

Drawn by Beauty: Jonathan Edwards and the Vision of God

Blacksburg Christian Fellowship

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1. Edwards and the angry God
 - a. Harriet Beecher Stowe
 - b. Mark Twain
 - c. "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"
 - d. Edwards was obsessed by God's beauty not wrath
 - e. Yale University Press's *Works of Jonathan Edwards* (26 volumes)
 - f. *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience* (3 vols)
 - g. America's greatest theologian
2. Edwards and the beauty of God
 - a. The essence of true religious experience is to be overwhelmed by a glimpse of the beauty of God, to be drawn to the glory of his perfections, and to sense his irresistible love.
 - i. Seeing the beauty of holiness.
 1. The devil and the damned see the holiness of God, but they do not see the beauty of that holiness.
 - a. Just as many see, but do not see the beauty of the world
 - i. Helen Keller
 - ii. A sixth sense: a sense of the beauty, glory and love of God.
 - iii. This is what has made Edwards so attractive
 1. "All created reality is like a quintessential explosion of light from the sun of God's intertrinitarian love."
 2. The world is full of beauty because beauty and light constitute the essence of its Creator.
 - a. **God is the foundation and fountain of all being and all beauty, from whom all is perfectly derived, and on whom all is most absolutely and perfectly dependent; of whom and through whom and to whom is all being and all perfection; and whose being and beauty is as it were the sum and comprehension of all existence and excellence: much more than the sun is the fountain and summary comprehension of all the light and brightness of the day.**
 - b. **All the beauty to be found throughout the whole creation, is but the reflection of the diffused beams of the Being who hath an infinite fullness of brightness and glory**
 3. All earthly beauty flows from this Trinitarian beauty

3. What beauty meant for Edwards.
 - a. Beauty is consent to being in general
 - i. Each part of the creation saying Yes to the Whole
 - ii. Even the inanimate creation
 - iii. Proportion
 1. Harmony among things that are different
 - a. The harmony is a pattern that is pleasing
 - b. Not only symmetrical harmonies as in a French garden at the Versailles
 - c. But also unsymmetrical harmony such as a Japanese garden
 2. This involved astounding combinations.
 - a. Combined divine infinity w/ care for finite humanity.
 - i. Infin grtness w/ infin care.
 - ii. Infin justice and infin mercy
 - iii. Infin majesty and incredible meekness
 - iv. The most beautiful pattern of all and therefore the pattern of all consent and harmony is God's loving consent among the Three Persons
 1. Each Person's loving consent to the glory and will of the other two persons, and then to the Trinity's design for the creation.
 2. This involved astounding combinations.
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4. A new view of God.
 - a. He does not drive us by duty, but draws us by beauty.
 - i. Not by fear but irresistible attraction.
 - ii. Like the most beautiful music and works of art
5. This has implications for
 - a. Conversion
 - b. Grace
 - c. Community
 - d. Justice
 - e. Cultural engagement
6. What is it finally about God that makes God God?
 - i. **God is God, and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above 'em, chiefly by his divine beauty, which is infinitely diverse from all other beauty.**
 - ii. **This is the beauty of the Godhead, and the divinity of the Divinity (if I may so speak), the good of the infinite Fountain of Good; without which God himself (if that were possible to be) would be an infinite evil**
- b. Its implication for life generally?
 - i. Sang Lee: "To know and love God, therefore, is to know and love the beauty of God, and to know the ultimate nature of the world is to know and love the world as an image of God's beauty."