circumstances, even though she or he cannot fully comprehend all the works done under divine providence. The point being made with God's perfectness and immutability with regard to providence so far is that Edwards's theology of providence is constituted and justified by reference to theology proper and the salvific economy.

Probably, Aquinas might be incompatible with Edwards in terms of the nature of divine causality—namely, how divine providential operation reveals itself in relation to human agents, for Aquinas was a compatibilist, but Edwards was closer to an idealist/occasionalist.¹⁰³ Yet for both thinkers, divine providence originates from God's immutable knowing, willing, and loving in relation to his creatures. They both advanced a theocentric account of the doctrine of providence. Furthermore, both Aquinas and

¹⁰¹ Crawford, "Immutability," 326.

¹⁰² Edwards, *WJE* 4:336.

¹⁰³ For philosophical-theological discussion on Edwards's occasionalism, see Daniel, "Edwards' Occasionalism," 1–14 and Crisp, "How Occasional was Edwards's Occasionalism," 61–77. Yet Edwards's understanding of the divine and human causation often seems inconsistent. He believed in God as the sole causal agent, but in *Freedom of Will*, he embraced the idea of human freedom and secondary causation. See Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards*, 58–59. Morimoto argues that Edwards was not an occasionalist, leaving behind his earlier idealist and immaterial position. According to Mark Hamilton, there are various species of occasionalism, and figuring out where his occasionalism is placed in a broad spectrum of it is challenging and needs more work. See Hamilton, *Treatise on Jonathan Edwards*, 48.

Edwards believed that divine providence is extended to the eternal fellowship of the elect with God *via* the progression of the beatific vision beginning from here to the consummation.¹⁰⁴

Calvin's Theology of Providence

Providence in Calvin's *Commentary on the Psalms*

In *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms*, Herman Selderhuis emphasizes the centrality of the theme of providence within John Calvin's theology as a whole. For Calvin, the doctrine of providence is very essential in that "its denunciation in fact equals the denial of God's existence," wrote Selderhuis.¹⁰⁵ He further says, "Calvin entitles the providence of God 'the true theology.'"¹⁰⁶ Also, in his 1905 essay titled "*Calvins Vorsehungslehr*," Josef Bohatec argued that for Calvin, the doctrine of providence is *Stammlehre* ("root doctrine"), which is all-inclusive to Calvin's central theologies—such as predestination, christology, and ecclesiology.¹⁰⁷

In her studies on Calvin's creation and providence, Schreiner writes that Calvin was a sixteenth-century theologian who retrieved a long theological tradition concerning the doctrine of providence.¹⁰⁸ Alister McGrath also points out that Calvin thought of his theology as "a faithful exposition of the leading ideas of Augustine of Hippo."¹⁰⁹ Gilkey

¹⁰⁴ For further information on the beatific vision of Aquinas and Edwards, see Hans Boersma, "The Grand Medium," 187–212.

¹⁰⁵ Selderhuis, *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms*, 94.

¹⁰⁶ Selderhuis, *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms*, 92.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. See Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 7.

¹⁰⁸ Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 7.

¹⁰⁹ McGrath, *Life of John Calvin*, 151. For further information on the Augustinian influence on Calvin's theology of providence, see Fergusson, *Providence of God*, 85. Fergusson writes: "In his exposition of providence, Calvin rehearses several familiar themes. In almost all of what he writes in this

explicates Augustine's and Calvin's theologies of providence as follows: "For both theologians the course of historical passage was under the rule of God and thus possessed an ultimate meaning; and for both that meaning was defined by the electing eschatological purpose of God to bring men and women to ultimate salvation beyond time and space."¹¹⁰ As with Augustine, Calvin shared a redemptive-eschatological understanding of providence. Moreover, Calvin also shared some ideas with Aquinas in that the two believed that God exercises providential disposals both immediately and mediately *via* secondary causes in leading all things to the final *telos*.¹¹¹

Similar to those theological predecessors, Calvin was also a preacher and biblical commentator.¹¹² That being said, his primary theological source derived from biblical revelation, but he read it not in a historical vacuum but in light of the Christian tradition.¹¹³ Calvin's *Commentary on the Psalms* (henceforth *CP*) first appeared in 1557 in Latin, and it was published next year with a French translation.¹¹⁴ The main theme of the *CP* is *theológos*, that is, the *doctrina de Deo*.¹¹⁵ According to Calvin, God at the centre, especially, God's providence, is the foundation and rationale for the Psalms. He wrote: "Nowhere else," but in the Psalms, "do we find so many splendid evidences of

context, he does not see himself as innovative or original. His intention is quite the reverse, since he strives to show the faithfulness of his reflections to traditions of the church, especially Augustine. Of the 3220 direct references to the church fathers in Calvin's writings, over half of these are to Augustine who is generally enlisted in support of his claims."

¹¹⁰ Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 175.

¹¹¹ Schreiner, *Theater of Glory*, 14.

¹¹² See the analysis of Calvin's source for his providence, Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 7, 33. See also, Parker, *Calvin*, 43. Parker writes, "From the outset it becomes clear that Calvin's concept of Providence is intended to be drawn from Scripture."

¹¹³ McGrath, *Life of John Calvin*, 151. For further resource on Calvin's theology of providence in the Psalms, see Barbara Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*, 98–130.

¹¹⁴ Selderhuis, *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms*, 24. The second French edition of the commentary was published in 1561.

¹¹⁵ Selderhuis, *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms*, 16.

the fatherly providence and solicitude of God towards us.”¹¹⁶ In her studies on Calvin’s commentary on Ps 1, Barbara Pitkin writes: God’s providence amid the confusion of history is not only the major theme in Calvin’s interpretation of this first psalm but also dominates his reading of the psalms as a whole.”¹¹⁷ After Calvin, his particular emphasis on holding unto “God’s providence amid the confusion of history” in Ps 1 was received and transmitted to the English Protestant refugees. Many Protestant preachers employed his interpretation to give them comfort while fleeing from Mary Tudor, who was determined to turn England back to Roman Catholicism, and it contributed to shaping an English-speaking Protestant providentialism.¹¹⁸ In a similar manner, the Psalms were also substantively employed to provide comforting language to early American Puritan settlers who believed themselves on an errand into the wilderness by God’s ordination.¹¹⁹

For Calvin, though God’s providence is a necessary consequence after creating the world, his meaning of providence is more dynamic than God’s preservation and governance in creation.¹²⁰ According to Selderhuis, “The notion may sound static, but in the issue in question is rather dynamic. The word “providence” is often associated with a detailed and designed plan engineered even before the creation of the world that inevitably and immutably will come to consummation.”¹²¹ God is neither idle (contra Epicureans) nor bound (contra Stoics).¹²² For Calvin, God is vigilant in creation. All

¹¹⁶ Selderhuis, *Calvin’s Theology of the Psalms*, 26.

¹¹⁷ Pitkin, “Calvin’s Commentary on Psalm 1,” 172.

¹¹⁸ See Pitkin, “Calvin’s Commentary on Psalm 1,” 178.

¹¹⁹ Barshinger, *Jonathan Edwards and the Psalms*, 11.

¹²⁰ Selderhuis, *Calvin’s Theology of the Psalms*, 89.

¹²¹ Selderhuis, *Calvin’s Theology of the Psalms*, 90.

¹²² Calvin acknowledged Stoicism more than Epicureanism and the former as superior to the latter since Stoics believed in providence in the way that the world is determined by fate. And as mentioned by Schreiner, Calvin’s theology of providence was formed in a polemical context combating

things are ruled by the vigilant God. According to him, this is why the doctrine of God (i.e., God's being and character) matters in terms of the Christian understanding of his ruling and governing the world. For him, the Epicurean concept of deity is the distant God, who is overly far or transcendent; on the other hand, the Stoic view of deity substitutes nature for God, so it is too immanent and bound within nature.¹²³ It would seem that Calvin foresaw in his own time how these philosophical seeds would develop into rival theories, such as deism and pantheism, against the Reformed understanding of the God-world relation.

According to him, both philosophies fashion God into their own images, and that was idolatry for Calvin. He believed that the Psalms are an antidote to such idolatry in that the psalter can lead to correct doctrine and life with a true knowledge of God, who is both beyond and present to the world.¹²⁴ By the metaphor of the shepherd in the Psalms, for instance, Calvin praised "God's care for those who are his own like the solicitude of a shepherd for the sheep intrusted to him."¹²⁵ The shepherd motif in the *CP* seems to be attributed to a particular love of God toward us. His guiding hands stretch out to his flock; his eyes keep watching over their safety and his rod and staff lead his sheep in the paths of righteousness, even in the shadow of death. In Christ, the God of love has revealed himself even more clearly; Christ has become the *pastor ecclesia* (shepherd of the church) or the head of the church according to God's providential plan for saving the elect. That is, God preserves and governs all things in being for his own

those philosophies. See the analysis of Calvin's polemical context, Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 16–21.

¹²³ For Edwards' brief view on those philosophers and their thoughts of providence, see *WJE* 23:443.

¹²⁴ According to Fergusson, in the *Commentary on the Psalms*, the 270 uses of providence seem to be referred to God as Father. See Fergusson, *Providence of God*, 90.

¹²⁵ Haroutunian, ed., *Calvin*, 260.

glory, especially by working all things that are necessary for his creatures to be united with Christ. Calvin commented on Ps 95:7 in the *CP* as follows:

But when asserted to be the Shepherd of the Church, more is meant than that he favours her with the common nourishment, support, and government which he extends promiscuously to the whole human family; he is so called because he separates her from the rest of the world, and cherishes her with a peculiar and fatherly regard. His people are here spoken of accordingly as the *people of his pastures*, whom he watches over with peculiar care, and loads with blessings of every kind.¹²⁶

This also shows Calvin's peculiar idea of the web of general and special providence interconnected with one another. Calvin first asserted God's universal providence and Christ's extensive application of it to all creation in common. Then, he demonstrated that God exercises a particular redemptive-eschatological providence over the elect within that universal providence.¹²⁷ For Calvin, the two providences may be distinguishable but not separable (*distinction sed non separation*). Perhaps, in other words, they are not insulated from but permeable into each other.¹²⁸ For Calvin, as a result, there is no place beyond the reach of divine providence, and nothing, including "those forces and people who are indifferent to God and even defiant of him," in the world exists outside of it.¹²⁹

As with Calvin, the Psalms were also a unique book for Edwards. In practice, both Calvin and Edwards were theological exegetes of the Psalms, who sought the riches of biblical doctrine from the Book and interpreted them with other scriptures. Both composed commentaries or notes on the Psalms; they used the Psalms frequently in their sermons and ministry.¹³⁰ They also drew comfort from the Psalms for their souls and

¹²⁶ Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, 35 (emphasis original).

¹²⁷ Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony*, 464.

¹²⁸ See Oliver Crisp, "Calvin on Creation and Providence," 53. He argues that Calvin acknowledged that the too-rigid distinction between the two modes or acts of providence is artificial.

¹²⁹ Helm, *Providence of God*, 20–21.

¹³⁰ For instance, in the case of Calvin, he never preached on other Old Testament text except the Psalms on Sunday. For further information on Calvin and the Psalms, see Barbara Pitkin, *Calvin, the Bible*,

congregations in their lives and ministry, especially when they felt God's providence seemed hidden from sight.¹³¹ As with Calvin, Edwards also thought that the main substance of the Psalms is the doctrine of God, such as God's glorious and sovereign nature and his name, like judge and father.¹³² Moreover, Edwards allocated God's glory to his work of redemption and he also "spoke of the christological and ecclesiological import of the Psalms, casting a broader net for interpreting the Psalter in a redemptive-historical framework."¹³³ Edwards spoke of the nature of the Psalms as a book for the church, saying that the Book of the Psalms was written and composed:

[B]y the direction of the Holy Ghost, penned for *the use of the church* of God in its public worship, not only in that age, but in after ages; as being fitted to express the religion of all saints, in all ages, as well as the religion of the Psalmist. And it is moreover to be observed, that David, in the Book of Psalms, speaks not as a private person, but as the psalmist of Israel, as the subordinate head of the church of God, and leader in their worship and praises; and in many of the Psalms, speaks in *the name of Christ*, as personating him in these breathings forth of holy affection, and in many other Psalms, he speaks in the name of the church.¹³⁴

This Calvinistic-Edwardsean way to read the Psalms both christologically and ecclesologically, according to Pitkin, has been an interpretive tradition of the church that first started from the early church and was adopted by various patristic, medieval,

and History, 97–121. For Edwards, the Book of the Psalms was one of the top five books on which he preached most along with Matthew, Luke, Isaiah, and Proverbs. See Barshinger, *Jonathan Edwards and the Psalms*, 9.

¹³¹ See Pitkin, *Calvin, the Bible, and History*, 119. See also Barshinger, *Jonathan Edwards and the Psalms*, 10.

¹³² Barshinger, *Jonathan Edwards and the Psalms*, 84.

¹³³ Barshinger, *Jonathan Edwards and the Psalms*, 2, 8. See Edwards, "Ps. 115:1," in *WJEO* 42. See also Helm, *Providence of God*, 20. Paul Helm's explanation of the soteriological-ecclesiological aspect of divine providence and the distinction between general and special providence is helpful for the reader to understand that. He writes: "God cares for the individual Christian now; but he also cares, has cared, and will care, for all Christians at all times. In some treatments of divine providence, such care for the church is referred to under the heading of 'predestination', the distinction being drawn between the general providence of God over the creation, and the special providence of God as it affects the church. In many respects this is a helpful distinction, because it draws out the fact that the providential purposes have one supreme end, the salvation of the church."

¹³⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 2:108–9 (emphasis added).

and early reformed theologians—including Augustine, Peter Lombard, and Martin Luther.¹³⁵ For the case of Calvin, Crisp corrects those critics who condemn Calvin’s twin doctrines of creation and providence as less christologically reflected. With Calvin’s commentarial engagement with New Testament passages (e.g., John 1:4; Heb 1:3; Col 1:15, 20) and some parts of the *Institutes*, Crisp argues that Calvin’s doctrines of creation and providence “much more appear Christologically focused” than what critics say.¹³⁶

Crisp further argues:

It should be tolerably clear from this that Calvin’s Christology plays a fundamental role in his doctrines of creation and conservation, and that Calvin sees no tension between such commitment and adherence to a classical conception of the divine nature.¹³⁷

For Calvin, God is upholding and sustaining all in Christ; Christ is the sole subject and object of providence.¹³⁸ It seems apparent that this classical and Reformed christological conception of divine providence was received and transmitted from those classical theologians to Edwards.

Creation and Providence in Calvin’s *Institutes of Christian Religion*

God’s activity in the continuance of his creation and his sovereignty over all are the theological hallmarks and most contested doctrines in the Reformed theological tradition.¹³⁹ Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (henceforth *Institutes*) has most contributed to forming such Calvinistic-reformed theology of providence, albeit not as

¹³⁵ Pitkin, “Calvin’s Commentary on Psalm 1,” 165–68.

¹³⁶ See Crisp, “Calvin on Creation and Providence,” 63.

¹³⁷ Crisp, “Calvin on Creation and Providence,” 64. Crisp provides the analysis of why Calvin’s commentaries seem much more christological on the doctrine of providence than the *Institutes*.

¹³⁸ Albeit with a christological focus, Calvin’s theology of providence in the *CP* cannot be said to be fully trinitarian, since as pointed by Benjamin B. Warfield, “his theology of providence reveals a serious pneumatological deficit.” Cf. Fergusson, *Providence of God*, 90.

¹³⁹ van der Kooi, “Creation and Providence,” 420.

the earliest work on the doctrine in Reformed the tradition.¹⁴⁰ In Calvin's theology, the formula *distinction sed non separation* is applied to the relation of the creator to his creation and that of creation with providence.

Concerning the God-world relation, first, Calvin affirmed that God freely created the world *ex nihilo*, and creation was the first *opera ad extra* of the triune God and the thing realized in time out of the atemporal divine decree (or the divine mind prior in eternity). In this sense, there is a close interrelatedness between God and the world though God is neither identical to nor indifferent to his created world. While struggling with the Stoic, Calvin refused to allow God to be separated from creation too firmly so that the world was left to the rule of *fortuna*, writing that "God's providence, as it is taught in Scripture, is opposed to fortune and fortuitous happenings."¹⁴¹

Cornelius van der Kooi aptly summarizes six features of Calvin's thought of creation. For Calvin, creation is (1) revelatory or reflective (like theatre); (2) visible or tangible (like mirror); (3) rich but fragile (like shadow); (4) providential by God's will; (5) distant from God; and entails (6) the *cognito duplex* of God as creator and redeemer.¹⁴² These aspects of the relation of God to creation that Calvin proposed may sound foreign to modern minds but not to Edwards, an eighteenth-century Puritan mind. In the *Institutes*, Calvin wrote that God has created the world as *theatrum gloriae* for

¹⁴⁰ Fergusson, *Providence of God*, 84. *De Providentia* (1530) by another reformer, Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), was the earliest systematic *corpus* on the doctrine of providence. Crisp thinks of Zwingli as a theological occasionalist, explaining that "Zwingli thinks God directly causes everything to occur that does occur such that mundane causes are merely the occasions (or something very like the occasions) of God's activity." See Crisp, "Calvin on Creation and Providence," 58.

¹⁴¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.16.2.

¹⁴² van der Kooi, "Calvin's Theology of Creation and Providence," 48.

those spectators who behold the creator.¹⁴³ The conception of the world as a theatre of God's glory is in his providence through the Spirit. As with Aquinas, Calvin taught the radical dependence of the world on God, both for its existence and sustenance. The driving force of the world is contained not in itself but in God and his providential care. By God's providential action, the creation remains "the most beautiful theater" of the glory of God.¹⁴⁴ Without it, the world would immediately cease to exist because God alone exists *a se*.¹⁴⁵ Then, if the outward reality paves the way for perceiving the glory of God in the world, and if it is to be tangible in human minds, they need another external source from God, found in the God-given faculties, the divine sense perception and understanding (the so-called *sensus divinitatis*).¹⁴⁶ Calvin wrote in the *Institutes*: "As God's providence shows itself more explicitly when one observes these, so the mind must rise to a somewhat higher level to look upon his glory."¹⁴⁷

In terms of Calvin's theology of nature, Edwards is obviously his theological heir because:

Edwards believed that the *Theatrum Mundi* was created by the Deity to be the mirror of divinity, his theology of nature conceived of the world as a grand theater for the contemplation of divine beauty; the natural world and its beauty were thus for Edwards, as was the case with Calvin, a theater of God's glory—*Theatrum Dei Gloria*.¹⁴⁸

Edwards argued that the creation of the world is an outflowing of the divine glory *ad extra* or a repetition of the immanent glory of the Godhead (God's self-glorification or

¹⁴³ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.14.20. Calvin has similar references to the heavens and the earth as a theater of God's glory in 1.6.2, 1.14.20, 2.6.1, 3.9.2, Comm. Gen 1:6, Comm. Ps 138:1, and frequently elsewhere.

¹⁴⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.14.20.

¹⁴⁵ Crisp, "Calvin on Creation and Providence," 51.

¹⁴⁶ See Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.3.1. Calvin wrote: "There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, *an awareness of divinity*."

¹⁴⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.5.2.

¹⁴⁸ Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of Nature*, 13.

God's glorifying of himself) in time and space.¹⁴⁹ This act of creation is purposive in that God as a communicative being wants his creatures to gratify and enjoy his perfect love and wisdom. "As it is a thing valuable and desirable in itself that God's glory should be seen and known," as Edwards wrote.¹⁵⁰ He was indeed a contemplator or spectator of "the sweet glory of God" in nature.¹⁵¹ Not only did he perceive the glory of the creator in nature, but Edwards also contemplated the redeemer from the sun, for instance. With a theological-typological imagination, Edwards affirmed the Messianic types from the natural world—e.g., the sun as a type of the righteous Christ and the lion and the lamb as a type of Christ's power and meekness. Accordingly, Edwards's typology echoes Calvin's duplex cognition of God as the creator and the redeemer in nature.¹⁵² He felt an urgent need to retrieve this Calvinist theology of God's glory in his own context in which the emerging Enlightenment philosophy of nature elevated nature and human welfare over God and his glory.¹⁵³ Similar to Calvin's spiritual epistemology, furthermore, Edwards also placed the centrality of knowledge on sense perceptions, arguing that true knowledge is perceiving the sense of God in the world *via* a mind made new with new light (the so-called "Divine and Supernatural Light") given by the Spirit of God.¹⁵⁴ Surely, both Reformed theologians affirmed the epistemological limitation of

¹⁴⁹ See Edwards, *WJE* 2:142.

¹⁵⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 8:432. See also *WJE* 11:152.

¹⁵¹ Edwards wrote that "I used to sit and view the moon, for a long time; and in the daytime, spent much time viewing the clouds and sky to behold the sweet glory of God." See Edwards, *WJE* 16:197.

¹⁵² See Brumm, *American Thought and Religious Typology*, 18. Ursula Brumm interprets American typology as derived from the Calvinistic theological tradition: "The aspect of Calvinism... is the general belief that God uses natural events to give *signs* or *signals* to man. Such a sign does have a definite meaning, even though it may well be imperfectly understood. This means that of natural events one must inquire after their *significances*—a very important word to the American Puritans... This leads us to another kind of symbolism used by the American Calvinists, their so-called *typology*" (emphasis added).

¹⁵³ McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 212.

¹⁵⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 19:266.

providence by the noetic effects of sin in which since the fall, sin has affected human minds and caused human knowledge of God to become diluting and dimming. It is by faith, according to them, that human minds are called to a knowledge of God and are able to understand him as “Creator of all” and “everlasting Governor and Preserver” by grace.¹⁵⁵

On the relation of creation to providence, for Calvin, both works are distinct but not inseparable, arguing that “to make God a momentary Creator, who once for all finished his work, would be cold and barren, and we must differ from profane men especially in that we see the presence of divine power shining as much in the continuing state of the universe as in its inception.”¹⁵⁶ Opposing to the Epicurean idea of a remote or idle providence, therefore, he argued for a meticulous providence by which God ordains all thing that will come to pass. For this, God exercises providence as (1) preservation (*conservatio*); (2) government (*gubernatio*); and (3) concurrence (*concursus*).¹⁵⁷ Calvin understood that God is near and preserves all thing in the world by the power of the Spirit:

Accordingly, we ought to seek from the same source proof of the deity of the Spirit. Indeed, that testimony of Moses in the history of the Creation is very clear, that “the Spirit of God was spread over the deeps” [Gen. 1:2, cf. Vg.], or formless matter; for it shows not only that the beauty of the universe (which we now perceive) owes its strength and *preservation* to the power of the Spirit.¹⁵⁸

In the *Institutes*, Calvin also explained what a meticulous providence means, that which is done by God’s providential government: “For he is deemed omnipotent, not because

¹⁵⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.16.1.

¹⁵⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.16.1.

¹⁵⁷ The threefold categorization is a standard concept in Lutheran and Reformed theologies. Yet too strict division between them is artificial. For three activities of divine providence, (1) preservation; (2) concurrence; and (3) government, see Coppedge, *God Who is Triune*, 291–95.

¹⁵⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.14 (emphasis added).

he can indeed act, yet sometimes ceases and sits in idleness, or continues by a general impulse that order of nature which he previously appointed; but because, *governing* heaven and earth by his providence, he so regulates all things that nothing takes place without his deliberation.”¹⁵⁹ His phrase “governing heaven and earth” refers to the vast and unlimited scope of divine providence. Interestingly, Calvin wrote in the *Institutes* that “the task of governing the world” is also the function of Christ the creator with his Father.¹⁶⁰ The last aspect of God’s providence is concurrence. This concept indeed has been less studied than the two previous aspects of divine providence because it seemingly negates the sovereignty of God. According to van der Kooi, however, the meaning of the biblical concept of concurrence is dynamic. First, it simply refers to God’s cooperation with the creaturely causes or human actions. Unlike Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) and his deterministic articulation of providence, Calvin accepted the doctrine of occurrence and that of secondary causes though human activity. So for Calvin, secondary causation is not meant to be divorced from divine activity.¹⁶¹ Schreiner admits that “Calvin was ambivalent about the role of secondary causes.”¹⁶² Against the Libertines, for instance, Calvin strongly held God as the principal/singular cause of all things, but he did not negate secondary causes but place them “in the proper place.”¹⁶³ Second, divine providence being concurrent means God’s presence or his working in the midst of all creaturely activity. By definition, concurrence is broadly

¹⁵⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.3 (emphasis added).

¹⁶⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.12 (emphasis added).

¹⁶¹ For further information on Zwingli’s doctrine of providence, See Fergusson, *Providence of God*, 81–84.

¹⁶² Schreiner, *Theater of His Glory*, 36. She argues that nevertheless Calvin did not deny secondary causality though he tied God too close to it. According to Gilkey, thus, human freedom in Calvin’s thought is less free than in Augustine’s.

¹⁶³ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.12.6.

meant to be God's presence in the world as its ultimate context and source of meaning.

"It means that God creates the conditions that enable us to act; without God's involvement, we would not be able to do anything," added van der Kooi.¹⁶⁴ According to Calvin, it is the Spirit of God who works for concurrence:

For it is the Spirit who, everywhere diffused, sustains all things, causes them to grow, and quickens them in heaven and in earth. Because he is circumscribed by no limits, he is excepted from the category of creatures; but in transfusing into all things his energy, and breathing into them essence, life, and movement, he is indeed plainly divine.¹⁶⁵

Warfield once called Calvin the "theologian of the Holy Spirit."¹⁶⁶ Indeed, pneumatology itself is pivotal to his *Institutes* in general and his doctrine of providence in particular.

As for Edwards, providence as preservation implies "the dependent condition of all finite objects" on the creator in the way that without it, they would cease to exist.¹⁶⁷ Not only recognizing the preservation of all things in being, Edwards also held a doctrine of preservation for the elect whose power was particularly exerted to the keeping of God's people and church amidst afflictions and threats.¹⁶⁸ According to Wallace Anderson, Edwards strongly protected the conception of providence as government against the materialistic philosophy of his day that "the universe is a complete, autonomous, and self-sustaining system of unthinking bodies."¹⁶⁹ Following the Reformed providential tradition, he also argued that it is a "constant concurrence of divine power" that upheld the laws of nature so that all creatures can exist and live ("our

¹⁶⁴ van der Kooi, "Creation and Providence," 431.

¹⁶⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.14.

¹⁶⁶ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 484–85.

¹⁶⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 3:57.

¹⁶⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 3:219.

¹⁶⁹ Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," 54.

living, moving or having a being”).¹⁷⁰ In other words, only due to concurrence, which is synonymous with divine assistance, all natural actions and all affairs of life, both general or particular, can take place. For Edwards as for Calvin, the Holy Spirit remains the primary agent in the providential relation of God to the world.¹⁷¹ In his “Miscellanies” no. 94 on the Trinity, Edwards wrote that the Spirit is God in providential action:

It appears by the holy Scriptures, that the Holy Spirit is *the perfect act of God*. (1) The name declares it: “the Spirit of God” denotes to us the activity, vivacity and energy of God. And (2) it appears that the Holy Spirit is the pure act of God and energy of the Deity, by his office, which is to actuate and quicken all things, and to beget energy and vivacity in the creature.¹⁷²

Through the outpouring of the Spirit, Edwards believed that God’s providential reality is in progress in its constitution and consummation. Hence, the true virtue of God’s people for Edwards is to pray for the coming of a great outpouring of the Spirit and is to be in a mutual consent and agreement with God’s providential operation (i.e., concurrence) during such a season of the great outpouring of the Spirit of God.¹⁷³

So far, the reader has seen that Calvin and Edwards were prominent providential thinkers. Particularly, by examining their biblical reasoning on the Psalms, it can be seen that the theology of divine providence, both general and special (christological and ecclesiological), held a central place in their system of thought. Moreover, looking at their dogmatic reasoning in terms of God’s providence in nature and the natural order,

¹⁷⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 21:300.

¹⁷¹ See Stephens, *Holy Spirit*, 2. Stephens writes that “it is the Spirit and not Christ who lends an energetic and restless quality to Edwards’ thought.”

¹⁷² Edwards, *WJE* 13:261 (emphasis added).

¹⁷³ Edwards, *WJE* 25:203. He wrote: “It becomes us to be earnest and constant in praying for this glorious event. Is. 62:6–7, “Give him no rest.” That great outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2:4 [and] vv. 13–17). The Spirit of God, the chief subject matter of prayer, [is] the great purchase and promise of Christ. [We have] more encouragement to pray for this than any other [thing]. This very thing is what is the subject of half the Lord’s Prayer. The church of God travailing (Rev. 12[:2]). The whole creation is represented as groaning (Rom. 8:19, etc.). Singing (Is. 49:13, 44:23). Prayer is represented as a principal means (Rev. 8:2–3).”

the reader will confirm that both Calvin and Edwards believed in a meticulous providence. Both believed that all God's will for the world comes to pass *via* his preservation, government, and concurrence. The christological and pneumatological focus was alive throughout Calvin's theory of providence.¹⁷⁴ Yet, it was Edwards who inherited that tradition and developed a more nuanced theology of providence with a more trinitarian logic than that of Calvin. The next chapters (Ch. 4 and Ch. 5) shall carefully examine how Edwards's trinitarian grammar provided a solid ground for his theology of providence and how he faithfully articulated the classical Reformed theology of providence within his mature trinitarian theology. These questions will be the focus of the next chapters.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted a comparative theology on *Deus providebit* to clarify Edwards's theology of providence with and in light of other historic theological works. It has placed Edwards's theology of providence at the intersection of historical depth and as a result has proved that Edwards's theology of providence has great theological affinities with the historic thought of Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin. As William Morris points out, this dimension of the historical depth in Edwards's theology is often neglected by contemporary theologians. After reviewing Edwards's providentialism with and in light of their theologies of providence, it is evident that Edwards was a retrieval theologian regarding the doctrine of providence. He had learned the very best from his

¹⁷⁴ See Fergusson, "Divine Providence and Action," 164.

theological predecessors and related those traditional theologies critically and constructively to the newly emerging intellectual *milieu* of his day.

Augustine's theology of history is foundational to the Western theological tradition. After him, all Christian thinkers, including Aquinas, Calvin, and Edwards, have developed theirs within the bounds of the Augustinian paradigm, especially his teleological view of history. Aquinas has surprisingly many similarities with Edwards in terms of interpreting the scriptures. An example of this agreement is in their expositional engagement with the Book of Job. Both were scriptural exegetes and bible teachers, whose interpretations of Job were subtly christological and redemptive-historical so that their theologies of providence touched the heart of the problem of all humans and distinctively formulated the Christian theology of providence. Moreover, perfect being theology described by the medieval Doctor provided a helpful theological ground for Edwards to articulate his theology of providence with theology proper. For Edwards, God thereby could not be God without providence for in Edwards's theology of providence is far broader than simple creation theology. Last but not least, Calvin the French Reformer was a father of Reformed theology, whose thought significantly contributed to the development of Edwards's Reformed-Puritan convictions. The core of his theological works on providence is the consistent application of Calvin's teachings on God's glory and sovereignty in his creation and providence. In summary, Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin provided valuable building blocks for Edwards's theology of providence. Edwards did not develop his thought in a historical vacuum but retrieved the works of his theological predecessors and articulated "a historically extended and

socially embodied argument” of divine providence in eighteenth-century New England.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 222.

CHAPTER 4

THE TRIUNE GOD AS THE PRINCIPAL MATTER OF EDWARDS'S THEOLOGY OF PROVIDENCE

The Christian idea of God...must preserve its fundamental position because of the regulative influence it exerts in reference to all the principal doctrines, securing in this way systematic coherence.

Isaak A. Dorner¹

Introduction

In recent years Edwardsean scholarship has persistently demonstrated that the Trinity is central to his entire theology.² In Edwards's mind, as Sang Hyun Lee correctly points out, "there is none of this bifurcation between the doctrine of the Trinity and the Christian life of faith and practice."³ This chapter examines Edwards's doctrine of the Trinity, especially by setting it as the principal object/matter of his theology of providence. For Edwards, all theologies are relative to their source—i.e., the life of the

¹ Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine*, 1:444.

² See Smyth, "Jonathan Edwards' Idealism," 960. See also Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 82. Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 173. Pauw, *Supreme Harmony*, 192. Studebaker and Caldwell, *Trinitarian Theology*, 1. Holmes, *God of Grace*, 254.

³ Lee, "Editor's Introduction," 3. Lee further writes: "Everything Edwards wrote about the Trinity expresses the intertwining connectedness of the Trinity and the Christian experience of God as the Creator, Savior, and Sanctifier, and thus between the immanent and the economic Trinity."

triune God. In the “Editor’s Introduction” of Edwards’s *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith*, Sang Hyun Lee notes:

The continuity of the immanent and economic Trinity is a hallmark of Edwards’s theology. For Edwards, God’s inner life is not a puzzle subject to theologians’ speculations but rather *a living truth about God* that emerges from the believers’ heartfelt experiences of God’s self-communication of himself in Jesus Christ and in all history and space.⁴

Theological discourse on the internal life of the Trinity has struck many theologians as arcane and speculative, so they prefer to focus on the external works of God in their theological works.⁵ Yet Edwards had a studious theology that was in some ways trying to construct a discussion of God’s being *in se* and an orderly account of the relation of God’s immanent and economic perfection. John Webster proposes a theologically helpful statement in terms of the nexus of the trinitarian relation *ad intra* and *ad extra*:

The perfect God has his perfection in himself in the integrity of his own life; but he also has his perfection in relation to the life that he creates, reconciles, and brings to perfection. God the Father, whose fatherhood is complete in the perfect mutuality of Father and Son, is also the creator of heaven and earth. God the Son, the perfect counterpart to the Father in their eternal fellowship, is also the Lord of creatures; he has his deity also in the exercise of his saving rule over the realm of created being. God the Holy Spirit, the perfect bond of life and love between the Father and the Son, is also the giver of life to creatures, the perfect one who perfects all thing.⁶

In other words, the immanent Trinity is the ontological ultimate for the communication of God’s activity in creation, being originated with the Father, passed through the Son, and perfected in the Spirit. Edwards understood the life of the Trinity *ad intra* and *ad*

⁴ Lee, “Editor’s Introduction,” 31 (emphasis added).

⁵ For instance, see Lacuna, “Practical Trinity,” 681. Lacuna puts it: “As focus rested more and more on the ‘inner life’ of God—on the self-relatedness of Father, Son, and Spirit to each other—instead of on God’s relation to us, eventually the doctrine of the Trinity could peak only of a Trinity locked up in itself, related to itself, contemplating itself perfectly and eternally, but essentially unrelated to us. It is no wonder that so many would find the theoretical explanation for this state of affairs uninteresting and irreverent.” For further resources that tend to denounce the necessity of the theological discourse on the immanent trinity, see Yazawa, *Covenant of Redemption*, 1–7.

⁶ Webster, “God’s Perfect Life,” 148.

extra in a consistent manner, and in his theology of providence, all divine providential activity is the realization of the self-communication of the perfect life of the triune God in creaturely reality. That is, the Trinity is the model for understanding the way providence works. It helps understand the nature and mechanism of divine providence.

This trinitarian nature of providence distinguishes the Christian understanding of providence from the Stoic conception of it in that the former is personal/relational but the latter is impersonal. This is how Edwards's trinitarian providence can make a doctrine of providence which is distinctively Christian in accordance with revelation. This chapter investigates Edwards's theology of providence with reference to its principal matter or object, that is, the triune God. Specifically, the goal of this chapter is to clarify the following theological themes: (1) the triune God's immanent reality; (2) the triune God's economic expression; (3) the triune God-world's relation; and (4) the end of the triune God's providence.

The Triune Provider in Action *Ad Intra*

The doctrine of the Trinity has traditionally been considered the central mystery of the Christian faith.⁷ The doctrine is also one of the most misunderstood doctrines in the Christian tradition. St. Augustine argued that once the human mind could fathom the doctrine of the Trinity, there is no single doctrine more rewarding than others. It is Edwards who was eager to rigorously study the doctrine of the Trinity and achieve that

⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 13:393. Edwards admitted the mystery of the Trinity, writing: "But I would not be understood to pretend to give a full explication of the Trinity, for I think it still remains an incomprehensible mystery, the greatest and the most glorious of all mysteries." See also *WJE* 21:134.

reward in his life.⁸ The doctrine of the Trinity deeply shaped his spiritual and intellectual mind alike. In his *Personal Narrative*, Edwards narrated the early exalted experience of his conversion with explicit reference to the triune God: “God has appeared glorious to me, on account of the Trinity. It has made me have exalting thoughts of God, that he subsists in three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”⁹ Surely, like Augustine, Edwards’s faith in the triune life of God (i.e., who God is) did emerge from his contemplation of the faith of the church in “the doctrines of the gospel” or “the way of salvation by Christ” (i.e., what God does), not merely from his consideration of abstract truths about God.¹⁰ That is, the economic Trinity took Edwards to the eternal life of the triune God, the eternal life of love shared by the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. As Robert Jenson writes, for Edwards “the historical triunity is “agreeable” or “condecant” to the immanent triunity.”¹¹ In other words, there is an inseparable link between the ontological and the economic Trinity. The dynamic identity that the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity and vice versa serves as a key pointer in understanding Edwards’s theology of providence.¹² In this light, the next section sketches Edwards’s own reflection on the ontological Trinity before looking into its mutual harmony and continuity with the triune God *ad extra* and its consequent implications in Edwards’s theology of providence.

⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 13:257. “I am not afraid to say twenty things about the Trinity which the Scripture never said,” as said Edwards.

⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 16:800.

¹⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 16:799. It becomes apparent that apostolic truth in the teaching of Scripture greatly influenced upon both Augustine’s and Edwards’s doctrines of the Trinity.

¹¹ Jenson, *America’s Theologian*, 84.

¹² Ross Hastings argues that, while it is not easily discernible, Edwards’s position on the immanent and economic Trinity relation aligns more closely with Karl Barth’s mutual correspondence model than Karl Rahner’s coalescence one. For this discussion, see Hastings, “Jonathan Edwards on the Trinity,” 595–97.

The Psychological Model

Starting with the claim that “God is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, in perfectly beholding and infinitely loving, and rejoicing in, his own essence and perfections,” Edwards gave an account of the fullness of the intra-trinitarian relations from eternity in his *Discourse on the Trinity* (henceforth *Discourse*).¹³ The statement infers that the inner life of the triune God is self-sufficient and perfect in happiness. Conceptually, this is called the doctrine of divine aseity (or independence), which refers to a God who is neither bound to nor dependent on the creation. In “Miscellanies,” no. 679, Edwards elaborated divine aseity this way:

God stands in no need of his creatures, and is not profited by them; neither can his happiness be said to be added to by the creature...God can't be said to be the more happy for the creature, because he is infinitely happy in himself; and he is not dependent on the creature for anything, nor does he receive any addition from the creature.¹⁴

The divine aseity (“the Deity is thought to exist *a se*”) has two aspects, according to Oliver Crisp: (1) ontological and (2) psychological.¹⁵ By ontological, it means God is self-existent, and he has no need of dependence upon the created entities for his existence. In addition, the doctrine also has another aspect—that is, psychological. God is “infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, and independently glorious and happy.”¹⁶ It implies that God himself is the ultimate source for his *well-being* in that the ground of

¹³ The work *Discourse on the Trinity* was written in the early 1730s, and it was posthumously published over the next decade with some revision and corrections. According to Caldwell, it is safe to conclude that *Discourse* is Edwards's mature trinitarian writing containing more than a decade's work on the Trinity. See Caldwell, *Communion in the Spirit*, 28.

¹⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 18:237–38. See also *WJE* 1:377. Edwards wrote that “the first Being, who is self-existent, independent, of perfect and absolute simplicity and immutability, and the first cause of all things.”

¹⁵ Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards on God*, 78.

¹⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 8:420.

his satisfaction and happiness is fully from/within God's own *ad intra* trinitarian life, not something external to the Deity himself.

Edwards's notion of divine aseity is grounded in the psychological model of the immanent Trinity. This peculiar trinitarian model drew on Augustine's psychological imagery of the Trinity to show how there could be the unity/oneness with the distinctive divine persons in the Godhead. This psychological model in Augustine's *De Trinitate* has significantly shaped the classical Western trinitarian tradition.¹⁷ According to Augustine, the immanent trinitarian relations are analogically reflected in a human mind (or memory) knowing itself (or intelligence) and loving itself (or volition). On the analogy, the mental triads analogically correspond to the divine persons in the immanent Trinity. God the Father is the divine mind (*mens*), the Son is the self-knowledge of God (*notitia*), and the Spirit is the self-love of God (*amor*). Yet, "these three, memory, understanding, wills are not three lives, but one life; nor three minds, but one mind; it follows certainty that neither are they three substances, but one substance," said Augustine.¹⁸ This Augustinian psychological model influenced upon Edwards's trinitarian framework for the immanent trinitarian relations of the divine persons.

In the *Discourse*, Edwards succinctly summarized the divine processions and their subsistence within the psychological trinitarian framework:

And this I suppose to be that blessed Trinity that we read of in the holy Scriptures. The Father is the Deity subsisting in the prime, unoriginated and most absolute manner, or the Deity in its direct existence. The Son is the Deity generated by God's understanding, or having an idea of himself, and subsisting in that idea. The Holy Ghost is the Deity subsisting in act, or the divine essence

¹⁷ Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 74.

¹⁸ Augustine, *Trinity*, X.11.18. Cf. Johnson, "Trinitarian Theology of Religions," 67. Refer to Barnes, "Logic," 7–11. Michel Barnes argues that Augustine made use of the psychological model, but that should not be regarded as the most core element of his trinitarianism. According to him, Augustine's utilization of the psychological analogy is described as "opportunistic," rather than "fundamental and necessary."

flowing out and breathed forth, in God's infinite love to and delight in himself. And I believe the whole divine essence does truly and distinctly subsist both in the divine idea and divine love, and that therefore each of them are properly distinct persons.¹⁹

The triad, (1) God as the mind (Father); (2) the idea of God (Son); and (3) the love of God (Spirit), subsists as divine persons in the eternal triune life.²⁰

For Edwards, God the Father is "the fountain of the Godhead" (*fons et origio*) "from whom proceed both divine wisdom and also excellency and happiness."²¹ God the Father is "the Deity subsisting in the prime, unoriginated and most absolute manner," added Edwards.²² Yet, when God reflects himself, God's beholding of himself begets the Son, the second person of the Trinity:

However, if God beholds himself so as thence to have delight and joy in himself, he must become his own object: there must be a duplicity. There is God and the idea of God, if it be proper to call a conception of that that is purely spiritual an idea. And I do suppose the Deity to be truly and properly repeated by God's thus having an idea of himself; and that this idea of God is a substantial idea and has the very essence of God, is truly God, to all intents and purposes, and that by this means the Godhead is really generated and repeated.²³

God's having an idea of himself is "the divine nature and essence again" so that logically, "there must be a duplicity" (or repetition) of the Deity in the Godhead.²⁴ The Son is a most perfect idea of God himself and exactly a perfect image/representation of God himself (logos). Indeed, this Augustinian psychological account was not only found

¹⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 21:131. For the five characteristics of the psychological model, see Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 111.

²⁰ According to David Hart, in the theology of Gregory of Nyssa, one of the Cappadocian Fathers, there is an important similarity with Augustine's thought in that both theologians thought of the human soul as a reflection of the likeness of God ("the divine image"). See Hart, "Mirror," 543. "One should also note, at the outset, that for Gregory, no less than for Augustine, the divine image is first and foremost the possession of each individual soul, in the mystery of her simultaneous unity of essence and diversity of acts."

²¹ Edwards, *WJE* 21:131. See also *WJE* 21:135.

²² Edwards, *WJE* 21:131.

²³ Edwards, *WJE* 21:114.

²⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 21:116.

in Edwards but also in his Puritan predecessor, William Ames (1576–1633), whose mind significantly impacted the formation of Edwards’s theology. Similar to Edwards, Ames claimed that “the Father is, as it were, *Deus intelligens*, God understood; and the Holy Spirit, flowing and breathed from the Father through the Son, is *Deus dilectus*.”²⁵

To be clearer, a further explanation should be added to Edwards’s notion of divine simplicity and its relation to the origin of a divine person from another (i.e., divine procession). In contrast to Amy Plantinga Pauw’s argument, Edwards consistently affirmed the Reformed scholastic and Puritan understanding of divine simplicity.²⁶ For Edwards, God is neither composed of parts nor a combination of nature and attributes. Divine simplicity means that God is a simple being and whatever is in God is God. “It is a maxim amongst divines that everything that is in God is God, which must be understood of real attributes and not of mere modalities,” said Edwards.²⁷ In other words, God as *actus purus* is pure actuality (wholly actual) in that God is being-in-act or God exists as actuality, not as potency.²⁸ Importantly, this theology of divine simplicity caused Edwards to propose an argument that God is not simply knowing himself, but God is the perfect idea of himself. So, Edwards argued that by God’s thinking of himself, the Deity “must certainly be generated” (begotten, repeated, or duplicated), and that is the Son, the second person of the Godhead, who must be real.²⁹ The Son is also

²⁵ Ames, *Marrow of Theology*, 89. Similar to Ames and Edwards, Turretin was well aware of the Augustinian psychological model. However, he seemed to be cautious about using the model in explaining the mystery of the life of the triune God with non-scriptural *analogia*. See Turretin, *Institutes*, 3:31–33; 1:309.

²⁶ See Pauw, *Supreme Harmony*, 69–75. She argues that “the notion of divine simplicity was never truly incorporated into his theology.” For Edwards’s affirmation of the doctrine of divine simplicity, see Edwards, *WJE* 1:295, 21:113,

²⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 21:132.

²⁸ For the definition of divine simplicity in Edwards’s words, see *WJE* 21:121.

²⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 21:116.

God's wisdom as described the Word of God in Scripture (John 1:1). The ideal repetition derives from the inseparability of being and act entailed in the theology of divine simplicity.

Drawing from the Johannine statement that "God is love" (1 John 4:8), Edwards then defined the procession and subsistence of the Holy Spirit in terms of the divine will/love. He argued that the Godhead subsists in love in the way that the perfect love and joy flows forth between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit, according to Edwards, is "a more pure act, and an infinitely holy and sweet energy arises between the Father and the Son: for their love and joy is mutual, in mutually loving and delighting in each other."³⁰ The mutual love and delight between the Father and the Son is "the eternal and most perfect and essential act of the divine nature" so that "the divine essence itself flows out."³¹ The divine essence from the two distinct persons of the Godhead is the love of God and also God, who is the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. In *Treatise on Grace*, Edwards described the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit as "the Love of God" flowing from the relationship between the Father and the Son.

Scripture signifies that the Spirit of God is the Love of God, [and] therefore it follows that [the] Holy Spirit proceeds from, or is breathed forth from, the Father and the Son in some way or other infinitely above all our conceptions, as the divine essence entirely flows out and is breathed forth in infinitely pure love and sweet delight from the Father and the Son.³²

Kyle Strobel sums up the Edwardsean immanent processions and subsistence of the Godhead by describing the trinitarian life *ad intra* as the perfect life of the *beatitudo Dei*: "Here Edwards lays out in carefully chosen language his understanding of God's

³⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 21:121.

³¹ Edwards, *WJE* 21:121.

³² Edwards, *WJE* 21:184.

existence: God is eternally *happy*, in that he perfectly and infinitely *beholds himself*, his perfect idea, and love arises in the *mutual beholding* of his idea, emanating in complacence and joy.”³³ In other words, Edwards believed that the human soul’s mental activities/powers of knowing and loving are a shadow of the Trinity who consists of God the Father, his perfect idea (the Son) and love (the Spirit), with their peculiar roles within the Godhead. Albeit distinct, they subsist as co-eternal and co-equal in the perfect life of the Trinity *ad intra*.

The Mutual Love Model

Edwards’s trinitarian thought was also benefited from another trinitarian model—i.e., the form of Augustinian mutual love theological heritage.³⁴ Augustine’s reflections on the Spirit in the Trinity also contributed to the formation of the model. Briefly speaking, he understood the Holy Spirit as the communion of the Father and the Son, their mutual love in giving and returning. The Father is lover, the Son is the beloved, and the Spirit is the mutual love between the Father and the Son.³⁵ Drawing from the Augustinian mutual love model, Edwards conceived of the Holy Spirit as the reciprocal love between the Father and the Son and thus the bond of union. In other words, the Spirit is the very love that provides unity in the Trinity: “[So] does the holiness of God consist in his love,

³³ Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards’s Theology*, 36–37 (emphasis original). See the same book, “The Father gazes upon the Son and the Son upon the Father, not in a detached fashion, but with delight (the Spirit’s spiration),” said Strobel (4).

³⁴ Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards’ Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 135.

³⁵ Kärkkäinen, *Trinity*, 46. See Edwards, *WJE* 21:147. Edwards wrote: “In one respect the Father has the superiority: he is the fountain of Deity, and he begets *the beloved Son*. In another respect the Son has the superiority, as he is the great and first object of divine love. The beloved has as it were the superiority over *the lover*, and reigns over him. In another respect the Holy Ghost, that is, *divine love*, has the superiority, as that is the principle that as it were reigns over the Godhead and governs his heart, and wholly influences both the Father and the Son in all they do” (emphasis added).

especially in the perfect and intimate union and love there is between the Father and the Son. But the Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son is the bond of this union, as it is of all holy union between the Father and the Son.”³⁶ The Edwardsean picture of the immanent Trinity is inherently dynamic in the way that sacred energy of love and joy is “exercised towards the inner life of God” and is infinitely shared and enjoyed within the divine life.³⁷

According to Studebaker, the mutual love model is “the heart of his trinitarian theology” because “the mutual love model was central to Edwards’s advocacy of the reasonableness of the Trinity.”³⁸ For Edwards, first, the mutual love model supposes an irreducible plurality in God, as expressed in the divine persons of the triune God:

That in John, “God is love” [1 John 4:8, 16], shows that *there are more persons than one in the Deity*: for it shows love to be essential and necessary to the Deity, so that his nature consists in it; and this supposes that there is an eternal and necessary object, because all love respects another, that is, the beloved. By love here the Apostle certainly means something beside that which is commonly called self-love, that is very improperly called love, and is a thing of an exceeding diverse nature from that affection or virtue of love the Apostle is speaking of.³⁹

In Edwards’s trinitarian thought, divine love is not a self-love but a reciprocal/multi-directional love that requires two equal subjects giving and returning love in the divine being. With this mutual love logic, second, Edwards advanced his peculiar theory of the divine excellence from the plurality of the Godhead. In “the Mind,” Edwards argued that “one alone...cannot be excellent.”⁴⁰ Edwards explicated the meaning of it:

One alone, without any reference to any more, cannot be excellent; for in such case there can be no manner of relation no way, and therefore, no such thing as

³⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 21:186.

³⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 8:373.

³⁸ Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards’ Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 193.

³⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 21:113–14 (emphasis added). See also *WJE* 13:263.

⁴⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 6:337. See Anderson, “Editor’s Introduction,” 73. Wallace Anderson expounds that for Edwards, “excellency is a relational concept.”

consent. Indeed, what we call “one” may be excellent, because of a consent of parts, or some consent of those in that being that are distinguished into a plurality some way or other. But in a being that is absolutely without any plurality there cannot be excellency, for there can be no such thing as consent or agreement. One of the highest excellencies is love.⁴¹

For Edwards, consent (“being’s consent to being”) is the essence of love.⁴² Without it, there can be no excellence, unity, or indeed being. If God were a single entity, then he would have no relation, and thus no consent, in his eternal life. Then, such a Deity cannot be referred to as excellent, according to Edwards. If God is excellent, there must be a plurality in him. Repeating the “being’s consent to being” axiom, Edwards further developed his doctrine of divine excellence with a pneumatological logic within the mutual love model: “’Tis peculiar to God that he has beauty within himself, consisting in being’s consenting with his own being, or the love of himself in his own Holy Spirit; whereas the excellence of others is in loving others, in loving God, and in the communications of his Spirit.”⁴³ As a result, the mutual love model is the paradigm within which Edwards understood the nature of God—i.e., divine excellency, goodness, and beauty—that leads to his doctrine of the Trinity. In “the Mind,” these interconnected relations are succinctly explained within the framework of the mutual love model:

God could be excellent no other way at that time, for all the exertions of himself were toward himself. But he exerts himself toward himself no other way than in infinitely loving and delighting in himself, in the mutual love of the Father and the Son. This makes the third, the personal Holy Spirit or the holiness of God, which is his infinite beauty, and this is God’s infinite consent to being in general.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Edwards, *WJE* 6:337.

⁴² Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards’ Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 195.

⁴³ Edwards, *WJE* 6:365.

⁴⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 6:364.

In summary, Edwards's concept of God can be defined as the triune provider who exerts his own self-knowledge and self-love infinitely and perfectly toward himself and within the trinitarian immanent life.

The Single or the Dual Tradition(s)

In recent years, several theologians have studied Edwards's trinitarianism as the topic of their doctoral research in theological studies. There has been a scholarly debate on whether Edwards *re*-claimed the Augustinian trinitarian tradition, especially the mutual-love model, or *re*-vised it with the Victorine model (the name after Richard of St. Victor, a twelfth-century medieval Scottish theologian), which is often understood as a Western version of social trinitarianism. Edwards's use of social analogies, such as "society" or "family," in his discussion of the real distinctions within the persons of the Trinity in the *Discourse* (also with "Miscellanies," no. 117 and 571) triggered the debate on his theological position regarding trinitarianism among Edwardsean scholars.⁴⁵ Their positions can be categorized into two approaches to Edwards's trinitarianism: (1) the single tradition and (2) the dual traditions approach.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See Edwards, *WJE* 21:135. The use of social terms, such as society and family, in terms of the *ad intra* trinitarian relations often appears in other Puritans' writings. For instance, see Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, 2:521. For instance, Mastricht wrote that "the holy Trinity supplies us an argument for divine glorification, with the example going before us of the seraphic doxology in Isaiah 6:3, repeated in Revelation 4:8 and signified also in Romans 11:36 and Revelation 1:4–5. For in the most blessed *society* of the three persons shines forth exceedingly." Thomas Goodwin also referred to the Trinity as the blessed society of three in the Godhead.

⁴⁶ See Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 104. That "Edwards employed one and not two trinitarian models" is a critical issue in the debate between Studebaker and Pauw. For categorizing Edwards's trinitarianism, see Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards's Theology*, 65–71. Louie, *Beauty*, 104–115. Yazawa, *Covenant of Redemption*, 63–67.

Studebaker and Caldwell are theologians advocating for the first approach.⁴⁷ For them, Edwards used the single trinitarian tradition—the Augustinian mutual love model. On the contrary, both Pauw and William Danaher opine that Edwards’s trinitarian theology was ambidextrous and eclectic since he used the double traditions, the Augustinian psychological and the Victorine social models, in tension.⁴⁸ However, it is clear that there is no disagreement on the rationale that the doctrine of the Trinity was fundamental to Edwards in both camps. They also admit Augustine’s influence on Edwards’s trinitarianism.⁴⁹ However, Pauw responds to Studebaker’s criticism against her use of the double traditions approach to Edwards’s trinitarianism:

I examine Edwards’s modulations between the two models of the trinity: a model that depicts the Son and Spirit as the wisdom and love of God, and a model that depicts the trinity as, in Edwards’s phrase, ‘a family of the three.’ I loosely associate the former with Augustine and the latter with the twelfth-century Western theologian Richard of St. Victor—who cannot be understood apart from his formation in the broadly Augustinian tradition.⁵⁰

That being said, even though Pauw does not deny the influence of Augustinian trinitarianism on Edwards’s theology, she argues that the single tradition alone cannot cover a complete picture of Edwards’s trinitarian theology.

In response to Pauw, however, Studebaker, from the single tradition approach, argues that she employs a reductionist methodology (exemplified by “the threeness-

⁴⁷ See Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards’ Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 4. See also Caldwell, *Communion*, 39–40. According to Robert Caldwell, Edwards’s use of the social languages was not because he employed the Victorine social trinitarianism but because he recognized the Holy Spirit as “the third person of the Deity and of the Trinity as a “family” or “society of the three.” See Edwards, “Miscellanies,” no. 571 as a proof text for Caldwell’s argument.

⁴⁸ See Pauw, *Supreme Harmony*, 10–11. See Pauw, “Trinity,” 46–47. See also Danaher, *Trinitarian Ethics*, 78–116.

⁴⁹ See Pauw, *Supreme Harmony*, 12–13. See also Danaher, *Trinitarian Ethics*, 17.

⁵⁰ Pauw, “Response,” 485.

oneness paradigm”) in analyzing Edwards’s trinitarian thought.⁵¹ With the conceptual tool, Studebaker argues that Pauw falsely assumes that Edwards’s trinitarianism was a theological hybrid of the two different models of the Trinity, the threeness one (referred to Eastern Cappadocian/St. Victorine) and the oneness model (referred to Western Augustinian). The assumption of the threeness-oneness paradigm is that the Eastern and Western trinitarianisms operate on contrary logic and that Augustine and the Cappadocians are found as theological foes, not friends, in their views of the Trinity.⁵² For instance, the former approach to the Trinity should be characterized as *social* in the sense that it begins with three divine persons (divine diversity) and persons have the primary ontological category over essence.⁵³ Unlike the former, the latter tradition should be understood as *substantial* in the sense that divine nature/essence (divine unity) underlies persons.

This misreading of Augustinian trinitarianism within the context of the threeness and oneness paradigm drew from the nineteenth-century French Jesuit Théodore de Régnon (1831–1893), who studied the dogmatic history of the Trinity.⁵⁴ For the

⁵¹ In her response to Studebaker, she tends to distance her thesis from the hermeneutical fallacy of the threeness-oneness paradigm, arguing instead that her *Supreme Harmony* tries to show “a multiform” of the Augustinian trinitarianism. See Pauw, “A Response,” 486.

⁵² One of the problems with the threeness and oneness paradigm is that it obscures the similarities between Augustine and the Cappadocian Fathers. Regarding the discourse of the Trinity, it is the scholarly consensus that the two share the apostolic/scriptural testimony of the Trinity and similar trinitarian patterns in their theologies. See Neil Ormerod, *Trinity*, 35–36. Hart, “Mirror,” 543. Johnson, “Trinitarian Theology of Religions,” 110. Barnes, “Augustine,” 240. See also, Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards’ Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 84. He writes that Augustine’s doctrine of the unity is meant for the doctrine of inseparable operations and “contrary to the threeness-oneness paradigm, Augustine’s doctrine of divine unity is not radically different from that of Gregory of Nyssa’s—i.e., a Cappadocian theory of unity.”

⁵³ Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards’ Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 74.

⁵⁴ Barnes, “Augustine,” 238. For further information on the de Régnon’s paradigm, see Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards’ Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 78–80. See also Wisse, *Trinitarian Theology*, 76. Maarten Wisse summarizes the “De Regnon thesis” as follows: “This thesis entails that there is a divide between Eastern Christianity, which is characterized by starting from the three persons and communion in the Trinity, and the Western Christianity, in which all emphasis is on the one essence of God.”

Cappadocians, according to de Régnon, “the divine is always encountered in or as person,” while for Augustine, “divinity is always understood in or as a nature.”⁵⁵ It is unfortunate that contemporary theologians, such as Collin Gunton and Catherine LaCugna, have uncritically adopted de Régnon’s threeness (Greek) and oneness (Latin) paradigm in their works.⁵⁶ “Nothing is more common in contemporary systematics than the inability to read Augustine outside of de Régnon’s paradigm,” complained Michel Barnes.⁵⁷ For instance, Allan Coppedge is one of the few theologians who connect the Trinity with providence. Though his contribution is acknowledged, he uncritically adopts the misjudgment of Augustinian trinitarianism as the oneness model and eventually makes a false conclusion, writing as follows: “Many in the Western church follow the Augustinian view of the Trinity, which focuses on God’s oneness. So they begin with God as sovereign King rather than as Father, Son, and Spirit. Thus God has the characteristics of *an absolute ruler*, similar to the emperor of Rome.”⁵⁸ Studebaker also points out that “the threeness-oneness paradigm is an over-generalized understanding of the historical trinitarian traditions.”⁵⁹ It is anachronistic to apply a

⁵⁵ Régnon, *Études de théologie positive*, 54.

⁵⁶ See Gunton, *Promise*, 96. Gunton’s comparison between Augustine and the Cappadocians is inaccurately drawn in arguing that “the general point to be made is that there is in these thinkers a movement towards a relational concept of the persons in God which maintains their distinctiveness in a way that is absent from Augustine.” See also LaCugna, *God for Us*, 96–97, 101. She puts that Augustine stood in a sharp contrast with the Cappadocians: “Related to this is Augustine’s emphasis on the unity of the divine substance as prior to the plurality of persons... The metaphysical revolution of the Cappadocian doctrine of the Trinity had been to see that the highest principle is *hypostasis* not *ousia*, person not substance: the hypostasis of the Father, Unoriginate yet Origin of all, even Origin of Son and Spirit. As we shall see in later chapters of the consequences of Augustine’s digression from the Cappadocian ontology of the Trinity were more than merely doctrinal. The changed metaphysical options for the theology of God changed politics, anthropology, and society as well.”

⁵⁷ Barnes, “Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology,” 239. See also, his “Rereading Augustine’s Theology of the Trinity,” 152.

⁵⁸ Coppedge, *God Who Is Triune*, 313 (emphasis added).

⁵⁹ Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards’ Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 68. See also Studebaker, “Supreme Harmony,” 480.

(even deficient) nineteenth-century theory invented by de Régnon to Augustine's trinitarianism. Misleading tradition leads Pauw to claim that Edwards had much continuity with the so-called social trinitarianism. Studebaker states: "Amy Plantinga's work on Edwards is the most explicit and thorough application of the threeness-oneness paradigm to Edwards's trinitarian thought."⁶⁰

Studebaker then points out two significant fallacies in Pauw's two traditions approach to Edwards's *ad intra* trinitarian relations. According to Pauw, Edwards developed his own complex trinitarian view, moving beyond the Augustinian and Reformed tradition: "His emphasis on both personal agency and deep relationality within the Godhead allowed him to bring together the social and psychological models for the Trinity in an imaginative way and plumb them as a resource for "living unto God."⁶¹ Indeed, Edwards's view of God is ontologically a relational or communicative being. Yet, Edwards's use of social trinitarian motifs is rather an anticipated expression from his theological inheritance in the Augustinian mutual love model, not the St. Victorine model, a Western social trinitarian model. That is to say, the Augustinian mutual love model led him to assert a social understanding of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, not away from it. According to Studebaker, the problem is that even though the Augustinian mutual love model does possess personal and social character within itself, Pauw credits Edwards's use of social themes to a distinct social trinitarianism, not the mutual love model.⁶²

⁶⁰ Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 67.

⁶¹ Pauw, *Supreme Harmony*, 75.

⁶² Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 106. See also Caldwell, *Communion*, 37. He is insistent that "the assertion that Edwards's theory of divine excellency provided a basis for his adoption of a non-Augustinian, social model of the Trinity does not hold weight precisely because his theory of excellency possesses Augustinian trinitarian themes." In his footnote, Caldwell provides a continuity of the divine excellency with the Augustinian trinitarian heritage, writing:

Second, Pauw tends to read Edwards's trinitarian thought in her preference for social trinitarianism (over an Augustinian mutual love approach) in an ahistorical way, so she fails to contextualize his thought. Even though Studebaker and Pauw place their primary theological interest in the same locus, Edwards's trinitarian thought, their modes of theology seem to stand in contrast. Studebaker mentions that with a post-modern impulse (against modernist views of truth and person), what current trinitarian scholars apparently prefer to work on is "relational theologies that are better suited to the needs of Christian spirituality" today.⁶³ Even though their theological intention is understandable, theologians today must be careful not to impose contemporary intellectual milieu upon trinitarian theologies of past theologians.⁶⁴ Rather, it would be better for them to understand their cultural-historical situations to become cognisant of their theological significance. As pointed out by John Webster, the characteristic of modern correlational theologies is "forgetfulness, alienation, or compromise."⁶⁵ A historical-theological analysis for the studies of Edwards's trinitarian thought by Studebaker is a mode of theological *retrieval* in which he attempts to interpret it primarily within his own context.

In contrast, Pauw appears to appeal to and indicate a more relevant orientation of Edwards's social trinitarianism and relational ontology. This claim means neither that Pauw's work is not entirely historically oriented at all and nor that Edwards's theology is not practically relevant for today. Instead, her moves towards the threeness and oneness

"Excellency, as the consent of a plurality within a unity (subject, object, and consent), shows a striking resemblance to the mind-knowledge-love triad."

⁶³ Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 9.

⁶⁴ Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 255.

⁶⁵ Webster, "Theologies of Retrieval," 586.

model and contemporary concept of rationality look to be a process of theological *correlation* or negotiation between the historical Edwards and theological renewal. This approach eventually led her to misinterpret Edwards's trinitarianism as an embodiment of two models of the Trinity—the Augustinian and Cappadocian/St. Victorine trinitarian traditions.

In historical studies, Augustine underscored the Holy Spirit as the love constituting the unity of the church and elaborated the trinitarian mutual love model in order to condemn the Donatist's schism in the church as a failure of love.⁶⁶ Similar to Augustine, Edwards also built upon the trinitarian tradition to show the reasonableness of the Trinity to his intellectual counterparties because the mutual love model of the Trinity, he believed, would establish divine goodness and excellence. Hence, Edwards's social trinitarianism was an apologetic device/project derived from the traditional Augustinian mutual love trinitarian model, preventing and refuting the adoption of a notion of deity generated by Enlightenment thought in his day.⁶⁷

The Triune Provider in Action Unfolded *Ad Extra*

The renewed interest in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in the twentieth century helped increase scrutinize of the relationship between the immanent and the economic Trinity. Modern theologians have suggested diverse ways in terms of characterizing the relation of the *ad intra* and the *ad extra* Trinity.⁶⁸ Edwards's way of understanding the

⁶⁶ Ployd, *Augustine*, 100.

⁶⁷ For a more detail information on the immediate context that had close ties with Edwards's trinitarian thought, see Studebaker and Caldwell, *Trinitarian Theology*, 125–53. See also Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 207–54. For a brief introduction to his overall context, refer to Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards's Theology*, 31–34.

⁶⁸ For different approaches to the relation between the immanent and the economic Trinity, see Chung Hyun Baik, *Holy Trinity*, 62–132. He proposes seven different positions on the immanent-

relationship is that the immanent Trinity is the authentic pre-historic (eternal) foundation of the economic Trinity.⁶⁹ If God did not possess internal self-relatedness (God in himself), there would be no external relatedness of God (God for us). Furthermore, the internal relatedness of the triune God's life shapes the external relatedness of the Trinity to the world.⁷⁰ As Edwards believed, God's own life in himself is thus known and experienced from God's economy of salvation in history through two divine agents, Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit, to the believers.⁷¹

Then, how did Edwards reckon that God's external activities reflect his inner life? From his Augustinian view of the immanent Trinity, the economic Trinity must be triadic in nature. The divine missions are according to the proper nature of each of the three divine persons and the roles of those three persons in God's life in himself.⁷² First, for instance, the unoriginated Father provides God himself for the world in two distinct,

economic Trinity relations in contemporary trinitarian theology as follows: (1) Barth (mutual correspondence), (2) Rahner (identity), (3) Moltmann, Pannenberg, and Jenson (eschatological unity), (4) Boff and Pittenger (the immanent Trinity much more than the economic Trinity), (5) Bracken (immersing the economic Trinity into the immanent Trinity), (6) Suchocki and LaCugna (absorbing the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity), and last (7) Lee (mutual inclusiveness).

⁶⁹ See Crisp and Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards*, 39. According to them, for Edwards, "God's life *in se* (in himself) is the foundation and end of all of Edwards's theologizing. The inner plenitude of the divine life grounds and guides the theologian's quest to seek understanding."

⁷⁰ Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 199. For this dynamic consistency between the *ad intra* and *ad extra* Trinity, see Lee's "Editor's Introduction," 2. He explains: "When Christians speak about God as eternally triune in God's immanent Trinity, they are affirming that God's activities of creating, saving, and sanctifying are not accidental but rather rooted in, and consistent with, the way God is eternally within his own life...the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity were inseparably connected."

⁷¹ Lee, "Editor's Introduction," 31. See Edwards, *WJE* 13:262–63.

⁷² Lee, "Editor's Introduction," 32. See Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, 3:310. Mastricht was a primary Puritan thinker who related the doctrine of the Trinity to that of providence in general and the distinct economic roles of each person of the Trinity in providence. He wrote: "three is one God who is the author of providence, and on the other hand, the Trinity of persons, when that same pronoun is repeated three times. At the same time is indicated the economy of the Trinity in the business of providence, by the threefold repetition, and the different cases. Thus providence is from the Father, as the Lord and ruler of the household, through the Son as the dispenser and steward of the household, to the holy Spirit as the emissary and executor." See Tan, "Trinitarian Action," 127. Seng-Kong Tan points out that there is "the profound fittingness between the divine *oikonomia* and *theologia*" in Edwards's trinitarianism.

yet inseparable, modes. “The Father in that affair acts as Head of the Trinity,” according to Edwards in “Miscellanies,” no. 1062.⁷³ He explained that this economic role as “Head of the Trinity” naturally fits to the first person of the Godhead because “the Father don’t arise from any natural subject” of other persons of the Trinity.⁷⁴ The *oikonomia* role of the Father is distinguished by and fits to his immanent relations to the Son and the Spirit.⁷⁵

’Tis fit that *the order of the acting of the persons of the Trinity should be agreeable to the order of their subsisting*: that as the Father is first in the order of subsisting, so he should be first in the order of acting; that as the other two persons are from the Father in their subsistence, and as to their subsistence naturally originated from him and dependent on him, so that, in all that they act, they should originate from him, act from him and in a dependence on him; that as the Father, with respect to the subsistences, is the fountain of the Deity, wholly and entirely so, so he should be the fountain in all the acts of the Deity. This is fit and decent in itself. Though it is not proper to say decency *obliges* the persons of the Trinity to come into this order and economy, yet it may be said that decency requires it, and that therefore the persons of the Trinity all consent to this order, and establish it by agreement, as they all naturally delight in what is in itself fit, suitable and beautiful.⁷⁶

That is, while sharing himself *ad extra*, the Father remains as the Father in his relation to the world, too, in the following ways: (1) he is the principal source of the processions and substance of the other divine persons and (2) the Son and the Holy Spirit are thus sent by the Father and work for the Father’s glory in their divine saving work.

Second, Edwards argued that the Son’s economic mission is fitted to the way of his procession from the Father. According to Edwards,

⁷³ Edwards, *WJE* 20:430.

⁷⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 20:430–31.

⁷⁵ See Butner, *Trinitarian Dogmatics*, 165. *Theologia* and *oikonomia* are more ancient terminology equivalent to the modern definition of the immanent and economic Trinity. Simply defining, the former is the doctrine of God as Trinity; the latter is the doctrine of God’s (administrative) work as Trinity. But some people prefer the Latin terminology, such as the Trinity *ad intra* (toward the interior/internal) and *ad extra* (toward the exterior/external), to *theologia* and *oikonomia*, for the Latin expression conveys relationality more clearly than the ancient terminology.

⁷⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 20:431 (emphasis added).

And how well doth this agree with his office of being the great prophet and teacher of mankind, the light of the world, and the revealer of God to creatures. John 8:12, “I am the light of the world.” Matt. 11:27, “No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” John 1:18, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Who can be so properly appointed to be [the] revealer of God to the world, as that person who is God’s own perfect idea or understanding of himself?⁷⁷

Given his eternal procession as the idea of God by God’s contemplating and knowing himself in the intra-trinitarian life, the Son communicates the knowledge of God into the created world. In his mission, the Son is primarily in charge of the self-disclosure of divine logos. The Son, the revelation or mediator, is to communicate the infinite mind of the Father to finite minds and lead intelligent beings to the saving knowledge of the truth. This particular Son’s economic work is fully appropriate to his divine nature.

In terms of the economy of the Holy Spirit, third, it is clear that Edwards also applied the very trinitarian grammar that “mission has the sameness with procession” to the Spirit.⁷⁸ The Holy Spirit, as the mutual love of the Father and the Son, is exerted toward the world so that the divine love (also holiness/beauty) is communicated with and enjoyed by the saints. Edwards deployed this trinitarian grammar again: ““God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” Which confirms not only that the divine nature subsists in love, but also that this love is the Spirit: for it is the Spirit of God by which God dwells in his saints.”⁷⁹ The Holy Spirit, who is breathed forth from the Father and the Son as they love and delight in each other—the Father loving the Son and the Son loving the Father in return—in the immanent trinitarian life, is poured out towards creaturely beings into their hearts (Rom 5:5). In

⁷⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 21:120–21. See also *WJE* 13:409.

⁷⁸ Baik, *Holy Trinity*, 75.

⁷⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 21:122.

this peculiar manner, the Spirit of God becomes God's love for himself *ad intra* and God's love for the world *ad extra*.

For Edwards, the saving work of the Son and the Spirit is denominated by their eternal relations with the Father. Therefore, as the Son becomes the wisdom and understanding of God (logos), so the Spirit becomes the love of God (agape) in the God-world relation. Or in other words, the divine missions extend the processions of the divine persons into the world; the former does not change or alter the latter. Yet Edwards's immanent-economic sameness grammar is not to be confused with something similar to a mechanically fixated or established law like gravity.⁸⁰ Rather, the visible missions of the Son and the Spirit originate from the invisible *pactum salutis*, the covenant of redemption. According to Richard Muller, the sophisticated Reformed concept of the covenant of redemption is defined as follows:

It manifests God's redemptive plan as eternal and as something far more than a reaction to the problem of sin. For all that this doctrine of eternal covenanting between Father and Son appears as the most speculative element in the covenant theology, it represents that most basic issues in the Reformed system—the eternal, divine, and consistently *gracious ground* of the plan of salvation, the resolution of the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the eternal and the temporal, the infinite and the finite, undertaken redemptively and *by grace alone* from the divine side.⁸¹

So, before the foundation of the world, there was a settled agreement (or covenant) between the Father and the Son to redeem the fallen creation.

According to Edwards, the Father ("Head") "begins the great transaction of the eternal covenant of redemption" by proposing the affair to the Son; the Son freely agrees to take "authority for the office" and provide himself for "the terms of man's

⁸⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 20:432.

⁸¹ Muller, "Toward *Pactum Salutis*," 15 (emphasis added).

redemption, and all the work that he should perform in this affair.”⁸² So, with a mutual agreement between the Father and the Son, the Father becomes the “supreme rector, legislator and judge,” who is “especially injured by sin, who is, therefore, the person whose wrath is enkindled, and whose justice and vengeance is to be executed and must be satisfied.”⁸³ Then, the Son becomes ascribed to “coming into the world in such a state of humiliation, and what he should do and suffer in that state.”⁸⁴ In this redemptive-covenantal affair, by humbling himself, the Son takes on human flesh and comes down below his heavenly dignity and glory; the Son is authorized by the Father to accomplish this *pactum salutis* for the elect. Not only does the Son enter into a new subjugated relation to God, but the Holy Spirit also is “put under the Son, or given to him and committed to his disposal and dispensation” until “the work of redemption shall be finished.”⁸⁵ Given the Holy Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and the Son *ad intra*, the Holy Spirit works to unite the elect with Christ and perfects their union in love.⁸⁶ Reita Yazawa points out that Edwards employed social language, such as “family” and “society,” within the context of the discussion of the covenant of redemption.⁸⁷

The covenant of redemption was not Edwards’s theological invention. He was indeed an heir of the Reformed-Puritan covenant theology in every aspect. Yet, what was

⁸² Edwards, *WJE* 20:435–36. For more information on Edwards’s view of the Trinity and the covenant of redemption, see Edwards, “Miscellanies,” no.1062.

⁸³ Edwards, *WJE* 20:433.

⁸⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 20:436.

⁸⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 20:444.

⁸⁶ See Edwards, *WJE* 20:443. According to Edwards, the trinitarian love shared (the mutual love) between the divine persons is the utmost source of the covenant of redemption. In this way, Edwards attempted not to marginalize the role of the Holy Spirit in the eternal covenant of redemption.

⁸⁷ Yazawa, *Covenant of Redemption*, 63.

constructive and creative in Edwards's covenantal theology was the significant place of the Holy Spirit in the saving work of the Trinity.

[T]he Father appoints and provides the Redeemer, and himself accepts the price and grants the thing purchased; the Son is the Redeemer by offering up himself, and is the price; and the Holy Ghost immediately communicates to us the thing purchased by communicating himself, and he is the thing purchased. The sum of all that Christ purchased for man was the Holy Ghost.⁸⁸

In the traditional Reformed understanding of soteriology, the role of the Spirit was considered subordinate to that of Christ within the framework of the objective and subjective paradigm.⁸⁹ This was due to the prioritization of the objective notion of justification as the guiding principle, overshadowing the subjective concept of sanctification. However, Edwards did not think of the Holy Spirit as mere divine agent after Christ's work by applying the benefits of redemption to the elect; so, he modified the tradition by arguing that the Spirit is "the benefit of redemption" itself, which Christ has purchased.⁹⁰ Studebaker and Caldwell write that the Holy Spirit is the gift that "Christ purchased for us that we should enjoy the love" and thus becomes "the sum of all spiritual good that the saints have in this world."⁹¹ Thus, the "benefit of redemption" is not a thing itself that the elect possesses but the Holy Spirit himself who enables the

⁸⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 21:136.

⁸⁹ Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 98.

⁹⁰ Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 98. See Edwards, *WJE* 21:132. Edwards wrote: "Merely to apply to us or immediately to give or hand to us the blessing purchased after it was purchased (as subservient to the other two persons), is but a little thing to the purchasing of it by the paying an infinite price by Christ's offering up himself in sacrifice to procure; and 'tis but a little thing to God the Father's giving his infinitely dear Son to be a sacrifice for us, and upon his purchase to afford to us all the blessings of his purchase. But according to this, there is an equality. To be the love of God to the world is as much as for the Father and the Son to do so much from love to the world; and to be [the] thing purchased was as much as to be the price: the price, and the thing bought with that price, are equal. And 'tis as much as to afford the thing purchased: for the glory that belongs to him that affords the thing purchased, arises from the worth of that thing that he affords; and therefore 'tis the same glory, and an equal glory: the glory of the thing itself is its worth, and that is also the glory of him that affords it."

⁹¹ Studebaker and Caldwell, *Trinitarian Theology*, 54.

elect to commune with the triune God. Hence, the Holy Spirit possesses the elect not vice versa, so to speak.

As seen so far, it is clear that the immanent Trinity communicates the economic Trinity in Edwards's thought. The trinitarian redemptive mission *ad extra* corresponds to the order of the immanent processions of the divine persons and their subsisting *ad intra*. What then is the fruit of all this discussion regarding the immanent and economic Trinity? Adonis Vidu summarizes why it matters:

Divine action *ad extra* does not wear its meaning on its sleeve. Its true nature is only accessible from the direction of the self-sufficient and yet abundantly overflowing divine life. Only by making our beginning with the processions will we properly be able to bear witness to the divine economy. We are not claiming that the procession can be comprehended. Such is a promise that will be made good in the beatific vision alone. Rather, we are expressing a principled directionality in our knowledge of divine operations. Failure to regard actions from the perspective of the processions invites mythologizing the agents, regarding them as objects in the world.⁹²

Although the regenerated still have the epistemological limitations to comprehend the trinitarian relations between the persons *ad intra* because of the ontological difference between God and humans, the inner life of the Trinity passes on such “a principled directionality in our knowledge of divine operations.”⁹³ Furthermore, the principled knowledge of the immanent Trinity also allows the believers to know that the divine missions are a sheer grace of God extended from the self-sufficient and abundantly overflowing perfect divine life into them. Also, Edwards's view of the *pactum salutis* indicates that the triune God is truly for the elect in advance; it has the positive connection between God's pre-temporal covenant between the divine persons and its

⁹² Vidu, *Same God*, 95.

⁹³ Vidu, *Same God*, 95.

enactment in time.⁹⁴ The covenant of redemption now flows forth and is applied into them by the sheer grace of God's eternally willing and loving intention to provide his divine life to them: "God is himself the portion and purchased inheritance of his people. Thus God is the Alpha and the Omega in this affair of redemption."⁹⁵ Accordingly, this would lead the saints to acknowledge that the triune God's action *ad extra* is freely and graciously undertaken for them so that the Trinity thereby deserves to be the source of their comfort, joy, and worship.

The Triune God-World Relation

What has been said so far can now be put into Edwards's trinitarian theology of providence. Edwards's theology is primarily concerned with the self-communication of God, in which God communicates his own being with the created world ("God is a communicative being").⁹⁶ Edwards's view of the God-world relation derives from his view of *theologia*. If, as has been shown so far, Edwards was to maintain the trinitarian grammar that "the eternal relations extend into the revealed history of God," then the immanent Trinity is the guiding grammar of his understanding of divine providence *ad extra*.⁹⁷ The world is a shadow of God's exerting and communicating his trinitarian life

⁹⁴ See Yazawa, *Covenant of Redemption*, 13. Yazawa argues: "The covenant of redemption connects time and eternity. The covenant of redemption is the nexus of the immanent and economic Trinity." Thus, contrary to skeptics, like Immanuel Kant, who say that the doctrine of the Trinity is not practically relevant, Yazawa corrects them, arguing: "Far from being abstract and speculative, the doctrine of the Trinity is practical because salvation of the church elect is impossible without the Trinity." For Kant's criticism of the doctrine of the Trinity, see Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties*, 65–7.

⁹⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 21:137.

⁹⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 13:410.

⁹⁷ Rice, *Trinity and History*, 181. See Owen, *Works of John Owen*, 2:405. According to John Owen, the divine persons are "distinct, living, divine, intelligent, voluntary principles of operation or working, and that in and by internal acts one towards another, and in acts that outwardly respect the creation and the several parts of it. Now, this distinction *originally* lieth in this,—that the Father begetteth the Son, and the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceedeth from both of them."

ad intra. If Edwards were to hold on to the fact that God's eternal history is the grounded narrative (or "identifying marker") for God's temporal activity and the way in which God acts in history, indeed, he would understand God's providential relation to the world as reflecting the eternal trinitarian life between the divine persons.⁹⁸ That is, the immanent Trinity helps the reader to glimpse how the triune God relates to the world. So, along with those successive thought processes, the point to be made here, Edwardsean divine providence is to be spoken of as effusing (1) divine relationality; (2) sovereignty (lordship); (3) wisdom (knowledge); and (4) love (happiness) from God's eternal life to his life in the created world by the (inseparable) work of the Trinity as Father, Son, and Spirit.⁹⁹

Divine Relationality: Centrifugal and Centripetal

Allen Coppedge argues that because the Christian God is the God who is triune, the Christian doctrine of providence must start with divine relationality rather than divine power. He writes that: "the triune God does not begin with the exercise of omnipotence over his creatures. Rather, he begins by developing relationships with human persons."¹⁰⁰ This relational view of the triune God is the key to understanding the overarching nature of Edwards's doctrine of providence as well—how God as the Trinity relates to the created world. His understanding of divine providence starts from the

⁹⁸ Rice, *Trinity and History*, 184.

⁹⁹ Those contents of divine providence in Edwards's thought are well summarized in his "Miscellanies," no. 332. See Edwards, *WJE* 13:410. See Turretin, *Institutes*, 1:489. Similar to Edwards, Turretin understood that providence is the concept that embraces and exercises three things: (1) knowledge ("directing knowledge"), (2) will/decreed (commanding will), and (3) administration ("fulfilling power").

¹⁰⁰ Coppedge, *God Who is Triune*, 296.

eternal life of God as Trinity and then characterizes the triune God-world relation in communicative and relational terms.

God first provides himself to the world, according to Edwards: “The great and universal end of God’s creating the world was to communicate himself. God is a communicative being.”¹⁰¹ That is, the triune God has a *centrifugal* force from the intra-trinitarian dynamic relations of mutual indwelling, knowing, and loving that keeps God moving outwards from his inner life.¹⁰² This communicativeness is called disposition or inclination in Edwards’s own term: “A disposition in God, as an original property of his nature, to an emanation of his own infinite fullness, was what excited him to create the world.”¹⁰³ According to Sang Hyun Lee, Edwards believed that the divine essence consists in power, habit, or disposition so that it primarily defines the nature of God and his moral character.¹⁰⁴ In Edwards’s thought, creation itself is thus a trinitarian act from the relational disposition of God as Trinity. The communicative disposition of the triune God *ad intra* extends to God’s relation *ad extra* to the world.

Yet, the divine disposition is not only centrifugal but *centripetal*. Centrifugal and centripetal force are the action-reaction forces combined from and associated with the perichoretic life of the triune God *ad intra*. If the centrifugal power is directed outwards, the centripetal disposition of God is directed inwards in the way that it brings God’s creatures from their creaturely life to their eternal communal life with the Trinity.

¹⁰¹ Edwards, *WJE* 13:410.

¹⁰² I owe the concept of the centripetal and centrifugal movement to Richard Bauckham. See Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, 72–80.

¹⁰³ Edwards, *WJE* 8:435. See Edwards, *WJE* 13:495–96. In “Miscellanies,” no. 448, Edwards wrote: “Both these ways God’s glorifying himself come from the same cause, viz. the overflowing of God’s internal glory, or an *inclination* in God to cause his internal glory to flow out *ad extra*.” See also Schweitzer, *God*, 13.

¹⁰⁴ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 76.

Edwards explained this relationship between centrifugal and centripetal forces and its implication to the God-world relation:

God is glorified within himself these two ways: (1) by appearing or being manifested to himself in his own perfect idea, or, in his Son, who is the brightness of his glory; (2) by enjoying and delighting in himself, by flowing forth in infinite love and delight towards himself, or, in his Holy Spirit. So God glorifies himself towards the creatures also two ways: (1) by appearing to them, being manifested to their understandings; (2) in communicating himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying the manifestations which he makes of himself. They both of them may be called his glory in the more extensive sense of the word, viz. his shining forth, or the going forth of his excellency, beauty and essential glory *ad extra*. By one way it goes forth towards their understandings; by the other it goes forth towards their wills or hearts. God is glorified not only by his glory's being seen, but by its being rejoiced in, when those that see it delight in it: God is more glorified than if they only see it; his glory is then received by the whole soul, both by the understanding and by the heart. God made the world that he might communicate, and the creature receive, his glory, but that it might [be] received both by the mind and heart.¹⁰⁵

Edwards's understanding of the God-world relation is cyclical, as Strobel also argues.¹⁰⁶

Using the terms emanation and remanation instead, Strobel summarizes the cyclical nature of the relationship between the triune God and the world: "God emanates his glory to creation and, in the work of Christ and the Spirit, regenerates the elect to remanate that glory back to God, ultimately finding its perfection in consummation."¹⁰⁷

The Millennium as a Display of Divine Providence

The two directions of movement, the centrifugal (from a centre) and the centripetal (towards a centre), are the basic diagram for understanding Edwards's trinitarian theology of providence. Where this centrifugal-centripetal diagram is most clearly

¹⁰⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 13:495.

¹⁰⁶ Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards's Theology*, 5.

¹⁰⁷ Strobel, *Jonathan Edwards's Theology*, 13.

revealed in Edwards's thought is his theological understanding of the millennium.¹⁰⁸ For him, the millennium is the final earthly stage in the successive dispensations of divine providence before bringing the church to the new heavens and the new earth. For Edwards, the millennium would be a foretaste of the new heavens and the new earth for the church, and it is a type of the "eternal state of the church's consummate rest and glory at the end of the world."¹⁰⁹ He believed that God would bring out an earthly millennial society—"one community, one body, in Christ"—at the end of the world, and with the saints, Christ will rule over it for a vastly long time, like a literal thousand years, on the earth.¹¹⁰

According to his millennialism, the millennial society has both centrifugal action and centripetal reaction. In "Miscellanies," no. 26, for instance, it is a centrifugal movement that, as Edwards wrote, the millennial society would be gradually "diffused all over the place" from the centre ("two or three nations of Europe" like "England") to the periphery ("barbarous nations").¹¹¹ With the image of light shining outwards, he argued that the millennium would be gradually expanded from some European countries established with the religion of Christianity to other non-Christian nations.¹¹² In addition to the centrifugal action, it is also centripetal that is envisioned in Edwards's millennialism. The millennium also has a centripetal reaction in that non-Christian

¹⁰⁸ The Millennium never played a peripheral role in the theology of Edwards. As C. C. Goen points out, Edwards was one of the first major postmillennial thinkers in America. See Goen, "Jonathan Edwards," 35–37. See also Stein, "Eschatology," 227. Stephen Stein divides the development of Edwards's eschatological thought into three stages.¹⁰⁸ He then concludes that although Edwards's eschatology maintained contextual flexibility in response to fluid situations, it did not undergo significant changes, and the millennium steadily remained central to his eschatology throughout every stage of his life.

¹⁰⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 18:289.

¹¹⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 13:369.

¹¹¹ Edwards, *WJE* 13:212–13.

¹¹² Edwards, *WJE* 13:212–13.

nations will come to “join the forces of their minds in exploring the glories of the Creator, their hearts in loving and adoring him, their hands in serving him, and their voices in making the world to ring with his praise” from all over the place.¹¹³

Yet Edwards pointed out that both Christian and non-Christian nations are not necessarily mutually exclusive during the millennial period. Instead, they will be “mutually enlightening each other” *via* the perichoresis (circumincession) of both centrifugal and centripetal movements so that the millennial society will be progressively and jointly enlightened and evangelized under the same lordship of Christ. Seeking truth and wisdom will be facilitated through globalization in that valuable philosophical and religious resources will be transported and shared from “one end of the earth and another”—for instance, “Terra Australis Incognita” (a hypothetical southern continent), “Wild Tartary” (north-central Asia), and “Hottentots” (south-western Africa).¹¹⁴ Not only will the millennial saints be joined together in learning knowledge of God from and sharing it with one another, they will also be united in loving and serving God. This is the future glory of the millennial society at the end of the world, according to Edwards.¹¹⁵

The Triune Provider as the Eschatological Trinity

¹¹³ Edwards, *WJE* 13:213. See Bezzant, *Jonathan Edwards*, 45. Bezzant points out the centrifugal (“spread”)-centripetal (“come”) diagram in “Miscellanies,” no. 26, writing: “Misc. 26 relates the *spread* of the knowledge of God throughout the world such that barbarous nations become “as bright and polite as English,” “excellent books and wonderful performances” might *come* from “Terra Australis Incognita” and other nations.”

¹¹⁴ See *WJE* 13:212, 5:143. See also McDermott and Story, *Other Jonathan Edwards*, 30–32.

¹¹⁵ See Edwards, *WJE* 9:484.

How then would God exercise his providence to lead the church to the millennial kingdom? In “Miscellanies,” no. 332, Edwards elaborated how God triunely provided and sent his inner glorious life to creaturely beings:

The great and universal end of God’s creating the world was to communicate himself. God is a communicative being. This communication is really only to intelligent beings: the communication of himself to their understandings is his glory, and the communication of himself with respect to their wills, the enjoying faculty, is their happiness. God created the world for the shining forth of his excellency and for the flowing forth of his happiness. It don’t make God the happier to be praised, but it is a becoming and condecant and worthy thing for infinite and supreme excellency to shine forth: ’tis not his happiness but his excellency so to do.¹¹⁶

Divine providence is to be practised by exercising God’s sovereignty (power), wisdom (knowledge), and love (happiness) in the world.¹¹⁷ The providential operation, according to Edwards, will be profoundly and progressively visible in the latter days in which there are more glorious things to come, which is the millennium.¹¹⁸ Even though his ultimate preoccupation was not with the millennium per se in his philosophy of history, it is apparent that he was expecting the millennial society as a rich communication of God’s sovereignty, understanding, and will with creaturely beings.¹¹⁹ For him, the millennium seems obviously to be echoing and picturing such a pattern of divine providence in the course of ecclesial history on earth; it also captures how God as triune exercises providence in history through the mutual trinitarian actions of God *ad extra*.

¹¹⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 13:410.

¹¹⁷ Butner, *Trinitarian Dogmatics*, 194. Butner writes: “The most famous appropriation of attributes treats the Father as power, the Son as wisdom, and the Holy Spirit as goodness.” Refer to Edwards, *WJE* 1:378–80. There appears a trinitarian nature of God’s absolute sovereignty, such as (1) power (authority), (2) will, and (3) wisdom.

¹¹⁸ For the millennium in Edwards’s history of redemption, see Edwards, *WJE* 18:289. According to Edwards, “The six days of the old creation typify probably the first six thousand years of the church; and the seventh, which was the sabbath, the glorious millennium, and also that eternal state of the church’s consummate rest and glory at the end of the world, of which the glory of the millennium is a type.”

¹¹⁹ See Davidson, *Logic of Millennial Thought*, 216–17.

First, Edwards believed that the millennium will be a theocratic society in which God shall reign with various forms of political services by human kings and governments that please God.¹²⁰ The triune God's relation to the millennium is characterized by the triumphant exercise of the lordship of the Father.¹²¹ The eternal relation of the Father as the unbegotten and the eternal origin (i.e., the fountain of Deity) of the divine persons with the Son and the Spirit *ad intra* extends into the millennium *ad extra*. Given the Father's immanent identity in the Godhead, Edwards said that "the Father in the economy of the persons of the Trinity is especially the Lord, sovereign, lawgiver, and judge and disposer."¹²² In redemptive history, the Father exercised his lordship over/with the elect from Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament, even beyond post-biblical history. And this Fatherly reign will be greater and wider across the globe during the millennial age. The millennium is an earthly divine monarchy where the Father exercises and advances his sovereign rule over his creatures, including historic empires and satanic monarchies.¹²³ Thus, they shall fall and come to an end in the millennium.¹²⁴ According to Edwards's redemptive discourse, there will be "a very great defeat and glorious disappointment of Satan" but more saints will come to acknowledge his sovereignty and join his millennial monarchy.¹²⁵ He wrote that "divine providence is preparing the way for the future glorious times of the church."¹²⁶ As a

¹²⁰ Stein, "Editor's Introduction," 18. The millennium as the image of divine monarch is clearly manifested in Edwards's *Notes on the Apocalypse*. See Edwards, *WJE* 5:180. According to Edwards, the reign of King Solomon in the biblical history of Israel was "a most eminent type of the millennium."

¹²¹ See Wood, *Question of Providence*, 105. *Omnipotens* (power) is an ecumenical connotation to the attribute of the first person of the Trinity in the creedal format—"the Father Almighty." For further information on providence as lordship, see Webber, *Foundations*, I/513–25.

¹²² Edwards, *WJE* 21:143.

¹²³ See Edwards, *WJE* 5:126. Quoting from Rev 14:1, the latter-day saints will be represented as those "144,000 having their Father's name written in their foreheads," as wrote Edwards.

¹²⁴ See Edwards, *WJE* 5:136.

¹²⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 13:307.

¹²⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 9:434.

result, the church will enter into an earthly state of great peace and prosperity in history: “The millennium is the sabbatism of the church, or the time of her rest,” said Edwards.¹²⁷ In this sense, the Father’s works in the millennium as the sovereign king is to be interpreted relationally—namely, God providentially exercises his power for the elect church. Moreover, divine sovereignty will be carried on with the church everywhere. With the king, the saints “shall reign on earth” and “shall take the possessions of king’s palaces and thrones,” as wrote Edwards.¹²⁸

In Edwards’s millennialism, second, there is a great emphasis on the future advance of knowledge, describing the millennial society as follows: “So great shall be the increase of knowledge in this time that heaven shall be, as it were, opened to the church of God on earth.”¹²⁹ In “Miscellanies,” no. 262, Edwards also spoke of the millennium as “more like heaven” in the similar manner that “contemplative and spiritual employments, and those things that more directly concern the mind and the religion, will be more the saints’ ordinary business than now.”¹³⁰ During the millennial future, according to him, the earth will thus be full of knowledge of the Lord, like the heaven where the heavenly saints enjoys the beatific vision. The difference between the millennial and heavenly knowledge of truth is rather in the degree of perfection and quality than kind. For Edwards, the role of the Son as subsisting in the Father’s *reflex* knowledge of himself *ad intra* extends to his becoming divine *redemptive* knowledge for

¹²⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 5:178.

¹²⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 9:482. See also *WJE* 9:473–74. Edwards wrote: “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High God.” Refer to *WJE* 18:295. He also argued: “The last kingdom which God will set up in the world will be a kingdom wherein the saints shall reign” (Rev 5:10).

¹²⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 9:481.

¹³⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 13:369.

the elect *ad extra*.¹³¹ Being compatible with his eternal divine nature, he is the revealer or the communicator who provides the knowledge of God to intelligent creatures (John 14:7). The Son is distinctly called the wisdom of God, and, according to Edwards, the Son as God's wisdom not only created the world (Prov 3:19) but also has accomplished a glorious work of divine providence and redemption.¹³² In particular, the Son providentially provides vast amounts of knowledge of God to the millennial saints for their enriching and beatific relationship with God. Thus, the millennial saints shall be joined together in their journey towards an increasing degree of perfection in their knowledge so that, in Edwards's words, the millennial society shall be "covered with the knowledge of God" as if "the water covers the sea."¹³³

Like power and knowledge, last but not least, happiness/love is also a relational term in Edwards's thinking. For Edwards, one alone cannot be either excellent or happy. The triune God's providential plan for the millennium is to make the society one happy people and blessed society. "The millennium is the proper time of this happy state of the church and the world," according to Edwards.¹³⁴ Edwards understood the role of the Holy Spirit as the one who brings the divine happiness and love to the saints in the millennium, and this economic mission has a continuity with the ontological divine identity of the Holy Spirit as the mutual love between the Father and the Son. As if the Holy Spirit brings perfect harmony between the divine persons, Edwards understood the

¹³¹ Salvation and revelation are not two separate entities in Christian theology. God reveals himself in Jesus Christ, the redeemer.

¹³² Edwards, *WJE* 9:524.

¹³³ Edwards, *WJE* 9:473. See also *WJE* 9:480. "And then all countries and nations, even those that are now most ignorant, shall be full of light and knowledge. Great knowledge shall prevail everywhere. It may be hoped that then many of the Negroes and Indians will be divines, and that excellent books will be published in Africa, in Ethiopia, in Turkey—and not only very learned men, but others that are more ordinary men, shall then be very knowing in religion," as wrote Edwards.

¹³⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 5:177.

Holy Spirit as the bond of union between the millennial saints. The Holy Spirit not only empowers the saints to love God (vertical love) but also mutually love one another (horizontal love) because he is the agent of divine love.¹³⁵ In this way, the millennial society shall be a type (penultimate reality) of the heavenly realm where the triune God dwells—“the Father, and so the Son, are united in infinitely dear and incompressible mutual love.”¹³⁶ So for Edwards, it is the life-giving work of God appropriated to the distinctive work of the Holy Spirit in the world. It becomes apparent that along with godly ruling and godly thinking, godly loving is another sign of the millennial society in Edwards’s millennialism. In this respect, his vision of the millennium was shaped by a trinitarian logic in which God’s relation to the world is defined by his providential activity as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

By connecting the findings above, it is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who exist as one eternal God or tripersonal, all-powerful, all-knowing, and above all, all-loving in the immanent and the economic trinitarian life. Their providential working *ad extra* rests on their divine processions and relations to each other *ad intra*. That is, the character of God’s providence is consistent with the relations of the divine persons in eternity. Accordingly, each divine person has a distinctive mission; they have thus their own peculiar honor/glory.¹³⁷ Yet the working of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is indivisibly the work of the three *ad extra* (the *opera Dei ad extra indivisa sunt*).¹³⁸ The classical theistic model of providence tends to emphasize *Deus providebit*, whose

¹³⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 21:129. Edwards argued: “It is a confirmation that the Holy Ghost is God’s love and delight, because the saints’ communion with God consists in their partaking of the Holy Ghost. The communion of saints is twofold: ’tis their communion with God, and communion with one another.”

¹³⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 8:369.

¹³⁷ See Edwards, *WJE* 21:135, 146–47.

¹³⁸ See Owen, *Works of John Owen*, 2:18. The works of the economic Trinity is “common and undivided,” said Owen.

power upholds all things by his sovereign decree in their theological discourse on providence.¹³⁹ The model primarily pays attention to the questions of the human and the divine will (omni-causality).¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, other prevailing view on the doctrine of providence is linked to divine idea or foreknowledge, arguing that the Christian concept of God must know all things in time (omni-science), even future events, to be *Deus providebit* and to order both universal and particular things in the world.¹⁴¹ In reaction to those traditional models of God's providence, some contemporary theologians tend to prefer a doctrine of providence that prioritises God's relationality and loving character (omni-agape) over his power and foreknowledge.¹⁴² However, all the divine omni-workings (all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving) in the realm of the created world are a single and holistic power of the triune God in three forms by which the Father works through the Son in the power of the Spirit for the world.¹⁴³ They are indivisible operations of the triune provider. David Fergusson points out that the trinitarian model of providence "assists us in this respect by presenting it in ways that are not dominated by a single model appropriated to the first person. Both Son and Spirit participate intimately in the work of God's particular providence."¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ For instance, see Meister and Dew Jr., eds. *God and The Problem of Evil: Five Views*. See Elwood, *Philosophical Theology*, 30. Edwards was a Reformed-Puritan theologian, whose theology stressed the theme of God's glory and sovereignty in his theology. Yet, according to Douglas Elwood, Edwards believed that "God is sovereign because he is good, not good because he is sovereign." For Edwards, God was "moved not by a lust for power but by the power of love" in creating the world.

¹⁴⁰ For example, see Gundry and Jowers, eds. *Four Views on Divine Providence*.

¹⁴¹ The Latin verb *provideo* means "to provide for, to foresee." The closest equivalent verb *pronoēō* can be translated as "to perceive beforehand or foresee." For a discussion of God's providence with an emphasis on omniscience (foreknowledge), see Beilby and Eddy, eds. *Divine Foreknowledge*.

¹⁴² As an example of the discourse of divine providence with an emphasis on divine relationality and love, see Oord, *Uncontrolling Love of God*.

¹⁴³ Butner, *Trinitarian Dogmatics*, 182. See Fergusson, "Theology of Providence," 275.

¹⁴⁴ Fergusson, "Theology of Providence," 275.

As it is in heaven, for instance, the lordship of the Father is actualized and completed in the earthly kingdom through sending his Son into the world and his perfect obedience to his Father's will in the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁵ Given the Son as the same with God's own perfect idea (divine logos), the Son is responsible for spreading knowledge of God to the souls of his creatures. Yet, without the light of the Holy Spirit (or the "glorious outpouring of God's Spirit"), God's truth and wisdom cannot be communicated in their minds and thus cannot advance in the world.¹⁴⁶ "Knowledge and light begin to increase, and truth to be gloriously displayed and vindicated" during the millennial age.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, because of the Holy Spirit, the blessed community of the saints can experience and enjoy God's self-giving life and love in Christ together. Given his divine identity, the Spirit sanctifies and empowers humans to love God and one another in return.¹⁴⁸ All three persons exercise providence for the world, yet their works *ad extra* are inseparable. (1) Exercising divine sovereignty over the realm of the created world, (2) providing divine knowledge, and (3) enabling happiness for the creatures' communion with God and others are three aspects of the same divine providential action

¹⁴⁵ See Edwards, *WJE* 9:357–58. Edwards said: "For God the Father would have nothing to do with fallen man in a way of mercy but by a mediator. But in order to Christ's carrying on the Work of Redemption and accomplishing the success of his own purchase as God-man, it was necessary that he should be alive, and so that he should rise from the dead. Therefore Christ, after he had finished this purchase by death and by continuing for a time under the power of death, rises from the dead to fulfill the end of his purchase and himself to bring about that which he died for. For this matter God the Father had committed unto him, that he might as Lord of all manage all to his own purposes, Rom. 14:9, "For to this end⁹ Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living."

¹⁴⁶ See Edwards, *WJE* 21:141. It is "by the Holy Spirit, that the divine nature and the divine Logos, or understanding or wisdom, is united to the human nature," as said Edwards. See also *WJE* 9:441. According to Edwards, it is the outpouring of the Spirit of God that advances the wisdom and knowledge of God by enlightening people's minds during the millennial period.

¹⁴⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 13:429.

¹⁴⁸ See Edwards, *WJE* 21:124. According to Edwards, "God's Spirit, or his love, doth but as it were come and dwell in our hearts and act there as a vital principle, and we become the living temples of the Holy Ghost; and when men are regenerated and sanctified, God pours forth of his Spirit upon them, and they have fellowship or, which is the same thing, are made partakers with the Father and Son of their good, i.e. of their love, joy and beauty."

of the Trinity in Edwards's thinking. And this trinitarian providential operation (not collaboration) is most obviously characterized in Edwards's vision of the future millennial society. For Edwards, the millennium is a God-given providential reality. It shows that God's providence is never static but dynamic/relational and the whole creature utterly depends on his powerful, wise, and loving providence in every part of nations and history.

The End of the Triune God's Providence

Charles Wood writes that the word providence is "an action word" in that "God is understood to be doing something."¹⁴⁹ He then argues that this point of view is most appropriate in understanding divine providence. In the case of Edwards's thinking, God is not merely posited in the abstract without reference to his act. In his dispositional understanding of Edwards's theology of the God-world relation, Anri Morimoto is insistent that: "God does not first exist and then begin to exercise his disposition. Rather, in his exercise, he is, God is, as God acts."¹⁵⁰ If so, the reader should ask what direction (telos) God's ongoing providence is heading towards. What is the end of God's providential act?¹⁵¹

As seen in previous chapters, Edwards's providentialism was deeply rooted in the Augustinian teleological tradition, focusing on its purpose or goal. For Edwards,

¹⁴⁹ Wood, *Question of Providence*, 73.

¹⁵⁰ Morimoto, "End for Which God Created," 43.

¹⁵¹ The Christian idea of providence is teleological in that God expresses his purpose for the whole world. See Brunner, *Dogmatics 2*, 157. Emil Brunner argues that the teleological nature of providence is one of the key differences between the Christian concept of providence and the Stoic's view of it, explaining that "the Christian view, but not the Stoic, is wholly teleological, related to the End, determined by the End. The God of revelation does not only "fore"-see, but He sees right down the course of events to the End of all things, to the final End."

providence is also a purposive activity that aims to achieve its final goal.¹⁵² In his typological thinking, divine providence serves as “a kind of voice or language of God, to instruct intelligent beings in things pertaining to himself.”¹⁵³ It is a means of God’s communicating himself to his creatures. Surely, Edwards believed that there are particular purposes of God in the life and death, including birth and marriage, of an individual person. Even behind the scenes of every victory and defeat in war and socio-political peace, there are God’s ends that seek to achieve their goal.

In *Concerning the End for Which God Created World* (henceforth *End of Creation*), Edwards focused on macro levels of discourse on the end of creation with a theocentric perspective. According to him, the end of creation for which God created the world is as follows:

the whole universe, including all creatures animate and inanimate, in all its actings, proceedings, revolutions, and entire series of events, should proceed from a regard and with a view to *God*, as the supreme and last end of all: that every wheel, both great and small, in all its rotations, should move with a constant invariable regard to him as the ultimate end of all.¹⁵⁴

Creation is not absolute but relative, depending on its source. God made himself the “ultimate” (or “supreme and last”) end of all creation.¹⁵⁵ In other words, God created the whole universe as a theatre for his immanent divine glory to play outward, and for his emanating glory to be received, glorified, and enjoyed by the creatures that God

¹⁵² See Morimoto, “End for Which God Created,” 42–43. According to Morimoto, it is a teleological aspect that Edwards’s use of emanation in his theology of creation is distinct from the neo-Platonic view of emanation. His idea of emanation with regard to creation is purposive; the neo-Platonic emanative view of creation is purposeless.

¹⁵³ Edwards, *WJE* 11:79.

¹⁵⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 8:424–25.

¹⁵⁵ See Edwards, *WJE* 8:422. Edwards expressed the same axiom in a different way, for instance, “God should have a supreme regard to himself.”

made.¹⁵⁶ As seen in the previous circular image, it is through such centrifugal and centripetal movements that God's ultimate end will be fulfilled. God's disposition to emanate his life *ad intra* in a perichoretic fellowship with the divine persons carries out to the world. It also has a centripetal force that draws the created reality toward his perfect life *ad intra*.

For Edwards, creation does not expend the perfect life of God and his life is perfect both in himself and in relation to the life that he created. Creation also does not jeopardize God's ultimate end. The ultimate end of his disposition (or his being in act) is always to communicate himself whether it is *ad intra* or *ad extra*. This supreme end is to be fulfilled in and through things by which God "makes himself known, or by *his word* and *works*; i.e. in what he says, and in what he does."¹⁵⁷ By his revelation ("word") and providence ("works"), God is capable of making himself known and thus achieving the ultimate end in the created world.¹⁵⁸

Just as God seeks to find that supreme end in creation, the ends of his providence also serve the same ultimate end. In *End of Creation*, he argued that "whatever appears to be God's "ultimate end" in any sense of his works of providence in general, that must be the ultimate end of the work of creation itself."¹⁵⁹ Using a clock an analogy, Edwards

¹⁵⁶ See Morimoto, "End for Which God Created," 43. In his entire works, Edwards used the words "emanation" more than eighty times and "emanations" about twenty times.

¹⁵⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 8:422. (emphasis original).

¹⁵⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 9:520. According to Edwards, one of the functions of Scripture is inform the works of divine providence within sacred history, arguing that scriptures "alone inform what God is about or what he aims at in these works that he is doing in the world." Thus, providence and work cannot be disunited in Edwards's theology of providence.

¹⁵⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 8:414. He further argued that "we may justly look upon whatsoever has the nature of an ultimate end of God's works of providence in general, that the same is also an ultimate end of the creation of the world; for God's works of providence in general are the same with the general use that he puts the world to that he has made." See also *WJE* 8:450. "The ultimate end of God's creating the world, being also (as was before observed) the last end of all God's works of providence," said Edwards. Nevertheless, Edwards also argued that the end of the work of creation is providence in his "Miscellanies," no. 702. For this same ultimate end in creation and providence, see Edwards, *WJE* 18:284.

argued that particular parts of the clock and their operations are different and manifold but the same as the whole machine in serving the ultimate end, which is to provide the exact time of day to its owner.¹⁶⁰ This formula can also apply to the elect. God has chosen his people from eternity, and through his particular providential exercises, God would have promoted their “holy conversion, or instances of their good and approved behaviour” in their lives.¹⁶¹ Preceding works would work for their conversion experiences in particular ways, but all the works are functionally subordinate to the ultimate last end—namely, expressing God’s goodness and exercising his glory in their lives.¹⁶² Stephen Holmes points out that “the concept of divine self-glorification was the central theme of Edwards’s theology.”¹⁶³ So, whether in creating or upholding creation, without change, God acts as having a chief regard to himself and for his glory: “God’s glory should be known by a glorious society of created beings.”¹⁶⁴ All providential works are teleologically rendered as “a medium of communication by God’s manner of being,” which is designed to “glorify and communicate himself” with his creatures.¹⁶⁵

In Chapter Two of *End of Creation*, Edwards focused on the scriptural vision of God’s glory manifested in the redemptive life and work of Jesus Christ, saying, “Christ’s

¹⁶⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 8:471. With other analogies, Edwards repeated the same conclusion: “For as was observed, we may justly infer the end of a thing from the use of it. We may justly infer the end of a clock, a chariot, a ship, or water-engine from the main use to which it is applied. But God’s providence is his use of the world he has made. And if there be any work or works of providence that are evidently God’s main work or works, herein appears and consists the main use that God makes of the creation.”

¹⁶¹ Edwards, *WJE* 8:473.

¹⁶² Edwards, *WJE* 8:473. See also Edwards, *WJE* 20:446. According to him, “the supreme end of the creation and of all God’s works” are like two branches of the same tree that (1) God’s glorifying himself and (2) God’s communicating himself. Accordingly, Edwards severely objected to considering the glory of creatures other than that of God as the loftiest and highest. In this theological context, Edwards conflicted with those Arminians and Pelagians who gave high regard to human free will and morality.

¹⁶³ Holmes, *God of Grace*, 244.

¹⁶⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 8:431–32. See *WJE* 13:339, 496.

¹⁶⁵ Knight, “Typology,” 200. See Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, 3:309, 311. Mastricht said that divine providence is “the foundation of the doxology,” and also wrote that “providence in its entirety, and in all its acts, aims to the glorification of God as its highest end.”

seeking the glory of God as his ultimate end.”¹⁶⁶ Without fusing them, Edwards related providence with redemption in his discourse on the end of God in creation. Both providence and redemption are economically distinct from creation but teleologically in agreement or harmony with each other in that all economy regards the glory of God as the same ultimate end for themselves.¹⁶⁷ Through Christ’s redemption, the whole creation (“all heaven and earth, angels and men”) has been put under the sovereign power and dominion of the kingdom of God.¹⁶⁸ With all God’s works of providence, the great purpose of Christ’s redemption is to make the glorious new community (“new creation and new creatures”) of God, from among every nation on earth to glorify God forever.¹⁶⁹ Creation, providence, and redemption are the whole unified one in the realization of the new eternal community of God that has a chief regard for and glorifies God alone. The eschatological community is thus the chief end of God’s creation.

For instance, the millennial society is a penultimate glorious community of God and a type of the ultimate eschatological society. Edwards believed that there will be more glorious times and things to come after the millennium. According to him, the millennium is the temporary (not eternal) reward that God gave to Christ for his righteous suffering and death, and during the millennial age, God’s glory mediated *via* Christ would be gradually enlarged and made fuller.¹⁷⁰ To be noted, Edwards’s

¹⁶⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 8:484.

¹⁶⁷ See Edwards, *WJE* 9:519. Edwards argued that “all God’s works of providence through all ages: they meet in one at last as so many lines meeting in one center. ’Tis with God’s work of providence as it is with his work of creation: ’tis but one work.”

¹⁶⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 8:488.

¹⁶⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 8:489.

¹⁷⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 18:506. For the nature of the millennial society, see *WJE* 9:483–84. According to Edwards, “And then shall all the world be united in peace and love in one amiable society; all nations, in all parts, on every side of the globe, shall then be knit together in sweet harmony, all parts of God’s church assisting and promoting the knowledge and spiritual good one of another...all the world [shall then be] as one church, one orderly, regular, beautiful society, one body, all the members in beautiful proportion.”

eschatology cannot be divided from his Christology, for it is a christologically (not anthropological) informed anticipation.¹⁷¹ Also for Edwards, since eschatology is an act of God's redemption, the millennium should be understood as a function of his soteriology. In "Miscellanies," no. 351, Edwards called the attention of the community of God to her ultimate hope in the last coming of Christ which will take the community from this earth and bring about the new heavens and the new earth. Before that, there would be a widespread satanic opposition against the church at the end of the millennial age. Yet the great apostasy would not last long, as Edwards believed, and soon after that, Christ will come for the decisive battle with Satan, and he will finally bring about the day of victory over rebellion, and lead "his church to its highest and its everlasting glory."¹⁷² He then concluded that the final action of God in Christ within history would be "the only remedy" for the church.¹⁷³ For Edwards, the ultimate hope of the community of Christ is thus not the millennium per se but the final consummation of all things in the Lord Christ. In the new heavens and the new earth, all the saints will become "one family" in their heavenly Father's house, where they will glorify and enjoy God forever, and they will participate in the fellowship of the Trinity.¹⁷⁴

Conclusion

¹⁷¹ See Edwards, *WJE* 20:510–12.

¹⁷² Goen, "New Departure," 29. See Edwards, *WJE* 13:427.

¹⁷³ Edwards, *WJE* 13:427. See also *WJE* 20:52. Edwards expounded a little more on the nature of the millennium as penultimate, arguing that "this is not the appointed state of her reward and happiness, and therefore won't be very long continued. The proper state of the church's rest is after the day of judgment; this that is before, is only given to the church as a foretaste, a forerunner and image of this her true rest and glory. 'Tis observable, that prelibations and images of things that are before the appointed proper season for the true thing of which they are forerunners and representations, are wont to be but short."

¹⁷⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 18:298. See also *WJE* 8:376, 378, 380. Along with family concepts of heaven, Edwards also called heaven a "blessed" and "heavenly society."

In his discussion of Edwards's eschatology, Stephen Stein points out an important Edwardsean logic that first things shape last things.¹⁷⁵ It means that creation shapes eschatology. In other words, achieving the end of creation is the eschatological goal. Though the two economies are distinct, they are consistent since both share the same ultimate end. Creation and eschatology are not two different realities but the same reality considered from different directions. This is what the logic is supposed to mean and possesses an Augustinian teleological nuance within it. The logic ("first things shape last things") can also be employed for the reader to understand Edwards's trinitarian theology of providence in a trifold way.

First, the Trinity *ad intra* is consistent with the Trinity *ad extra* in Edwards's trinitarianism. The former shapes the latter, too. The divine persons and relations *ad intra* in the Trinity shapes the sending and mission of the divine persons *ad extra* in the Trinity. That is, the triune provider *ad intra* corresponds to the triune provider and his providential activity *ad extra*. Second, first things shape last things in the way that the immanent trinitarian persons and subsistence of the Godhead shape the triune God-world relation. In the providential works/operations of the Trinity, the first person of the Trinity (God the Father) remains the ultimate lord of all, providing the ultimate (God himself) through the Son to the world as he is the Head of the Trinity *ad intra*. The second person of the Trinity (the Son as the logos) is sent as the wisdom and knowledge of God to the world, and his mission is to be the self-communication of the Father in the lives of creaturely intelligent beings: the Son provides the knowledge of the Father to the world. The third person of the Trinity (the Holy Spirit as the agape) participates in the bond of

¹⁷⁵ Stein, "Eschatology," 235. The original phrase is that "first things shape the understanding of last things."

love in the world as he does in the very eternal life of the Trinity: the Spirit provides the Father's love manifested in the life of his Son to the world. Those invisible divine processions and relations of the triune provider are vividly seen in Edwards's visible description of the millennial society.

Last, the first thing shapes the last thing in that the Edwardsean notion of the eternal Trinity shapes his understanding of the eschatological triune reality. The blessed life of the Godhead, where the Father and the Son know each other and form the bond of union in the Holy Spirit, is spread/repeated into the realm of creation (the centrifugal force).¹⁷⁶ Hence, the triune God also has his blessed life *ad intra* with the life *ad extra* that God brings his people to come to his own perfect and beatific glorious life (the centripetal force). The community of saints will be admitted into the eternal family of the Godhead, whereby the redeemed will enjoy a filial relationship with God and progressively grow in their knowledge and love of God in heaven (i.e., the beatific vision).¹⁷⁷ For this, the triune God provides nothing but himself to the world. Divine providential activity *ad extra* is peculiar according to the divine natures *ad intra*. Yet the missions of the triune persons are indivisible (the *opera Dei ad extra indivisa sunt*), working towards the same ultimate goal from eternity—that is, God's making himself his last end to himself *ad intra* and *ad extra*. In this respect, the first thing shapes the last thing in Edwards's thinking. First, this chapter has explored how Edwards's notion of the immanent Trinity is consistent with his view of the economic Trinity, the triune God-

¹⁷⁶ See Edwards, *WJE* 8:369, 373. For Edwards, heaven is a trinitarian world of love, whereby the Father and the Son mutually love one another, and their mutual love eternally brings forth the Spirit. The heavenly saints will experience the trinitarian mutual love with the blessed Trinity and others in eternity. This shows how Edwards's trinitarian (mutual love) model shaped his eschatological vision of heaven.

¹⁷⁷ For Edwards's trinitarian vision of heaven, see *WJE* 18:110.

world relation, and the end of providence in a grand harmony. Second, it has established an Edwardsean model of providence, highlighting a dynamic providential relation to the created order by applying his view of the Trinity to the doctrine of providence. Last, the chapter has further suggested his millennial insight as an exemplar projecting the divine providence into view.

CHAPTER 5

EDWARDS'S THEOLOGY OF PROVIDENCE IN A COMPREHENSIVE OUTLINE

God therefore uses means not because of any lack of power, but because of the abundance of his goodness; he communicates a certain dignity of efficiency to his creatures and in them makes his own efficiency more perceptible...Hence our faith does not look to those means which God uses, nor does it depend on them, but rather to God who alone can relieve all our necessities, either with or without means at it appears good to him. Dan. 3:17, Our God whom we worship is able to deliver us out of the host fiery furnace and out of thy hands, O king.

William Ames¹

Introduction

Edwards's theology of providence primarily has its root in his immanent trinitarianism—the eternal inner life of the Trinity. That is, Edwards's understanding of God's providence is deduced from his analysis of the Trinity.² Its form and character are shaped by *Deus providebit* as the Father, Son, and Spirit in God's triune life. The Father causes or originates the care and providence for the world; the Son knows or understands divine providence; the Spirit wills or exerts the divine providential action towards the objects of the divine providence, such as nature, history, and human beings. Hence, the Christian doctrine of providence differs from other providentialism in that it is derived from the

¹ Ames, *Marrow of Theology*, 107.

² See Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 152–53.

concrete perception of God as the Trinity, who provides God himself to the world in and through his Son and Spirit. The provident Christian God is not an abstract god but the living triune God ruling, knowing, and loving in his relation to the world and communicating himself in his Son and Spirit.³ Hence, belief in divine providence for Edwards is not primarily the interpretation of the world outside God's life but the confession of God's life in the Trinity, whose good and glorious life is communicated with his creature through the Son in the power of the Spirit. For Edwards, therefore, the concept of *Deus providebit* is distinctively Christian and trinitarian.

Within the trinitarian grammar, this chapter attempts to summarize and construct Edwards's theology of providence in a systematic outline. Despite being a prolific writer, Edwards did not organize his entire theology into a dogmatic treatise, as his Reformed-Puritan predecessors—for instance, Calvin (e.g., *Institutes of the Christian Religion*), Ames (e.g., *Marrow of Theology*), Turretin (e.g., *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*), and Mastricht (e.g., *Theoretical-Practical Theology*) did. In *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, Michael McClymond and Gerald McDermott argue that Edwards was neither a static nor a “closed system thinker.”⁴ Surely, his theology had multiplicity, openness, and dynamism. However, the fact does not necessarily imply that he did not seek a comprehensive mode of doing theology. In his 1757 letter to the trustees of the College of New Jersey, Edwards wrote that he was setting out to write “a body of divinity in *an entirely new method*, being thrown into the form of an history.”⁵ In other

³ The Christian and trinitarian nature of providence is also found in Emil Brunner's theology of providence. For his doctrine of providence, see Brunner, *Dogmatics 2*, 157. Brunner writes that “we are not thinking of the providence of a deity known to us through metaphysics, but of the providence of God the Father, made known to us in Jesus Christ, who, as my Father, loves me, His son, from all eternity, and therefore will never treat me like a dog bound to the chariot of Fate.”

⁴ McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 9.

⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 16:727 (emphasis added).

words, he was attempting to organize and construct his theology as a whole in a historical-redemptive method.⁶

Being aware of this, this chapter comprises the compilation and comprehension of Edwards's doctrine of providence (preservation, government, and concurrence) regarding nature, history, individuals, and the church from his writings, including treatises, sermons, and "Miscellanies". This chapter provides a constructive theme and comprehensive exposition of his theology of providence. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, this chapter constructs a tri-une working reality of creation, providence, and redemption and their inter-relationship in Edwards's theology. Then, second, it explores the micro-level aspects of preservation, government, and concurrence that appear in his doctrine of divine providence as another tri-une working reality.

A Tri-Une Working Reality: Providence, Redemption, and Creation

Before systematically outlining Edwards's doctrine of providence, this part first articulates the relationship of providence with creation and redemption. Creation, providence, and redemption are all the works of the same triune God, so, as Edwards believed, they reflect the mystery of the Trinity in myriad ways *ad extra*.⁷ They are closely interwoven as a unity in Edwards's thinking.

In his "Miscellanies," no. 702, which was the longest miscellany entry that Edwards wrote during the 1730s, there appears a tri-une (three-in-one) relation of the works of redemption, providence, and creation:

⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 16:728.

⁷ See Edwards, *WJE* 13:434. Edwards wrote that "the whole outward creation, which is but the shadows of beings, is so made as to represent spiritual things."

'Tis not many works that are separate and not dependent, or subordinate. 'Tis but one work. 'Tis all one scheme, one contrivance; and that is the scheme, contrivance and work of glorifying himself and his Son Jesus Christ, and gathering and uniting his creatures to himself, and making them happy in himself through Christ God-man by means of that glorious redemption that he has wrought out.⁸

Since creation and providence are purposive and mediatorial in nature as the “means of the glorious redemption” in action, according to Edwards, they are only one work and scheme.⁹ For him, the work of creation has not yet been completed, and God has created the world in the state of moving toward an ultimate end that is still to be reached.

In the same “Miscellanies” entry, Edwards further explained how creation and providence could serve redemption in specific. With a redemptive aspect, for example, all things, motions, and dispensations in creation are designated to provide a spouse, that is, the elect church, to Christ the redeemer; all works and operations in providence are supposed to provide the wedding (union) of Christ the lamb with his spouse.¹⁰ Through the union with Christ, what God wants to do is to communicate his goodness and happiness to the elect, and this is his ultimate end of creation and providence.¹¹ By locating providence (also creation) within the salvific-redemptive discourse, Edwards’s providentialism answers to, rather than avoids, the ultimate problems of God-given reality. By doing so, his theology of providence prevents providence from becoming abstracted and misguided by other philosophies or ideologies. It also finds its meaning

⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 18:296. See also *WJE* 20:444.

⁹ See Ames, *Sketch*, 55–58. According to Ames, creation itself has two meanings—“not only the intention but also the comprehension of the goal.”

¹⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 18:298. Creation and providence are ultimately found in the service for the end of redemption.

¹¹ See Edwards, *WJE* 18:290. That “God would make the lesser give place to the greater and would make the means to be subject to the end” would be a comprehensive Edwardsean reasoning for understanding the whole scheme of redemption, creation, and providence and also creaturely beings (angels, men, animals, and plants) and historical events. As pointed out by Avihu Zakai, the medieval idea of “the Great Chain of Beings (*scala naturae*)” was embedded in Edwards’s thinking. See Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards’ Philosophy*, 13.

and function in the larger context of the redemptive history authored by the triune God, not in a syncretistic belief in God's providence with no redemptive and trinitarian substance. In his theology, therefore, there is no providence without the benevolent God's redemptive solution (*via* his Son and Spirit) to the fallen world, and this can apply to creation as well.¹²

In "Miscellanies," no. 702, there also appears a support for the doctrine of the inseparable operations in God's economic work. Not only did Edward ascribe God's redemption to the Son but so did creation itself to Christ. According to him, since God's redemption is indeed to renew (the old) creation (i.e., being typified to Adam) into his new creation (i.e., being typified to Christ the new Adam), thus, "God made the world by Jesus Christ."¹³ Yet the decree was neither by an arbitrary nor solo decision by God the Father; according to Edwards, there was an eternal "consultation of the persons of the Trinity about it," which refers to the covenant of redemption, before creation.¹⁴ Then, Edwards ascribed to the Spirit of God the role of the "vital principle" (or "the breath of life"), infusing his life into and over human souls.¹⁵ In this respect, Edwards understood creation and new creation (redemption) are inseparably common to all divine persons of the Trinity. For him, creation (both old and new creation) is a trinitarian act, which is consented *ad intra* and commissioned *ad extra*.

Edwards then developed a robust christological providence, arguing that "God hath entirely left it with him; and therefore, whatever is needful to be done in order to it,

¹² Edwards's theology highlights the essential and indivisible bond between providence and redemption. This aspect contrasts with contemporary theological discussion on providence, particularly within the modern liberal theological tradition, which advocates the separation of redemption and providence. For instance, one can observe this perspective in Gilkey, "Concept of Providence," 171.

¹³ Edwards, *WJE* 18:287, 289.

¹⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 18:286.

¹⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 18:286–87.

to prepare the way for it, to introduce it and to complete it, it belongs to him to do.”¹⁶

For him, Christ is the co-agent of the divine providence who serves to “prepare,”

“introduce,” and “complete” God’s redemption (John 5:17). Unlike much recent

theology that posits a Christ-less (thus redemption-less) doctrine of providence or simply

an appendage to the doctrine of creation, Edwards unfolded a trinitarian theology of

providence by integrating all God’s external works into the salvific work of the

Trinity.¹⁷ In this respect, the redemptive discourse becomes a theological-theoretical

means by which Edwards could bind together creation, providence, and redemption. He

did not treat the doctrine of providence as being individual or independent of the

trinitarian works of creation and redemption. Hence, the triune God is known as the

creator and redeemer of all things, so is the one who provides.¹⁸

¹⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 18:289.

¹⁷ See Wood, *Question of Providence*, 66. Charles Wood points out the absence of trinitarian grammar in the doctrine of providence as a locus of systematic theology. He argues: “In systematic theology, on the whole, providence has been “appropriated” to the Father, and its treatment is largely uninformed by Christological or pneumatological considerations.” John Wesley’s providentialism in his “Catholic Spirit,” according to Wood, is one of the theologies of providence that are highly dependent on the first article alone. See also Barth, *CD* 3/3:3, 32–34. Barth briefly points out the fundamental reason for the demise of the Christian theology of providence in the Reformed tradition: “Unfortunately the connexion between the belief in providence and belief in Christ had not been worked out and demonstrated theologically by the Reformers themselves.” He also writes a sharp critique of Christ-less and, thus, non-trinitarian providence: “If faith in providence is Christian faith, and therefore faith in Jesus Christ as the Word of God and therefore the self-revelation of God, there is for it no obscurity concerning the nature and will and work of the Lord of history, no ambiguity concerning His character and purpose, and no doubt as to His ability to see to His own glory in this history. This is the starting-point from which we must set out and to which we must continually return in this matter if we are not to go astray.”

¹⁸ See Edwards, *WJE* 18:297. Edwards wrote in his “Miscellanies,” no. 702 that: “The world will be brought to an end by him; and the last issue of all things in creation and providence will be brought forth by Christ the Redeemer; and the ultimate end of all things in all their motions, changes and revolutions from the beginning, will be accomplished by Christ God-man, Mediator.” See also Leonhardt, *Grundinformation Dogmatik*, 165. Rochus Leonhardt, a German dogmatic theologian, points out the inseparability of the divine identities and/or responsibilities as creator, sustainer, and redeemer, writing as follows: “Ein Gott, der nicht selbst die Welt geschaffen hat und/oder sich nicht um sie kümmert, kann auch nicht für die Übel der Welt verantwortlich sein.” In my own translation into English, it can be translated as follows: “A god who did not create the world and/or does not sustain it, the god cannot be responsible for the evils of the world.”

It becomes apparent that the doctrine of redemption and its significance were formative ideas for Edwards's doctrine of providence. For example, he acknowledged God's providence as general and special alike. According to him, general providence is that which God "exercises towards all his creatures, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate, in preserving them, and disposing of them by his mighty power, and according to his sovereign pleasure."¹⁹ For the case of God's special providence, however, it is exercised towards intelligent and moral creatures for their being and well-being in a peculiar manner.²⁰ Even though both modes of divine providence are equally God's sacred providence and mutually interactive, he believed that general providence serves a special purpose. In his theology, there appears a functional subordination of the former to the latter in that "all things in this world are governed and disposed of in subordination to the great ends God has to obtain with respect to the souls of men."²¹ Following the same logical pattern that he developed with the concept of creation and providence serving redemption, Edwards embraced the notion of a hierarchical order of God's providence in which general providence is functionally subordinate and

¹⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 25:65. The words and phrases of Edwards quoted here are very similar to John Flavel's writing on the twofold providence, general and special. See Flavel, *Mystery of Providence*, 27. "There is a twofold consideration of Providence, according to its twofold object and manner of dispensation: the one is general, *exercised about all creatures, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate*; the other special and peculiar. Christ hath a universal empire over all things, Ephes. i.22, the head of the whole world, by way of dominion; but a head to the Church, by way of union and special influence...The Church is his special care and charge; he rules the world for her good, as a head consulting the welfare of the body" (emphasis added). For Flavel's influence in Edwards's theology, see Smith, "Editor's Introduction," 61. Flavel was indeed a very influential thinker on various Puritan-Reformed thinkers, such as John Owen, John Calvin, William Ames, and so on.

²⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 25:65.

²¹ Edwards, *WJE* 25:65.

serviceable to special providence. For Edwards, redeeming human souls is the ultimate telos of the work of the Trinity within creation.²²

Overall, Edwards developed a tri-une working reality of creation, providence, and redemption from a trinitarian perspective. The triune God, whose three divine persons relate to each other in mutual love *ad intra*, creates the world out of the overflow of his love, goodness, and glory *ad extra* in order to bring creatures into his triune fellowship of love (i.e., the work of creation). For the ultimate purpose of creation, the triune God provides all things and shares that love with them through providential means, such as preservation, governance, and concurrence (i.e., the work of providence). In creation, all things come to completion through providence, especially through the self-giving care and love of the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit (i.e., the work of redemption). Hence, creation is the context of redemption; providence is the manner of redemption; redemption is the end of all. This is the grand design of the tri-une reality of creation, providence, and redemption by the triune God.

A Tri-Une Working Manner: Preservation, Governance, and Concurrence

Belief in *Deus providebit*, as it is made known dogmatically, indicates to preserving of, governing over, and concurring with all things, including nature, history, individuals, and the elect. Technically speaking, (1) preservation; (2) governance; and (3) concurrence are the traditional theological sub-loci under the doctrine of providence. To Edwards, those divine acts are understood as a tri-une act of the provident God as

²² It is obvious that Edwards as an eighteenth-century Puritan thinker had an anthropocentric and hierarchical view of the universe (e.g., the great chain of being). He understood the universe created by God in an ordered hierarchical reality. For this, see further Studebaker and Caldwell, *Trinitarian Theology*, 209. See also Zakai, "Jonathan Edwards' Philosophy," 264.

creation, providence, and redemption constitute God's unified work. He employed a traditional triple classification of providence within the Reformed framework but reinterpreted and synthesized it in a creative manner. His theological work did not evolve in a vacuum. Rather, his theology was apologetic to his theological antagonists, such as the Hobbesian materialism, Enlightenment deism, and Arminianism prevalent in his eighteenth-century context.

The Act of Preservation

All things were not only created by the creator God, but by him all things exist (Col 1:17). In a dogmatic view, this biblical teaching is called preservation (*conservatio*). Edwards was known as a strong advocate for divine preservation, arguing that all things that exist are preserved by the constant and immediate exercise of God's power. He held a hard, not soft, view of preservation so that his understanding of creation and providence were closely merged into the doctrine of continuous creation. In fact, Reformed theologians, such as Charles Hodge (1797–1878) and Karl Barth (1886–1968), refuted the doctrine of continuous creation and attempted to sever the ontological continuity of creation and preservation.²³ For them, the theological concept of

²³ See Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 577. He wrote: "Creation, preservation, and government are in fact different, and to identify them leads not only to confusion but to error. Creation and preservation differ." See also Barth, *CD* 3/3:3–8. "We must not interpret providence as *continuata creatio*, but as a *continuation creationist*," as Barth argued. Although Barth did not embrace *continuata creatio*, he did not reject the divine preservation of the creature against *das Nichtige* (nothingness). For this, see Gilkey, "Concept of Providence," 190. Gilkey provides the following explanation and significance of the strong notion of preservation in Barth's theology: "the old orthodox doctrine of God's 'preservation of the creature against non-being' means more than the gift of continuing objective being; it means the gift of existential being within a meaningful context, and that implies the divine ordering of historical and personal life as well as its objective continuation."

preservation was as simply a continuation of the original act of creation; the distinction between the original creation and its sustenance was clearly made.

Unlike these later Reformed theologians, the concept of divine preservation for Edwards was understood to be continuous creation (*continuata creatio*) in that the world radically depends in every way upon God the creator—not only for its initial creation but also for its continued existence and operation (Wis 11:25).²⁴ In *Original Sin*, for example, Edwards argued for the doctrine of providence as continuous creation:

God's upholding created substance, or causing its existence in each successive moment, is altogether equivalent to an *immediate production out of nothing*, at each moment, because its existence at this moment is not merely in part from God, but wholly from him; and not in any part, or degree, from its antecedent existence.²⁵

He delineated providence as God's on-going creative activity, wherein the world is constantly created anew by him. Edwards regarded God's providential engagement as synonymous with his creative work. In "Of Atoms," Edwards further claimed that "all body is nothing but what immediately results from the exercise of divine power in such a particular manner."²⁶ In other words, God creates and re-creates things moment-by-moment to bring them into being in the world, and Edwards assumed that "the universe is created out of nothing every moment" rather than persisting *via* time.²⁷ As a result, continuous creationism refutes the notion that any entity can be the origin or cause of its own subsequent existence within creation. The sole source of existence of something comes from God's creative providence alone. It also implies that the world clearly lacks inherent sustainability or autonomous existence. Consequently, this strong and dynamic

²⁴ For further information on Edwards's continuous creation, see Hamilton, *Treatise on Jonathan Edwards*.

²⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 3:402 (emphasis original). See also *WJE* 13:210, 418.

²⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 6:215.

²⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 6:241.

theory of conservation not only excludes deism but also challenges the static Aristotelian view of substance.²⁸

Indeed, Edwards was not the first Puritan thinker who held such a nuanced view of divine preservation. William Ames, a Reformed-Puritan theologian, pointed out in his *magnum opus*, writing: “Conservation is nothing else than a continued creation, so to speak, and therefore it is joined with creation.”²⁹ According to Mastricht, the opposition of preservation is destruction or annihilation. If preservation were subtracted or negated, or God’s preserving power ceased to perform, then what remains would be nothing.³⁰ For Turretin, God alone is wholly independent, but creatures are not: “As things could not have been made without God, so neither without him could they subsist even for a moment; otherwise they would be independent, which pertains to God alone.”³¹ Also, Johann Heinrich Heidegger (1633–1698) noted that “Preservation is not an act distinct from creation but is continued creation.”³² These two Puritan thinkers indeed held a strong view of preservation, and for them, the distinction between creation and providence was not profound. For those Puritans, the doctrine of continuous creation is simply that if God has continued to preserve things in existence all the time, and all things exist by and depend upon God’s upholding power in every successive moment, then God’s providence is no different from his continuously creating them *ex nihilo*. This

²⁸ Yet this Edwards’s view of continuous creation has the potential that is surely likely to become more open and leaning toward to panentheistic views that emphasize the immanence of God that all things are in God, and God is in all. For further information, see John Cooper, *Panentheism*, 77. See also Oliver Crisp, “Jonathan Edwards’ Panentheism,” 107–25. Crisp specifically opines that Edwards was “an idealist panentheist.” Don Schweitzer also refers to Edwards’s understanding of the God-world relationship as an approximately “panentheistic model.” See Schweitzer, “Aspects of God’s Relationship,” 20.

²⁹ Ames, *Marrow of Theology*, 109.

³⁰ Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, 3:314–15. See Watson, *Body of Divinity*, 124. Similar to Mastricht, Thomas Watson (1620–1686) wrote: “If God’s providence should be withdrawn but for a while, creatures would be dissolved, and run into their first nothing.”

³¹ Turretin, *Institutes*, 1:501.

³² Cf. Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 251.

Puritan theological tradition became more explicitly focused and elaborated in Edwards's theology.

Norman Fiering found the origin of Edwards's continuous creation within the earlier tradition of the "theocentric metaphysicians," consisting of Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715), John Norris (1657–1711), and George Berkeley (1685–1753).³³ Edwards fits to this tradition, according to Fiering, since he shared its common theological denominators. The five denominators of theocentric metaphysics are as follows: the affirmations of (1) "total divine sovereignty;" (2) "divine concurrence in events and in the continuous conservation and re-creation of the existing world;" (3) "teleology at the ultimate level of explanation" of reality; (4) "the Neoplatonic typological system;" and (5) immaterial reasoning against "the Cartesian position that the essence of matter is extension."³⁴ Edwards's theocentric vision of reality made out of those traditional principles significantly contributed to his view of the God-world relationship in general and divine providence in specific. Michael McClymond also argues that theocentrism is the controlling principle of Edwards's metaphysical speculation on the God-world relation.³⁵ The acceptance and affirmation of God as "the prime and original being, the first and last, and the pattern of all, and has the sum of all perfection" is pivotal in his understanding of the fundamental nature of reality.³⁶ Thus, all reality ought to be interpreted in light of the divine reality that is only fully and perfectly realized; that is, God is "the Measure of all things" in Edwards's metaphysical thinking.³⁷

³³ Fiering, "Rationalist Foundation," 77.

³⁴ Fiering, "Rationalist Foundation," 78.

³⁵ McClymond, "God the Measure," 45–46.

³⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 6:363.

³⁷ McClymond, "God the Measure," 47.

For Edwards, the idea of continuous creation interplays with his idealism. He believed that the world is ideal and that matter is not true substance but minds (ideas) are.³⁸ The main thesis of idealism is simply that “minds are most real and the physical world is mind-dependant.”³⁹ For Edwards, unthinking things or non-intelligent beings are therefore not considered true substance since they lack the capacity to be aware of the mind (or knowledge) of God. In short, being and knowing cannot be thus separated in his thought. God’s glory must be communicated and known to the hearts and minds of his creatures. This is Edwards’s central vision of God’s end of creation. So, matters are not truly substance because they are not able to receive and communicate with God’s mind; only spirits are true substance because they are able to commune with and consent to the divine mind and vision, intellectually and morally.

McClymond argues that Edwards’s idealism served as an apologetic device in response to the threat posed by Thomas Hobbes’s materialism, which claimed that only matter is true substance and materials only exist.⁴⁰ His idealism also addressed the subsequent challenges advanced by the mechanistic conception of the world. In order to refute these ideas, Edwards’s idealism leaves the physical and material world without true substance.⁴¹ Strictly speaking, according to him, God alone, who is a spirit, is the

³⁸ See Edwards, *WJE* 6:344, 356. See also Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards’ Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 147–63. Steven Studebaker rightly locates Edwards’s idealism within the intellectual tradition and Augustinian voluntarism: “Edwards conceived of God’s activities of creation and sustaining creation in terms of intellectualism. He believed that the entities that comprise the universe ultimately exist as ideas in God’s mind.” See also Preciado and Helm, *Reformed View of Freedom*, 200. They support Studebaker, arguing that Edwards’s theology is indeed a complex synthesis of intellectualism and Augustinian voluntarism, and it has a significant implication to his view of the divine and human freedom.

³⁹ Farris and Hamilton, “Idealism and Christian Theology,” 1.

⁴⁰ McClymond, “God the Measure,” 53. See Edwards, *WJE* 6:235.

⁴¹ See Edwards, *WJE* 6:398; 13:327. See also *WJE* 11:61. In “Images of Divine Things,” Edwards wrote: “The material world, and all things pertaining to it, is by the Creator wholly subordinated to the spiritual and moral world. To show this, God, in some things in providence, has set aside the ordinary course of things in the material world to subserve to the purposes of the moral and spiritual, as in miracles.”

sole substance and thus the only one who truly exists.⁴² Edwards even went so far as to argue that things (or objects) exist and have continuous *esse* only in the conscious mind of God and that matter is a merely derivative phenomenon of the divine consciousness. Specifically, Edwards was careful to argue that God acts moment-by-moment to bring the material world into existence out of his mind.⁴³ God also acts to create conscious beings whose minds can perceive and communicate his divine action and glory. In this respect, God is the sole ground by whom all things create and preserve; thus, the world is therefore mind-dependant.⁴⁴ Material things are existent only because God knows them to be so. In contrast to Hobbes and the mechanical and scientific philosophy of his days, Edwards's theocentric theology asserts that the world does not persist just by its laws, matter, motion, and time, but God himself continually creates and re-creates the world.⁴⁵ In other words, they are rather outcomes of God's thought in action.⁴⁶ With the doctrines of idealism, immaterialism, and continuous creation, Edwards desired to defend the unsurpassable sovereignty of God and his total providential control over the world.

Metaphysical Preservation

⁴² Edwards, *WJE* 6:215. He wrote: "So that, speaking most strictly, there is no proper substance but God himself (we speak at present with respect to bodies only). How truly, then, is he said to be *ens entium*."

⁴³ See Crisp, *God, Creation, and Salvation*, 48. Oliver Crisp calls Edwards a divine conceptualist, who believed that all things that exist are actually are "created on the basis of eternal ideas or exemplars God has of these things in his mind."

⁴⁴ See Edwards, *WJE* 6:204. He wrote that "nothing has any existence anywhere else but in consciousness." According to Edwards's analogy of space, if the existing room is closed and disappears, the stuffs, motions, and noises existing in it will disappear. Likewise, nothing exists outside of God's conscious mind. In this context, Edward thought that space is God.

⁴⁵ According to Crisp, Edwards's view of continuous creation is consistent with a motion picture made up of numerous, yet distinct, frames that God stitches together and plays in his mind. See Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards on God and Creation*, 160.

⁴⁶ Holmes, *God of Grace*, 84.

Edwards preached that God directly and immediately upholds and preserves the entire universe. God is also at work preserving all, whether inanimate or animate, irrational and rational beings, in the world. Nothing is self-sufficient and independent from God's preserving hands. Edwards wrote that God exercises his providence not only for "all the necessities, but also for the pleasure and recreation of all sorts of creatures, even the insects," like flying spiders.⁴⁷ For Edwards, God's providence has no realm beyond its reach, from the heavenly and to the earthly realm, from small insects to gravity.⁴⁸

In his sermon "God's Excellencies," he preached that God "can shake the whole earth in pieces in a moment, and can annihilate the whole universe in the twinkling of an eye."⁴⁹ Gravity is not from a mechanical cause but from the "immediate operation of God," so it "depends immediately on the divine influence," as he wrote in "Of Atoms."⁵⁰ God, the providential agent, does not act by the manner of a natural principle in giving rise to gravity. God's operation bringing it is immediate, not merely tied to natural and pre-existent principles. As for Edwards, hence, God determines not only the supernatural events and miracles in the world, but the small and natural events at every moment. Edwards then concluded that "the very being, and the manner of being, and the whole bodies depends immediately on the divine power."⁵¹ In this respect, Edwards refuted the eighteenth-century deistic concepts of God, such as a "cosmic lawgiver," "Creator-

⁴⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 6:158.

⁴⁸ See Edwards, *WJE* 20:46. For instance, Edwards called angels as "ministers of God's providence."

⁴⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 10:426.

⁵⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 6:231–32. See Holmes, *God of Grace*, 81. Stephen Holmes is insistent that the Edwards's notion of the immediate action and power of God was emerged as "an apologetic task" out of the context where Hobbesian materialism was rising. It became "an adequate answer to the then popular materialism that derived from Hobbes," wrote Holmes.

⁵¹ Edwards, *WJE* 6:234–35.

Mechanic,” or “God of order.”⁵² For Edwards, on the contrary, *Deus providebit* is the triune God who preserves everything in his divine mind and idea.

Despite this, that all created existence depends on God’s immediate power does not mean that his providential operation is arbitrary or tricky from an ad hoc power. Rather, Edwards succinctly argues that God’s work of preservation is “constant and uniform” because there is nothing more consistent and stable than God’s mind and idea in the whole creation.⁵³ Because God’s intellect/knowledge is immutable and superlatively rational, divine conservation thus enables the study of science, such as physics and chemistry, and it undergirds the experiential method of observing God’s purpose and revelation in the natural world. The outcome of divine preservation is also a given order that reflects God’s wisdom, power, goodness, and justice.⁵⁴

According to Edwards, not only does God preserve the universe at large, but God also conserves human life. Despite being ruined by the Fall and subject to death, Edwards held the belief that the *imago Dei* (the image of God) is the core identity of human being. Human beings are his images, and therefore God preserves them. He pointed out that just as the universe would be annihilated if God did not hold it, so would human life.⁵⁵ In his sermon “Dedication to God,” Edwards delivered a strong notion of preservation on human life, boldly proclaiming that that “He preserves us from

⁵² Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards’ Philosophy*, 258.

⁵³ Edwards, *WJE* 25:113–14. See also *WJE* 6:344. “That which truly is the substance of all bodies is the infinitely exact and precise and perfectly stable idea in God’s mind, together with his stable will that the same shall gradually be communicated to us, and to other minds, according to certain fixed and exact established methods and laws: or in somewhat different language, the infinitely exact and precise divine idea, together with an answerable, perfectly exact, precise and stable will with respect to correspondent communications to created minds, and effects on their minds,” said Edwards. See also Crisp, *God, Creation, and Salvation*, 55, 58.

⁵⁴ See Edwards, *WJE* 13:192. See also Anderson, “Editor’s Introduction,” 17.

⁵⁵ See Edwards, *WJE* 13:478. “There is a more special providence appears in ordering and determining matters of greater concern and importance, as in determining the limits of men’s life,” wrote Edwards.

annihilation; we should immediately drop into *nothing* if he did not hold us.”⁵⁶ God preserves humans from death (“kept alive by him”), and thus he feeds, nourishes, and clothes human beings.⁵⁷

Redemptive-Historical Preservation

In addition to conserving the physical life of ordinary persons, Edwards posited that God preserves and takes care of the saints’ spiritual “well-being” by (1) preserving and protecting them from the devil with his almighty hands and (2) providing spiritual comforts and good things to them.⁵⁸ Edwards argues that though “God is not bound to preserve us,” he does so out of “his mercy and goodness.”⁵⁹ God is like a good shepherd who preserves his flock by feeding them, providing for their needs, and leading them to their pasture. Moreover, God is also a great preserver/protector who guards his flock in a wilderness where predators are plentiful. If God as shepherd withdraws his watchful eyes from his flock, their lives would be in danger of being threatened and killed by hungry wolves and roaring lions (devils) at any time.⁶⁰

Edwards’s famous sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” delivered at Enfield, similarly includes a vivid image of the redemptive-providential hand of God that “holds you over the pit of hell” and “holds you from falling into the fire every

⁵⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 10:556 (emphasis added).

⁵⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 10:556.

⁵⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 10:556. See also *WJE* 25:159. Edwards explained how God preserves his people: “He has preserved and defended us. Children need the care of their parents; but God [has] preserved us in being, preserved us from death [through] sickness, accidents, [and the attacks of] enemies: from such trouble [and] temporal calamities as many others [commonly suffer; but also from] spiritual calamities, spiritual enemies, [and] damnation, and so has brought us up.”

⁵⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 10:556.

⁶⁰ See Edwards, *WJE* 22:411–12.

moment.” This divine preserving activity for the human souls is a work in which the Son and the Spirit participate. It is a trinitarian providence in the way that the Son becomes “the good shepherd” of his sheep and the Spirit is poured over and indwells them; hence, the redeemed is preserved by the communicative effects of the divine power, knowledge, and happiness.⁶¹

For Edwards, God deploys a special preservation for the church. He believed that the old world would end; it would be not renewed but annihilated and then the new heaven and the new earth will be achieved. Even if the present earthly world (referring to the old creation) perishes by fire, the church will not be destroyed with it but will continue to exist by God’s special providence in the new heaven and new earth.⁶² Edwards wrote that “the church shall dwell in a world new to it, or to a great part of it, even heaven, which will be a new habitation.”⁶³ The reason for the church to be preserved for eternity in the heavenly world is not because of her merits but because of the covenant made with Christ to fulfill his faithfulness with his bride. As the church is the bride of Christ, she now has the covenant with her head Christ and will possess eternal glory with her bridegroom in the future. The church is in the covenant of grace and marriage with Christ, so the church is thus to be the object of God’s special preservation. As God’s providence for the church in this earthly world comes to an end, “Christ shall rejoice over his bride, and the bride shall rejoice in her husband, in the state of her consummate and everlasting blessedness,” said Edwards.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Edwards, *WJE* 25:341.

⁶² For Edwards’s views of the destruction of the earthly world, see *WJE* 20:51, 93, 176, 181–82. See also *WJE* 14:530.

⁶³ Edwards, *WJE* 9:349.

⁶⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 9:508.

The Act of Governance

The second element in Edwards's theology of providence is government (*gubernatio*). God is not only known as the conserver/preserver but also acknowledged as the supreme and universal governor in his theology of providence. The articulation of God as governor or ruler of the world is closely connected with his thinking. In his "Miscellanies," no. 128, Edwards defined what Christian religion is like. Christianity is a religion that professes the existence of God as the one and only divinity and believes his works, especially bringing the world into existence (i.e., the work of creation) and governing it according to his will (i.e., the work of providence).⁶⁵ In light of this basic truth, one of the essential natures of Christian religion in Edwards's theology was that God *governs* the whole creation and all things are designed and ruled by his providence. The scope of the creator God's government is also enormous and encompasses everything that exists and occurs in time.

Based on his theological understanding of God as a communicative being who provides for his people, Edwards assumed that there is a surplus of intended meaning governed by God's *intervention* in every divine revelation so that a single revelatory word, event, or nature may have multiple referents.⁶⁶ The divine government has the specific and binding purpose of revealing *deo gloria* in the world. Edwards specifically anchored his typological interpretation of divine province over all revelatory events and defended typology as providing the key to understanding them. He encouraged his

⁶⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 13:291–92.

⁶⁶ Unlike deists who, in principle, denied God's intervention in the world in any way in his day, Edwards's typology attempted to activate the interventionist view of God and his providence.

audiences and readers to “consider the events of providence in light,” and the light is a typological vision.⁶⁷ Edwards’s being “master typologist” is indeed the other side of him being as idealist.⁶⁸ Stephen Nichols also opines: “Edwards’s typologizing of Scripture, history and nature are all of one piece, explicable by reference to his philosophical commitments, in particular his idealism and his notion of being as relational and communicative within a teleology of divine self-glorification.”⁶⁹ Throughout his major writings—*A History of the Work of Redemption*, *Typological Writings*, including “Images of Divine Things” and “Types of the Messiah,” and *The Harmony of the Old and New Testament*—typology runs deep in Edwards’s providential thinking. Edwards’s “Miscellanies” also have many references to typology. In his “Miscellanies,” no. 119, for examples, Edwards stated:

The things of the ceremonial law are not the only things whereby God designedly shadowed forth spiritual things, but with an eye to such a representation were all the transactions of the life of Christ ordered. And very much of the wisdom of God in the creation appears in his so ordering things natural, that they lively represent things divine and spiritual, [such as] sun, fountain, vine; as also, much of the wisdom of God in his providence, in that the state of mankind is so ordered, that there are innumerable things in human affairs that are lively pictures of the things of the gospel, such as shield, tower, and marriage, family.⁷⁰

He further developed a typological theology of providence, making the radical statement that God’s providences are “typical providences,” in which all proto-types are related to their anti-types by his providential care.⁷¹ Edwards believed that typological framework

⁶⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 9:519.

⁶⁸ McClymond, “God the Measure,” 43.

⁶⁹ Nichols, *Jonathan Edwards’s Bible*, 68. See also Nichols, “Typology,” 576. He connects Edwards’s idealistic immaterialism to his typological hermeneutics of the world, writing: “Every created thing was related in some way to every other created thing. But every material thing also imaged spiritual reality. Spiritual reality (the antitype) was the “substance” of the inferior and material creation (the type), communicated by God to created minds.”

⁷⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 13:284.

⁷¹ Edwards, *WJE* 9:289.

as a mode of thought could enable human minds to understand the providence of God by contemplating the patterns of types and anti-types in the affairs of individuals, and historical and natural events (e.g., thunder and war). Typology helped Edwards understand the personal, historical, and natural dimensions of life by locating them within larger patterns. As the book of scripture is full of typological schemes, the book of nature is also full of the providential disposals of God, testifying to his governance of all reality. Accordingly, Edwards's thinking exhibits a profound interdependence between providence and typology.

Ursula Brumm points out that Edwards's typology was not foreign to the Reformed theological tradition, but it was a part of the aspect of Calvinism:

The aspect of Calvinism...is the general belief that God uses natural events to give *signs* or *signals* to man. Such a sign does have a definite meaning, even though it may well be imperfectly understood. This means that of natural events one must inquire after their significances—a very important word to the American Puritans...This leads us to another kind of symbolism used by the American Calvinists, their so-called *typology*.⁷²

Against those Enlightenment rationalists and deists denying and hiding the spiritual meanings of the material world, Edwards retrieved the typological interpretation of reality, in which the world has genuine spiritual reality, visible and invisible, and its sacramental character.⁷³ Edwards's use of typology remains both within and extends beyond an intramural Calvinist-Reformed-Puritan tradition. So, it surely has an important theological import and relevance in ecumenical discourse.

⁷² Brumm, *American Thought*, 18 (emphasis added). Yet it is also clear that Edwards's typology moved a step-further from the way Reformed-Calvinist tradition dealt with it. His typology was a mixed one of his Reformed-Calvinist with some philosophical claims from the Cambridge Platonists (e.g., idealism and continuous creation).

⁷³ See Anderson et al., "Editor's Introduction," 11.

Natural Governance

The idea that God is “the sovereign Lord of nature” occupies a central position in “the western theistic understanding of providence.”⁷⁴ Edwards stood in the tradition, believing that God is the creator and the governor of the physical nature and its existence. He was indeed an ardent student of nature and enjoyed reading the book of nature. He said that “I used to sit and view the moon, for a long time; and in the daytime, spent much time viewing the clouds and sky to behold the sweet glory of God.”⁷⁵ As the psalmist proclaims in Ps 19:1, Edwards believed that natural types and signs point to the spiritual reality that they represent.⁷⁶ As for Edwards, typological thinking regarding nature is more than endowing the natural realm with spiritual significance. Instead, he basically understood God as a communicative being who uses types to teach his intelligent creatures regarding the spiritual world, which is true and sacred by nature, and reveal what lies beyond the physical one.⁷⁷ “The whole outward creation, which is but the shadow of beings, is so made as to represent spiritual things,” wrote Edwards.⁷⁸ In *Religious Affections*, Edwards firmly held that natural phenomenon, such as “the rain and fruitful seasons,” bear witness to and typify “God’s being and goodness.”⁷⁹ For Edwards, the ability to grasp natural signs and types as pointers to God and his providence in the heavens and the earth is also spiritual. Natural persons cannot fully understand them and their meanings but only those regenerated with the religious

⁷⁴ Freddoso, “Medieval Aristotelianism,” 74.

⁷⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 16:197.

⁷⁶ “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands” (New American Standard Bible).

⁷⁷ See Holmes, *God of Grace*, 100. Similarly, Holmes asserts: “What is both surprising and interesting, however, is Edwards’s appropriation of typology as a method of finding meaning and coherence in the created order and the course of human history.”

⁷⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 11:152. This manner of thinking goes back to Plato.

⁷⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 2:232.

affection infused and effected by the Spirit can see and read God's providential works and traces shown in nature. Interestingly, quoting from 1 John 5:8 ("there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one"), Edwards opined that it is a trinitarian providential event if the human mind could see the water as a spiritual-typical pointer to the blood of Christ beyond over its original property.⁸⁰ The Father has provided and preserved the water as a spiritual sign; the Son's blood of the covenant with the Father was shed; the gracious holy effect of the Spirit has testified that the water bears witness of the blood of the Son of God in the hearts of the saints.⁸¹

According to Janine Knight, Edwards understood that nature is moving or in the motion of something towards its *telos* or *finis*. She argues that Edwards's use of typology escalated or ascended "the scale of being" of created reality by "moving from the lower to the upper end of creation in an infinite variety of degree."⁸² Edwards claimed that God has established "inferior things in an analogy to superior" or constituted "the external world in an analogy to things in the spiritual world."⁸³ Gerald McDermott describes Edwards's concept of the natural world as typical of God's attributes as follows: "Every last part of the creation is emblematic of the divine, an effulgent crystal with supernatural meaning—even the tiniest leaf in a flower is a word from God, the sun shows forth God's glory, the clouds and mountains bespeak God's majesty, and the green

⁸⁰ King James Version (KJV)

⁸¹ See Edwards, *WJE* 2:232–33. See also Anderson et al., eds., "Editor's Introduction," 10. Wallace Anderson writes that "the full meaning of the types was closed to the reprobate. For Edwards, the 'light' in the soul imparted by the Holy Spirit in conversion enabled the regenerate to comprehend more fully the harmony or 'agreeableness' of creation, human experience, and the work of redemption as given in Scripture.'"

⁸² Knight, "Typology," 200.

⁸³ Edwards, *WJE* 8:564.

fields and pleasant flowers testify to ‘his grace and mercy.’”⁸⁴ In Edwards’s own words, the sun which “rises out of darkness” and “under the earth” is a type of the divine providence that raised up Christ “from a state of death.”⁸⁵ There are as many as saints as there are stars in the sky: “The stars are types of saints in glory.”⁸⁶ The light from the moon and stars granted by God during the time of darkness represents “those divine supports God gives his people in the day of their trouble.”⁸⁷ The sun that repeatedly rises and sets is typical of the divine providence that brings about the spiritual process of individuals and things occurring in the world just as the sun can flourish and wither plants.⁸⁸ In this manner, according to Edwards, the physical nature is preserved and governed in order to “show this, God in some things in providence, has set aside the ordinary course of things in the material world to subserve to the purposes of the moral and spiritual, as in miracles.”⁸⁹ Following his Puritan theological predecessors, such as Increase Mather (1681–1701), Edwards comprehended certain natural occurrences as “illustrative providences,” which are designated to serve one of the “means by which God made his will known to his covenant people,” in his theology of God’s providence.⁹⁰

Historical Governance

⁸⁴ McDermott, “Jonathan Edwards, John Henry Newman,” 152.

⁸⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 11:66, 120. According to Edwards, the sun is generally a type of the person of Christ being called “the Sun, the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the World.”

⁸⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 11:86.

⁸⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 11:90.

⁸⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 11:85.

⁸⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 11:61.

⁹⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 11:22.

Government (“God rules the world”) as an aspect of providence has a particular meaning in the Reformed theology that God “guides it in a particular direction, toward the final realization of his plans and promises.”⁹¹ From a Reformed dogmatic perspective, more specifically, government is deeply connected with history and its “final realization of his plans and promises” in the world.⁹² According to Benjamin Farley, the Reformed understanding of providence as government refers to “the direction, purpose, and goal that God assigns to each component of creation and to *the whole history*.”⁹³ Hence, divine government is God’s purposive and directed work towards the end for which he created the world. As Edwards admitted, divine providence in worldly events often seems puzzling like “so many branches and so many windings and turnings” of the river; it is often difficult to predict where all this water flows into.⁹⁴ By God’s superintendence of history, however, it is apparent that there will ultimately be fulfillment at the end of history.⁹⁵ The outcome of history in the world is assured. Edwards believed that faith in the divine government of a God who will continue to rule over and direct the course of worldly events up to their destination(s) offers a confident hope and expectation to the redeemed for the things to come.

⁹¹ van der Kooi, “Creation and Providence,” 432. See Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 581–82. Charles Hodge explains that divine government “includes the ideas of design and control. It supposes an end to be attained, and the disposition and direction of means for its accomplishment. If God governs the universe He has some great end, including an indefinite number of subordinate ends, towards which it is directed, and He must control the sequence of all events, so as to render certain the accomplishment of all his purposes.” See also Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 175. Louis Berkhof also emphasizes the teleological nature of divine government: “The divine government may be defined as *that continued activity of God whereby He rules all things teleologically so as to secure the accomplishment of the divine purpose*.” (emphasis original). See also Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 172. Along with those traditional Reformed thinkers, John Frame concurs with them that divine government is particularly teleological and thus eschatological.

⁹² van der Kooi, “Creation and Providence,” 432.

⁹³ Farley, *Providence of God*, 42.

⁹⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 9:349, 519–20. See also *WJE* 11:77–80.

⁹⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 9:349.

In his sermon “God’s Excellencies,” Edwards praised the God who turns the streams of the river (Prov 21:1) in the course of history, preaching: “Thus he holds an absolute and uncontrollable government in the world; and thus he has done from the beginning, and thus he will do to the end of all things.”⁹⁶ Comparison (e.g., *analogia entis*), according to Edwards, is an imagery literacy device that enables human minds to grasp God’s excellence to some extent. By comparing the examples of human kings, rulers, and teachers (e.g., Solomon) to the transcendent God, Edwards paradoxically emphasizes that no one is excellent like God and offers a justification for his governing rule as follows: “who has every being in the world to rule and govern; who rules every thought, and every purpose, every motion and action, not only of angels and men, but of every creature, great and small, even to every little atom in the whole creation, and that forever and ever?”⁹⁷ Furthermore, it seems noticeable that Edwards defined the meaning of sin in a specific theological context as he applied the sermon. He pointed out that sin is rebellion against or disobedience to the governance of God by which he, with power, wisdom, and love, upholds and rules over the lives of the saints.⁹⁸

Also, Edwards understood the history of the whole world from a redemptive and typological viewpoint.⁹⁹ In Edwards’s understanding of God’s redemptive history, from the beginning to the end, past events are types of future ones and conversely, future events are antitypes of past ones. Furthermore, the *finis* of redemptive history is chiefly

⁹⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 10:422.

⁹⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 10:422.

⁹⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 10:426. Edwards wrote that “sin is committed against that God that made us and preserves us, feeds us and clothes us.” For Edwards, sin is rebellion against God, the redeemer who has saved the world, but also against the creator who made the world and the provider who preserves the world.

⁹⁹ For Edwards’s understanding of the history of the world from an ecclesiastical worldview, see Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards’s Philosophy of History*, 163–67.

accomplished by “successive great events” and “dispensations of providence.”¹⁰⁰ For instance, Noah’s flood is typical of the blood of Christ in which it washes away of the sins of the world.¹⁰¹ Likewise, the building of the temple in Solomon’s reign is typical of three things to come in the future—(1) Christ; (2) his human body; and (3) his church.¹⁰² In non-biblical history, the emergence of Constantine and his destruction of the heathen empire, being called “the second great dispensation of providence” by Edwards, are typical of Christ’s “coming to judgement in the sixth chapter of Revelation at the latter end,” according to him.¹⁰³ In this manner, Edwards was insistent that God “began new dispensations of providence, tending to make way and forward this great event.”¹⁰⁴ Particular persons and historical events are selected and worked out by God’s covenantal governance, serving as lively images and types of Christ’s redemption and his kingdom to come in the world.

According to Gerald McDermott, Edwards’s typological-teleological understanding of history was not new but influenced by Mastricht, a Dutch theologian, whom Edwards admired.¹⁰⁵ In addition to Mastricht, Cotton Mather (1663–1728), who was an Edwards’s immediate Puritan forebearer and also a typologist, expressed “the parallel between the New England experiment and the great biblical drama of Old

¹⁰⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 9:351.

¹⁰¹ Edwards, *WJE* 9:151.

¹⁰² Edwards, *WJE* 9:224. See also *WJE* 11:196. In “Types of the Messiah,” Edwards claimed that “God was often please to bring to pass extraordinary and miraculous appearances and event s to typify future things.”

¹⁰³ Edwards, *WJE* 9:351, 374.

¹⁰⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 11:79.

¹⁰⁵ McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society*, 80. See Edwards, *WJE* 16:217. Edwards wrote: “But take Mastricht for divinity in general, doctrine, practice, and controversy; or as an universal system of divinity; and it is much better than Turretin or any other book in the world, excepting the Bible, in my opinion.”

Testament Israel” in *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702).¹⁰⁶ Further earlier from those post-Reformed theological works, Adriaan Neel finds the root of Edwards’s teleological-providential view of history in the “dispensational progressive view of history” of St. Augustine’s *Civitate Dei*.¹⁰⁷

Personal Governance

The most standard understanding of typology is that typology exists when there is a historical correspondence between persons in the Old and the New Testament. Biblical theologians seek to determine the correspondence between the type and the antitype, and the typological relationship should be real and intelligible. This concept of typology is etymologically derived from the Greek word *τύπος* which connotes “example” (1 Cor 10:6), “image” or “pattern” (Acts 7:44), “mark (John 20:25), or “model” (Titus 2:7), in the New Testament. Among many usages, the most well-known use of personal type in the New Testament would be in Rom 5:14 where Paul introduced “Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”¹⁰⁸ Adam was a typical man since he (the type) is understood in such a way as to accord with Christ (the antitype), who fulfills and encompasses his life. He wrote in “Miscellanies,” no. 362 that “almost everything that was said or done that we have recorded in Scripture from Adam to Christ, was typical of gospel things; persons were typical persons, their actions were typical actions...God’s providences toward them were typical providences.”¹⁰⁹ In this manner, God’s personal providence is defined as his governing and fulfilling provision for his people as he rules over their

¹⁰⁶ See Stephen Nichols, “Typology,” 575.

¹⁰⁷ Neele, *Before Jonathan Edwards*, 189.

¹⁰⁸ New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁰⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 13:435.

faith journey through life—even involving their sins (e.g., the Fall of Adam)—leading them to the end, in which God is glorified in his redemption.

To Edwards, a Reformed-Puritan theologian, God alone is absolutely self-existent, self-provident, and self-sufficient. He is the source and author of every other creature and reality. God has made human beings his revelatory images (or typical beings) that are appropriate to represent his great work of redemption. Thus, human beings are not merely physical creatures but lively and spiritual images or types of some real divine things, especially to Christ, in Edwards's thinking. In his sermon "Blessed Struggle," typology is prominent, and he found various types and anti-types in the narrative of Jacob's struggle.¹¹⁰ Edwards preached that Jacob lived a type of divine providence to his congregation—for instance "Jacob's thus wrestling with God, was doubtless ordered in *providence*, and recorded in the Scripture history to be a *type* and representation of prayer; of that fervent, and earnest, and persevering prayer, in which we ought to see the blessing of God."¹¹¹ According to Edwards, God exercised his providence for his people to seek and receive blessings from him, even amid intense struggle or the most hopeless times, just like Jacob at Peniel, where he wrestled with the angel ("I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved").¹¹² The dislocation of Jacob's thigh from the wrestling between him and the angel is a type of struggle and hopelessness.

¹¹⁰ Noll, "Jonathan Edwards' Use of the Bible," 36.

¹¹¹ Edwards, *WJE* 19:423 (emphasis added).

¹¹² Edwards, *WJE* 19:422–23. According to Edwards, the angel should be understood christologically. In the sermon, he argued that the man was Christ, the second person of the Trinity, by referring to the angel since "God the Father is never called an angel."

Edwards taught his congregation that God sometimes allows Satan to tempt his people and thus to be their grand enemy, who stirs their souls up.¹¹³ Yet their trials and afflictions by Satan are still under God's governing provision, making all afflicted believers more perseverant and steadfast in seeking God's blessing and depending on his providence. Furthermore, the persistent wresting itself is a type of fervent, earnest, and preserving prayer; the blessing of God after that wrestling with the angel is also a type of the greatest light and joy bestowed by God after asking his will.¹¹⁴ The life of Jacob typifies all the afflicted believers who have encountered great difficulties and struggles, and it has a pedagogical value that provides them a universal spiritual-moral lesson on God's providential care and action for his people. He then further expanded his typological understanding of Jacob's affliction and blessing to prefigure Christ's own suffering and resurrection. "This was the time when Christ rose from the dead, and this was the time when Jacob obtained the blessing after long wrestling," as he wrote in "The Blank Bible."¹¹⁵ As for Edwards, it is a serious mistake if one postulates human beings as mere spectators of divine providence (i.e., anthropocentric). Within the God-given reality, they are relational and intertwined together by becoming part of the whole. Humans are typical beings who ought to submit their lives to God, the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they live, move, and have their being in his governing providence (i.e., theocentric).

The Act of Concurrence

¹¹³ Edwards, *WJE* 19:429.

¹¹⁴ See Noll, "Jonathan Edwards' Use of the Bible," 34–36.

¹¹⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 24:852.

The third aspect of Edwards's doctrine of providence is divine concurrence (*concursus*).¹¹⁶ What this concurrence denotes to is simply the divine influence, by which provident God exercises in the world. To Edwards, all that begins to exist cannot arise without a cause: "nothing every comes to pass without a cause."¹¹⁷ Except God alone, who is the self-existent, self-sufficient, and self-provident for eternity, it is evident that all things "must have some foundation of their existence" in his thought.¹¹⁸ The universe has the divine cause. That God is the *prima causa* as the ground for all other causes is the *prime dictum* in Edwards's doctrine of divine concurrence.¹¹⁹

As indicated above, God exercises his metaphysical and redemptive-historical preservations, and he governs nature, history, and individual persons in minute detail. As to how concurrence is distinct from preservation and governance, it specifically focuses on God's foundational influence (*ratio sufficiens*) for all states of affairs in the created reality. Quoting from Rom 11:36, Mastricht explained concurrence, for instance, the third act of divine providence, with the Greek preposition *διὰ* (through).¹²⁰ He wrote: "This particle here does not denote an instrumental cause, but influence or *concurrence*, or the very operations of the persons in providence."¹²¹ All things come to pass through (*διὰ*) the divine influence and power that causes them to do so precisely as God

¹¹⁶ The significance of concurrence, the third aspect of the doctrine of providence, is evident, although the term per se is not frequently found in Edwards's writings.

¹¹⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 1:181.

¹¹⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 1:181.

¹¹⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 1:181, 377.

¹²⁰ "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever, Amen." New American Standard Bible

¹²¹ Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, 3:309–10 (emphasis added). Two other acts of providence are equivalent to the following Greek prepositions in such a way that *ἐξ* ("from") signifies preservation and *εἰς* ("to" or "into") refers to governance. As for Mastricht, briefly speaking, albeit being three (*ἐξ*, *εἰς*, and *διὰ*) in one, preservation highlights the *agent* of providence; governance considers the *end* (telos) of providence and concurrence focuses on the *way* of operation in providence.

decrees.¹²² As with Mastricht, that the things certainly decreed should precisely come to pass is firmly grounded in Edwards's thinking. This is clearly one of the most distinctive aspects of the Calvinistic theology of providence.¹²³

Edwards often associated divine providence with decree and used them interchangeably. For instance, things—such as one's will to sin and salvation—are “foreordained in God's decrees, and ordered in providence.”¹²⁴ Though divine decree and providence are distinct in a technical manner, the former is the eternal act of God *ad intra* and the latter is the transient act of God *ad extra*. The relationship is consistent with his view of the intra-trinitarian life of God and the economy of salvation. From an epistemological point of view, God's providential activities *ad extra* constitutes the foundation of knowing his eternal decrees or counsels, for humans have no direct access to the eternal will of God *in se* apart from his *oikonomia* of providence. From an ontological perspective, however, the divine decrees constitute the internal foundation for his external outworking of providence in the world.

So if God decrees all things to pass from eternity, and if his providence brings all the things ordained to pass in time, just as Edwards believed, then his theology of providence needs to answer some critical theological objections against his ideas as to whether or not human actions are deterministic, God is the author of sin, and he is responsible for evil. On these philosophical-theological subjects, Edwards alleged his

¹²² See Turretin, *Institutes*, 1:508. Turretin stood in line with Mastricht and Edwards on God's decree: “Whatever he decreed, that he follows out; and whatever he performs in time, he decreed from eternity. The antecedent is proved because since the futurity of things depends upon on other God's decree, nothing can be done in time which has not been decreed by him from eternity.”

¹²³ See Shafter, “Editor's Introduction,” 11.

¹²⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 13:233, 409.

claims against Arminians.¹²⁵ By doing so, he significantly contributed to the formation of peculiar eighteenth-century Calvinistic theology and even further influenced the nineteenth-century emergence of the New Divinity in America.

Freedom of Will

In Edwards's time and place, there was a struggle between Calvinistic and Arminian theologies. Philip Schaff argues: "Calvinism represented the consistent, logical, conservative orthodoxy; Arminianism an elastic, progressive, changing liberalism."¹²⁶ Generally speaking, Calvinism attempted to reconcile the freedom of human will with the uncompromised sovereignty of God and his universal causation and predestination. In contrast, Arminianism denied divine causation and predestination but advocated a more libertarian view of human freedom. Arminians argued that free will is one's power of making choices other than what she or he actually made, implying the possibility of doing otherwise. In such a historical-theological context, Edwards made two major contributions, according to William Rowe: "The importance of Edwards lies in his brilliant effort to do two things: (1) to reconcile human freedom and moral responsibility with causal determinist and divine predestination, and (2) to attack the understanding of freedom and responsibility advocated by the Arminians."¹²⁷ Additionally, Edwards's

¹²⁵ For the definition of Arminians or Arminianism, see Ramsey, "Editor's Introduction," 3. By Paul Ramsey, the term Arminianism was a "loose term for all forms of the complaint of the aggrieved moral nature against the harsh tenets of Calvinism" in Edwards's time and place. See also Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards*, 20. For Edwards and his theological antagonists, see Ramsey, "Editor's Introduction," 65–118. Major Arminian (or Arminian-ish) thinkers to whom Edwards opposed were Thomas Chubb, Daniel Whitby, and Isaac Watts.

¹²⁶ Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, 1:509.

¹²⁷ Rowe, *Can God be Free*, 56. For further information on Edwards's contribution to the Reformed theological discussion on human and divine freedom, see also Crisp, "Jonathan Edwards,"

contribution to the Reformed theological discussion of human and divine freedom was to relate them in a trinitarian manner. His view of the human soul is that it has the *imago Dei* in the way that just as the divine mind (Father) consists of understanding (Son) and will (Spirit), the human soul possesses the faculties of knowing and willing.¹²⁸ For him, “the divine will is directed by virtue of the divine knowledge,” and so is the human will.¹²⁹ Though metaphysical and qualitative distinction between God and human can never be erased, it can be said that the divine and human minds are similar in some manner.¹³⁰

So human freedom is the shadow of divine freedom in Edwards’s thought. He believed that God’s willing is preceded, influenced, or motivated by his understanding.¹³¹ According to Steven Studebaker, Edwards believed that “all created entities exist first because they are ideas in the divine mind and second because the divine will actuates their existence in time and space.”¹³² That is, the divine understanding guides the will. Edwards carefully argued that God necessarily chooses the best possible action for him to do, for example, according to his disposition to communicate his glory and goodness *ad extra*. Thus, God is necessarily determined to choose according to his moral nature and act the way that he knows and sees to be best

153–54. See also Helm, “Francis Turretin and Edwards Compatibilism,” 343. Paul Helm says that “the Freedom of the Will may be said to present an at-length critique of this notion favored by the Jesuits and Arminians.”

¹²⁸ Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards’ Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 150.

¹²⁹ Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards’ Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 149.

¹³⁰ For further information on the continuity of the divine and human mind, see Seng-Kong Tan, “Anthropology, Affections, and Free Will,” 251–52.

¹³¹ Edwards, *WJE* 1:217. Edwards wrote that “every act of the will is some way connected with the understanding...the soul always wills or chooses that which, in the present view of the mind, considered in the whole of that view, and all that belongs to it, appears most agreeable.”

¹³² Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards’ Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 149.

because of his nature as an essentially perfect being.¹³³ This is not a flaw to God, according to Edwards:

'Tis no disadvantage or dishonor to a being, necessarily to act in the most excellent and happy manner, from the necessary perfection of his own nature. This argues no imperfection, inferiority or dependence, nor any want of dignity, privilege or ascendancy. 'Tis not inconsistent with the absolute, and most perfect sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God is his ability and authority to do whatever pleases him.¹³⁴

Unlike an Arminian libertarian concept of free will as freedom to do otherwise in a state of equilibrium (i.e., the self-determining will), the will is rather the power of the mind to choose the thing that appears most agreeable to it (i.e., determining the will) in Edwards's thinking.¹³⁵ This is his counter argument to the Arminian definition of the will. Though the will and desire are distinguishable, he did not think that "they are so entirely distinct, that they can ever be properly said to run counter."¹³⁶

Concerning human freedom, Edwards held that humans are also determined to make their own choices since human nature is naturally caused (natural/external necessity) and morally effected (moral/internal necessity).¹³⁷ Not as having the freedom of indifference or some other version of Arminian indeterminism, according to Edwards, humans *freely* choose and act as they do what they desire to do.¹³⁸ In other words, he

¹³³ Crisp, "Jonathan Edwards," 152. See Edwards, *WJE* 1:144. Edwards held the view that "the will is determined by the greatest apparent good, or by what seems most agreeable...the mind's preferring and choosing seem hardly to be properly and perfectly distinct."

¹³⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 1:377-78.

¹³⁵ See Edwards, *WJE* 1:137. Edwards described the will as that "faculty or power or principle of mind by which it is capable of choosing: an act of the will is the same as an act of choosing or choice." See also *WJE* 1:305. He argued that "the will is always, and in every individual act, necessarily determined by the strongest motive; and so is always unable to go against the motive, which all things considered, has now the greatest strength and advantage to move the will."

¹³⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 1:139.

¹³⁷ See Preciado, *Reformed View of Freedom*, 194. The difference of the moral and natural inabilities is the former is internal and the latter is external, and both inabilities make humans no able to choose and do otherwise.

¹³⁸ Turretin held the same notion of defining freedom and liberty with Edwards. See Turretin, *Institutes*, 1:508. He argued that: "The fount of error is the measuring of the nature of liberty from

understood freedom as volitional and rational spontaneity, not as indifference. In his dispute with Arminian thinkers, such as Thomas Chubb (1679–1747) and Isaac Watts (1674–1748), Edwards argued that their preference of the will “out of a state of perfect indifference” is fairly not possible.¹³⁹ He then defended his view that natural and moral necessities are compatible with freedom. For Edwards, the Arminian understanding of the human person as an autonomous rational and free subject outgrows the strong notion of the provident God and his controlling power and sovereignty; he thought the former would weaken the latter. Apart from God, there is no true human freedom; the central purpose of God’s creatures is freely to know, love, and glorify him in the God-human relationship in Edwards’s theology. Along with seeing the world as a machine operated by fixed laws, he understood the Arminian understanding of human nature as another critical factor for the loss of providence.

Moreover, when it comes to God’s freedom interpreted in light of Arminian theological notions of free will, Edwards proved their view of divine freedom and responsibility inconsistent. As Arminians insist, “if power to will and do otherwise is essential to freely willing and doing,” and if it must be the essential ground for morally praising or blaming of one’s action based on her and his volition, then, “it is relatively easy to see the difficulty in praising God for willing and doing what he sees to be the best possible thing for him to do.”¹⁴⁰ That being said, God’s will is neither self-determining power nor possible to do otherwise for it is determined to fit and act

equilibrium (*isorropia*) and making indifference (*to amphirrepes*) essential to it. Liberty must be defined by willingness and spontaneity (as will be seen in the proper place).

¹³⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 1:140.

¹⁴⁰ Rowe, *Can God be Free*, 62.

according to his superior *dispositio*.¹⁴¹ This is not problematic at all to God's providence for the world that is freely and knowingly executed based on his foresight (*provideo*) because God is the most perfect free agent, whom cannot but do what he sees to be best.

Predestination

The etymology of the term providence (*πρόνοια*, *pronoia*) literally means foresight, and it is usually associated with foreknowledge, predestination, or election. In his definition of the orthodox Christian notion of providence, Thomas Flint subscribes God's foresight to its first feature along with his providential care and sovereignty:

A provident God is one who not only knows what will happen, but in some sense or other actively controls what will happen; in Calvin's memorable phrase, providence "*belongs less to his hands than to his eyes*." Christians see God as sovereign over his world, as "holding the helm of the universe, and regulating all events." To call God providence yet deny him such control would be, from the orthodox perspective, to contradict oneself.¹⁴²

As with Calvin, Edwards held a traditional account of providence, especially believing that God certainly foreknows and knows all things. Not only does God know the whole future infallibly for he is beyond time, God has also meticulously predetermined (or predestined) all worldly events. God's preordination occurs with his foreknowledge, and Edwards explained this: "Now it is self-evident, that if he knows all things beforehand, he either doth approve of them, or he doth not approve of them; that is, he is either

¹⁴¹ Fisk, "Que sera, sera," 297. See Stuebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 153–55. Edwards's dispositional understanding of God's will is from his synthesis of intellectualism and Augustinian voluntarism, according to Stuebaker. Stuebaker also argues that it is traditionally Puritan in that Puritans believed in the power of disposition "to determine the apprehension of the understanding and the desire of the will." For the primary source, see Edwards, *WJE* 13:286–87. So to speak, Edwards's notion of the mind is volition seeking understanding and vice versa.

¹⁴² Flint, "Two Accounts of Providence," 149 (emphasis added).

willing they should be, or is not willing they should be.”¹⁴³ As a result, nothing happens outside the order of the divine provision.

If free choices which God knows beforehand are foredetermined as Edwards held, then the major problem with his view of predestination is that it may seem to amount to an accusation of fatalism to which he was strongly opposed.¹⁴⁴ He was of course aware of this criticism and wrote that when this Calvinistic doctrine of predestination is expounded, its opposers, particularly among Arminians, “cry out them, as agreeing with the ancient Stoics in their doctrine of fate, and with Mr. Hobbes in his opinion of necessity.”¹⁴⁵ Unlike their criticism, even though all things are causally determined by God’s will and wisdom, such causal determination does not guarantee fatalism. The scheme is a fatal error, according to Edwards, because it is inconsistent with (1) “the common and universal notions that mankind have of liberty, activity, moral agency, virtue and vice” and (2) “the world’s being in all things subject to the disposal of an intelligent wise agent...the sovereign Lord of the universe, governing all things by proper will, choice and design.”¹⁴⁶ That is, fatalism rejects both human and divine freedom.

On the human nature, first, Edwards clearly taught that humans are free agents insofar as they have “determining will,” bringing about “the act of the will or choice” in their minds; hence, they are morally responsible or blameworthy for “consequence of some action, or influence, its choice is directed to, and fixed upon a particular object.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Edwards, *WJE* 13:175.

¹⁴⁴ See Edwards, *WJE* 1:100. It was Isaac Watts who directed this criticism towards Calvinists.

¹⁴⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 1:371.

¹⁴⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 1:373–74.

¹⁴⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 1:141. See also *WJE* 1:137, 163. By definition, the will is a power of the mind to choose or simply the mind choosing without coercion. Edwards defines it as follows: “The plain and

Second, fatalism excludes God's teleological and personal nature in providence. As it is considered, there is a fundamental difference between fate and providence. Paul Helm writes: "'Fate' suggests impersonality, as in astrological beliefs; but providence is personal, the personal activity of God in his creation through which he brings it to its appointed end or destiny."¹⁴⁸ As for Edwards, the divine will is neither indifferent nor neutral but freely oriented and inclined to what is best agreeable and pleasing to his mind. The world is bound with neither chance nor fate; its sourcehood and control is not self-determined but determined by the all-wise, powerful, and benevolent provident God and his "*universal, determining providence*."¹⁴⁹ God not only has determined the *finis* of providence but also ordained the detailed means which achieve the ultimate fulfillment of God's ends. Therefore, creatures can be confident in God's providence, and within the system of the divine providence, they can also freely participate in and contribute to the universal determining providence of God.¹⁵⁰

Theodicy

Finally, given Edwards's endorsement of predestination, it is asked as to whether he thought that God is the author/first cause of sin. Edwards allotted many pages to discussing this question how God *concurs* to the act of sin in the latter parts of his *Freedom of Will and Original Sin*.¹⁵¹ Arminians considered such discourse (i.e., God as

obvious meaning of the words "freedom" and "liberty," in common speech, is power, opportunity, or advantage, that anyone has, to do as he pleases."

¹⁴⁸ Helm, *Providence of God*, 218–19.

¹⁴⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 1:431 (emphasis original).

¹⁵⁰ Helm, *Providence of God*, 219.

¹⁵¹ To delve into the matter of whether God is the author of sin, please refer to Edwards, *WJE* 1:397–412; 6:380–89.

the author of sin) as a blasphemy. Edwards quoted Daniel Whitby (1638–1726) and his accusation against the Calvinistic-Reformed view of predestination and its connection with human sinful volitions and actions:

this opinion of the necessity of the will “absolves sinners, as doing nothing of their own accord which was evil, and would cast all the blame of all the wickedness committed in the world, upon God, and upon his providence, if that were admitted by the asserters of this fate; whether he himself did necessitate them to do these things, or ordered matters so that they should be constrained to do them by some other cause.”¹⁵²

On Whitby’s criticism, Edwards first conceded this theological matter as challenging. Then, he replied that Whitby made a fallacious argument distorting or exaggerating the Calvinistic-Reformed concept of determinism as an extreme version of fatalism in order to make it easier to blame (i.e., straw man fallacy). He proposed two alternative meanings of God being “the author of sin” for clarity.¹⁵³ (1) If God is the agent, active actor, or doer of sin, then it is justifiable to call God “the author of sin,” but (2) if God is the permitter, or not a hinderer of sin, and if God is a purposeful disposer of the state of events that people sin for greater good, then God is not justified to be called “the author of sin.”¹⁵⁴ Edwards argued that God can permit evil, and he does so for a good purpose,

¹⁵² Edwards, *WJE* 1:397. See also Holbrook, “Editor’s Introduction,” 60. John Taylor (1694–1761), who was a prominent theological opponent to Edwards on the doctrine of original sin, proceeded with a similar argument and argued that the orthodox doctrine eventually would lead God to be the author of sin. For further information on Taylor, see Holbrook, “Editor’s Introduction,” 68–70.

¹⁵³ Edwards, *WJE* 1:399.

¹⁵⁴ Edwards, *WJE* 1:399. Edwards consistently restated the same argument in defense of the notion that God is not the active and direct author of sin. He wrote: “concerning this, I must refer the reader to what I have said of it in my discourse on the *Freedom of the Will*. Though, besides what I have there said, I may here observe; that if for God so far to order and dispose the being of sin, as to *permit* it, by withholding the gracious influences necessary to prevent it, is for him to be the author of sin, then some things which Dr. Taylor himself lays down, will equally be attended with this very consequence.” As pointed out by Clyde Holbrook, Edwards’s main argument is consistently twofold in both *Freedom of Will* and *Original Sin*. Edwards advanced two primary explanations: (1) he said that sin is the consequence of the withdrawal/absence of God’s action and (2) it occurs through God’s permissive will.

so that for him, God cannot be called the author of sin but it is perhaps better to call him the permitter of sin instead.

God permitted so that “what these murderers of Christ did, is spoken of as what God brought to pass or ordered, and that by which he fulfilled his own word.”¹⁵⁵ According to Edwards, that God permitted such evil to occur and used the evil as his salvific means does not necessarily make him morally guilty of the fault or author of sin because God only permitted the physical substance of their act (indirect or efficient cause), not their moral wickedness (direct or final cause). For further clarity, he used an illustration of the sun, arguing that “if cold and darkness are found” on earth, the consequence arises from the “withdrawment” or “absence” of light and heat, which are the effects of the sun.¹⁵⁶ First, just as darkness follows from the removal of light and coldness does so from the withdrawal of heat, Edwards understood evil as the absence of good, having affinity with St. Augustine’s privation view of sin. Second, it is inappropriate to blame the sun for the coldness and darkness on earth even though the sun is their fountain and source.

Bringing a biblical case for Adam’s first sin, Edwards similarly opined that Adam sinned because God withdrew the superior and supernatural principles from him and it did not make God guilty of being the author of sin.¹⁵⁷ Against blaming God as the author of sin, Turretin also employed several illustrations or analogies: “The magistrate is the cause of the death inflicted on the guilty person by the executioner, but is not the cause

¹⁵⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 1:403.

¹⁵⁶ Edwards, *WJE* 1:404.

¹⁵⁷ Woo, “Is God the Author of Sin,” 106. See Holbrook, “Editor’s Introduction,” 61. Holbrook judges Edwards’s approach to the problem as follows: “It was all very well for Edwards to pitch his argument on the principle of permissiveness by God, but he had still left unsettled the crucial issue of God’s responsibility for sin.”

of the cruelty exhibited in that execution; the harp player is the cause of the sound, but not the dissonance arising from the strings; and he who drives a lame horse is the cause of the motion, but not the lameness.”¹⁵⁸ Both Edwards and Turretin found two causes in the same event and distinguished the material cause of the act from the moral cause of the wickedness. So if following the logic, it might have been possible to blame God for the indirect or efficient cause of her or his doing evil, but someone could never attribute their sin to God or call him the author/final cause of their actual wickedness. Edwards continued his defence of a holy and innocent God: “God may be, in the manner which has been described, the orderer and disposer of that event, which in the inherent subject and agent is moral evil; and yet his so doing may be no moral evil.”¹⁵⁹

B. Hoon Woo attempts to locate Edwards’s account of the authorship of sin within a broad western Christian tradition, from the Patristic and Medieval to Reformation and post-Reformation periods.¹⁶⁰ Through comparisons, he establishes substantial theological continuities between theologians, such as St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin, and Edwards on the issue as to whether God is the author of sin or not. His work can be a scholarly evidence to prove that on the doctrine, Edwards had a catholic spirit of Christianity. According to Woo, Edwards has a particular affinity with the early modern Reformed orthodoxy theologians on the view of God’s will, in which they distinguished between (1) God’s secret and (2) revealed will. Woo explains the difference between the twos:

According to early modern Reformed theology, God’s free will (*voluntas libera Dei*) is distinguished between the will of decree or good pleasure (*voluntas*

¹⁵⁸ Turretin, *Institutes*, 1:509. The suitability of such illustrations in explaining God’s personal providence is certainly a matter of debate and raises questions.

¹⁵⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 1:406.

¹⁶⁰ Woo, “Is God the Author of Sin,” 101.

decreti vel beneplaciti) and the will of the sign or precept (*voluntas signi vel praecepti*). The former is the ultimate, effective, and absolutely unsearchable will of God which underlies the revealed will of God (*voluntas revelata Dei*); it is also called the hidden or secret will of God (*voluntas arcana Dei*).¹⁶¹

Although the wills seem dissimilar, they are not incompatible with each other.

Considering Jesus' death on the cross, for instance, the event seems inconsistent with the divine secret will because it is contrary to God's holy disposition or nature. However, within God's foreknowledge, "it might appear to God to be, a glorious event; and consequently be agreeable to his will" in the total context of his purposes so that God decreed it to come to pass for a further good.¹⁶² As with early modern Reformed theologians, Edwards held that the same event (e.g., the death of Jesus at the cross) can thus have positivity (the divine yes) and negativity (the divine no) simultaneously.¹⁶³ So despite all the mystery pertaining to the divine providence, decree, and permission of sin, Edwards chose to affirm divine providence nevertheless because his providential orders and disposals emerge out of God's all-knowing and all-wise secret will. Sin originates from the misuse of human freedom, yet God's providence operates in the

¹⁶¹ Woo, "Is God the Author of Sin," 114.

¹⁶² Edwards, *WJE* 1:406–7. Edwards further explained: "There is no inconsistency in supposing, that God may hate a thing as it is itself, and considered simply as evil, and yet that it may be his will it should come to pass, considering all consequences."

¹⁶³ Woo, "Is God the Author of Sin," 115. See Edwards *WJE* 4:344. Though God and the Devil do not collaborate, both spiritual agents can operate simultaneously at the same time and location, as Edwards noted. However, the intentions and goals of God are entirely opposed to those of the Devil. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Devil is in the providential control of God, being ordained for his greater and higher good purpose. He wrote: "For though undoubtedly, God and the Devil may work together at the same time, and in the same land; and when God is at work, especially if he be very remarkably at work, Satan will do his utmost endeavor to intrude, and by intermingling his work, to darken and hinder God's work; yet God and the Devil don't work together in producing the same event, and in effecting the same change in the hearts and lives of men: but 'tis apparent that there are some things wherein the main substance of this work consists, a certain effect that is produced, and alteration that is made in the apprehensions, affections, dispositions and behavior of men, in which there is a likeness and agreement everywhere. Now this I say, is either a wonderful work of God, or a mighty work of the Devil; and so is either a most happy event, greatly to be admired and rejoiced in, or a most awful calamity. Therefore if what has been said before, be sufficient to determine it to be as to the main, the work of God, then it must be acknowledged to be a very wonderful and glorious work of God."

presence of sin. His providential workings are responsible for converting all that is negative, including sin and evils, into a greater or further good. This occurs through the Father's all-sovereign power and righteousness within his glorious redemptive activity in and through the Son and the Spirit.

Conclusion

From the Augustinian psychological model, Edwards identified divine persons with God the Father (the mind), Son (the understanding), and Spirit (the will), respectively. These divine persons subsist as three equally divine persons; the divine persons also exist perichoretically or mutually indwell within themselves so that there is only one understanding and one will in the Godhead. This trinitarian model serves as the paradigm for the works of the Trinity in the world, such as creation, providence, and redemption. The immanent Trinity provides a framework for understanding the tri-une working reality of divine *oikonomia*. Creation, providence, and redemption are God's distinct external works, but one work and the same scheme within the salvific work of the triune God. As indicated above, Edwards's theologies of creation, providence, and redemption are intrinsically intertwined. As the source of all that is his doctrine of God as a communicate being, whose fullness is centrifugal and centripetal. The first part of the chapter argues that Edwards's providence provides the answer to the problems of the God-given reality, such as the evil that has entered into the world. By doing so, it further argues that within a trinitarian-redemptive grammar, his theology of providence exhibits distinct Christian theological characteristics.

Another tri-une working paradigm is seen in Edwards's understanding of the classic Reformed aspects of the doctrine of providence, which include divine

preservation (*conservatio*), government (*gubernatio*), and concurrence (*concursus*). So the chapter attempts to construct a synthetic account of his providentialism in a systematic style by collecting Edwards's providential writings from diverse sources and integrating his thoughts into a unified whole. As a result, his doctrine of providence aligns with the orthodox and Calvinistic-Reformed tradition, as it affirms the divine sovereign and meticulous providence over all aspects of existence. This encompasses God's governance and intervention in the natural world, historical events, human affairs, the presence of evil, and the salvation of the elect. Such divine providence is manifested through his preserving, governing, and concurring acts/disposals, as outlined in Edwards's theological framework. His doctrine of providence stood on the shoulders of those theologians who had lived before him, especially Puritan and Reformed theological predecessors.¹⁶⁴

However, he was confronted with notable and specific challenges to the orthodox doctrine of providence during his era, stemming from the emergence of new philosophical ideologies, such as the Hobbesian mechanistic and deistic worldview. Moreover, revisionist theologies, exemplified by Arminian theology, further contributed to the critical examination and reevaluation of the prevailing understanding of providence. So on the grounds of his Reformed-Calvinistic confessions, he had to develop a peculiar model of divine providence using diverse theological and intellectual materials—for instance, continuous creationism, idealistic occasionalism, immaterialism, typology, and theocentric determinism. Yet, as seen above, those

¹⁶⁴ For instance, Edwards's theology of providence can be considered a form of retrieval theology, as it largely aligns with the medieval models of the doctrine of providence illustrated by Langdon Gilkey in his book. Refer to Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 161–62.

components did not cause a parting of the ways between Edwards and his Puritan-Reformed theological forerunners and the broader Christian tradition. Due to such creativity/peculiarity in his retrieval theology, Edwards's theology of providence can continue to hold theological relevance and ecumenical import for today.

CHAPTER 6

EDWARDS'S THEOLOGY OF PROVIDENCE AMONG MODERN THEOLOGIES OF PROVIDENCE

To deny providence...is to deny religion.

H. H. Farmer¹

We must by all means see to it that we be sound and clear in the great doctrines of the gospel, which are the life of our holy religion (we here intend those doctrines which are exhibited in our excellent Westminster Catechism and Confession of Faith); and that we all boldly and impartially appear in the defense thereof. At the same time, we must take heed and beware of the dangerous errors which many have run into; particularly the Arminian and neonomian on the one hand, and the antinomian and enthusiastical on the other.

Jonathan Edwards²

Introduction

Jonathan Edwards was an eighteenth-century Puritan-Reformed theologian and preacher. He was deeply rooted in his immediate historical-theological tradition. Yet he developed a robust theology of the providence of God, which could transcend his historical-cultural boundaries and be utilized by theologians of various generations. His providentialism offers a dialogical-ecumenical engagement and theological relevance to contemporary

¹ Farmer, *Word and God*, 99.

² Edwards, *WJE* 16:277–78.

discussions on God's providential action in the world. Surely, Edwards was not the only theologian who grappled with challenging socio-cultural and religious climates. Every great theologian has faced such a cultural-religious adjustment and pondered how to uphold the great theological traditions of the church amidst evolving circumstances. Some theologians have worked to *re*-visit the traditional Christian theology, while others have sought to *re*-vise it.

Not everyone followed the same path that Edwards chose in doing theology. As indicated so far, he did not uncritically accept cultural and religious norms on the discourse of God-world relation.³ He looked back to the Christian theological tradition, especially his distinctively Augustinian trinitarianism and Reformed-Puritan theology, in order to move forward (along the Edwardsean path). Therefore, it would be erroneous to assume that Edwards, being a Northampton Congregationalist minister, did not hold tradition in high esteem.⁴ On the ecumenical Edwards, Kyle Strobel points out that Edwards studied Christian doctrines “within a living Reformed tradition” and its thinkers, including Owen, Turretin, and Maastricht, making him part of “the living Christian tradition as a whole.”⁵

The chapter is a comparative and ecumenical approach to the providential theologies of Edwards and of the three theologians, Maurice Wiles (1923–2005), Karl Barth (1886–1968), and Clark Pinnock (1937–2010).⁶ The reason these theologians are

³ Surely, this does not indicate that Edwards was not well educated or informed by various advanced learnings and that he was an ecclesial nerd or narrow-minded thinker.

⁴ Parker, “Jonathan Edwards, The Westminster Standards, and Presbyterian Church Government,” (blog), January 8, 2015. It is worth noting that Edwards consistently taught the Westminster Catechism and Confession of Faith to his own children and also instructed the Indian children in Stockbridge, not only in practice of prayer but also in the teachings of the confession. For further information on this, see Edwards *WJE* 16:277–79, 355, 688.

⁵ Strobel, “Introduction,” 4.

⁶ I owe this comparative studies to Kenneth Gavel's dissertation titled “The Triune Provider.”

presented as dialogue partners with Edwards is that they were significant contributors to the development of modern Christian theology of providence. They diverge from Edwards in their theological methods and substances regarding divine providence. Despite this fact, he is able to interface with those different thinkers because of their shared contemplation of the doctrine of providence, and their detailed scholarly studies on the subject. They have aimed to communicate their theologies of providence in a manner that can be applicable to their milieu. Wiles undertook the *re*-vision of the traditional doctrine of providence in his deistic and deconstructive theology. Barth attempted to *re*-discover the Reformed doctrine of providence within a christological-trinitarian grammar. Pinnock *re*-interpreted the doctrine within the openness of God theological movement.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: first, to engage in an ecumenically significant dialogue between their respective theologies in order to relate Edwards's theology to contemporary understandings of providence, and second, to elucidate his theology of providence and discern the distinctiveness of his thinking in comparison to other theologians.

Wiles's Theology of Providence

Maurice Wiles was an Anglican priest and theologian. He was born and raised in a family with a strong clerical background, with both of his grandfather's being ministers. One was a moderately liberal minister of the Church of England; the other was a conservative Baptist pastor-preacher. Although Wiles had no chance to meet either of his grandfathers, and they never had the opportunity to meet during their lifetimes, he employed this family's ecclesial background as an illustration to highlight his

exploration of theological perspectives, spanning from traditional to liberal theology.⁷ In his youth, Wiles was influenced by evangelical ministry and theology. He underwent, however, a gradual transition towards embracing a more liberal-modernist theological position.⁸ When World War II erupted, he served as a high-intellectual with the aim of deciphering coded messages, and following the conclusion of his military service, he pursued his philosophical-theological studies at Cambridge University. His theological interests encompassed a wide range of fields, including patristic theology, John's Gospel, doctrinal criticism, and theology of providence.⁹

According to John Macquarrie, Wiles's theological methodology can be characterized as a theological deconstruction:

It seems to me that the procedure which Wiles has outlined is very close to what postmodernists call "deconstruction"...the word has two prefixes, apparently contradictory. The prefix "de-" suggests "taking apart," but the "con-" suggests "putting together." The archpriest of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida, claims that the method is finally not negative but affirmative.¹⁰

As for Wiles, doing Christian theology is a matter of neither simply "testing the intelligibility of biblical concepts" nor "reaffirming them when they pass the test."¹¹ Deconstructive theology critically challenges traditional theological frameworks, substances, and language to make them more relevant and accessible in the contemporary world. It involves dismantling and remaking these constructs through

⁷ Using Murphy's general categories to define liberal theologians, Kenneth Gavel argues that Wiles's theology can be classified as liberal theology for the following reasons: "epistemology (knowledge of God is rooted in religious experience); philosophy of religious language (it expresses in symbolic and metaphorical terms human experience of God); view of divine action (God does not intervene from the outside, but is immanent and active within the processes of nature and history)." See Gavel, "Triune Provider," 54. Cf. Nancy Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism*, 6–7, 77–80.

⁸ Wiles, *Scholarship and Faith*, 138–39.

⁹ His key books include: *Christian Fathers*, *Archetypal Heresy*, *Spiritual Gospel*, *Making of Christian Doctrine*, *Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, and *God's Action in the World*.

¹⁰ Macquarrie, "Theological Legacy," 604.

¹¹ Wiles, *God's Action*, 9.

critical reflection to better understand and engage with current contexts. Regarding theological understanding of divine providence, Wiles deconstructed the traditional model of the God-world relation, including divine action in the world (i.e., “modification of detail of belief”), and carries out the work of remaking it in a revised form, aligning with modern rational and empirical thinking (i.e., “shift of basic paradigm”).¹²

According to Vernon White, in the nineteenth-century, with the rise of Protestant liberal theology, understanding divine providence started to become subjective and human reflection. Within the theological strand, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1843), for instance, treated divine providence in a subjective and reductionistic manner.¹³ In addition, being influenced by Hegel’s ideas and process philosophy, the doctrine of providence was strictly limited in its scope and effectiveness so the traditional view of God’s providence as sovereign and meticulous became the contingency or immanent model.¹⁴ This shift was attributed to a change in how God was viewed by the nineteenth-century theologians. The concept of the triune God was marginalized, and divine providence became detached from theology proper (the doctrine of God), and came to be viewed as a deistic notion of maintaining the created reality. Wiles inherited and furthered the non-trinitarian understanding of divine providence within his twentieth-

¹² Wiles, *God’s Action*, 13. For Schleiermacher’s theology, see Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 39–51. According to Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson, the fundamental basis of Schleiermacher’s theology can be understood as “feeling” or the devout awareness or consciousness of God in faith.

¹³ White, *Purpose and Providence*, 89–90.

¹⁴ White, *Purpose and Providence*, 90–91. For the Hegelian system, refer to Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 38. Hegel posited that the absence of the world renders it devoid of God’s being (“Without the world is not a God”). Grenz and Olson points out the problem of the Hegelian thinking, writing that “God is *not* a self-sufficient being it and for himself; rather, God *needs* the world for his own self-actualization. World history is also God’s history.” Consequently, this idea brings about a radical immanent theology. (emphasis original).

century liberal theological context.¹⁵ Consequently, it becomes apparent that Wiles's theology of providence incorporated elements of both Schleiermacher's subjectivism and Hegel's immanentism (or panentheism).¹⁶

Natural Providence

Wiles affirmed the traditional Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, asserting that the world was brought into existence by the will of the creator out of nothing.¹⁷ Yet, he took a deistic stance in terms of providence by disassociating himself from the traditional meticulous doctrine of providence.¹⁸ However, Wiles's neo-deism differs from the classic deism that emerged during the Enlightenment period. While old deism emphasized a distant and non-interventionist God who created but abandoned the world, Wiles affirms God's on-going presence and creative role within the created order. So, Kenneth Gavel calls Wiles's deism "a continuous creation."¹⁹ According to Wiles, the Christian understanding of God's action in the world should be perceived as more of an intention or goal, akin to an idea, rather than an actual divine intervention in specific events or occurrences.²⁰ For him, it is no longer suitable to hold the belief in God's continuous special interventions in the created world because it is inconsistent with the

¹⁵ Cf. Wiles, *Explorations*, 68. He attempted to de-construct and then re-construct the doctrine of the Trinity, arguing that it is suitable to refer to God as spirit rather than Father since the name spirit signifies the intimate and conceivable relationship between the divine and the human in a modern context.

¹⁶ White, *Purpose and Providence*, 91.

¹⁷ Yet, his belief in creation seems to be not a Christian faith in the triune creator but rather closer to a universal belief in the existence of a creator of the world. As for Wiles, the creator of the world is simply "our symbol" or "ground" of all existence of finite and temporal beings, with no specific Christian and trinitarian form and shape, such as Irenaeus's view of the creator—God the Father created by means of his two hands, the Son and the Spirit. See Wiles, "Divine Action," 14.

¹⁸ Wiles, *God's Action*, 26.

¹⁹ See Gavel, "Triune Provider," 61. Edwards's trinitarian ontology also suggests a dynamic relational presence of God in every event.

²⁰ Wiles, *God's Action*, 28.

regular patterns of how the world operates, as unveiled by modern science and the principles of natural science.²¹ He also rejected the traditional view of divine providential action due to its moral grounds, criticizing the absence of God's intervention in all necessary instances to counter evil and its repercussions.²²

Wiles deconstructed the traditional meaning of God as omnipotent (all-powerful) and redefined it in a kenotic manner. He quoted from Grace Jantzen's writing: "If God's power is understood as the expression of his love, then God's power is his power to give independence, autonomy, even to creatures over whom, strictly speaking, he is sovereign."²³ Divine omnipotence, according to him, is not derived from controlling or ruling intervention but rather from self-emptying, allowing the created reality to become autonomous and independent and also reciprocal in the God-world relation. This kenotic concept represents Wiles's fundamental understanding of the nature of God and his relation to the world. So, both metaphors of the potter-clay and the soul-body relationship are inadequate for comprehending the relationship between God and the world.²⁴ Rather, the God-world relation, according to Wiles, is a reciprocal interplay

²¹ Wiles, *God's Action*, 97. Before the arrival of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) and the subsequent emergence of evolutionary theory, the notion of divine providence held an initial and apparent significance. However, the theological perspective that regards the natural world as a divine theatre came to be viewed with suspicion. As scientific discoveries revealed that particular occurrences, once believed to be interventions of divine providence, were part of simple or complicated natural processes, the faith in an intervening God gradually transformed into doubt. For further information on the decline of the traditional doctrine of providence in modernity, see Kim, *Deus Providebit*, 2–5. For the relationship between the Darwinian hypothesis and the doctrine of providence, see Gilkey, "Concept of Providence," 172–73.

²² See Wiles, "Divine Action," 13–29. For example, he frequently employs the illustration that God was absent in the scenes of the Hiroshima atomic bomb attack and the Nazi Holocaust as his moral argument for the non-interventionist model of divine providence.

²³ Cf. Wiles, *God's Action*, 23. Also, see Jantzen, *God's World, God's Body*, 152.

²⁴ Wiles, *God's Action*, 35–37. He rejected those metaphors simply because they presuppose that God directly and meticulously intervenes. That is, he strongly held that God does not interpose in the world, and he does not act arbitrarily.

where God works with the world, much like musicians improvising together in a jazz performance.²⁵

Divine providence in relation to the natural world is not supernatural in that it does not come from outside but is always immanent within the process of nature or under it like a fundamental energy or life force. Employing Austin Ferrer's "from the bottom up" approach, he wrote "Energy and its physical expression constitute the basic building bricks out of which the whole universe, with all its human and spiritual richness, is constructed. So it is God's will that the physical elements should continue to be themselves and the energies to function in *their own way*."²⁶ Wiles espoused a revised deistic perspective posing that God's purpose for the physical world lies in a single intention: the progressive development of new entities possessing creativity and autonomy. In this view, the world is designed to evolve and produce novel entities, with intrinsic energies and vitality endowed by the creator.²⁷ Hence, there is no need for God's special intervention or miraculous acts because they will violate the divine single intention and thus it would make God contradict himself in Wiles's thought.²⁸ Consequently, the traditional account of special providence and its distinction from general providence become irrelevant in his theology.

Personal Providence

²⁵ Wiles, *God's Action*, 108.

²⁶ Wiles, *God's Action*, 34 (emphasis added).

²⁷ Kenneth Gavel interprets Wiles's notion of the purpose or *telos* of the world as "directionality" in the evolutionary process. See Gavel, "Triune Provider," 57.

²⁸ See Wiles, *Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, 37–38.

Wiles' understanding of God's personal providence is a scaled-down version of his natural providence, implying that the way God interacts with individuals and the physical world is not fundamentally distinct in nature.²⁹ He believed that God is both the source of individual lives and the sustainer of their existence with an open and non-coercive way. God does not intervene or rule human lives, arguing that "his will for individual human lives must also be one that allows us freedom to choose between various ways in which our potentialities may be developed and used."³⁰ Thus, the destinies of individuals and nations remain uncertain and open, neither necessitated nor pre-ordained by divine plan.

Wiles again challenges the traditional model of personal providence that states that individual lives are guided by God's predestination or decrees. So, this notion, according to him, includes both perspectives, prospective and retrospective, in one's personal providence. As an example, Paul the Apostle had been chosen to be an apostle by God before he was formed and born (prospective), and after experiencing his conversion on the road to Damascus and the fulfillment of divine will for him, he gradually started recognizing the divine and sacred providential plan and action for him (retrospective). However, for Wiles, God's providence for Paul was attributed to his religious consciousness/feeling or sense of God, rather than being ascribed to an actual particular or discrete act of God in his personal life.³¹ It rather expresses in symbolic and metaphorical terms Paul's personal experience of God. So here are the two main points in terms of Wiles's personal providence: (1) providence is always retrospective or

²⁹ See Wiles, *God's Action*, 104–5. Wiles wrote that "what is true about the world at large is true about our individual lives also."

³⁰ Wiles, *God's Action*, 105.

³¹ Wiles, *God's Action*, 76.

viewed in hindsight, reflecting on the past rather than anticipating God's particular future events in one's life and (2) conversion is not a direct divine supernatural grace enacted upon individuals but rather a self-awareness (or "the self-dedication") of one's life within God's broader intention.³² Wiles reduced providence into the realm of the human conscious level and experience like Schleiermacher.

Wiles advocated for the libertarian understanding of free will; he strongly opposed Augustinian views on human freedom, election, and reprobation because he found them morally unacceptable.³³ Wiles demonstrated his libertarian view of human freedom and God's responsibility with a theatrical drama metaphor: "The players in the improvised drama of the world's creation, through whom the agency of the author finds truest expression, are not ones to whom he has given some special information or advice, but those who have best grasped his intention and developed it."³⁴ It seems that the tension exists between the roles of the divine and the human in his thought. He seems to concur with Pelagian theology, which underscores the immanence or immediacy of God's grace within and the inherent moral and spiritual capacity of humanity to do the right thing.³⁵ However, he rejected the Augustinian tradition and theology of the Reformers which sees "a great gulf between nature, in its fallen state, and grace" and affirms "the radical impotence of his own will to choose rightly."³⁶ He

³² Wiles, *God's Action*, 81. Unlike Wiles, Edwards believed that God's providence has a prospective aspect because it is originated from the covenant of redemption in the eternal triune God.

³³ Besides (1) the scientific standards that rules out the ideas of God's action in the Bible, Wiles used (2) a moral dimension to establish justifications concerning as to whether God intervenes in particular situations. For instance, one is morally compelled to question why there is an abundance of evil present in this place if God is able to intervene in certain people's lives and particular occasions. See Wiles, "Divine Action," 16. See also Wiles, *God's Action*, 39–53.

³⁴ Wiles, *God's Action*, 108.

³⁵ See White, *Fall of a Sparrow*, 71.

³⁶ George, *Theology of the Reformers*, 73.

further insisted: “For God’s purpose is no pre-packaged blue-print to which men and women must conform or be broken... We are not born into the world with a predestined role to fulfill-or to frustrate and be frustrated.”³⁷ For Wiles, personal providence is likened to one’s spiritual journey with the presence of God within oneself, moving towards largely uncharted territory to fulfill the intention of God.

Redemptive-Historical Providence

Who was Jesus and what was God’s action in his life? According to Wiles, Jesus was a figure who exemplified the climax or pinnacle of personal providence by unfolding the divine intention—a perfect consciousness of God’s creative act—in his life so that he fully and freely embodied true humanity. This concept is Jesus’ deity and salvific action in Wiles’s christology. Given his explicit rejection of particular divine actions occurring in the world, the prominent miracles in the life of Christ, such as his virginal conception, incarnation, and bodily resurrection, are more symbolic language than historical truth that points to that divine creative act in his life.³⁸ Wiles also suggested that “such language is best understood as a form of retrospective interpretation of experience” of Jesus and his followers and later the tradition of his church.³⁹

³⁷ Wiles, *God’s Action*, 104–5. Wiles’s anthropocentric understanding of providence thus stands in a sharp contrast to Karl Barth, whose theology of providence is on the ground of the eternal predestination in the life of the triune God *ad intra*. In his theology, God’s provident role is deistic or minimalized so that Mark Elliott talks of his concept of God as follows: “Wiles’ God subcontracts,” rather than precedes (*praecurrit*). See Elliott, *Providence Perceived*, 262–63. He also comments on Wiles’s theology proper in his theology of providence: “God on this scheme is more Master planned or Director than Master Actor.” In his theology, overall, God appears to assume the role of an understated figure, often residing in the periphery, overshadowed by creaturely freedom and contingency.

³⁸ Wiles argued that instead of dismissing these miracle stories of Jesus, people should direct their attention to the pictorial lesson that they convey, which is to show the self-giving love of God that can transform the world. In this sense, Jesus is called the God-man; rather than he has two natures, fully God and fully man. See Wiles, “Christianity without Incarnation,” 9. See also Wiles, “Divine Action,” 26–29.

³⁹ Wiles, *God’s Action*, 83.

His non-interventionist view of God's action in the world is also extended to the realm of history.⁴⁰ That God acts in history and redeems history anew has been central to the traditional Christian theology. Yet, Wiles offered criticism of the classical understanding of history as sacred and redemptive that had prevailed since St. Augustine in the Christian theological tradition. He did not accept the notion that history is a sacred domain in which God's particular and special providence remains in operation. If God's particular providential actions were not exercised from outside into the realm of the natural world, then, the same principles should apply to the domain of history.⁴¹ In contrast to Wiles, Lee Sang Hyun points out that Edwards perceived divine essence as power, habit, or disposition, resulting in a dynamic understanding of God rather than a static one.⁴² This dispositional understanding of God implies that God is necessarily the one who acts or that God has an essential disposition to act. Consequently, this dispositional concept distinguishes Edwards and his theism from Wiles and his deism. So, Wiles's view of *Deus Provident* can be summarized as the God of the world, the immanent foundation or the ground of being of the evolving natural and historical processes, working in time and through the laws of nature and the natural forces of history.

⁴⁰ To grasp the background that shaped the new consciousness of history in liberal theology, see Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 188–208. Langdon Gilkey compares the traditional and the modern theological views of the meaning of history: “(1) Orthodox views of providence seemed to imply that those structures which history manifests, being willed by God, are not relative and transient, but eternal, absolute and sacred; so that history far from being progressive is static in character. (2) The older view implied that change is a result of either a continuous divine action or an intervening divine action both of which contradicted the new understanding of history as determined by inalterable natural laws available to rational inquiry. (3) The older view implied that in effect God made history, whereas it is now obvious that finite factors, plus natural and progressive human invention, “made” history.”

⁴¹ Wiles, “Divine Action,” 13.

⁴² Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 76.

Wiles suggested that the analogy of theatre might be plausible to speak of the meaning of history and of its relation to the divine and the human. To him, history possesses a theatrical quality, characterized by the presence of a stage, actors, and a sense of directionality. He also held that the significance of religious activities in life, such as prayer and worship, are the means that bring the person to special awareness of the overall divine intention and the various human roles and responsibilities in the theatrical history.⁴³ Those spiritual practices are not meant to bring about particular divine interventions in response to people's requests, according to Wiles, but he argued that the realization of human moral progress is accomplished by means of those religious practices.

On his theology of history, Nicholas Philip Griffin points out: "So, history is not following a path guided by the hand of God, instead it is God's will that humans make the history of the world."⁴⁴ This is his liberal theological view of the meaning of history and providence. This history-forming decree by the human is for Wiles the most fundamental divine purpose or will. Also, Wiles implicitly addressed his eschatological vision of history. Though he did not explicitly elaborate on the end of history, he wrote that the time would come when conscious human minds will recognize the eschatological moment, wherein God's will as a whole is truly realized in history. Perhaps, people cannot say it is as of now, but to Wiles, it seems apparent that history is progressing towards such eschatological fulfillment. Providence is perceived as visible progress. So to speak, his eschatology is historical in character; it is a future state in which God's will is truly accomplished ("Thy will be done in earth"), which was fully

⁴³ See Wiles, *God's Action*, 103.

⁴⁴ Griffin, "Use and Function," 136.

displayed in the kenotic life of Christ.⁴⁵ Christ in God's end is an eschatological hope and expectation that leads his followers to choose and act the life of divine love. The eschatological character of history is progressively unfolding *via* the system of laws in nature and human creaturely forces and moving from possibility to actuality. This theme is fundamental to Wiles's liberal theology of providence.

A Dialogue Between Wiles and Edwards

The distinction between Edwards's and Wiles's theologies of providence lies in the fact that Edwards regarded the Christian theological tradition as authoritative, whereas Wiles accords theological authority to modern norms rather than the Christian past. In other words, for Edwards, Christianity is to benefit from *re*-visiting the tradition, but for Wiles, it should gain from *re*-making the tradition.⁴⁶ Also, in terms of using scriptures to shape the theological agenda and formulate doctrinal claims, Edwards, along with the traditional theologians of the church, such as St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin, understood the scriptures as God's special revelation and considered them as the authoritative and fundamental source for his theological reasoning. On the other hand, Wiles viewed them as subjective human languages and "legends" pertaining to human religious experiences.⁴⁷ Consequently, their theological methodologies, retrieval theology for Edwards and deconstructive theology for Wiles, have produced distinct

⁴⁵ See Wiles, *God's Action*, 51–52. He wrote: "But we will be speaking out of our faith in the God who has taken the risk of creating the world, the unremitting character of whose love the Christian believes himself to have seen in the figure of Christ, and on that basis expressing our confidence that the world will ultimately be expressive of God's will in a way which is not true now; that eventually we will be able to say, as we know we cannot say now that what *is* is God's will."

⁴⁶ See Wiles, *Remaking*, 1. For Wiles, theology is "a study of the way in which Christian doctrine is always in the making, in the process of formation."

⁴⁷ Wiles, "Divine Action," 21.

theological outcomes. Also, Edwards and the deists of his time believed that through natural theology, reason could prove God's existence and providence; Wiles's position seems more agnostic than the old deists in terms of the view that God acts in creation.

By definition, deism is a broad idea or system of thought, (1) advocating natural, not revealed, religion, (2) emphasizing morality, and (3) denying the reality of the creator's interventional action in the world.⁴⁸ Although Wiles's model of the God-world relation does not exactly align with the classic sense of deism, it has those deistic tendencies in a new and quasi form with a strong negation of the traditional understanding of divine action in the world.⁴⁹ For Wiles, God is paradoxically immanent, serving as an underlying and consistent intention/vision that directs the created reality towards God's overall intention in the world. However, God is also paradoxically transcendent, refraining from intervening or engaging with particular events in the world, thereby reducing God to the status of an ineffective being.⁵⁰ Consequently, Wiles's notion of the absence of God's intervention excludes revealed religion, special revelation, redemptive history, and grace just as the deistic thinkers during Edwards's time. In lieu of these, Wiles's theology of providence primarily highlights the importance of natural laws, human religious experience, reason, and

⁴⁸ During Edwards's time in the eighteenth-century, deism also shared similarities in affirming: (1) the existence of a Supreme Being; (2) the belief in the immortality of the soul; and (3) the assertion that moral conduct was central to Christianity. Yet, it must be acknowledged that the term deism has an ambiguous and fluid category. Edwards himself thought that deism is one of the dangerous threats to Christian religion. His prophetic imagination has indeed been realized. As previously mentioned, particularly, among generations, both inside and outside of the ecclesial context, the most dominant religious worldview is defined as Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (*MTD*) in North America. In other words, the old deism that was prevalent during Edwards's time has become outdated and relegated to the past, yet its substance and practice persist in new forms.

⁴⁹ Gavel, "Triune Provider," 59, 61–62. Classical deism is often metaphorically compared to the relationship between a watchmaker and a watch. It suggests that God, as a distant creator and transcendent, is similar to a watchmaker who makes a watch with predetermined motions and then abandons it to operate without interference.

⁵⁰ Wiles, *Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, 21.

morality.⁵¹ Wiles's providence has thus a naturalizing tendency, wherein its purpose is circumscribed within the world, so that resulting in an immanentized and humanized eschatological vision (i.e., a thoroughly *historicized* eschatology).⁵²

Edwards did not necessarily negate the validity of those elements.⁵³ Both Wiles and Edwards recognized that Christian religion is not merely confined to theoretical or doctrinal dimensions but includes the experience of God. Like Wiles, Edwards highlighted the importance of religious experience or ethos and believed that divine providence should be experienced in one's religious practices, such worship and prayer.⁵⁴ Edwards held the belief that God's natural laws were ingrained in every element of the created world and that moral principles were inherently present within all humans. The special providence of God, according to Edwards, does not cancel natural providence. Instead, the former completes or enlarges the latter. According to Edwards,

⁵¹ As a result, the doctrine of divine providence becomes another form of anthropology in Wiles's theology. Examining Wiles's theology of providence, it becomes evident that Wiles would not be at odd with famous American deists such as Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) and Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826). These thinkers placed emphases on natural religion and pursued the ultimate goal of attaining happiness and fulfilment for humanity as their primary end. The difference between Edwards and those American deists is that Edwards was God-centered, and they were human-centered even though all of them believed in a divine creator. Cf. Gavel, "Triune Provider," 68–74. The following three, (1) the scientific worldview, (2) morality, and (3) human freedom, are the main criteria to make Wiles's view of the God-world relation meaningful. Christian scientists and theologians like Arthur Peacocke (1924–2006) and John Polkinghorne (1930–2021) acknowledge the potential for God's involvement in the world, considering it open to external intervention and influence. In contrast, Wiles's perspective maintains that God cannot intervene in the natural world, laws, history, or individual lives. This viewpoint is grounded more in the problem of evil and moral reasoning rather than scientific thought. Wiles's belief in a non-intervening God stems from his theodicy, where he contends that if God were to act, it would be perplexing why his actions remain hidden amidst horrendous evils.

⁵² See Gavel, "Triune Provider," 79. Similarly, Gavel points out that "in spite of Wiles' intention to the contrary, it threatens to collapse the distinction between God and the world." Due to its radical immanence, Wiles's model is hard to conceptualize divine providence, and there is a risk of easily correlating it with the worldly ideologies and beliefs.

⁵³ A Christian perspective on providence is essential to consider, not just the way God relates to humanity, but also how God relates to historical events and natural occurrences. Both Edwards and Wiles approached God, humans, history, and natural phenomena as interconnected entities that need to be examined together.

⁵⁴ See McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 723. Drawing on the expression of Gerald McDermott and Michael McClymond, it can be said that Edwards exhibited a conservative stance in terms of his theological content, while being liberal in his theological style or ethos.

divine providence does not contradict natural laws: “God produces all effects; but yet he ties natural events...to fixed, determinate and unchangeable rules, which are called laws of nature.”⁵⁵ Even so, both Edwards and Wiles shared a similar perspective on continuous creation, which entails the ongoing creation and regulation of the world through the use of natural laws by God. Furthermore, for Edwards, God implanted reason within human persons as a means to perceive and understand his truth, beauty, and goodness; therefore, human beings have a “universal mind.”⁵⁶ All knowledge of true religion or truth among “the heathen” outside the church is thus from God so that, according to his perspective, Christianity can learn from other religions, philosophies (e.g., Socrates and Plato), and science.⁵⁷ Moreover, for Edwards, moral duties hold greater importance in religion; sometimes, he placed them above religious duties, including “going to public and private meetings, attending outwards acts of prayer or the ordinances of worship.”⁵⁸ In Edwards’s thinking, therefore, both natural and true virtues are not seen as mutually exclusive or cannot be neglected in favour of one another.

Yet, according to Edwards, they are primarily designed to serve God’s special *telos*, which is to reveal his own glory through redemptive history. He believed that all of those laws, knowledges, and virtues would not be fully realized in this world but progressively perfected in heaven. Furthermore, he viewed God as the primary agent of providence, not a hidden deity or a collaborator with human agents as Wiles suggested. Rather, God is the sovereign ruler and the Alpha and Omega, encompassing all things,

⁵⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 18:157.

⁵⁶ McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 159. Please see the following for Edwards’s mention of the value of reason, see *WJE* 3:168; 10:195–6, 309, 347; 13:342; 17:67.

⁵⁷ Edwards, *WJE* 19:710.

⁵⁸ Edwards, *WJE* 22:118.

including nature, history, and humans: “In the beginning of this revolution all things come from God, and are formed out of a chaos; and in the end, all things shall return into a chaos again, and shall return to God, so that that is Alpha, will be the Omega.”⁵⁹ At this point, the theocentric providence in Edwards’s theology and the anthropocentric providence in Wiles’s idea are not reconcilable.

Also, while Wiles, with his deistic form of theism, denied the doctrine of the Trinity, Edwards, on the other hand, argued that the triune God becomes the Alpha and Omega in his providential relationship with creation.⁶⁰ In Edwards’s theology, the immanent and the economic aspects of the Trinity are essentially related. The triune God’s relation to the world is therefore both above us (transcendent) and in us (immanent), hidden and revealed, and existing *in se* and *pro nobis*. Also, Edwards’s concept of God as a communicative being (or God’s being in action) posits the possibility of understanding the providential activities of God in creation. However, in Wiles’s deistic model of God as a creative energy, humans are epistemologically agnostic and remain in mystery when it comes to comprehending his providence in the world.⁶¹ Wiles’s idea is simply that if God creates energies, created beings are able to act freely. According to Wiles, God’s primary will is for humans to live in the process of freely acting and making decisions. In this manner, he provides a minimal role of the

⁵⁹ Edwards, *WJE* 15:375.

⁶⁰ See Gavel, “Triune Provider,” 64. Gavel describes the impact of Wiles’s non-trinitarian doctrine of God on understanding the God-world relationship, writing that “this view of the God-world relation reflects a non-traditional understanding of God (unitarian versus trinitarian), and of God’s action in the world (as a single act excluding particular actions).” According to Gavel, Wiles understood the traditional doctrine of the Trinity as a metaphor representing the relational nature of God.

⁶¹ See Wiles, *God’s Action*, 33. As a result, Wiles reduced divine providence to individuals’ religious experience so that it becomes an inner model of providence in which God is absent from the world but present within one’s inner being or feelings (retrospective). His main thesis is that not only divine providence but also the Christian religion are mysterious.

divine, but maximizes the human role and responsibility in the world.⁶² This problem comes from mislocating the doctrine of providence within anthropology rather than theology proper or *theologia*.⁶³

Wiles does not indeed deny divine-human interaction, but he argued that the history of this world is ultimately a drama with human beings as central characters (i.e., anthropocentric), rather than a theo-drama where the triune God unfolds salvation history through his Son, Christ Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Wiles's view of history as a divine-human interactive drama seems to emphasize relationality on the surface. Given his belief in the primacy of human freedom and autonomy, however, the relationship between God and human agents seems uncertain in Wiles's perspective.⁶⁴ Wiles's general outlook on how God's ultimate plan can be fulfilled and how the problem of evil can be overcome, without the acceptance of special divine agency and acknowledging that God can be affected by humans (in Wiles's thinking), seems to be optimistic.

Furthermore, his theatrical concept of history also clearly misses essential dramatic elements such as direction, director, script, and the role of actors. Rather, the drama that Wiles speaks of is characterized by lonely human soliloquies. This lack of what God has said and what he has actually done presents a significant drawback when

⁶² According to Wiles, God's primary will is for humans to live in the process of freely acting and making decisions.

⁶³ See the following criticism that points out the issue of prioritizing the human condition above the divine in the doctrine of providence. See Webster, "Providence," 154. According to John Webster, "The creaturely act of faith is the work of the Holy Spirit, a point at which reason is caught up in an antecedent, gracious causality which enables the intellect to see God and all things in God by locating its operations *coram Deo*. This is why faith in providence is only derivatively 'subjective,' an interpretation of and attitude toward the world. Primarily and strictly, it is *objective*, generated and sustained by a movement from outside reason."

⁶⁴ The development of the idea of divine intervention is not without challenges. However, if the idea is dismissed, as in Wiles's thought, it becomes uncertain how a dynamic relationship between God and humans can be established.

characterizing it as a well-informed interactive drama.⁶⁵ On the contrary, Edwards's understanding of divine providence is the trinitarian theocentric drama of redemption, where God's glory is manifested in creation as he communicates through Jesus Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit with his creaturely beings. For Edwards, God's drama of redemption consists of various dispensations or stages throughout the course of creation. In accordance with God's providence, human agents respond to scriptures as the script for theo-drama and participate in his redemptive drama as the people of God (or the community of God) during each epoch.

Barth's Theology of Providence

Karl Barth, a Swiss Reformed theologian, had an undoubted impact on the development of Christian theology through the twentieth-century.⁶⁶ Similar to Wiles, Barth was raised and educated in a family with a pastoral background. His father served as a minister in a conservative church. Additionally, both theologians experienced a transformation in their theological trajectories. While Wiles made a transition from evangelical theology to liberal theology, Barth diverged from the liberal theology in which he had received his education (as a disciple of "modern theology").⁶⁷ He later found his intellectual and theological nexus, which exhibited significant deviation from modern theology since Schleiermacher. This departure was influenced by several transformative moments in his life, such as pastoring at Safenwil for working people, joining the religious Social

⁶⁵ It is indeed that Wiles did not acknowledge that divine providence has a blueprint.

⁶⁶ See Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 65.

⁶⁷ Hardy, "Karl Barth," 22.

Democratic Party, witnessing the outbreak of World War I, and observing some of his theological mentors supporting and justifying German colonialism.⁶⁸

Soon after he significantly contributed to the development of the dialectical or *Krisis Theologie* (crisis theology), which refers to the emergence of a theological perspective in response to the uncertainties and challenges of the modern culture. With his *The Epistle to the Romans* (1919), Barth's theology is regarded as the most influential theological movement within German Protestant theology during the early twentieth century.⁶⁹ His theology involved a significant reconceptualization of God and the God-world relation ("World remains world. But God is God.").⁷⁰ Barth opposed the brand of liberalism that had arisen in the late nineteenth and early twenty centuries and its theological misgivings. He particularly criticized liberal theology for constructing a God based on human desires (anthropocentrism or theology from below, not above) and compromising the irreducible and transcendent nature of divine revelation. Instead, Barth aimed to rediscover a view of God known only in revelation, emphasizing the wholly otherness of God, which negates and transcends human cultural insights and experience.⁷¹ Specially, he sought to counter the dominance of correlation in liberal theology, which negotiated between the Christian theological tradition and modernity. So, if liberal theology sought to *re-new* the core tenets of the Christian faith in light of modern thoughts and cultural shifts, Barth *re-claimed* them—doctrines such as the

⁶⁸ Hardy, "Karl Barth," 22. For a brief overview of Barth's life, see Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 66–70.

⁶⁹ In addition to Barth, other figures who participated in the early *Krisis theologie* included Emil Brunner (1889–1966), Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), and Eduard Thurneysen (1888–1977).

⁷⁰ Cf. Hardy, "Karl Barth," 24.

⁷¹ See Gilkey, "Concept of Providence," 176–77, 186. Barth and the Reformers both emphasized a revelation-centered perspective on providence, which means that for them, revelation is the primary means to understand God's providence. So, with this reformed theological heritage, Barth challenged liberal Protestantism's interpretation of divine providence in natural theology or with human reasoning.

primacy of divine revelation, particularly in the person of Christ, the sovereignty of God, and his saving grace and election.

In Barth's theological endeavors, he notably emphasized the re-affirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity, which had traditionally held a central position within the Christian faith but had been neglected since the rise of the Enlightenment.⁷² Robert Jenson, a Barth (also Edwardsean) scholar, points out that it is Barth through whom "twentieth-century theology has learned that the doctrine of the Trinity has explanatory and interpretative use for the whole of theology."⁷³ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen gives an explanation of Barth's theology as being trinitarian in character in the following manner that "not only is the doctrine of the Trinity in Barth's dogmatics placed in the beginning of the theological system, as a prolegomenon, but that it also serves as the major structuring principle of theological discussion."⁷⁴ Barth wrote in his *Church Dogmatics*: "It is the doctrine of the Trinity which fundamentally distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God as Christian—it is it, therefore, also, which marks off the Christian concept of revelation as Christian, in face of all other possible doctrines of God and concepts of revelation."⁷⁵ So to speak, the doctrine of the Trinity is not only the root doctrine of his theology but also the formative doctrine in his dogmatics. In other words, there is an indivisible correspondence between the doctrine of the Trinity and other doctrines.

⁷² During the early twentieth-century, a remarkable resurgence of interest in trinitarian theology emerged (the so-called the Trinitarian Renaissance). This resurgence was brought about by theologians, such as Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988), and Karl Rahner (1904–1984), and their works. Their primary goal was to retrieve the importance of the Trinity within Christian theology, recognizing that it had been marginalized or disregarded in earlier theological processes.

⁷³ Jenson, "Karl Barth," 42.

⁷⁴ Kärkkäinen, *Trinity*, 69. For instance, according to Kärkkäinen, Barth's understanding of the Word of God can be structured in a trinitarian way, encompassing the following meanings: (1) as proclaimed (the church), (2) as written (the Bible), (3) and as incarnated (Jesus). Also, God is Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness. For this, see Barth, *CD* 1/1:340.

⁷⁵ Barth, *CD* 1/1:346.

Barth perceived providence not merely as an abstract concept, but rather as a faith seeking understanding (*Fides quaerens intellectum*) toward God's providence.⁷⁶ For Barth, faith should be the foundational basis for seeking deeper understanding and knowledge of divine providence in the world. As he went through the experiences of his son Matthias dying at twenty and the destructive impact of the Nazis upon the world, Barth made a profound acknowledgment of God's providence: "Nevertheless, God himself is He who is freely and graciously and mightily present and active at these points ... This Nevertheless is the problem of the belief in providence and the doctrine of providence."⁷⁷ On Barth's theology of providence, Christopher Green states that Barth wrote his doctrine of providence on his bended knees.⁷⁸ Moreover, Barth's primary epistemological foundation for understanding divine providential ways and works undoubtedly stems from the biblical testimony of Jesus, rather than relying on human abilities of observation and reason.⁷⁹ Rejecting natural theology, he contended that the primary agent of Christian providence is God the Father, the father of Jesus, rather than the philosophical notion of God as the first mover in an infinite chain of causality.

Barth's theory of providence is presented in *Church Dogmatics* III/3, which adheres to the composition and structure of the Reformed Orthodox doctrine of providence. Unlike Edwards, Barth placed the doctrine of providence within the doctrine

⁷⁶ The phrase "*Credo ut intelligam*," which means "I believe in order to understand" in Latin, is a famous statement used by Anselm of Canterbury in his book *Proslogion*, 1. See Fergusson, "Providence," 374–5. According to David Fergusson, the belief in providence to Barth is "an article of faith, rather than a philosophical hypothesis of explanatory value or an admixture of theology and philosophy." Thus, as Fergusson further explains, for Barth, "faith in providence is intended to serve a practical purpose rather than to satisfy our intellectual curiosity." Fergusson suggests that Barth reflects his existentialist and pastoral emphasis in doing theology, as it highlights the significance of faith and trust in his thinking. See also, Elliott, *Providence Perceived*, 234.

⁷⁷ Barth, *CD* 3/3:43–44.

⁷⁸ Green, *Doxological Theology*, 220.

⁷⁹ Tanner, "Creation and Providence," 112.

of creation, not that of God.⁸⁰ Strictly speaking, he regarded divine providence as the work of God's executing predestination *ad extra*. Yet, similar to Edwards's theology of providence, his providential thinking revolves around three fundamental elements: God's acts of preservation (*conservatio*), governance (*gubernatio*), and concurrence (*concursus*), which establish the framework for his understanding of God's providence.⁸¹ Particular attention is given to Barth's understanding of those tri-fold acts of divine providence in this part.

Dei Conservatio

In contrast to Wiles's non-interventionistic or deistic view of providence, Barth's understanding of divine providence follows an interventionistic model of providence.⁸²

He adhered to the Calvinistic-Reformed perspective in terms of divine preservation:

This Lord is never absent, passive, non-responsible or impotent, but always present, active, responsible and omnipotent. He is never dead, but always living; never sleeping, but always awake; never uninterested, but always concerned; never merely waiting in any respect, but even where He seems to wait, even where He permits, always holding the initiative.⁸³

He held that God's preserving grace encompasses the entire world, nature, history, and individuals, and these domains are ordered and guided by God's providential disposals

⁸⁰ See Barth, *CD* 3/3:3. This location of the doctrine of providence within that of creation or as an aspect of it in Barth's theology does not mean that his doctrine of providence is unrelated to the doctrine of God. David Fergusson explains Barth's doctrine of providence by stating that, for Barth, there cannot be a God without "providential oversight of the world." See Fergusson, "Providence," 373.

⁸¹ See Gilkey, "Concept of Providence," 186. According to Gilkey, "Barth asserts in the strongest terms the sovereignty of God over all natural and historical events: a sovereign ordering that preserves, precedes, accompanies, follows, and rules (that is, directs toward God's goal, the covenant community of grace) all creaturely occurrence." See also Fergusson, "Providence," 376. Fergusson argues that "Barth follows a standard pattern of exposition his treatment of providence...The first views providence under the three headings of divine preservation (*conservatio*), accompanying (*concursus*), and ruling (*gubernatio*)." For Barth's use of the three aspects of the doctrine of providence, see also Tanner, "Creation and Providence," 122.

⁸² Barth, *CD* 3/3:13.

⁸³ Barth, *CD* 3/3:13.

and exercises at all time: “For the world, for men and for the Church God sees to that which in their earthly lot is necessary and good and therefore planned and designed for them according to His wisdom and resolve. And as He does so, He cares for them, and therefore sees to the fulfilling of His own purpose for them and to His glory in face of them.”⁸⁴ Given the universal scope and sacred character of God’s providence, the sharp distinction between general and special providences is incongruous in his theology.⁸⁵

Also, according to Kathryn Tanner, Barth’s understanding of providence renders the distinction between general and special providences irrelevant.⁸⁶ Even though Barth positioned the doctrine of providence alongside that of creation, he conceptually connected the doctrine of providence to soteriology, specifically highlighting its theological relationship with the loci of covenant and predestination. In other words, Barth’s perspective implies that God’s special providence is neither an extra nor particular action from general providence; rather, it is the opposite. General providence serves as the foundation and framework designed to accomplish God’s special saving work that is found in Christ.⁸⁷ So, Tanner comments on Barth’s providence that “God’s special history with Israel, as it finds its fulfillment in God’s becoming human in Jesus

⁸⁴ Barth, *CD* 3/3:4.

⁸⁵ Barth, *CD* 3/3:185. See also *CD* 3/3:36–37. Barth argued: “That world history in its totality is the history in which God executes His will of grace must thus be taken to mean that in its totality it belongs to this special history; that its lines can have no other starting-point or goal than the one divine will of grace; that they must converge on this one thin line and finally run in its direction. *This is the theme of the doctrine of providence*” (emphasis added).

⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Barth does not entirely eliminate this differentiation for an epistemological reason. He insists that a two-way approach is necessary to understand the divine governance in the world. It is first to know it from the special and saving events in the scriptures and the history of the church to the general events taking place in the world and second vice versa, from the latter to the former or the general to the special ones. For this distinction, see Barth, *CD* 3/3:183–84.

⁸⁷ Barth, *CD* 3/3:184. Therefore, Barth wrote: “There is no such thing as secular history in the serious sense of the word...The general events have their meaning in the particular.” For detailed definition of the two providences, general and special, see Barth, *CD* 3/3:185.

Christ, becomes the model for God's history with the world generally."⁸⁸ Barth's account of *conservatio* should be comprehended in the context of his soteriological or special providential framework.⁸⁹ For him, conservation carries a deeper significance that extends beyond the mere preservation of being from nothingness, meaning from meaninglessness, and order from chaos. Rather, it is the work of God leading all of those to Christ (i.e., directness) and fulfilling them in his saving grace (i.e., deliverance).⁹⁰

Dei Gubernatio

The doctrine of *gubernatio* in the Reformed tradition deals with the purpose/fulfillment of God's providence. Barth understood divine government as God's lordship, which is seen as the divine work of achieving his end throughout history in the world.⁹¹ This theological interpretation maintains an older theological perspective.⁹² Fulfilling the end of history is the substance of the traditional aspect of government in the doctrinal

⁸⁸ Tanner, "Creation and Providence," 122. See Barth, *CD* 3/3:186. "The history of salvation attested in the Bible cannot be considered or understood simply in and for itself. It is related to world history as a whole. It is the centre and key to all events," as he wrote.

⁸⁹ See Barth, *CD* 3/3:79. The following is Barth's remark on this: "This is the eternal will of God fulfilled and accomplished once and for all in time in Jesus Christ. And in the light of this will and work we have to regard the question of the *conservatio* of the creature as one which has already been decided." See also Barth, *CD* 3/3:82. He wrote: "The connexion between *servare* and *conservare*, between saving grace in Jesus Christ and the gracious preservation of creaturely being by God the Father, emerges most clearly in the New Testament and especially the Pauline passages in which the verbs τηρεῖν, φρουρεῖν, φυλάσσειν, βεβαιοῦν, and στηρίζειν are used to describe a specific activity of God or Christ in relation to Christians."

⁹⁰ Tanner points out that to Barth, technically speaking, the doctrine of providence is rather "a kind of deliverance that imitates the deliverance to come in Christ. See Tanner, "Creation and Providence," 123.

⁹¹ Barth, *CD* 3/3:158. Barth's doctrine of government has also a strong teleological character. "The goal towards which everything moves in its own history is the goal which God alone has fixed and appointed for it," as Barth said.

⁹² See Barth, *CD* 3/3:155. Divine government, according to Barth, "has to do and to be in the course of its history in time; to the *telos* which has to be attained in this history." See also Barth, *CD* 3/3:164. Barth defines the doctrine of government as follows: "The rule of God is the operation of God over and with the temporal history of that reality which is distinct from God; the operation by which He arranges the course of that history, maintains and executes His own will within it, and directs it wholly and utterly in accordance with that will."

discourse of providence. However, to Barth, his main concern was to clarify the governing agency. By presenting the Old Testament concept of God as Yahweh, who is referred to as the “King of Israel” and “Lord of Hosts,” he argued that the God who rules is not merely a supreme deity with power and authority, but rather a deity who has entered into a covenantal relationship with his chosen people, having a specific purpose.⁹³ The reader can see that his thought relies heavily on these themes of (1) covenant and (2) election as evident from his understanding of the divine government. These doctrines in Barth’s theology exemplify God’s living relation to history.⁹⁴

By integrating his christological perspective with the Old Testament notion of God as manifested in covenant and election, Barth saw the divine government as the lordship of God, revealed in the life of his son Jesus Christ: “This is the idea of the Saviour-King who is awaited at the end of the age, the Son of Man, the Messiah of the House of David; and He, too, is a figure who to some extent moves from a particular Israelitish significance to a world-historical and universalist.”⁹⁵ Also, the almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth, whose lordship is extended over all things, is also the Father of the Son. *Dei gubernatio* is therefore nothing but the Fatherly lordship over creation, which has definite character of free grace over his creature.⁹⁶ Second, Barth was insistent that Christ’s coming and the incarnation served a distinct objective, which is the election and choice of a covenant people by God in Christ. Thus, as the divine-human, the Son “has associated Himself with this people and cosmos, even accepting

⁹³ Barth, *CD* 3/3:156.

⁹⁴ See Barth, *CD* 3/3:133. Barth wrote: “He would not be God at all if He were not the living God, if there were a single point where He was absent or inactive, or only partly active, or restricted in His action. The earth is His and all that therein is (and the heavens as well), and this is something which continues to be true in the directest possible way.”

⁹⁵ Barth, *CD* 3/3:156.

⁹⁶ Barth, *CD* 3/3:58.

likeness and solidarity with it.”⁹⁷ Christ is the sole subject and object of divine government in the way of his becoming both the electing God and elected one.⁹⁸ In reference to election and providence in Barth’s thought, Horton Davies points out that “Barth in a radically revised doctrine of Election enables us to see the divine providence most strikingly as a preparation for human salvation in Christ.”⁹⁹ So, providence is the divine working through which the invisible election becomes visible.

Barth identified the movement of divine providence not only from Jesus, a particular person, to the universal body of the elect (i.e., from one to many) but also from a particular past towards the universal future, known as the *eschaton*. He argued that “apart from the goal which God Himself has appointed,” there are no absolute and definite goals in history.¹⁰⁰ It is important to note that for Barth, the *eschaton*, or the end, goes beyond its temporal dimension, but encompasses more dynamic “*movement* towards God.”¹⁰¹ So, the divine government is an eschatological movement towards God, wherein it counters and overcomes the forces/powers (e.g., “autonomous collateral government, or counter-government”) that seek to “limit” and “compromise” God’s providential plan and purpose throughout history.¹⁰² Yet, it is crucial not to overlook the transcendence of God in his thinking. For Barth, God is wholly other, ultimately a transcendent being, and therefore, his rule and government also possess such a nature,

⁹⁷ Barth, *CD* 3/3:156.

⁹⁸ See Barth, *CD* 2/2:3.

⁹⁹ Davies, *Vigilant God*, 134–35. According to Davies, Barth radically revised the traditional doctrine of election due to identifying the following shortcomings: “first, an existing system not founded on grace; second, the practical utility of the doctrine as minatory but which is no guarantee of truth; thirdly, experience which begins with man not God; and, finally, a doctrine of divine sovereignty which begins with an abstract deity and not the electing god of Scripture.”

¹⁰⁰ Barth, *CD* 3/3:158. He further wrote: “The goal towards which everything moves in its own history is the goal which God also has fixed and appointed for it.”

¹⁰¹ Barth, *CD* 3/3:158 (emphasis added).

¹⁰² Barth, *CD* 3/3:158.

too. Consequently, he eschewed a God's eye perspective on the divine reign over world occurrence.¹⁰³ Barth was indeed very cautious about attributing God's governance (e.g., the mighty acts of God) to specific historical events and particular individuals.¹⁰⁴

Dei Concursus

Creatures exist and act only by virtue of God's conservation which preserves them from the power of annihilation and ensures their continued existence. Also, they are governed by divine providence from the threat of regressing into a status of disorder and chaos. Finally, they are all formed and directed by God through his permission.¹⁰⁵ This divine permissible influence is "universal" in scope, so that it "embraces and concerns all creaturely activity and its effects, it is actually an ordering of everything that happens."¹⁰⁶ Hence, the occurrence of any event is contingent upon God's permission, according to Barth. If nothing can happen without God's permission, then, does that mean creatures are not truly free but fall into determinism? At this point, it is necessary to specify that Barth firmly rejected both the Stoic doctrine of fate (fatalism or

¹⁰³ Fergusson, "Providence," 383.

¹⁰⁴ See Fergusson, "Providence," 383–84. Overall, Barth regarded God's reign and his kingdom as mysterious and hidden, yet he did not think of it to be completely veiled. According to Fergusson, Barth believed that certain signs allow little glimpses into God's ruling government over the world: (1) the history of the Bible, (2) the history of the church, (3) the history of the Jews, (4) the limitation of human life, and (5) the sign and testimony of the angels. To Barth, it is evident that the eyes through which one can discern those signs of divine providence are only through the *analogia fidei*, rather than the *analogia entis*. For this Barthian notion of the role of *analogia fidei* in terms of knowing divine providence in the world, see Webster, *God without Measure* 1, 134. See also Elliott, *Providence Perceived*, 234. As Elliott elaborates on Barth's belief in *Deus providens*, "It is a belief that God is providential on the grounds of biblical revelation, not *how* He is to me or us. Our experience of God's ways do not provide the material for a doctrine." (emphasis original).

¹⁰⁵ In this regard, Barth upheld the traditional Reformed theology regarding the problem of evil. He cited an example of Joseph to argue that God, in his governing providence, permitted evil to occur in his early life but ultimately redeemed it for saving many. For this, see Barth, *CD* 3/3:163.

¹⁰⁶ Barth, *CD* 3/3:167.

determinism) and the Epicurean doctrine of chance.¹⁰⁷ So to speak, God is neither an absolute tyrant nor a God of disorder.

His Reformed doctrine of concurrence opposes both philosophical concepts of divine and human freedom. Rather, he truly believed that God's sole rule is not a solitary endeavour devoid of creaturely participation; instead, it allows creatures to be genuinely free as God preserves them in his grace, granting them exercise of their freedom.¹⁰⁸ For Barth, creaturely freedom is derivative in that it derives from God so that "it finds its natural and self-understood limit."¹⁰⁹ He opined: "Freedom apart from this limit would not be creaturely freedom but the freedom of a second god. To claim this kind of freedom would be sin and death for the creature."¹¹⁰ Just as a fish leaping out of water cannot be truly free, creaturely freedom cannot be considered genuinely free unless it remains within the bounds of God's preserving and governing providence.¹¹¹ In addition, to Barth, the Christian concept of providence is the fatherly providence of God. In other words, God the Father accompanies the creature so that, as Barth held, (1) his fatherly providence does not merely "abandon it to its own activity once He has set in motion" but rather (2) "affirms and approves and recognises and respects the autonomous actuality and therefore the autonomous activity of the creature as such."¹¹² Therefore, as

¹⁰⁷ Barth, *CD* 3/3:175. Providence as both fate and chance jeopardizes the biblical account of providence as the personal activity of God in his creation.

¹⁰⁸ See Barth, *CD* 3/3:166.

¹⁰⁹ Barth, *CD* 3/3:166.

¹¹⁰ Barth, *CD* 3/3:166.

¹¹¹ The modern readers may struggle to accept this kind of freedom as truly free. Yet, Barth accepted the fact that creaturely freedom has limits. And this Barthian account of freedom is compatible with the Reformed fathers, believing that creatures were only free insofar as they participate in uncreated freedom.

¹¹² Barth, *CD* 3/3:91–92.

Barth concluded, God himself is not a tyrant, and creaturely freedom in his providence is a fatherly gift from God.¹¹³

In summary, God's acts of preserving of, governing over, and concurring with creaturely beings are inseparable in Barth's doctrine of providence. Barth affirmed that *via* the preserving grace of God, creatures are given room to choose and carry out particular activities. Also, the divine act of government is manifested in his constantly renewed permission, which allows creaturely activities to align with God's purpose.¹¹⁴ In the analogy of the fish, God does not control or "do violence" to the fish in its particular activity; he rather changes the water currents so that the fish can move freely while still moving in the direction that God desires.¹¹⁵

According to him, the Reformed theological fathers correctly recognized this God-creature relation with respect to the doctrine of concurrence. Yet, their theology was usually abstracted apart from God's salvific action in Christ so that they understood the concept of God as a "purely formal concept, denoting a supreme being endowed with absolute, unconditioned and irresistible power."¹¹⁶ With a christological treatment of the doctrine, Barth made it a more concretely Christian account. Based on the biblical witness that God, in the person of Jesus Christ, operates without jeopardizing his divine

¹¹³ Barth, *CD* 3/3:92–93. See Webster, *God without Measure* 1, 131. John Webster finds the most distinctively and extended Christian concept of providence in the modern world in "Barth's insistence on providence as God's 'fatherly lordship.'" And, according to Elliott, this fatherly lordship primarily works for his Son in Barth's thinking. See Elliott, *Providence Perceived*, 234.

¹¹⁴ Barth, *CD* 3/3:168.5.

¹¹⁵ Barth, *CD* 3/3:168. See Tanner, "Creation and Providence," 123. She elaborates Barth's notion of *concursus*: "God's action for creatures always precedes the creature's own action; the creature's action is always only a response to what God has already done for it. This sequence, or order of call and response, is irreversible, and in that sense one must say that God's action is never conditioned by the creature's action. The creature is, moreover, most itself and properly free only when its actions so follow God's primary action for it." See also Barth, *CD* 3/3:13. Barth argued: "The concept of *concursus* is itself irreversible. God "concur" with the creature, but the creature does not "concur" with God."

¹¹⁶ Barth, *CD* 3/3:113.

nature, and that Jesus, being fully human, participates in the divine nature without compromising his humanity, if so, as Barth believed, human freedom and divine freedom are not inherently contradictory. Through Jesus becoming the God-man, human beings have earned the true creaturely freedom to participate in the work of God even though creaturely freedom is not absolute but relative to him.¹¹⁷ In Barth's doctrine of providence, the Christ-event serves as the point where all the lines between divine sovereignty and human freedom can converge.

A Dialogue Between Barth and Edwards

In Barth's view, God is the one who acts and intervenes in the world. This aspect differs significantly from Wiles's concept of God's action as non-interventional, but it closely aligns with Edwards's theology of providence. Specifically, God's action in Jesus Christ reveals the character of divine action in the world, and it remains true to the way God works history. Therefore, while Wiles claimed that there is no blueprint for God's providence, Barth claimed that it can be confirmed through the Christ event, especially the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. The Barthian fashion of providence is "christologically grounded and interpreted throughout."¹¹⁸ One of the most interesting developments in Barth's doctrine of providence is that it emphasizes the centrality of the Trinity in understanding God's providential action in the world. As with Edwards, Barth also believed in the doctrine of the Trinity, stressing the distinction and unity of the three

¹¹⁷ See Beintker and Bräutigam, "Karl Barth," 186. They elucidate the positive outcome of Barth's Christian theology in the following manner: "Barth's movement towards both a Christological concentration and a more comprehensive approach to theological thinking offered a deliberate alternative to the anthropological turn characteristic of modern philosophy and theology."

¹¹⁸ Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 219.

persons of the triune God (Father, Son, and Spirit), shapes and structures the whole framework of Christian doctrines. He voiced his criticism towards Calvinist-Reformed theology, arguing that its thinkers did not allow the doctrine of the Trinity to control or structure the theological discussion of divine providence. According to him, this failure resulted in what he referred a “generally apprehensible doctrine of providence,” which allowed the influence of non-Christian concepts of providence from different traditions of “the Epicureans, Atheists and finally Nihilists” into Christian theology.¹¹⁹ Christoph Schwöbel points out the significance of the Trinity matters in making Christian doctrinal assertions: “If the understanding of God as Trinity is constitutive for Christian faith it cannot be relegated to the place of a mere appendix of the Christian doctrine of God. Rather, it must be conceived as the *gateway* through which the theological exposition of all that can be said about God in Christian theology must pass.”¹²⁰ Both Barth and Edwards explored the connection between God and the world, as well as his providential work, within the framework of the doctrine of the Trinity. Hence, their trinitarian theologies can foster further theological dialogue regarding advancing the trinitarian theology of providence.

Barth and Edwards both share a common emphasis on reclaiming a strong Reformed doxological understanding of providence, even in the midst of challenging socio-cultural circumstances characterized by wars and horrors. Both were wartime preachers and ministers.¹²¹ Although their approaches differed, such as Barth’s unapologetically theological and Edwards’s apologetically theological approaches, both

¹¹⁹ Barth, *CD* 3/3:14.

¹²⁰ Schwöbel, “Introduction,” 6 (emphasis added).

¹²¹ For their wartime sermon collections, see the following sources. For Barth, see William Klempa, trans and ed., *Unique Time of God*. For Edwards, see Christian Cuthbert, ed., *Wartime Sermons*.

preachers dedicated themselves to proclaiming to the glory of God's providence in situations where affirming God's sovereignty and glory were very challenging, especially when the good of his creatures was threatened.¹²² For both theologians, God remains in control, and under his lordship, history is still a domain of his glory. They preached to their congregations, encouraging them to place their hope in God's glorious kingdom and future providence amidst all the sufferings of life and the horrors of the world. The reason why they could preach hope in the providence of God even in horrific situations like wartime is because they found the foundation of God's providence not in temporal circumstances but in God's eternal covenant. Barth held that the internal basis of creation and providence is the covenant, while the covenant itself serves as the external basis.¹²³ Similar to Barth, Edwards discovered the origin of divine providence in the eternal covenant of redemption.

Despite the commonalities between these two Reformed thinkers, there are distinct differences. Notably, Edwards affirmed natural theology, while Barth opposed it. Barth opposed seeking clues of God's providence outside of divine revelation, whereas Edwards, based on his typological understanding of the world and belief in God as a communicative being, embraced the positive aspects of general revelation.¹²⁴ For the case of Edwards, this includes traces of God's providence revealed through various

¹²² For Barth's doxological theology and its relation to the doctrine of providence, see Christopher Green, *Doxological Theology*. For Edwards's theology of glory, see Stephen Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory*. To Edwards, God's glory is not distinct from seeking the good of His creatures and promoting their overall well-being. See Edwards, *WJE* 8:440, 458–59, 535. As Edwards wrote, "Here God's acting for himself, or making himself his last end, and his acting for their sake, are not to be set in opposition; or to be considered as the opposite parts of a disjunction: they are rather to be considered as coinciding one with the other, and implied one in the other."

¹²³ Barth, *CD* 3/3:38.

¹²⁴ For instance, see Edwards, *WJE* 16:794. For Edwards, "God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature, which used greatly to fix my mind."

disciplines, such as philosophy, science, and even other religious teachings. Yet for Barth, comprehending divine providence and all divine action must be solely based on scriptures, interpreting them in light of Jesus Christ as God's special revelation as well as "the hermeneutical key to Scripture."¹²⁵ In a different manner, it is well-known that Barth rejected the *analogia entis* in favor of the *analogia fidei*. However, Edwards stood in the *analogia entis* tradition that all beings bear some analogy to their creator.¹²⁶

Furthermore, Barth, in contrast to Edwards, declined to incorporate the doctrine of providence being incorporated into the doctrine of God, and instead included it under the doctrine of creation. Barth wrote: "Medieval scholasticism treated it as part of the doctrine of the being of God. Post-Reformation dogmatics brought it into very close relation with the doctrine of creation. We follow the latter tradition."¹²⁷ According to him, providence primarily focuses on God's activity. More concretely, it is the execution of God's predestination and eternal decree, so it thus "presupposes the work of creation as done and the existence of the creature as given."¹²⁸ For instance, medieval theologians like Boethius and Aquinas understood the doctrine as being derived from the divine being.¹²⁹ However, in the transition from medieval theology to Reformed and post-Reformed theology, there was a shift in the history of the doctrine of providence from a part of the doctrine of God to a subdivision of the doctrine of creation. According to David Fergusson, this turn can lead to a misuse of the doctrine, as it places excessive emphasis on divine activity over nature, history, and persons, leading to "unduly

¹²⁵ Anizor, "Creation," 137.

¹²⁶ See Pauw, "Aesthetics," 147.

¹²⁷ Barth, *CD* 3/3:3.

¹²⁸ Barth, *CD* 3/3:5.

¹²⁹ Fergusson, *Providence of God*, 60–63.

determinist and philosophical direction” that has deviated from the biblical notions of providence by the trinitarian God.¹³⁰ However, unlike Barth and other Reformed thinkers, Edwards appears to associate the doctrine of providence with that of God, particularly his communicativeness. According to William Schweitzer, communicativeness can be interchangeably used with purposiveness, that is, God as a communicative being is also a purposeful deity.¹³¹ So, with this indissoluble relationship between divine being and providence, Edwards could highlight the purpose of God’s providence as a means to communicate his power, knowledge, and happiness to his creatures.¹³² His model of providence, grounded in the communicativeness of God the creator, played a role in dismissing the concepts of deism and mechanistic naturalism of his day.

Regarding the relationship between creation and conservation, Edwards held a view of continuous creationism, considering conservation as God’s continuous act of creating the world *ex nihilo* at every moment. Thus, for him, there is no real difference between the two. God is continuously creator and provider. As previously pointed out, Edwards’s doctrine of conservation as continuous creationism was intended to underscore the creator God as the sole and sovereign agent in a context where the Reformed-Puritan theocentric view was gradually being challenged and threatened. On the contrary, Barth viewed creation *ex nihilo* as a single event at the first time at which the creature exists, and understood conservation as God’s on-going preserving work for

¹³⁰ Fergusson, “Theology of Providence,” 261.

¹³¹ Schweitzer, *God Is a Communicative Being*, 172.

¹³² See Edwards, *WJE* 13:192.

the world, enabling its continued existence.¹³³ By distinguishing his doctrine of conservation from that of continuous creation, Barth instead highlighted God's covenantal faithfulness and his continual work for creaturely existence.¹³⁴ Despite those differences between them, however, their theologies of providence equally demand the theme of nothingness. To Edwards, God alone is self-sufficient, but creatures are not. Thus, divine conservation is God's affair, upholding the whole creation so that it does not fall into nothingness.¹³⁵ Like Edwards, Barth also held that God's fatherly lordship compels the Nihil, *das Nichtige* (nothingness or negation) of his children, and God preserves his creatures from the things that continuously attempt to annihilate or negate them.¹³⁶ For both Reformed thinkers, therefore, divine preservation is not a static but rather a dynamic divine act. This divine preserving action can be constructively extended and understood as part of God's providential activity to preserve his creatures from all evil forces that aim and work to negate and annihilate them.

Pinnock's Theology of Providence

¹³³ See Barth, *CD* 3/3:8. Barth argued: "We must not interpret providence as *continuata creatio*, but as a *continuatio creationis*."

¹³⁴ See Barth, *CD* 3/3:7. Divine providence "does not repeat or continue creation. It corresponds to it in the continued life and history of the creature, proving the faithfulness which its Creator wills to maintain and does maintain in relation to it. Why? Because at its head, in man, the creature is the partner in His covenant, elected by His grace in Jesus Christ. Because it continually needs Him as Creator, and His action (in correspondence to the act of creation) as a confirmation of the external basis of the covenant," as Barth wrote.

¹³⁵ Edwards, *WJE* 6:204. He argues that the "universe would cease to be, of itself; and not only, as we speak, because the Almighty could not attend to uphold the world, but because God knew nothing of it."

¹³⁶ See Duthie, "Providence in the Theology of Karl Barth," 65–66. For an examination of Barth's writing of the Nihil, see Barth, *CD* 3/3:289–368. See also Gilkey, "Concept of Providence," 190. According to Langdon Gilkey, for Barth, "God's Providence continuously overcomes, the Nothingness that surrounds and threatens the meaning of our personal existence."

In 2007, under the sponsorship of the Templeton Foundation, a group of twenty theological and philosophical thinkers met at Eastern Nazarene College for three weeks to engage in discussions on various topics related to the openness of God.¹³⁷ Their philosophical, scientific, and theological discourses were refined at the 2008 Azusa Pacific University meeting, and the outcomes were published as volumes.¹³⁸ This movement came to be known as “neotheism.”¹³⁹ A Canadian Evangelical theologian was at the forefront of this emerging intellectual movement. Clark Pinnock (1937–2010), who served as a professor of systematic theology at McMaster Divinity College, is introduced on a photo commemorative board specifically dedicated to him within the divinity building. It introduces him as follows: “A wise and courageous pilgrim whose lifelong quest for deeper theological insight was impelled by yearning for the face of God.”¹⁴⁰ Among the many names or titles used to describe him, one that cannot be overlooked is surely pilgrim. Pinnock was a theological pilgrim, an Evangelical Baptist who constantly sought and courageously explored the face of God throughout his life.¹⁴¹ Wiles and Barth were theologians who underwent profound changes in their theological

¹³⁷ Hasker et al., “Introduction,” 3–4. Open theism is not a theological system that holds the same belief about the world and God. The spectrum of Open theism is wide, and there are diverse theological opinions within it. Hence, their diversity sometimes indicates a lack of clarity. For more on this topic, please refer to the following chapter, Oord and Schwartz, “Panentheism and Panexperientialism,” 231–51.

¹³⁸ The published volumes are as follows: Thomas Jay Oord, ed., *Creation Made Free*. William Hasker, Thomas Jay Oord, and et., *God in an Open Universe*.

¹³⁹ William Hasker, Thomas Jay Oord, and et., “Introduction,” 4. The name “neotheism” was first used by those opposed to the movement, carrying a negative connotation.

¹⁴⁰ The memorial quote is written in Pinnock’s photo memory board in the hallway of McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, ON in Canada. See Pinnock, “A Forum,” *Christianity Today* (9 February 1998), 42–43. Pinnock described himself as a pilgrim rather than a settler. Briefly, he, originally from Canada, earned his master’s degree in Toronto. He later studied in England, where he completed his doctorate under the guidance of F. F. Bruce. He taught in Switzerland, New Orleans, Chicago, and Vancouver before eventually teaching at McMaster Divinity College. For a brief introduction of the life of Pinnock, see Williams, *Boundless Love*, xxiii–xv.

¹⁴¹ For Pinnock’s intellectual biography, see Callen, “Clark H. Pinnock,” 1–15. Callen summarizes Pinnock’s theological life as a “journey toward renewal.”

journeys. Similar to them, Pinnock was also another twice-born theologian. After finishing his Ph.D. in New Testament studies in England, Pinnock began his teaching career at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, a conservative Baptist theological institution. However, he eventually surpassed the boundaries of his specialized scholarly discipline, from biblical to theological studies, and even his conservative evangelical theological background from which he had come, gradually transitioning into a post- or new-evangelical theologian—specifically, moving away from his Calvinist and Arminian evangelical roots to open theism.¹⁴²

After Pinnock became uneasy with major theological problems within mainstream Evangelical Christianity, he actively and openly delved several theological debates, such as the inerrancy of Scripture, inclusive soteriology, and the openness of God. Specially, Pinnock and his fellow theologians within the movement of the openness of God, for instance, John Sanders, David Basinger, and William Hasker, ignited intense theological debates on the doctrine of God within the Evangelical Theological Society (*ETS* henceforth) in the early two-thousands. His open theism was indeed at the forefront of controversy within the *ETS*.¹⁴³ According to Daniel Strange, “Within the Evangelical community, especially in North America, Clark Pinnock is one of the most stimulating, controversial and influential theologians, and a study of his work raises important questions about the nature and identity of contemporary Evangelicalism.”¹⁴⁴ In sum, through such a paradigm shift, Pinnock’s theology has

¹⁴² Pinnock himself states that he encountered fundamentalist Christianity in his early years and subsequently grew up as a follower of Calvinist evangelicalism. See Pinnock, “I was a teenage fundamentalist,” 18. See also Pinnock, “From Augustine to Arminius,” 17.

¹⁴³ See Strange, “Clark H. Pinnock,” 318. Open theism has been referred by different names, such as “free-will theism,” “creative love theism,” or “the openness of God.”

¹⁴⁴ Strange, “Clark H. Pinnock,” 311.

undergone substantial changes, and he has made significant contributions, along with his fellow open theists, in growing the movement of the openness of God within the Evangelical community.

As mentioned earlier, Pinnock's theological *modus operandi* can be described as a theological pilgrimage or journey.¹⁴⁵ This also mirrors Jürgen Moltmann, a German Reformed-ecumenical theologian, whose theological journey is similar to Pinnock's. When Moltmann does theology, it is, according to him, "a tremendous adventure, a journey of discovery into a, for me, unknown country, a voyage without the certainty of a return, a path into the unknown with many surprises and not without disappointment."¹⁴⁶ Pinnock also viewed theology through the lens of curiosity, adventure, or discovery of faith. His theology as a serendipitous discovery leads to theological insights and surprises, exploring new ideas without changes of mind and challenging established doctrines, especially Reformed views, over various issues in the context of the Christian theological tradition.¹⁴⁷ One of the distinguishing marks of Pinnock's open concept of God is that God is a most moved mover, and accordingly, this aspect also serves as an excellent explanation for his dynamic theological methodology.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Strange, "Clark H. Pinnock," 321. According to Strange, "Clark Pinnock's *modus operandi* is that of seeing theology as an adventure and a matter of curiosity."

¹⁴⁶ Moltmann, *Coming of God*, xiv.

¹⁴⁷ Strange, "Clark H. Pinnock," 322. Strange emphasizes that Pinnock's theology is both "conservative" and "contemporary", highlighting his theological methodology as an adventure within the wide perspective of the Christian tradition as a whole, rather than dismissing its rich theological heritage. According to Strange, Pinnock's theological task is described as twofold: (1) to retrieve the theology of the past traditions and (2) to respond appropriately to contemporary discussions. See also Callen, "Clark H. Pinnock," 1–2. Similar to Strange, Callen also argues that Pinnock "sought always to remain both faithful to ancient biblical foundations and relevant to contemporary culture" and "committed to church mission and the present meaningfulness of divine revelation."

¹⁴⁸ Pinnock presents a contrasting perspective to Aristotle's notion of deity as the moved mover when discussing the openness view of God as the most moved mover.

Three key characteristics of Pinnock's theology bear upon the issue of providence. First, Pinnock developed a relational ontology based on an eternal and dynamic life of love in the Trinity.¹⁴⁹ Pinnock believed that the eternal communion of life and mutual love within the persons of the Trinity, rather than sovereignty and omni-attributes, constitutes the essential nature of God.¹⁵⁰ With the doctrine of the Trinity, Pinnock sought to unfold the God-world relation in a more relational manner. He wrote that "God invites creatures to participate in this divine dance of loving communion."¹⁵¹ Second, he was a theologian of the Holy Spirit. For Pinnock, Evangelical theology is not purely theoretical or speculative; rather, it is an experimental through the Spirit's vital and dynamic life.¹⁵² So, his understanding of the nature of Evangelical theology should have a holistic meaning, encompassing *orthodoxy* (thought), *orthopathy* (affection), and *orthopraxis* (action). For Pinnock, third, scripture is a significant source in Evangelical theology as it consistently reforms the church and her beliefs and practices (*semper reformandum*). Pinnock favored a "simple biblicism" or biblical philosophy while rejecting "philosophical biblicism," which means he adopted a narrative-centered, neither Neo-Platonistic nor Calvinistic, approach to the biblical witness to God and his love.¹⁵³ Thus, his approach has a more intuitive character. Overall, his open theism,

¹⁴⁹ His open theism has many names (e.g., free-will theism and creative love theism), including the trinitarian openness of God.

¹⁵⁰ See Olson, "Postconservative Evangelical Theology," 32–34. On Pinnock's trinitarianism, see also Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 83–84.

¹⁵¹ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 189. See also Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," 108–9. Pinnock developed the concept of God as a relational being and the relational ontology of the God-world relationship, influenced by social trinitarianism.

¹⁵² Barren, "Clark H. Pinnock," 12. See Studebaker, "Clark Pinnock," 9. Steven Studebaker describes Pinnock's theological identity as a pilgrimage towards Pentecostal theology.

¹⁵³ Barren, "Clark H. Pinnock," 8. See Pinnock, "New Dimensions," 200. Pinnock wrote that "Scripture is a gift of the Spirit, and evangelicals want to be open to all that God says in the text ... Not a theory about the Bible, simple biblicism is the basic instinct that the Bible is supremely profitable and transforming, alive with God's breath." For Pinnock's criticism of the philosophical interpretation of the

grounded in simple biblical narratives, attempts to restore the centrality of God's relational love in the Bible.¹⁵⁴

Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom

The main focus of Pinnock's theology revolves around the reconciliation of the tension between God's sovereignty and human freedom.¹⁵⁵ Strictly speaking, Pinnock's foundational concept is love, not freedom or free will per se in the discourse on open theism.¹⁵⁶ According to Pinnock, the Trinity, the God of love, has perpetuated a loving fellowship within the triune life *ad extra* and sought to extend that loving bond with creation *ad extra*. According to Pinnock,

God is free and self-communicating *love*, not a solitary monad. He is not a supreme will to power, but a will to communicate in which both life and power are shared. He is the power whose very nature it is to give and receive love, and his rule, as the triune God, is one of love and not force. The power of God is creative, sacrificial and empowering, not coercive, and his glory consists in sharing life with, not dominating, others. God is for us and with us. He is not a metaphysical abstraction, but the one who makes his presence felt—actively, responsively, relationally, dynamically, and reciprocally. God is transcendent, but does not exist in isolation from the world. He is unchangeable in character, but is not unchanging in his relations with us.¹⁵⁷

According to Pinnock, conventional theologies of providence, especially classical theism, do not thoroughly reflect God as a social being *ad intra* and *ad extra* due to their lack of foundation in biblical data. Their ideas are more influenced by Western

doctrine of God, see Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 65–111. See also Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 101–25.

¹⁵⁴ Refer to the following resources to counter the biblical foundation used by Pinnock in his advocacy for Open Theism. See Samuel Storms, “Open Theism.” Stanley Porter, “Assessment of Some New Testament-Related Assumptions.” See also Steven Roy, *How Much Does God Foreknow*.

¹⁵⁵ See Strange, *Possibility of Salvation*, 47. Daniel Strange, who has studied on Pinnock's theology of religions in general and his soteriological inclusivism in specific, points out that the subject on divine sovereignty and human freedom “filter down through every area of Pinnock's theology.”

¹⁵⁶ See Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 107–9.

¹⁵⁷ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 6 (emphasis added).

philosophies (e.g., “the Greek ideal of deity” or “a changeless Greek deity”) that perceive deity as an absolute, timeless, and immutable entity.¹⁵⁸

In Pinnock’s theology, God’s love takes precedence and as a consequence, human freedom is bestowed as a fruit from love.¹⁵⁹ So, the trinitarian model of love serves as “central concern” for the divine-human relationship in his openness model of providence.¹⁶⁰ Pinnock argued that the *Abba* (Daddy) relationship between God and humans, as portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 14:36)—particularly through the narrative of the Prodigal Father-Son (Luke 15:11–32)—challenges the conventional concept of God’s sovereignty.¹⁶¹ It should be understood as the allowance of human freedom by God within such a relationship of love, rather than as “an all-controlling, dominating, and aloof patriarch.”¹⁶² Pinnock stood for the manifesto of the openness concept of divine sovereignty, citing the fourfold definition by John Sanders, an advocate of the openness of God model: (1) the divine-human relationship is in a reciprocal and *open*, neither self-contained nor closed off, fellowship, (2) God’s sovereignty permits humans to make *open* decisions even if they would be in opposition to God, (3) God’s providence is neither fully controlling nor maximally meticulous, but rather *open* to contingencies and cooperative with human choices, and (4) God grants humans the libertarian *open* freedom, and his providence takes risk and exercises in a way that accommodates human free actions.¹⁶³ The perspectives on the relationship

¹⁵⁸ See Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 106.

¹⁵⁹ See Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 81–83.

¹⁶⁰ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 3.

¹⁶¹ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 3–4. See Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 103. The conceptuality of God as *Abba* or a “caring parent” is the most important metaphor of God in his theology.

¹⁶² Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 2.

¹⁶³ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 4–5 (emphasis added).

between God and the world in open theism differ significantly from the theological views of Edwards and Barth. Yet, those theses bear noteworthy similarities to Wiles's theology.

In summary, Pinnock redefined the meaning of the sovereignty of God in a relational manner, while rejecting a deterministic concept that attributes God's full and meticulous providence over every detail in the world. He argued that the God of the Bible is a free and loving God who grants humans the ability to exercise genuine freedom and poses relative autonomy in a libertarian sense (e.g., human agents have power to choose and do otherwise or take more than one possible course of action). Then, he proposed the open theology of providence, which sets forth the dynamic interaction between divine responsibility and human free choices and actions. It also entails risk-taking on God's part, when and where God voluntarily limits his dominance to allow genuine possibility of human freedom (the divine choice), and human agents take genuine moral consequences.¹⁶⁴

Divine Attributes

The discussion of God's attributes holds a significant place within biblical, theological, and philosophical discourses on divine providence. The three omni-attributes of God characterize him as all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient), and all-present (omnipresent). While this statement may appear straightforward, a deeper analysis reveals various possible interpretations and conundrums. For example, what does it truly

¹⁶⁴ As a result, Pinnock did not consider his open view of providence as departing from or completely new to the Christian tradition. Rather, it is broadly rooted in the Wesleyan, Arminian, and Pentecostal tradition, which are commonly found within the current evangelical community.

mean for God to be all-powerful? Can God as all-powerful do everything, even committing evil? On the other hand, if a perfectly good God cannot do so, then is God perfectly free? Are there limits to what God can do? If God knows everything, including future contingencies, then does it result in everything being determined, thus making human freedom void? Is God in time or timeless? If God is impassible, how can God love his people but does not suffer with them? If God does not intervene continually, can God's providence be said to be in control? Theologians and philosophers associated with the openness of God movement have biblical, theological, and philosophical responses to those questions concerning divine attributes and providence. As a response to such, Pinnock himself sought to revise some classical conceptions of God as a perfect being in a dynamic direction that is coherent with God's relational and loving character (omni-agape).

Firstly, God's omnipotence (all-powerful) does not mean that God monopolizes all power.¹⁶⁵ Rather, according to Pinnock, it means that "God is so powerful as to be able to stoop down and humble himself."¹⁶⁶ Affirming God's omnipotence for Pinnock and open theists is to acknowledge his condescension, rather than power or controlling. God has chosen to empower and nurture creatures by humbling himself and entering into a social relationship with them. He argued that this definition differs in quality from the traditional concept of power to determine everything as attributed by classical theism.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," 113.

¹⁶⁶ Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," 105. See Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 92. As Pinnock writes, "'God is sovereign over his sovereignty' and can make the kind of the world he likes—in this case, a world with free creatures in it. This is, I think, the majority Christian position."

¹⁶⁷ Similarly, William Hasker redefines God's providential control. According to him, God is in control not in a way which he exercises "full control", but rather in that he retains "ultimate control" over his creation. Also, he argues that God's control is not solo control by God alone, but rather a sharing of control of a plurality of agents, both divine and human. See Hasker, "Antinomies of Divine Providence," 363.

Pinnock is insistent: “Omnipotence does not mean that nothing can go contrary to God’s will (our sins go against it) but that God is able to deal with any circumstance that may arise.”¹⁶⁸ For Pinnock, God’s power, perfectly combined with his perfect love, was fully demonstrated on the cross of Jesus. The divine power is also contextualized within the divine-human covenantal relationship, and despite the fallenness and rebellion of human agents, God’s persuasive power continues to be active. In this context, Pinnock also redefined the immutability of God as his covenantal faithfulness.¹⁶⁹

Secondly, for Pinnock, God is all-knowing but “omniscience need not mean exhaustive foreknowledge of all future events.”¹⁷⁰ The conventional concept of God’s complete knowing of past, present, and futures events is, according to him, not so much a biblical idea, and even goes against the theological tradition of the church.¹⁷¹ From his relational ontology, Pinnock refutes the idea because divine foreknowledge “would jeopardize the genuineness of the divine-human relationship.”¹⁷² He opposes the classical-Calvinistic view of divine omniscience: “What kind of dialogue is it where one party already knows what the other will say and do? I would not call this a personal

¹⁶⁸ Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 114. See also Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 100.

¹⁶⁹ Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 117. According to Pinnock, immutability does not exclude responsiveness but rather promotes it. For more information on his understanding of the immutability of God, see Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 85–88. Similarly, he also writes that divine “immutability is about God’s unchanging trinitarian nature and relational faithfulness.”

¹⁷⁰ Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 121.

¹⁷¹ Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 122. Through the depictions of God in the Old Testament, such as God’s genuine response to Abraham when he intended to offer his son Isaac as an offering (Gen 22:12), and God’s true expression of sorrow over the rebellion and corruption of the Israelites led their leader Moses in the wilderness (Jer 32:35), Pinnock argues that future is truly open to God, too. See Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 89. See also Hasker, “Antinomies of Divine Providence,” 370. According to him, it is clear that the scriptures witness to God as experiencing regret and changing his plans. For example, God regrets creating human beings (Gen 6:6) and relents from making Saul king (1 Sam 15:11). Similarly, God’s emotive responses are depicted dramatically in connection with his people (Hos 2:2-3, 14-15). Their interpretations of the biblical passages in the Old Testament, though simply intuitive, seem challenging to avoid criticisms of anthropomorphism.

¹⁷² Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 122.

relationship.”¹⁷³ He also philosophically rejects the concept because “if choices are real and freedom significant, future decisions cannot be exhaustively foreknown.”¹⁷⁴ Pinnock argues that since the future is non-existent, it cannot be accurately known with certainty, even by God, because future free acts or decisions do not exist. So, decisions that will occur in the future have not been determined yet, and while God possesses knowledge of all that is knowable, he cannot know things that are yet-to-be-made in future.¹⁷⁵ This does not diminish the perfection of God’s knowledge because (1) the hypothetical knowledge of conditional future contingents has no truth value and (2) God’s omniscience means that he fully knows only events that actually exist.¹⁷⁶

Thirdly, for Pinnock, God is not beyond time and change.¹⁷⁷ He argues that “the biblical symbols do not speak of divine timelessness but of God’s faithfulness over time.”¹⁷⁸ Even though God is not as temporal as humans, God is in time and relates to “sequence and history,” and this is not a weakness to God but becomes paradoxically the basis for creatures to praise him for his historical providence.¹⁷⁹ In other words, because God has entered into the world through the incarnation, as Pinnock insists, God is approachable and he has a “human face.”¹⁸⁰ While Pinnock’s open theism and process theology share some similarities in terms of God and time, they also differ in significant

¹⁷³ Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 122.

¹⁷⁴ Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 122.

¹⁷⁵ Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 123–24. While consistent with his view of divine omniscience, Pinnock seems to take a radical stance by arguing that “God is the best learner of all because he is completely open to all the input of an unfolding world.”

¹⁷⁶ his *Most Moved Mover*, 101. Most open theists concur with the fact that God knows the future not in an absolute sense but part as a realm of possibilities and probabilities. And this thought on God’s futurity is met with sharp controversy.

¹⁷⁷ For Pinnock’s view of God as divine temporal agent, see Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 96–99.

¹⁷⁸ Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 120.

¹⁷⁹ Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 120.

¹⁸⁰ Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” 102.

ways. First, for Pinnock, God created the world *ex nihilo*; thus, God and the world are distinct. While God is not self-sufficient in process theology, for Pinnock, the Christian deity as the triune God is perfect in love and happiness *ad intra* and neither bound to nor dependant on the world.¹⁸¹ Second, the creator God is both immanent and transcendent. While being transcendent from the world, God's presence is wide through the Holy Spirit. Last but not least, Pinnock's theology of the God-world relation is not formed through process philosophy or pantheism but his social trinitarian theology.¹⁸²

Theodicy

As Pinnock and open theists engage with the problem of evil, they strive to find out and propose the best possible theory that can reconcile the divine nature and attributes as have been articulated so far. William Hasker, for example, argues that within the traditional Christian theological accounts of divine providence, theories to address the problem of evil while striving to reconcile divine goodness and sovereignty can be summarized as follows: (1) Augustinianism; (2) Molinism; and (3) Open Theism.¹⁸³

On the Augustinian theory, according to Hasker, since God meticulously determines all occurrences through his decrees and ordinations, God is thereby directly responsible for the problem of evil. This view evidently conflicts with God's goodness and love. On the Molinist perspective, Hasker argues that through his middle knowledge

¹⁸¹ See Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 83. For him, "creation was a free gift and not something that God needed to do."

¹⁸² See Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," 108. He is indeed insistent that the "trinitarian model seems superior to process theism in this matter of the divine openness."

¹⁸³ Hasker, "Antinomies of Divine Providence," 374. For further information on his view of the problem of evil, see Hasker, *Providence, Evil and the Openness of God* and *Triumph of God over Evil*. For his philosophical perspective on the open concept of divine providence, see Hasker, "Philosophical Perspective," 126–54.

of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, God knew that evils would ensue if he created the world. Nevertheless, God actualized such a possible world despite his knowledge of the potential for evil in the created world. Thus, this Molinist account is equally problematic, according to Hasker.

For the open model of God, however, Hasker points out that it does not assert God's complete control and power over the details of worldly events, and they are determined by free choices and acts of human agents. While it may not be possible to fully comprehend precise causal chains behind all instances of evil, Hasker argues that the responsibility for the problem of evil lies with the free choices of human beings and the resulting moral corruption. As a result, it is unjustifiable to attribute the cause of the problem of evil to God.¹⁸⁴ Consequently, he argues that the open view of the problem of evil, known as the risk-taking model, provides the best reconciliation between the goodness and the power of God in the existence of evil among the three accounts.

As with Hasker, Pinnock took a critical position towards the traditional theistic theodicies, offering a critique and substituting them with an open view of theodicy. He argues that just as the life of the Trinity, both immanent and economic, is open and dynamic, the structure of this world is likewise open. This created reality is open to moral and natural evils since "God created for the sake of loving relationships," requiring "giving real freedom to the creature" and thus entailing "risk" and "the possibility of moral and certain natural evils."¹⁸⁵ Pinnock acknowledges the reality of

¹⁸⁴ This open view of God in the problem of evil appears to describe God as a passive spectator or observer. Drawing an analogy to a parent-child relationship, for instance, God is depicted as a parent who chooses not to intervene when his child uses a baseball bat to harm a friend, citing a respect his freedom of will.

¹⁸⁵ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 131–32.

genuine evil and the mysterious nature of divine providence in the world. However, he, along with Maurice Wiles, argues against the notion that God has a blueprint or great design in dealing with the problem of evil.¹⁸⁶ In other words, he rejects the classical theistic view of theodicy that God ordains or uses evils and controls them as a means to accomplish his greater plan—such as, evil is used to purify individuals’ souls (i.e., the Soul Making model) or to ultimately make the world a better place (i.e., the Greater Design model). Instead, Pinnock argues that the actual problems of evil that arise in the real world occur contrary to God’s intentions; God is interactive with, not blameworthy of, all evil because they occur mostly by free human agents.¹⁸⁷ Then, can Pinnock’s open view of theodicy enable a belief in divine providence amidst the reality of evil? The response can be either an affirmative or negative stance. In strict terms, it appears more fitting to argue that open theism, particularly Pinnock’s view, places greater emphasis on trusting God’s faithfulness than solely relying on his providence.

A Dialogue Between Pinnock and Edwards

Edwards has been known to most people for his infamous sermons titled “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (1741). Consequently, he has been perceived as a preacher preoccupied with God’s wrath against humans. However, it should not be overlooked that his numerous sermons and writings do indeed delve into the subject of love. In his overall theological framework, especially from his trinitarian theology known as the mutual love model, he highlighted the love of God towards himself as well as the created world. Edwards made love central to his theological accounts of God’s essence,

¹⁸⁶ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 133.

¹⁸⁷ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 133.

pneumatology (the Spirit of love), eschatology (heaven as a world of love), virtue (love as the sum of all virtue), and spirituality or piety (holy affection). He was indeed a Reformed-Puritan theologian of love who believed that God is love, and God's love for the world arises from the fundamental nature of the divine nature as love.

Pinnock was also an open theologian of love. According to Pinnock, his theological change was due to his realization of an open concept of God: "I have changed mainly in one way not in many...It was a shift in the doctrine of God which saw me gradually more from the root metaphor of God as an absolute monarch to the root metaphor of God as a loving Parent. It was an important change which would affect a whole range of issues as its significance worked itself out."¹⁸⁸ Affirming that sinners are in the arms of a loving Parent, Pinnock's open and relational concept of God as love functions as a controlling factor in his view of providence. It is derived from his social trinitarianism. For Pinnock, God is love because "Father, Son, and Spirit are the members of a divine community...The Trinity portrays God as a community of love and mutuality."¹⁸⁹ Pinnock, similar to Edwards, utilized a social or familial metaphor to describe the life of the Trinity, and this social trinitarianism contributed to a profound focus on relationality within his view of the God-world relation.¹⁹⁰ According to him, God's love and relationship with creation are not merely contingent or arbitrary but rather essential. Yet, it is apparent that Edwards's trinitarianism, influenced by the

¹⁸⁸ Pinnock, "Response to Daniel Strange and Amos Yong," 351. Cf. MacDonald, "From Augustine to Arminius, and Beyond," 24–26. Criticism has been directed at Pinnock's utilization of root metaphors for God, particularly the need to choose either an "absolute monarch" or a "caring Parent" image. This criticism arises from the existence of diverse metaphors for God in the Bible, including those portraying God as a sovereign judge or king. Pinnock's preference for the root metaphor is problematic in that other metaphors should be excluded and replaced with the metaphor of God as a loving parent.

¹⁸⁹ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 27.

¹⁹⁰ Relational theism is another label for open theism.

Augustinian psychological and mutual love models, presents a more balanced and comprehensive approach when compared to Pinnock's trinitarianism, which focuses on a single motif—for example, love or relationality (the approach of either A or B).

Edwards's trinitarianism integrates different facets of divine nature, such as power, knowledge, and happiness, in a theologically balanced manner (that of both A and B) in his doctrine of providence.

Also, not only do Edwards and Pinnock demonstrate a trinitarian grammar, but they also vividly set forth the prominent role of the Holy Spirit in God's providential actions in their theologies of providence. As already pointed out, Edwards thought of the Holy Spirit as the primary agent of *Deus providebit*.¹⁹¹ Specially, it becomes apparent in Edwards's concept of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the engine of advancing redemptive history. Pinnock also referred the Holy Spirit as the agent of *Deus providebit*: "Even the doctrine of providence does duty for the cosmic work of the Spirit. Under this category too we reflect on God at work within history and the world. *Providence* refers to God's sustaining and governing all things and therefore indirectly to Spirit's moving in continuing creation."¹⁹² In "Miscellanies," no. 94, Edwards wrote that "the Holy Spirit is the pure act of God and energy of the Deity, by his office, which is to actuate and quicken all things, and to beget energy and vivacity in the creature."¹⁹³ Although Edwards held firmly to Reformed theology while Pinnock departed from it, Edwards as a theologian of revival and Pinnock as an Evangelical Baptist Charismatic theologian, their pneumatology is a point where they can be meaningfully linked in an

¹⁹¹ See Studebaker, "Introduction," 13. Studebaker points out that "Pneumatology was the arena of some of Edwards' most innovative work, and it is a staple of pentecostal theology."

¹⁹² Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 56.

¹⁹³ Edwards, *WJE* 13:261.

ecumenical dialogue.¹⁹⁴ With this pneumatological focus, Edwards (and Pinnock) can aid Barth's christocentric theology of providence, highlighting the Holy Spirit as the primary divine agent in the providential acts for the world. This perspective enables a recognition of the Spirit's universal or wider presence in every domain.

Another comparison that can be made between Pinnock's, Edwards's, and Wiles's theologies of providence is their panentheistic understanding of the God-world relation. Wiles's model of the God-world relation makes God dependent upon the world.¹⁹⁵ In his account of God as working within the world or being immanent as its creative energy, Wiles comes close to a process and panentheistic model of creation in that the God-world relation is reciprocal in relation and an open process.¹⁹⁶ Although open theism varies and differs from process theology, Pinnock and other open theists hold the view that because of God's kenotic love or self-giving, God freely chooses to be with and present in creation.¹⁹⁷ According to Thomas Oord and Andrew Schwartz, "Open and relational theologies have a particular affinity for panentheism and Panexperientialism (panpsychism)."¹⁹⁸ As a result of such an affinity, they argue that most open theists believe that "Consequently, both God and creatures face an open, yet to be determined future. Because the future is not actual, it is inherently unknowable as

¹⁹⁴ For more information on the ecumenical dialogue between Edwards and Pentecostal theology, see Steven Studebaker and Amos Yong, eds., *Pentecostal Theology and Jonathan Edwards*. On Edwards and the Revival tradition, see also McDermott and McClymond, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 675–94.

¹⁹⁵ See Wiles, *God's Action*, 26–38.

¹⁹⁶ Wiles, *God's Action*, 51. Wiles wrote that "God is affected by our actions."

¹⁹⁷ The theological common ground between Wiles and Pinnock (as well as most open theists) lies in their emphasis on the kenosis of God, which refers to God's self-limiting, self-humbling, and self-giving. For Wiles's concept, see "Divine Action," 22. For Pinnock's view, see Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," 115. In his words, "God allows the world to be affected by the power of the creature and *takes risks* accompanying any genuine relatedness" (emphasis added). Furthermore, these two theologians also share a common emphasis on human freedom that is inviolable, specifically highlighting radically libertarian free will.

¹⁹⁸ Oord and Schwartz, "Panentheism and Panexperientialism," 231.

actual. Open and relational theists believe God is time-full rather than timeless. Theistic presentists often adopt this view of divine time-fullness.”¹⁹⁹ For Edwards, although God is ontologically distinct from creation and God is transcendent in time and place, he also believed that creation is somehow in God and God as “being in general” is immediately present to the world, too.²⁰⁰ Edwards interpreted the relationship between God and the world as panentheistic for a different reason than Wiles and Pinnock. According to Oliver Crisp, this perspective was influenced by his Reformed theology which was incorporated with Neoplatonism and occasionalism. So, Crisp describes Edwards as “a Christian Neoplatonist” and also “panentheist.”²⁰¹

In modern theology, however, Langdon Gilkey asserts that the concepts or terminologies regarding divine providence are often empty or open concepts unless they are specified.²⁰² For instance, sovereignty and freedom are theological concepts that require precise specifications. In grappling with the tensions between God’s sovereignty and human freedom, Pinnock arrived at a different conclusion compared to Reformed theologians like Edwards and Barth, leading him to *re*-articulate these ideas. Edwards (also Barth) viewed the classical concept of divine sovereignty as a necessary and

¹⁹⁹ Oord and Schwartz, “Panentheism and Panexperientialism,” 231–32.

²⁰⁰ Edwards, *WJE* 20:122–23. See Schweitzer, “Aspects of God’s Relationship,” 20. Schweitzer also refers to Edwards’s concept of the God-world relationship as an approximately “panentheistic model.” See also Wainwright, “Ontology,” 93. Wainwright writes: “For panentheism is the view that God includes the world and the world includes God. But if ‘inclusion’ is interpreted as an *entailment* relation, then Edwards’ God is clearly panentheistic. For, on his view God necessarily creates the world and it is logically or metaphysically impossible for the world to exist if God does not.” However, there is an exception. He further argues that Edwards only implies a one-way inclusion. In other words, Edwards’s perspective suggests that God includes the world, but not vice versa. See also Bombaro, *Jonathan Edwards’s Vision*, 69.

²⁰¹ Crisp, “Jonathan Edwards’ Panentheism,” 107–22. See also Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards on God*, 139. In terms of interpreting Edwards’s view of the self-enlargement of God in the world, there is a theological debate between Crisp and Wainwright whether it is the divine being that is enlarged in creation (Crisp) or it is the divine attributes that are so in redemption (Wainwright).

²⁰² Gilkey, “Concept of Providence,” 185.

sufficient condition for his creatures, as God exercises His sovereignty not only over but also on their behalf. On the other hand, Pinnock (also Wiles) understood divine sovereignty as a stumbling block to genuine human freedom (e.g., divine sovereignty over against human freedom) so they *re*-vised them in a strong libertarian context. Yet, Edwards and Barth refused such a libertarian view. Instead, they *re*-claimed the Augustinian-Thomistic-Calvinian notion that genuine human freedom is derived from God and is thus compatible with divine sovereignty in a Reformed sense.

Moreover, Pinnock raised concerns regarding the traditional explanations of divine attributes and instead presented alternative perspectives incorporating the concepts of divine self-limitation and dependence. These viewpoints were informed by Pinnock's examination of biblical depictions of God's power, knowledge, and presence. In Edwards's theology, although there is an emphasis on divine self-humiliation and the incarnation, the idea of God being dependent on humans is deemed unacceptable to him. This notion directly contradicts his fundamental view of a sovereign deity who is glorified through human dependence.²⁰³

Also, Edwards, who was a theological determinist, affirmed the exhaustive foreknowledge of the future (i.e., the classical doctrine of divine omniscience), stating that God knows everything, including the future, which is semantically known to him. To Edwards, divine foreknowledge and providence are akin to twin concepts. By means

²⁰³ See Edwards, *WJE* 17:197–99. Mark Valery presents his interpretation of Jonathan Edwards's famous sermon *God Glorified in Man's Dependence*. He writes: "By implication, Arminian views on human nature, which deny humanity's complete dependence on God...He [Edwards] argues that it is this very doctrine of human sin and dependence, rather than any supposition of human goodness or moral capacity, that glorifies God...Edwards' theocentric vision of God as Redeemers leads him to a nearly doxological conclusion." See also Helm, *Providence of God*, 85–88. Paul Helm interprets Edwards's continuous creationism as an aspect of Reformed theology, emphasizing the immediate and absolute dependence of humans on God, who upholds all of creation, which is opposed to the views of deists and pantheists.

of foreknowledge, God predestines all things, including existence, salvation, and even sin, in his decrees, while providence orders them through various means.²⁰⁴

In terms of theodicy, both Edwards and Pinnock seem to hold that God's permission is the cause of the problem of evil although Pinnock might argue that for Edwards, God is the author of or responsible for evil. The difference between the two lies in whether it is a direct result of divine permission or an indirect outcome from the permission. For instance, Edwards argued that God permitted evil for his high and holy end(s) in his triune working reality *ad extra*. On the other hand, Pinnock was insistent that God permitted human freedom to establish a genuine and reciprocal relationship with humanity. So, in this context, the problem of evil is inevitable. Overall, both theologians seem to employ the concept of divine permission theory when it comes to the problem of evil. Or, in other words, Edwards viewed the problem of evil as a means for God to maximize the expression of his power. On the other hand, Pinnock saw it as an indirect result of minimizing God's expressions of his power. In the conflicts between Edwards's Reformed view of power and Pinnock's open theistic understanding of it,

²⁰⁴ See Edwards, *WJE* 18:408–9. As with Edwards, for Barth, election is central to his soteriology and it contains two things, foreknowledge and predestination. Barth emphasized divine freedom, wherein God freely chooses humans without considering their inherent qualities or merits. He believed that God elected them in Jesus Christ, who was chosen as the elected one for all humanity, and in Christ, God chose to reconcile them to himself. The theme of God's election in Christ, as found in Barth's thought, resonates with Edwards's theology. See Edwards, *WJE* 28:418. According to Edwards, "The elect are chosen in him with respect to these two, in senses somewhat diverse. With respect to foreknowledge or foreowning, we are chosen in him as God chose us to be actually his, in this way, viz. by being in Christ, or being members of his Son. This is the way that God determined we should actually become his. God chose Christ and gave them to him, and so looking on them as his, owned them for his own. But by predestination, which is consequent on this foreknowledge, we are elected in Christ, as we are elected in his election. For God having in foreknowledge given us to Christ, he thenceforward beheld us as members or parts of him; and so ordaining the head to glory, he therein ordained the members to glory. Or, in destining Christ to eternal life, he destined all parts of Christ to it also, so that we are appointed to eternal life in Christ, being in Christ his members from eternity. In his being appointed to life, we are appointed. So Christ's election is the foundation of ours, as much as his justification and glorification are the foundation of ours."

many people indeed find neither approach to the problem of evil fully satisfactory. However, it is essential to clarify a misconception about Edwards's theodicy. His understanding of divine power is not abstract in a philosophical sense. Edwards viewed God as the triune God, emphasizing love as his fundamental and true essence or life, just like Pinnock did so. Thus, love (omni-agape), not just its neutral concepts, should characterize and define Edwards's view of divine power. Moreover, he also held that the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity, a God who works and fights *pro nobis* (for us). Given their shared commitment to trinitarian theology, this specific trinitarian perspective allows for some points of dialogue between Edwards and Pinnock regarding the problem of evil.

Conclusion

All theology does not evolve in a vacuum. In this sense, all theology is contextual. This chapter has confirmed that the question of divine providence has never gone unchallenged. New intellectual movements have emerged challenging traditional Christian doctrines (e.g., the Enlightenment and Darwinism), and faith in God's providence has also been questioned by wars and natural disasters. In the modern era, scientism demands a reinterpretation of the God-world relation and divine action in creation. Theologians, such as Edwards, Wiles, Barth, and Pinnock, have developed their theologies of providence in response to their circumstances and challenges. In their own challenging contexts, Edwards *re*-trieved the Reformed doctrine of providence with a strong trinitarian function; Wiles *re*-vised the traditional understanding of divine action into a new deistic model of providence; Barth *re*-claimed the centre of the gospel of

Jesus Christ as God's ultimate providential event for the world in his modern theology and Pinnock *re*-interpreted the doctrine of God within his open theism.

With ecumenical dialogues on the doctrine of providence, however, it becomes apparent that Edwards's doctrine of providence can be a "theological bridge" for two reasons.²⁰⁵ First, his Reformed-catholic and Evangelical aspect of providence towards the ultimate accomplishment of the triune redemption for the world in Christ, and it has an ecumenical import, embracing diverse theological traditions. Tony Richie points this out, too: "I suggest that Edwards's reliance on the theme of providence's acting in all of history...is essentially affirmable by both Calvinists and Wesleyan Arminians, including Pentecostals."²⁰⁶ Second, Edwards's doctrine of divine providence has "multivalent" faces or "many-sidedness," showing a surprising degree of theological convergence or communicable substances with those theologians.²⁰⁷ This idea does not deny the existence of irreconcilable differences between Edwards and those theologians. However, Edwards's theology of providence can hold potential for constructive engagement in an ecumenical dialogue with them. This is possible because his theology underwent extensive interactions and developments during the dynamic and transformative eighteenth century, marked by notable historical and intellectual changes. These included the rise of the Enlightenment and mechanical philosophy, the introduction of progressive ideas (e.g., deism) challenging traditional beliefs (e.g., Trinity), the Reformed and Arminian free will dispute, and the debates between pro-revival and the anti-revival parties (e.g., charismatic and non-charismatic). Due to its

²⁰⁵ McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 720–21.

²⁰⁶ Richie, "Grand Design of God," 212.

²⁰⁷ McClymond and McDermott, *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 720–21.

comprehensive nature, Edwards's theology of providence encompasses and synthesizes various theologies and ideas related to divine providence, thus enabling meaningful ecumenical dialogues. His understanding of providence can be described as a communicative theology, reflecting his perception of God as a communicative being.

CONCLUSION

Edwards thought that the concepts of God's being and providence as fundamental principles for all sacred human knowledge, and he had the strong conviction that these principles would become gradually apparent as knowledge progresses. He also asserted that the doctrine of providence holds greater significance than that of creation, even though both are ontologically great works of the triune redeemer. Edwards used providence as a way to describe his understanding of God's activity in relation to creatures within the triune context of divine working reality encompassing creation, providence, and redemption. To Edwards, God cannot be God without providence contrary to those Stoic, Epicurean, Deistic, and Mechanical philosophers that deny a *Deus providentia*. This providential theology has deeply rooted itself in his spirituality, and Edwards resolved to live a life that follows the providence of God. This resolution stems from his Reformed-Puritan faith, rather than his originality.

As R. C. De Prosopo points out, Edwards's doctrine of providence is expressive of his concept of deity, reflecting the divine nature, such as divine power, wisdom, and goodness or happiness. To Edwards, God is a communicative being as the Trinity *ad intra* and *ad extra*. This dissertation argues that by locating his doctrine of providence within the doctrine of God (*theologia*), not as a subsection of the doctrine of creation,

Edwards was able to advance a distinctively Christian concept of providence. Therefore, the retrieval of Edwards's theological providentialism becomes a solution to the generalizing trend of the Reformed doctrine of divine providence, a concern that Karl Barth raised several hundred years after Edwards. With a trinitarian and redemptive grammar, furthermore, Edwards's doctrine of providence offers a response to the question raised by Maurice Wiles pertaining to the place of Christian providentialism within a religiously pluralistic and global context.

Edwards's trinitarian doctrine of providence stemmed from his firm grounding in the *deep* theological heritage of Christian tradition, specifically from the Augustinian trinitarian model. As a Puritan theologian, he was opposed to traditionalism, but he did not reject the tradition of Christian theology. Influenced by Puritan and Reformed orthodoxy theologians such as Perkins, Owen, and Maastricht, Edwards emerged as a Reformed-catholic and retrieval theologian. Due to his profound theological depth, Edwards was able to be creative and relevant in his critical and constructive engagements with the newly emerging ideas and events in his context. His retrieval theology serves as a great resource for contemporary Reformed theologians and Evangelical ministers. Recent scholars are surpassing Perry Miller's modernized interpretation of Edwards and rediscovering the traditional facets of Edwards, thereby obtaining new theological insights through them.¹

¹ Social historians also contribute to such study of Edwards by challenging the grand narrative of Edwards, which modern researchers have shaped, by reconstructing socio-religious details regarding the lives of colonial Americans. For example, see Ava Chamberlain, "Edwards and Social Issues," 326. Chamberlain concludes Edwards was "not divorced from ordinary reality but deeply embedded in the popular culture of eighteenth-century New England."

Edwards's understanding of divine providence shares biblical reasoning with those Western theologians such as Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin, and thus exhibits profound affinities with them. The role of scriptures cannot be overlooked in the formation and development of Western theologies of providence. Edwards's theology of providence is a historically extended argument influenced by Augustinian, Thomistic, and Calvinistic exegetical-dogmatic reasoning. Furthermore, in accordance with the Augustinian mutual love trinitarian model, Edwards defined God's relation to the world (or the God-world relation) in a trinitarian manner and was thus able to form a theology of providence in light of the doctrine of the Trinity. God is a triune provider, and the Father is providing all things through the Son and in the Spirit.

Edwards's theology of providence is not only a historically extended but also a socially embodied argument. The Puritan heritage, the Enlightenment, and the Great Awakening in his eighteenth-century context provided much of the theological foundation for his understanding of God's active and meticulous providential disposals and exercises. To Edwards as a Puritan minister, divine providence was a fundamental article of Christian faith. Consequently, he had to develop a providential theology that challenged the deists who denied divine intervention and the mechanistic philosophers who excluded divine providence from the world. All occurrences are in accordance with God's plan and have a designated purpose or end; nothing is excluded from the fatherly mind and his idea and will. To him, nothing is excluded from and absent in divine providence. Moreover, as a Calvinistic-Reformed thinker, Edwards opposed the Arminian theology, which promoted human autonomy freed from divine providence, and advocated for doxological and theocentric divine providence within the Reformed threefold framework: (1) divine preservation; (2) divine governance; and (3) divine

concurrence. Even though Edwards had peculiar and creative ideas in his providential theology, they do not create a division between Edwards and Reformed theology regarding the doctrine of divine providence.

Instead, the prominent aspects that originated within the Puritan-Reformed tradition and yet were further developed in Edwards's dynamic eighteenth-century context enables his theology to remain relevant and engage with various theologies of providence. His theology of providence has an ecumenical *width* or many-sidedness. Also, through Edwards's interactions with these three theologians, Maurice Wiles, Karl Barth, and Clark Pinnock, it becomes evident that the doctrine of providence is intricately intertwined with their theological conceptions of God and their larger models of the God-world relation. For instance, they differ in their views on God's intervention and his transcendence and immanence, such as how he is open to the world. For Edwards, however, God is a triune provider, communicative being, and sovereign deity. Therefore, his theology of providence is characterized by its interventionistic, communicative, and theocentric nature and his model of the God-world relation based on his trinitarianism.

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