

# **GLORY EXTENDED**

## ***GOD'S TRINITARIAN PURPOSE IN CREATION***

“ 'Tis most certain that God did not create the world for nothing.”  
(**Jonathan Edwards**, *Miscellany gg*)

“The key to Edwards' thought is that everything is related because everything is related to God.” (**George Marsden**, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, p. 460)

### **INTRODUCTION**

\*Why is there something rather than nothing? What is the meaning of human existence?

“There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest - whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories - comes afterwards. These are games; one must first answer. And if it is true, as Nietzsche claims, that a philosopher, to deserve our respect, must preach by example, you can appreciate the importance of that reply, for it will precede the definitive act. These are facts the heart can feel; yet they call for careful study before they become clear to the intellect. If I ask myself how to judge that this question is more urgent than that, I reply that one judges by the actions it entails. I have never seen anyone die for the ontological argument. Galileo, who held a scientific truth of great importance, abjured it with the greatest ease as soon as it endangered his life. In a certain sense, he did right. That truth was not worth the stake. Whether the earth or the sun revolves around the other is a matter of profound indifference. To tell the truth, it is a futile question. On the other hand, I see many people die because they judge that life is not worth living. I see others paradoxically getting killed for the ideas or illusions that give them a reason for living (what is called a reason for living is also an excellent reason for dying). I therefore conclude that the meaning of life is the most urgent of questions. How to answer it?” (**Albert Camus**, *The Myth of Sisyphus*)

“And here is the perpetual message of the Church: to affirm, to teach and to apply, true theology. We cannot be satisfied to be Christians at our devotions and merely secular reformers all the rest of the week, for there is one question that we need to ask ourselves every day and about whatever business. The Church has perpetually to answer this question: to what purpose were we born? What is the end of Man?” (**T. S. Eliot**, *Christianity and Culture*, p. 77)

\*Unknown masterpiece by Jonathan Edwards: *The End For Which God Created The World*

# 1.) HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

\*Published posthumously in 1765 (Edwards died in 1758 from a smallpox vaccination)

\*A life-long pursuit & study for Jonathan Edwards (see his private notebooks, the “Miscellanies”)

\*Originally titled *Two Dissertations*, it was not a stand-alone piece. Edwards intended it to be read along with *The Nature of True Virtue*, a similarly philosophical discussion about what genuine morality looks like in light of God’s primal purposes for human beings.

\*Responding to the rise of the Enlightenment, and the resulting de-centralization (not denial!) of God from every sphere of human existence. At the root of these new views was the idea that God’s purpose in creation must be *human happiness*, abstractly or autonomously considered—without any strong connection to God Himself.

“In all of Edwards’s great corpus, the *Two Dissertations* is perhaps the best place to encounter both the breathtaking vision of divine glory and the human strain required to take in that vision. For most of us, who so rarely strain in that direction while we eagerly seek the contemplation of ourselves, the defects of the *Two Dissertations* are not nearly as important as the merits, above all of which is the clear-eyed proclamation that we exist for God rather than God for us.” (**Mark Noll**, “God at the Center,” p. 858)

“Together, the *Two Dissertations* attempted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century what Philip Watson once described as Martin Luther’s main concern in the 16<sup>th</sup> century—the promotion of a theological ‘Copernican revolution’ in which anthropological instincts are transformed into a theocentric picture of reality.” (**Mark Noll**, “God at the Center,” p. 855)

“*The End for Which God Created the World*, though often highly acclaimed, is one of the less read (and less easy to read) of Edwards’ treatises because it focuses on the narrow starting point for this larger theological vision. Nevertheless, this theological and Scriptural prolegomenon is essential for understanding how Edwards positioned himself in relation to the prevailing philosophies of the era. Eighteenth-century moral philosophers and moral popularizers were increasingly speaking of the deity as a benevolent governor whose ultimate interest must be to maximize human happiness.” (**George Marsden**, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, p. 460)

**\*A difficult book!**

“Some readers may find the labor hard to keep pace with the writer, in the advance he makes, when the ascent is arduous.” (from original preface to the 1765 edition, as cited by Paul Ramsey in *Works* vol. 8, p. 402)

“The book is hard to read. It was hard to read in its own day and it is harder today.” (John Piper, *God’s Passion For His Glory*, p. 23)

“*End of Creation* is an intricately written and almost forbiddingly dense treatise.” (Michael McClymond, *Encounters With God*, p. 53)

**\*Two divisions to the book: 1.) What Reason Teaches 2.) What Revelation Teaches**

**\*A Difficult Question—and easier to point out the *wrong* answers than to discover the *right* one**

“He does not do it, therefore, because in His essence He is under the necessity of having the world as well, outside Himself, perhaps as His fellow-worker or even as His playmate. He does not do it because He is not great or rich enough in Himself, or because His omnipotence—the omnipotence of the divine knowledge and will—needs and object distinct from itself, or space for its activity outside itself. Nor does He do it because of a superabundance which has to find an outlet, as it were, and if it did not overflow in the creation of a world would be an imperfection, discord or suffering. He does not in any sense do it because He stands in need of an improvement or enlargement of Himself and must provide it for Himself.” (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2: 121)

“Orthodoxy stressed that God was perfectly happy and blessed and self-sufficient, quite apart from creation. Yet this tenet led to a problem: if God’s reservoir of glory was eternally full, then what did the creation of the world add to it? Might not God’s decision to create suggest an initial incompleteness in God? But there were problems on the other side as well: If one reasoned (along with the Neoplatonists) that God’s reservoir of glory and goodness overflowed or emanated because of its sheer superabundance, then did this principle not compromise God’s freedom in acting and make God subject to an inner compulsion to create? Neither an incomplete God nor an unfree God was acceptable to traditional theologians, though one or the other would seem to be logically mandated. In approaching *End of Creation*, one should remember that Edwards was tackling an issue that Christian orthodoxy has perhaps never successfully resolved.” (Michael McClymond, *Encounters With God*, p. 62)

**\*The Vagueness of “Glory” Language**

“...the bare assertion, ‘God created for His own glory,’ was common amongst the Reformed orthodox; detailed descriptions of what is meant by ‘the glory of God’ are less common.” (Stephen Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory*, p. 62)

“It appears that however the last end of the creation is spoken of in Scripture under various denominations; yet if the whole of what is said relating to this affair be duly weighed, and one part compared with another, we shall have reason to think that the design of the Spirit

of God don't seem to be to represent God's ultimate end as manifold, but as one. For though it be signified by various names, yet they appear not to be names of different things, but various names involving each other in their meaning; either different names of the same thing, or names of several parts of one whole, or of the same whole viewed in various lights, or in its different respects and relations. For it appears that all that is ever spoken of in the Scripture as an ultimate end of God's works is included in that one phrase, 'the glory of God'; which is the name by which the last end of God's works is most commonly called in Scripture: and seems to be the name which most aptly signifies the thing." (**Jonathan Edwards**, *End of Creation*, p. 526)

"In the *Dissertation*, the problem set is one that was always acute for the Calvinist tradition: does God create for our sake or for his own sake? It is apparent that either answer is likely to support destructive religiosities. If we say God creates for the creatures' sake, it will be hard to combat the cult that has, as Edwards feared, come to be the practiced religion of most Americans: of the 'loving,' 'unconditionally accepting' God, who has no intentions of his own and is ever more transparently a mere device of our self-help. If we say God creates simply for his own sake, it is hard to know why we should care. Edwards foresaw the dangers of both answers and labored to show how their disjunction does not fit the biblical God." (**Robert Jenson**, *America's Theologian*, p. 38)

**\*Two extreme positions are often given as God's animating purpose in creating the universe. Did God created for Himself, or for us?**

## **2.) JOHN 17: THE CRUCIAL PASSAGE**

\*JE shows significant dependence upon this passage in his developing theological convictions over the course of his lifetime with respect to God's *telos* in the creation of the universe

### ***Tracing the Flow of Thought***

The initial request: "**Father, glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you**"—Edwards argues that this (verse 1) is the main *idea* of Jesus' final prayer in its entirety, and that the remainder of the passage is the *explanation* of HOW it will be fulfilled in the future.

**\*Tracing the GLORY language in John 17:** Glory before the world existed (beginning) & glory with the Father that he will return to (end). His *glorification* includes something new (middle) in addition to the preexistent relationship between the Father and Son—namely, a *group of people* that Jesus refers to as "those the Father

has given to the Son” (i.e. Christians). They are central to Jesus’ prayer that the Father and the Son be glorified. Indeed, they are an indispensable and constitutive part of this process.

\*Jesus **knows** the Father...now these ones **know** you, too

\*The Father has **loved** the Son...now that **love** is in them, too

\*The **joy** that the Son has in the Father...my **joy** is now in them, too

All of this (*knowledge, love, joy*) = the **glory** that the Son had with the Father before the foundation of the world, and which has subsequently been “given” to this group of people

**RESULT:** This glory is *extended* or *enlarged* beyond the domain of the Son’s relationship with the Father, to now include the redeemed in this divine dynamic. As “those that the Father has given to the Son” know, love and rejoice in God with the very knowledge, love and joy that the Son imparts to them from His relationship to the Father, “glory” is given to this group to share in (cf. the conclusion of the prayer)

### 3.) TRINITY

“When the triune God was at the center of his theological reflection, it was clear to Edwards that the true puzzle was not the Trinity but the creation of a finite world. Why would the God who is already in perfect union desire union with what is not God? The creation cannot add anything to God who is already the perfection of love and wisdom. There is within the Godhead already a perfect, harmonious society.” (**Amy Plantinga Pauw**, *The Supreme Harmony of All*, p. 125)

\*Where Edwards starts: not God’s purpose in creation, but the Trinity. Who God is comes before what God does (logically, though not always in our experience)

\*Muted Trinitarian emphasis in *End of Creation* (polemical reasons), but read JE’s “Essay on Trinity” and *Treatise on Grace* to see his position developed at length

\*Behind everything else in created reality: the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father (John 3:35, 8:29, 14:31, 17:24, Matt. 3:17, 17:5). This is ultimate.

“Now in the confession of the Trinity we hear the heartbeat of the Christian religion: every error results from, or upon deeper reflection is traceable to, a departure in the doctrine of the Trinity.” (**Herman Bavinck**, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 288)

“Apart from the Trinity even the act of creation becomes inconceivable. For if God cannot communicate himself, he is a darkened light, a dry spring, unable to exert himself outward to communicate himself to creatures.” (**Herman Bavinck**, *Reformed Dogmatics*, pp. 308-09)

“A Christian’s confession is not an island in the ocean but a high mountaintop from which the whole creation can be surveyed. And it is the task of Christian theologians to present clearly the connectedness of God’s revelations with, and its significance for, all of life. The Christian mind remains unsatisfied until all of existence is referred back to the triune God, and until the confession of God’s Trinity functions as the center of our thought and life...If God is indeed triune, this has to be supremely important, for all things, according to the apostle, are from him and through him and to him (Rom. 11:36).” (**Herman Bavinck**, *Reformed Dogmatics*, pp. 330-31)

## **DIAGRAM**

“...so does the holiness of God consist in His love, 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, and between God and the creature, and between the creatures among themselves...that Divine Spirit, which we have shown to be God the Father’s and the Son’s infinite love and joy in each other.” (“**Treatise on Grace**”)

### **\*LUKE 10:21-22 & MATTHEW 3:16-17: Trinitarian Dynamics**

“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, un-originated and most absolute manner, or the Deity in its direct existence. The Son is the Deity generated [begotten] by God’s understanding, or having an idea of Himself and subsisting in that idea. The Holy Spirit is the Deity subsisting in act, or the Divine essence 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 [image] and Divine love, and that each of them are properly distinct Persons.” (“**Essay on the Trinity**”)

### **\*The Bitter Accusation Against Edwards’ Glory-Seeking God**

“The great wrong which Edwards did, which haunts us as an evil dream throughout his writings, was to assert God at the expense of humanity.” (**Alexander Allen**, cited in Michael McClymond, *Encounters With God*, p. 62)

“God’s self-love is not the self-love of some arbitrary deity, but of the Triune God of the Christian gospel. It is a love of eternal mutual self-giving, not of selfish solipsism. Once again, the doctrine of the Trinity is central to understanding Edwards’ logic—and it is invoked explicitly this time. Selfishness cannot be an issue with this doctrine in place.”  
**(Stephen Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory*, p. 61)**

“...the vision of Trinitarian overflow...[is] basic to Edwards’ concept of God’s self-glorification.” **(Stephen Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory*, p. 149)**

“The infinite love which there is from everlasting between the Father and the Son is the highest excellency and peculiar *glory* of the Deity. God saw it *therefore* meet that there should be some bright and glorious manifestation made of [it] to the creatures...”  
**(Jonathan Edwards, Miscellany 327)**

## **4.) CREATION**

“According to Edwards, when God created the universe and began the process of glorifying Himself through the redemption of the elect, He did not disregard the shape of His inner-trinitarian glory. Rather, God had in mind to bring glory to Himself in creation and redemption in a way that would reflect His inner-trinitarian life...The entire plan of creation and redemption, from the widest possible angle, is actually a created reflection of God’s infinite inner-trinitarian glory.” **(Robert Caldwell, “The Holy Spirit as the Bond of Union in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards,” *Reformation and Revival* 12.3 (Summer 2003): 43-58)**

**\*Problem: Scripture rarely, if ever, comes out and explicitly says (or explains) what God’s purpose in originally creating the world was!**

“Purpose is something which is hidden in the mind of the person whose purpose it is until one or other of two things happens. Either the purpose is carried out so that everyone can see what was originally an idea in the mind of the one whose purpose it was, or that person must tell others what his purpose is. There is no third possibility. If we are considering the cosmos as a whole and the human story within the cosmos, and if we are asking whether there is any purpose which would enable us to understand it, the first option is not available. We shall not be around to observe the final moments of the cosmic story. The only available possibility is the second: that the One whose purpose it is should reveal it. If there is no revelation from God, then speech about the purpose of human life can only be speculation—the kind of speculation which Bacon advised his contemporaries to avoid in order to study facts.” **(Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth*, p. 22-23)**

\***The History of Redemption:** what is God after? (2<sup>nd</sup> section of book, which is an examination of the biblical witness)

\*Frequently repeated “purpose” statements of the divine pursuit, in every stage of redemptive history, in every aspect of God’s reclamation of His fallen creation:

*“That you may know that I am the Lord”*

*“For His glory”*

*“For His own sake” or “For the sake of His name”*

*“For His praise”*

*“For the good of His people”*

*“That I might be your God and you might be My people”*

\***Edwards’ evaluation of the biblical evidence, in light of the Trinity**

“There are many reasons to think that what God has in view [in creation], in an increasing communication of Himself through eternity, is an *increasing* knowledge of God, love to Him, and joy in Him.” (**End of Creation**)

“If, when the world was not, there was any possible future thing fit and valuable in itself [which might move God to create], I think the knowledge of God’s glory, and the esteem and love of it, must be so.” (**End of Creation**)

“The *whole* of God’s *internal* good or glory, is in these three things, viz. His infinite *knowledge*, His infinite virtue or *holiness* [love to Himself], and His infinite joy and happiness...and therefore, the *external* glory of God consists in the *communication* of these...and in these things, *knowing* God’s excellency, *loving* God for it, and *rejoicing* in it, and in the *exercise* and *expression* of these, consists God’s honor and praise; so that these are clearly implied in that glory of God, which consists in the *emanation* of His internal glory.” (**End of Creation**)

“God communicates Himself to the *understanding* of the creature, in giving him the *knowledge* of His glory; and to the *will* of the creature, in giving him *holiness*, consisting primarily in the *love* of God; and in giving the creature *happiness*, chiefly consisting in *joy* in God. These are the sum of that emanation of divine fullness called in Scripture, *the glory of God.*” (**End of Creation**)



\***Goal and Motive:** The *goal* of creation is that God's Trinitarian glory might be extended outside of Himself (objectively), while the *motive* for doing so is the value He places upon His glory (subjectively)

### GOAL

- a.) That there might be an *external manifestation of God's internal glory*.
- b.) That *other beings besides Himself* might know, love, and rejoice in the glory of God.
- c.) That God's infinite fullness or glory might be *communicated or extended outside of Himself, ad extra*.
- d.) That the relational dynamic within the eternal Trinity might be extended outside of God to henceforth exist among those that the Father has given to the Son

### MOTIVE

- a.) God's *disposition or inclination to communicate His own glory and fullness*
- b.) God's *Value* which He places on His glory, or, His *valuing* of His internal fullness and glory

"And God had regard to it [the extension of His glory in creation] in this manner, as He had a supreme regard to Himself, and value for His own infinite, internal glory. It was this value for Himself that caused Him to value and seek that His internal glory should *flow forth* from Himself...It was from His infinite for His internal glory and fullness, that He valued the *thing itself* communicated, which is something of the same, extant in the creature. Thus, because He infinitely values His own glory, consisting in the knowledge of Himself, love to Himself, and complacence [delight] and joy in Himself; He therefore valued the image, communication, or participation of these in the creature. And it is because He values Himself, that He delights in the knowledge, and love, and joy of the creature; as being Himself the object of this knowledge, love, and complacence [delight]." (*End of Creation*)

"In creation, God 'went public' with the glory that reverberates joyfully between the Father and the Son. There is something about the fullness of God's joy that inclines it to overflow. There is an expansive quality to His joy. It wants to share itself. The impulse to create the world was not from

weakness, as though God were lacking in some perfection that creation could supply...God loves to behold His glory reflected in His works. So the eternal happiness of the triune God spilled over in the work of creation and redemption. And since this original happiness was God's delight in His own glory, therefore the happiness that He has in all His works of creation and redemption is nothing other than a delight in His own glory. This is why God has done all things, from creation to consummation, for the preservation and display of His glory. All His works are simply the spillover of His infinite exuberance for His own excellence." (John Piper, *The Pleasures of God*)

## 5.) REDEMPTION

\***ADOPTION Analogy** (*Goal & Motive* of the "extension" of the relationship)

\**The Wedding of the Lamb and the Bride*: Emanation & Remanation—Flowing Out, Returning to the Source

**103. INCARNATION.** Therefore the children of God and the spouse of Christ, is more nearly related and more closely united to God than the angels; for whom God has done more than ever [He has] for the angels, and who in many respects shall be advanced above them in glory, and shall be objects of the dearer love of God. This spouse of the Son of God, the bride, the Lamb's wife, the completeness of Him who filleth all in all, is that for which all the universe was made. Heaven and earth were created that the Son of God might be complete in a spouse, on whom the barons and nobles of the court of heaven shall esteem it their honor to attend.

**571. HEAVEN. WISDOM AND GLORIOUSNESS OF THE WORK OF REDEMPTION.** ...the church's being so often called the spouse of Christ, intimates an admittance to the greatest nearness, intimacy and communion of good...they shall partake with Him in His riches, as co-heirs in His pleasures...When the church is received to glory, that is her marriage to Christ; and therefore doubtless the conversation and enjoyment will be more intimate...The saints beings united to Christ, shall have a more glorious union with and enjoyment of the Father, than otherwise could be, for hereby their relation becomes much nearer...they are partakers of His relation to the Father, or of His sonship. Being members of the Son, they are partakers of the Father's love to the Son and His complacence in Him. John 17:23,26; 16:27...So they are in their measure partakers of the Son's enjoyment of His Father: they have His joy fulfilled in themselves, and by this means they come to a more familiar and intimate conversing with God the Father, than otherwise ever would have been. For there is doubtless an infinite intimacy between the Father and the Son; and the saints being in Him shall partake with Him in it, and of the blessedness of it. Such is the contrivance of our redemption, that thereby we are brought to an immensely more

glorious and exalted kind of union with God and enjoyment of Him, both the Father and the Son, than otherwise could have been...John 17:21-23, Christ has brought it to pass, that those that the Father has given Him should be brought into the household of God, that He and His Father and they should be as it were one society, one family; that His people should be in a sort admitted into that society of the three persons of the Godhead. In this family or household, God [is] the Father, Jesus Christ is His own natural and eternally begotten Son. The saints, they also are children in the family; the church is the daughter of God, being the spouse of His Son. They all have communion in the same Spirit, the Holy Ghost.

**702. WORK OF CREATION. PROVIDENCE. REDEMPTION.** The end of the creation of God was to provide a spouse for His Son Jesus Christ that might enjoy Him and on whom He might pour forth His love. And the end of all things in providence are to make way for the exceeding expressions of Christ's love to His spouse and for her exceeding close and intimate union with, and high and glorious enjoyment of, Him and to bring this to pass. And therefore the last thing and the issue of all things is the marriage of the Lamb. And the wedding day is the last day, the day of judgment, or rather that will be the beginning of it. The wedding feast will be eternal; and the love and joys, the songs, entertainments and glories of the wedding never will be ended. It will be an everlasting wedding day.

**\*The Conclusion:**

“The emanation or communication of the divine fullness, consisting in the knowledge of God, love to Him, and joy in Him, has relation indeed both to *God* and the *creature*; but it has relation to God as its *fountain*, as the thing communicated is something of its internal fullness. The water in the stream is something of the fountain; and the beams of the sun are something of the sun. And again, they have relation to God as their *object*: for the knowledge communicated, is the knowledge of God; and the love communicated, is the love of God; and the happiness communicated, is joy in God. In the creature's knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both *exhibited* and *acknowledged*; His fullness is *received* and *returned*. Here is both an *emanation* and *remanation*. The refulgence shines upon and into the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. The beams of glory come from God, are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole is *of God*, and *in God*, and *to God*; and He is the beginning, and the middle, and the end.” (***The End of Creation***)

"The whole purpose for which we exist is to be thus taken up into the life of God." (**C. S. Lewis**, *Mere Christianity*, p. 161)

"God's first purpose is to share His own life, and so His fullness overflows to creatures that they may be drawn in to the eternal life of God." (**Stephen Holmes**, *God of Grace and God of Glory*, p. 58)

"The ultimate reason God creates, said Edwards, is not to remedy some lack in God, but to extend that perfect internal communication of the triune God's goodness and love. It is an extension of the glory of a perfectly good and loving being to communicate that love to other intelligent beings." (**George Marsden**, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, p. 462)

"...for Edwards God's intention to create is patterned off and is in some sense an extension of his own trinitarian fullness." (**Robert W. Caldwell**, *Communion in the Spirit*, p. 59)

"God's ultimate purpose is to increase ["extend" would be better] his joy by sharing the blessing of the Trinity in creation." (**Daniel Fuller**, *Unity of the Bible*, p. 136)

"The source and *raison d'être* for the creation and redemption of humanity are the eternal love and harmony of the Godhead, and the ultimate goal of the work of redemption is the saints' joyful participation in the overflowing harmony of the divine life." (**Amy Plantinga Pauw**, *The Supreme Harmony of All*, p. 6)

"In Edwards' favorite image, Christ is the bridegroom who is bringing his bride, the church, into a creature's fullest possible experience of trinitarian love." (**George Marsden**, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, p. 488)

"...the enlargement of the fellowship of the trinitarian family..." (**Amy Plantinga Pauw**, *The Supreme Harmony of All*, p. 130)

"...the extension and enlargement of that glorious union..." (**Amy Plantinga Pauw**, *The Supreme Harmony of All*, p. 141)

"God's triune decision to create and redeem humanity therefore expresses the love and mutuality that already exist between the persons of the Trinity so that we are incorporated into the triune society." (**William Danaher**, *Trinitarian Ethics*, p. 211)

**\*JOHN 17!!**