

THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN NATURE IN NEW ENGLAND

1687-1787

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by

Jerry D. Weber

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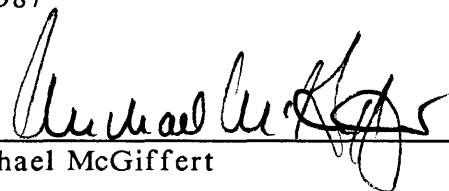
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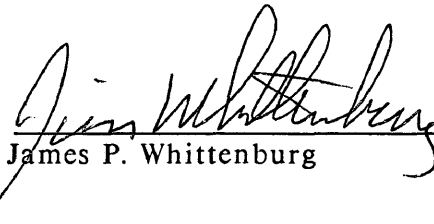
Master of Arts

  
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ABSTRACT

Between 1680 and 1720 New England divines predominantly described human nature from an avowedly theocentric stance. After 1720 some divines began to describe human nature from an anthropocentric position. Samuel Willard, John Wise, Jonathan Edwards, Jonathan Mayhew, and Charles Chauncy are the subjects of this investigation of the changing nature of the theological anthropology in Puritan New England from 1687 to 1787.

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THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY IN VIRGINIA

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## Introduction

The subject under investigation is New England Puritan concepts of human nature from 1687, the year Samuel Willard began his sermons on the Westminster Assembly's ShorterCatechism, to 1787, the year Charles Chauncy died. Five divines--Samuel Willard, John Wise, Jonathan Edwards, Jonathan Mayhew, and Charles Chauncy--have been chosen to illustrate this aspect of New England's thought. Each of these men represents an episode in the history of the concept of human nature, and each provides a contrast with the others.

Samuel Willard, an orthodox Puritan of the seventeenth century, expounded a theocentric theological anthropology affirming a concept of human nature as wholly depraved. This view was opposed by John Wise, who was influenced by the emerging natural rights theory in the early eighteenth century. The champion of orthodox Puritanism in the mid-eighteenth century was Jonathan Edwards. Edwards's concept of human nature, theocentric in foundation, emphasized the depravity of humanity as well as the natural abilities of humankind. The anthropology of Edwards stands in contrast to the anthropologies of his contemporaries, Jonathan Mayhew and Charles Chauncy. Like Wise, Mayhew and Chauncy propounded an anthropocentric theological anthropology.

The main purpose of this essay is to explicate the different concepts of human nature in Puritan New England. Between 1680 and 1720 New England divines predominantly described human nature from an avowed

theocentric stance. After 1720 some divines began to describe human nature from an anthropocentric position.<sup>1</sup> The concepts of human nature espoused by Willard, Wise, Edwards, Mayhew, and Chauncy support a thesis of change. Like the economic, political, intellectual, and social worlds, the theological world and, in turn, ideas about human nature were changing. The objective of this essay will be to document the thesis of change and explain the substance of the theological anthropology of New England.

The essay presupposes that opposites exist in any era. The opposites of this period are the theocentric and anthropocentric anthropologies of five Puritan divines. One manner of describing these opposites through history would be to discuss them in terms of trends. This study treats these opposites, however, as episodes, with each Puritan divine a historical individual who expressed differing relations of the opposites at their moment in history.<sup>2</sup> The present study is not so much concerned with overarching trends as it is concerned with developments and the generation of an empirically oriented history that adds depth to the existing body of knowledge about human nature in American thought.

## I

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<sup>1</sup> Merle Curti, Human Nature in American Thought (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> For examples of this period discussed in terms of trends see Perry Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1939); idem, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1959); Joseph Haroutunian, Piety Versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology (New York: Holt & Co., 1932).

The Puritan theological world in seventeenth-century New England rested upon three pillars: the doctrines of original sin, human depravity, and irresistible grace.<sup>3</sup> Descriptions of human nature by Puritans reflect these three points. The predecessors of Willard, Wise, Edwards, Mayhew, and Chauncy, preachers such as John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, John Norton, and Thomas Shepard, described humanity as evil and sinful. Humans in their eyes were helpless and de-praved; were it not for a merciful God who made a covenant of grace and salvation to the elect, they would suffer in hell forever.<sup>4</sup>

The innate depravity of humankind is a basic theme that runs throughout Puritan reflections on human nature. The Puritans in New England, however, made two types of statements about the depravity of the human condition: one was theological, the other psychological. Theologically, the Puritans emphasized the fact that humans are "corrupt, evil, and impotent," yet psychologically, they "made the most of what remained of the divine image and built as much as possible upon the innate law of nature or the inborn light of reason."<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, they stressed the inherently evil aspects of humanity, while on the other they highlighted what good remained.

New England divines considered a human being "a whole creature imbued with understanding, with a reasonable appetite, with affections capable of divine objects, with apprehension and aspirations suitable" to its nature, "being able to compare, connect, discourse, deduct, to remember,

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<sup>3</sup> Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Curti, Human Nature, pp. 45-46.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 256, 402.

and perform other noble parts and actions."<sup>6</sup> They characterized humans as rational, although divine wisdom transcended the power of reason. They believed that knowledge was accumulated through the mind's apprehension of God's world. External objects were judged by an innate will that could distinguish between good and evil.<sup>7</sup> The mind, however, became corrupt as a result of the fall of Adam. Therefore, reason, they stressed, was a treacherous guide.<sup>8</sup>

In sum, theologically the Puritan forbears declared that humans were corrupt, evil, and impotent, while through their faculty psychology they described how the mind's will and reason were out of balance in unregenerate human beings.<sup>9</sup>

During the course of the eighteenth century Willard, Wise, Edwards, Mayhew, and Chauncy struggled with these two distinct elements of their inherited anthropology--the theological and the psychological. Each of these divines would make choices about which part of their tradition they would emphasize. In some instances they infused new elements into their thought about human nature. The story that unfolded in the eighteenth century reflected the uneasy synthesis that explains seventeenth-century New England Puritan concepts of human nature.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

Two Stars of the First Magnitude:  
Samuel Willard and John Wise

Samuel Willard's and John Wise's views of human nature were products of their Puritan heritage. Willard, born January 31, 1639, twelve years before Wise, wrote and preached in terms that would have been familiar to his forebears. John Wise, on the other hand, wrote in a manner more akin to the eighteenth century than the seventeenth. Each of these ministers commented on human nature in his writings. Willard's A Compleat Body of Divinity (1726) and Wise's A Vindication of The Government of New England Churches (1717) reveal their Puritan derivation.

Willard, orthodox in theology but liberal in the practice of religion, undertook the most comprehensive attempt to formulate a catechism of American Puritanism. With A Compleat Body of Divinity, a collection of sermons published in 1726, nineteen years after his death, Willard continued the rational strain of Puritan thought in his use of the categories of faculty psychology. By incorporating the faculty psychology Willard's "summa theologica" disclosed close ties to an intellectual heritage that demonstrated humanity's rational capacities and a tradition of piety.<sup>1</sup>

A Compleat Body of Divinity, consisting of 914 folio pages, is "immense,

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<sup>1</sup> J. Rodney Fulcher, "Puritans and Their Passions: The Faculty Psychology In American Puritanism," Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences 9 (April 1973): 136-137.

orderly, systematic, and detailed."<sup>2</sup> The foundation from which Willard constructed these sermons, delivered once a month on Tuesday afternoons from 1687 to 1707, was the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism. Written in dialogue form, the thirty-three chapters of sermons present the central tenets of Puritan theology from a Calvinistic viewpoint. Willard stresses the Reformed doctrines of scriptural authority, the absolute sovereignty of God, human dependence, predestination, and salvation by faith.<sup>3</sup> Willard argues, on the one hand, within the framework of the covenant theology of New England for the external operations of the Spirit, the "effectual calling." On the other hand, he explains the internal operations of the Spirit by means of the faculty psychology.<sup>4</sup>

Knowledge, for Willard as for earlier Puritans, is a "relationship that joins together the knowing mind and the external world." As Ernest Lowrie explains Willard's "light of nature," it is "grounded in God, visible through the rational pattern of the given order of the universe," and capable of comprehension by the finite intelligence of humans.<sup>5</sup> Reason is not understanding self-evident propositions, but is a "curious inquiry," a collection by the mind through "observation and Experience."<sup>6</sup> As it was

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel Willard, A Compleat Body of Divinity, foreword by Edward M. Griffin (1726; reprint, New York & London: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1969), p. v.

<sup>3</sup> Fulcher, "Puritans and Their Passions," p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>5</sup> Ernest B. Lowrie, The Shape of the Puritan Mind: The Thought of Samuel Willard (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 428.

for his forebears, so to for Willard, the mind's power of internal reasoning was a poor guide. In Perry Miller's words, Samuel Willard's mind was "completely enclosed in the traditional rhetoric and logic."<sup>7</sup>

John Wise's mind and writings developed out of the course of Puritan thought but had different emphases; at numerous points he exceeded the bounds of traditional covenant theology. Wise defends the church constitution of his elders, the Cambridge Platform of 1648, but he does so in an unconventional manner. Instead of relying on the Word of God alone, Wise appeals for ecclesiastical democracy by citing the Puritan concept of history, New England's provincial experience, and taking Samuel Pufendorf as his "Chief Guide and Spokesman."<sup>8</sup> Thus John Wise introduces the natural rights theory of continental Europe to New England Puritanism. Perry Miller describes Wise's "shift" from defender of congregationalism "to the champion of laws of reason and nature and to the character of the social compact" as "no violent break in the course of New England thought."<sup>9</sup> John Wise and Samuel Willard are representative figures of New England thought in their theology and concepts of human nature.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 421.

<sup>8</sup> John Wise, A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches (1717; reprint, Gainesville, Florida: Scholar's Facsimile & Reprint, 1958), p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> Perry Miller, Errand Into the Wilderness (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 98.

In A Compleat Body of Divinity Samuel Willard defines the nature of a creature as "those powers and principles which are put into it, whereby it is rendered capable of acting in its own orb." The nature of a reasonable creature, a human being, "is that power which it had given it to act as a moral agent under a rule," an agent endowed with an "ability of knowing, and electing, or chusing and refusing." The actions of the creature are those things that are accomplished by the "exertion of that nature or principle which is in it; or whatsoever it doth under the influence of its reason and will."<sup>10</sup> The further description of human nature that Willard presents revolves around his fundamental theological beliefs in the fall of Adam, and original sin. Therefore much of what Willard ascribes to the nature of humans either supports these beliefs by describing the unregenerate state of humans or is an explication of regenerate Christians who have felt the stirrings of grace.

Concentrating on unregenerate humanity, Willard bases his depiction of humankind on secondary theological beliefs that interlock with his primary theological tenets. God, the creator of all things, made all things for an end, is wise, and "therefore would not make anything in vain." Accordingly, God created humans with a nature suited to their end.<sup>11</sup> The end for which the human being is created is "to Glorify God, and Enjoy him for ever." Humans, being distinct from other creatures, were "made capable of Happiness: which no other inferior creature can attain unto." Happiness consists only in following one's "Chief End." To follow their end and glorify God, humans must seek to live according to God's will, thus

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<sup>10</sup> Willard, Body of Divinity, p. 209.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

making themselves dependent beings. A "Dependent Being" means that one's felicity is not from oneself--God alone is the "Adequate Object for Felicity."<sup>12</sup> This "Quest for Happiness" is a principle that is so much a part of human nature "that all The Mischief which the Fall hath done" cannot deprive humans of this pursuit.<sup>13</sup> The fall of Adam made humankind "Miserable," but it did not sever the "possibility of being restored to Felicity." Unregenerate humans, then, are "not only not Happy, but extremely Miserable," for they are "under a Necessity of going abroad" to seek happiness.<sup>14</sup>

The mischief of the Fall and original sin did not deny this "Quest for Happiness," but it did make humans "truly and woefully Miserable and Wretched." Adam's sin removed humankind from "that Nearness" to happiness; they became "separated" from their end; they have "fallen short of the Glory of God, (Rom. 3:23) and [are] removed from the Enjoyment of Him (Isai. 59:2)." As a result of the loss of their "Blessedness" Willard declares humankind "wretched";<sup>15</sup> humans "fell from Life into a state of Death." Humans are born "actually miserable"; the recovery from wretchedness "is an act of God's sovereign Pleasure." Here again Willard shows the necessity of human reliance upon God. Any reconciliation "derives from hence and hath its dependence on God."<sup>16</sup> After this brief

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 2, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

outline of his concept of human nature, Willard describes human nature in more detail but never outside of this theological context.

An additional component of Willard's theological context is the "Goodness of God" which is available to all human beings. The Goodness of the Lord "hath fallen on sinful Man for its subject, and is therefore in a more restrained sense called the Mercy of God." God's mercy or Common Goodness is defined as "God willing to succor sinful Man in their Misery." God's mercy is displayed to all, "both good and bad,"<sup>17</sup> and is free as well. God's grace, however, is extended to only a few, the predestined. God's grace, along with original sin, the fall of Adam, and subsequent misery of humankind, completes a sketch of Willard's theology.

From his theological context Willard describes the "Special Nature" of humans. God created humans but unlike other living creatures God made them "Reasonable Living Creature[s]." Human beings were given a "Special Nature," whereby "as the head of the Lower World" they were "to direct" themselves "and improve the other beings, to the Glory of . . . , their creator." God, creating humans last of all the creatures, endowed them with the powers of reason "because otherwise [God] would not have been a suitable ruler." Human dominion over the other living creatures "requires Wisdom and Discretion." With the ability to reason, humans are "capable of guiding them [the other animals] according to the Rules of right Reason."<sup>18</sup> The "Rules of right Reason" will suffice in the temporal world, but reason is an unsafe guide in the spiritual world.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 81, 87.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 122, 128.

Accordingly, Willard describes human nature as divided into a body and a soul, a motive life and a life of sense.<sup>19</sup> Because of the soul's "Desire after Immortality" human beings seek eternal life. The soul is endowed with something else as well--the "Facilities of Understanding and Will."<sup>20</sup> The human creature was made "a Moral Agent, a Cause by Counsel," and because God gave humans a reasoning ability, they "therefore must have a Moral Goodness." This moral goodness "was an Imprinted Goodness or Rectitude" that remains even in fallen humanity. Willard concludes that "it was then a Stamp and Character of Divine Goodness left upon" human nature.<sup>21</sup> Unfallen humanity could understand and comprehend "all the Intellectual virtues fitting" their ability "to discern, approve of, and regulate" themselves in "doing the Will of God." Spiritually they could discern "all that was needful" of their happiness.<sup>22</sup> Reason and the will worked together. After the Fall, however, humans lost this discernment and the two fell out of balance. As a result, reason, which had lost its moral goodness, became an unreliable guide for the soul.

At the time of creation God implanted in humans a law of "Gubernation" along with moral goodness. This natural law is given to all of God's creatures, for "God directs and leads the Creatures in the Right Way," to the attainment of their end. Willard notes, "there is an Ordering in the World," a great chain of being where "all the Actions of all Beings" are

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 119, 123.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

designed by God to serve to some end.<sup>23</sup> In a subsequent sermon Willard describes an "Order of Superiority" in which children should obey their parents, a wife her husband, and a servant its master.<sup>24</sup> Willard summarizes that "all the Natural Actions of all these Creatures are guided by Some rule of Government."<sup>25</sup>

The rule of government in all creatures becomes the "Law of Nature," and is "nothing else but the Impression of God upon the Creature's Nature." It is "an inclination or promptitude natural in the Creature" to act in accordance with this law. In other words, it is a "natural Instinct" that is "endowed with sense." Because of this the creature is "instigated to put forth noble Acts." This "Law of Nature" in its ultimate form becomes an "Obedient Power" wherein the creature is subject to a "passive Obedience to the will of the Creator" that entails a "sovereign Pre-determination" of all the creature's actions.<sup>26</sup>

For the "Reasonable Creature" there is a special government called the "Moral Law." Humans, being the reasonable creatures of God's creation, are "capable of chusing their own Actions"; they can "act upon Deliberation, and either Elect or Reject." To guide their choosing God provides humans with a moral rule. The "Moral Law," as Willard defines it, is a "Divine Unchangeable Rule" given to all humankind in accordance with their nature, as created by God, that obliges them "to serve to God's Glory" and attain

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 142-145.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 608.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

their "Last End."<sup>27</sup> Without this law, the moral actions of humans, "which are only truly and properly Humane, would be under no Government, and hence they would serve no End." Willard further explains that this law "is therefore usually called by Divines, the Law of Nature; not in a larger sense respecting the Whole Nature of the Creature, but refrained, relative to" human nature.<sup>28</sup>

In their natural estate human beings "abide under the law as a Covenant" and as a "Rule." If they adhere to the terms of the Covenant "they shall live, if otherwise they shall die."<sup>29</sup> God gave this law to Adam and meant it to be "perpetual." As a result of the Fall, however, humans "lost the Sense" of the "Moral Law". A "New edition appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai, the Ten Commandments."<sup>30</sup> Whatever its form, though, the "Moral Law" is a "Special Government" for "Reasonable Creatures," which guides them to "a state of Happiness or Misery, according to the Tenour of the Moral Law."<sup>31</sup>

Willard certainly believed that humans had fallen from their primitive estate by sinning against God; they fell "from the Rule of God's Government into Misery," but did not fall from their "Obligation of Obedience." The "proper Fall" of humankind was from the "Rule of Life into Misery,"<sup>32</sup> and since the covenant of works was made with Adam, "not

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 149, 565-568.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 567-568.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 156-157.

only for himself, but for his Posterity," all of his descendants "by ordinary generation sinned in him, and fell with him in his First Transgression."<sup>33</sup>

The misery into which humankind fell is one of "lost Communion with God."<sup>34</sup> By virtue of original sin their estate became sinful. In a complete explanation, Willard, echoing the Westminster Shorter Catechism, states that the estate whereunto humans fell, "consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it." In effect, humans are "born into the world under guilt."<sup>35</sup>

The world they are born into is a world of sin. Sin is the "common disease" of humankind, which "the whole race is fallen into" (Rom. 5:12). When Adam committed the original sin he forfeited for himself and his posterity "all claim to any Goodness, and could expect nothing at God's hands." The only thing that he and humankind could expect was that God's "revenging Justice would fall upon them and cut them off." Adam's sin put humanity "under the Curse of Death, which contains in it a loss of all good and a suffering of every evil." Furthermore, it "brought him into a low Condition, cast him into a dungeon of distress, a pit of misery, he was laid by the Curse as low as Hell itself." Through the offering of grace, however, certain of God's creatures could be drawn "out of this Pit" and delivered "from the Lowest Hell."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 81, 88.

Original sin consisted of humans losing sight of their end. At their creation humans were "appointed to serve to the Glory of God, by an active conformity to the Law of Obedience." The moral rectitude of humans depended upon God and humanity abiding unto the law of God. Since humans, being moral agents, had moral powers, an inclination to follow the moral law, and the ability to do so, their "nature was set right; and this was truly" their "righteous-ness and holiness which is therefore said to be renewed in conversion."<sup>37</sup> In natural, fallen, or unregenerate humans, there is a lack of moral rectitude, and by the "contracting of the contrary habit" human nature "is swerved from the Law." Properly called, the swerving of reason from its rule is original sin. Original sin consists of "the loss of original righteousness, or the image of God," and the "corruption of the whole nature by the introduction of a contrary image."<sup>38</sup>

In order to explain the image of God, Willard makes a distinction between the natural and moral attributes of humans. Their natural attributes are the rational powers of understanding and willing. With the moral attributes he makes a further distinction between internal and external moral attributes. An external moral attribute is dominion over creatures. Internal moral attributes are the habits of grace or holiness infused by God. The habits of grace or holiness, "belonged" to the human nature "at first."<sup>39</sup> Willard asks, is this image of God natural or supernatural? His response is that it is "connatural:" the image of God would not belong to

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

human nature, "merely considered as humanity," for if it did it would mean that humans would "cease" to be humans "upon the loss of it."<sup>40</sup>

Through original sin humanity lost the image of God and by so doing "hath contracted" certain characteristics. The first of these is "an utter impotency to do that which is truly good." A human "not only doth not do it, which belongs to actual sin," but "cannot do" good. At one time, before the Fall, humans could do good, but now all their strength is gone.<sup>41</sup> Willard's second description of humanity after the loss of God's image portrays the creature as having "an universal indisposition to that which is good." In essence humans have lost their desire to serve God's "Chief End." As a result, the whole of the human nature is corrupt. Instead of having the image of God in their nature, humanity has the image of sin, and from this arises "an utter averseness to that which is spiritually good" and "a violent propenseness to evil."<sup>42</sup>

Willard poses the question "What is man?" His response is the following:

he is a creature utterly void of all goodness, and a seminary of all manner of abominations. There are not the vilest actions of the worst sinners, who have been monsters of men, whose actions stand as so many blots Scripture register, but there are seeds of them all in the head of every child of Adam. There is not the least part of any theological good left in any of his posterity, by nature. There is a concatenation of all sins in the spawn of them within, a whole old man, That hath every lust, as so many members, belonging to it; this is man: think of it and be proud if you can.<sup>43</sup>

These are harsh words, but they follow faithfully the Calvinistic tradition of Willard's Puritan heritage.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

Willard's description of the natural estate of humanity is exhaustive and portrays one aspect of the Puritan concept of human nature. Another facet of the Puritan concept of human nature emerged from the pen of John Wise. Willard's thought was orthodox Puritanism in its content and expression. John Wise, however, rejected the orthodox doctrine of the depravity of human nature in favor of a concept of human nature based on the natural law theory of Samuel Pufendorf.

In defending the congregational form of church polity, Wise begins A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches by stating his purpose: "I shall consider man in a state of natural being, as a free-born subject under the crown of heaven, and owing homage to none but God himself." He continues, "I shall more distinctly explain the state of human nature in its original capacity," for humans are put on earth by God, and blessed with "many investitures, and immunities which properly belong" to humankind.<sup>44</sup>

The fundamental characteristic, or "the prime immunity," that Wise notes in the natural state of humanity is that humans are "most properly the subject of the law of nature." Human beings are "the favourite animal on earth; in that this part of God's image, viz. reason is cogenate with [this] nature." Through this immutable law of reason and its being a part of the human nature "God has provided a rule" for human beings "in all their actions" that obliges each to do that which is right, "not merely as to justice, but likewise as to all other moral virtues," which is "nothing but the dictate of right reason founded in the soul of man."<sup>45</sup> Immediately a

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<sup>44</sup> John Wise, A Vindication, p. 33.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

distinction can be made between Willard and Wise in the emphasis that each places on reason. The orthodox content of Willard's beliefs would not allow him to put as much trust in reason as Wise did.

The law of nature that humans are subject to is a product of their reason. As Wise defines the law of nature, it is "that which is to be drawn from [human] reason, flowing from the true current of that faculty, when unperverted, may be said to be the law of nature, on which account, the Holy Scriptures declare it written" on the hearts of humanity.<sup>46</sup> Wise qualifies this definition by saying that

when we acknowledge the law of nature to be the dictate of Right Reason, we must mean that the Understanding of Man is Endowed with such a power, as to be able, from the contemplation of human Condition to discover a necessity of living agreeable with this law.<sup>47</sup>

Wise grounds this in Scripture, "for being endowed with a soul, you may know from yourself, how, and what you ought to act (Rom. 2:14)." All of this leads Wise to declare that the nature of humanity is inherently good and reasonable. He states that although "a principle of self-love and self-preservation is very predominant" in every human being, they are "also possessed of a sociable disposition and an affection to live to mankind in general."<sup>48</sup> With respect to human nature, John Wise has removed his thinking from the rigid orthodoxy of his elders.<sup>49</sup>

Reason is further emphasized when Wise states that "Reason" and "Revelation" are "equally" emanations of God's Wisdom in "hanging out so

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 30-31.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 30-31.

<sup>49</sup> Clinton L. Rossiter, Seedtime of the Republic: The Origin of the American Tradition of Political Liberty (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953), p. 215.

many Lights to guide [humans] through a dark World." Wise goes further and allows reason to replace revelation--"the light of Reason as a Law and Rule of Right is an Effect of Christ's goodness, care and creating Power, as well as of Revelation; though Revelation in Nature's Law in a fairer and brighter Edition."<sup>50</sup> In "Nature's Law" reason is a better guide than revelation. Samuel Willard and the Puritan elders could not allow reason to supersede divine revelation. To them reason was a fallible guide. Wise in a bold stroke did the unthinkable--he stated that "Natural Reason is to be accounted, *Jure Divino*, in matters of Religion."<sup>51</sup> Wise completely reversed the emphasis of Puritan thought from revelation to reason in *A Vindication*.

Wise notes a "second great immunity" of humanity, "an original liberty" stamped upon their rational nature. He explains further that he "shall wave the consideration of" humanity's moral turpitude" and instead view them "physically as a creature" of God's creation that has been given many "ennobling immunities." These immunities render the human being "the most august animal in the world," and despite the fall of Adam, the human "remains at the upper-end of nature, and as such is a creature of a very noble character."<sup>52</sup> In contrast to Willard, Wise's characterization of human nature focuses on the positive aspects, not the disparaging ones of an impudent and evil creature.

The introduction of "an original liberty" by Wise is generally attributed to the fact that Wise chose Samuel Pufendorf as his "Chief Guide and Spokesman." Pufendorf's work *De Jure Nature et Gentium*, first published

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<sup>50</sup> Wise, *A Vindication*, pp. 30-32.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 37.

in Latin in 1672, had been printed in English in 1703 and again in 1710. It is possible that Wise read the original Latin, but it is assumed by most scholars, since many of Wise's phrases are adaptations of the 1710 version, that he studied Pufendorf after 1710.<sup>53</sup> Following Pufendorf's natural law theory, Wise states that the "third capital immunity" which belongs to the human nature is an "equality amongst" themselves.<sup>54</sup> In subsequent paragraphs Wise combines "an original liberty" with an "equality amongst" themselves to prove the fundamental goodness of humankind.

The term Wise introduces to show human goodness is "Sociableness." Beginning with the statement that human beings in their natural state "must be free and at [their] own dispose," Wise further states that they are "impelled to enter into a civil community" and divest themselves of their "natural freedom," and enter into a compact with their fellow human beings. The forming of governments and "yielding" of natural liberty are of necessity "to guard" humans against themselves, there being "none so good to man, as man, and yet none a greater enemy."<sup>55</sup> This reveals Wise's belief in both good and bad motives in humans; if he had stopped here, it would seem that Wise, like Thomas Hobbes in The Leviathan, saw life as "nasty, poor, brutish, and short."

Wise, however, takes Hobbes' conclusion and transforms it into a belief in the goodness of humankind. True, human beings are creatures "desirous" of their "own preservation," they are "exposed to many wants," and yet they still "are unable to secure" their "own safety and maintenance." Despite

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<sup>53</sup> Rossiter, Seedtime of the Republic, p. 213.

<sup>54</sup> Wise, A Vindication, p. 34.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

these factors that point to human self-interest and brutish ignorance of fellow humans, human beings are also "able of returning kindness by the furtherance of mutual good."<sup>56</sup> In a qualifying argument Wise states that human beings are "often found to be malicious, insolent, and easily promoted and as powerful in effecting mischief" as they are "ready in designing it."<sup>57</sup> For such creatures to be preserved "it is necessary" that they "be Sociable."<sup>58</sup> "Sociableness" is the ability of humans to "unite [themselves] to those of [their] own species, and to regulate [themselves] towards them, that they may have no fair reason to harm others but rather incline to promote [another's] interests, and serve [their] rights and concerns."<sup>59</sup> In summary, "Sociableness" is a "fundamental law of nature, that every [human being], to the best of their ability, do maintain a sociableness with others, agreeable with the main end and disposition of human nature in general." The final conclusion for John Wise, in reference to human nature, is that "from the principles of sociableness it follows as a fundamental law of nature" that humans are "not so wedded to [their] own interest but that [they] can make the common good" their goal.<sup>60</sup>

At first glance Wise's "Sociableness" might be mistaken as a divergence from the course of Puritan thought, but in actuality, as Perry Miller observes, it has a correlation with the covenant theology of earlier

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 36-37.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Puritanism.<sup>61</sup> A component of covenant theology was the promoting of certain ends for the good of the faithful; it was a duty commanded by the Law of the Gospel. John Wise's "Sociableness" appropriates this fundamental point, but Wise does so from an angle that incorporates natural law theory, not merely the Law of the Gospel.

Both Samuel Willard and John Wise were true to their Puritan heritage but each in a different way. Willard defended the orthodox doctrines of original sin and human depravity, but he did so in a "systematic exposition" that emphasized the rationalist side of the Puritan tradition.<sup>62</sup> Like earlier Puritan divines, Willard regarded "volitional integrity as essential," yet he never lost sight of the strong tradition of piety within Puritanism or its orthodox doctrines.<sup>63</sup> Willard in this sense foreshadowed the work of men like Charles Chauncy, who also held to the rationalist side of the Puritan tradition, but Willard more than anyone upheld the orthodox Puritan doctrines of his forebears.

John Wise, on the other hand, reached into the future and placed a greater emphasis upon the power of reason, an emphasis that would come to dominate the intellectual world later in the eighteenth century. Merle Curti notes that Wise reflects the transition from Puritanism to the Enlightenment insofar as he incorporates aspects of both.<sup>64</sup> In this sense, then, Wise can be described as the Puritan "off-beam."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Miller, Errand, pp. 97-98.

<sup>62</sup> Fulcher, "Puritans and Their Passions," p. 137.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Merle Curti, Human Nature in American Thought, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), p. 76.

<sup>65</sup> Michael McGiffert, personal interview, April 10, 1984.

In A Compleat Body of Divinity Willard described human nature as wretched. In A Vindication of the Government of the Churches of New England, more than an ecclesiastical tract and much like the political treatises of Revolutionary America, Wise portrayed humanity in the light of reason and declared it essentially good. Though reason had once been looked upon as a treacherous guide, it had gained an endorsement from a Puritan divine, John Wise. Both characterizations of human nature are part of the course of New England thought. In conjunction with each other they mark out the bounds of intellectual discourse about human nature that was to take place in New England after 1720.

"Natural Men in a Dreadful Condition":  
Jonathan Edwards

If John Wise's "Enlightenment" attitudes took Puritanism off course by infusing it with concepts of natural rights, Jonathan Edwards wanted to return New England to its orthodox Puritan foundations.<sup>1</sup> Edwards, colonial America's preeminent philosopher-theologian, not only defended the views of orthodox Puritan theology, but incorporated into his concept of human nature much that was new. He appropriated the emerging science of Isaac Newton and followed the monistic psychology of John Locke. The concept of human nature that Edwards created reflects these influences.

The manner in which Edwards described human nature can be discussed on two levels. On one level stand Edwards's metaphysical views about human nature; on the other are his scriptural beliefs about humanity. Edwards's metaphysical explanations, when coupled with his scriptural beliefs about human nature, are the basis for an anthropology unique in the history of New England Puritanism.

Jonathan Edwards's views about human nature were under-girded by his early scientific and philosophical writings. The sermons he preached in Northampton (1726-1751) reveal the scriptural basis for his accounts of humanity and outline a completely different aspect of Edwards's theological

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<sup>1</sup> See especially Norman Fiering, "Will and Intellect in the New England Mind," William and Mary Quarterly 29 (1972): 551-558; James Hoopes "Jonathan Edwards's Religious Psychology," Journal of American History 69 (1983): 849-865.

anthropology. His published works, Religious Affections, Freedom of the Will, Dissertation on the End in Creation, Nature of True Virtue, and Original Sin, are examples of the melding together of the two strains of thought, the metaphysical and scriptural.<sup>2</sup>

## I

The scientific and philosophic writings, "Of Being," "Of Atoms," and "The Mind," provide the foundation for Edwards's religious psychology. These writings also serve to outline his metaphysical ideas. Wallace Anderson notes that "Of Atoms" is an example of Edwards's "metaphysical materialism"; "Of Being" and "The Mind" are aspects of his "idealistic phenomenalism."<sup>3</sup> In order to comprehend the anthropology Edwards forged it is necessary to understand his epistemological and metaphysical reflections. To discuss Edwards's anthropology without first looking at his metaphysical ideas would be an error, for, as Edwards notes, it is necessary that something exist before it can be discussed. Treating Edwards's ideas about humanity developmentally, one finds that the metaphysical reflections of these works serve as the foundation from which Edwards constructed a more complete concept of human nature.

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<sup>2</sup> The complete titles of these works are as follows: A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, In Three Parts; A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the modern prevailing Notions of the Freedom of the Will, Which is supposed to be essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame; Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God Created the World; Dissertation on the Nature of True Virtue; and The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended. The short titles used in this paragraph will be used elsewhere in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of The Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 53.

Emerging from the scientific and philosophical writings is Jonathan Edwards's idealism.<sup>4</sup> In these works Edwards is beholden to John Locke and the Cambridge Platonists such as Henry More.<sup>5</sup> Like Locke, Edwards distinguished between primary and secondary qualities of bodies. Unlike Locke, however, he did not argue for the reality of primary qualities. The primary qualities--solidity, extension, figure, and motion--became not material existence but merely "resistance," and "resistance," Edwards states, is "nothing but the exertion of God's power."<sup>6</sup> All of what is observed by human beings that gives them the idea of solidity of bodies is resistance. The property of resistance has no substance, yet we know it to exist; it exists in the mind for there is a one-to-one correspondence between the object of perception and the perceived idea. Edwards's idealism, then, rests on the supposition that "nothing has existence anywhere else but in consciousness,"<sup>7</sup> for all "real existence depends on perception."<sup>8</sup>

Knowledge in this scheme originates in sensation and apprehension by the mind. Arising in piecemeal fashion via the senses, knowledge is ordered appreciation and reflection; it is definite because it is ordered and comprehensible; yet it is limited by its fragmentary character. "Intuition,"

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<sup>4</sup> See George Rupp, "The 'Idealism' of Jonathan Edwards," Harvard Theological Review 62 (1969): 209-226.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the influence of the Cambridge Platonists on Edwards see *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24, 98, 111-112; see also Emily Stipes Watts, "Jonathan Edwards and the Cambridge Platonists," (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1963).

<sup>6</sup> Edwards, "The Mind," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 351.

<sup>7</sup> Edwards, "Of Being," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 204.

<sup>8</sup> Edwards, "Notes on Knowledge and Existence," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 398.

a type of knowledge, is an immediate awareness of the objects of sensation. For Edwards, intuitive knowledge is not the full content of knowledge but it is a self-evident truth such as "the grass is green," that is based on immediate sensation.<sup>9</sup>

Revelation also plays a part in Edwards's metaphysical explanation. As the reservoir of real truth, revelation enters the mind by the "Divine Light." The "Divine Light" is an illumination wherein reality is revealed to the eye of the soul. This takes place in one instant, is immediate, and brings about the fulness of reason.<sup>10</sup> Through the senses, or perception of the aesthetic, the mind perceives the natural world, enters the realm of intuition or experience, and has finite knowledge. This finite process of aesthetic principles, with its finite knowledge, does not provide the information that is supplied by the infinite knowledge and beauty of the divine and supernatural light of God the creator.<sup>11</sup> Through the "Divine Light" humans are able in a finite manner to comprehend the infinite goodness and beauty of the creator. Human knowledge of all things in Edwards's metaphysical idealism is finite.

The universe in which humanity lives is a structure of determinate parts, ordered and governed by invisible laws. Certain natural laws are discoverable by the finite human mind. Edwards's characterization of the universe in this instance relies upon his familiarity with the works of Isaac Newton. Jonathan Edwards cited Newton on numerous occasions. In three

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<sup>9</sup> Edwards, "The Mind," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 346.

<sup>10</sup> H. G. Townsend, Philosophical Ideas in the United States (New York: American Book Co., 1934), p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

of his less known works, "Of Insects,"<sup>12</sup> "Things to be Considered,"<sup>13</sup> and "Of the Rainbow,"<sup>14</sup> Edwards refers to Newton's Optics, on the incurvation of rays. And in "The Mind," No. 65, on motion, Edwards's concept of absolute, relative, and absolute circular motion is derived from Newton's Principia.<sup>15</sup> Newtonian science influenced Edwards's scientific writings by showing and proving that the universe was governed by laws.<sup>16</sup>

Edwards's work in "Of Atoms" evinces one of the invisible laws of of the universe, his theory of "atomism." According to Edwards, all bodies "except atoms, themselves, must of absolute necessity be composed of atoms, or of bodies that are indiscerpible, that cannot be made less." They are held together by an infinite power and cannot "by any infinite power whatsoever, be separated one from another."<sup>17</sup> The solidity that these bodies exhibit is "nothing but resistance to other solidities."<sup>18</sup> These solids occupy space and resist each other. The space that these bodies occupy

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<sup>12</sup> Edwards, "Of Insects," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 159.

<sup>13</sup> Edwards, "Things to be Considered," Scinetific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 221.

<sup>14</sup> Edwards, "Of the Rainbow," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 298.

<sup>15</sup> Edwards, "The Mind," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 383.

<sup>16</sup> Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, pp. 41-47.

<sup>17</sup> Edwards, "Of Atoms," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 208.

<sup>18</sup> Edwards, "Of Being," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 202.

operates under the necessary and fixed law that relies upon the "external, infinite, and omni-present being," God.<sup>19</sup>

Edwards's scientific conception of nature, consisting of atoms, space, and resistance, fundamentally grounds itself in the power and wisdom of God. Throughout his life Edwards held in awe the "wisdom of God" in contriving the whole system.<sup>20</sup> Whether he was conscious of it or not, the philosopher-scientist of Edwards's youth, as Wallace Anderson states, investigated the world from an avowed "theological setting."<sup>21</sup>

Another of Edwards's early works, "Of Being," exhibits two important parts of the scientific and philosophic learning of his youth.<sup>22</sup> The two main claims are that "nothing can be without being known" and that "nothing has any existence anywhere else but in consciousness," and therefore, does not exist unless it is perceived.<sup>23</sup> To exist, the physical object must be apprehended by the mind. For Edwards this means that it is impossible "that anything should be, and nothing know it," for "those beings that have knowledge and consciousness are the only proper and real and substantial beings."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>20</sup> Edwards, "Wisdom in the Contrivance of the World," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, pp. 307-310.

<sup>21</sup> Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 49.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>23</sup> Edwards, "Of Being," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 204.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

In "The Mind" Edwards continued to be concerned with the "existence of bodies and the manner of their dependence upon the mind," rather than as the title implies "the existence and nature of minds themselves."<sup>25</sup> Edwards is initially concerned with excellency in "The Mind" and states "all excellency is harmony, symmetry or proportion."<sup>26</sup> Being as a result "consists in relations," a relationship between the real object and the mind or between two or more objects.<sup>27</sup> The truth in general of a relationship "is the consisting of our ideas with those ideas . . . that are raised in our minds according to God's stated order and Law."<sup>28</sup> With respect to the knowledge of the perceiving mind, Edwards, as Wallace Anderson states, "does not suppose that physical objects are merely nominal entities." As did Locke, Edwards "holds that bodies have real natures independent of the ideas and beliefs we form concerning them."<sup>29</sup> With regard to the connection between bodies and minds or spirits, the two have distinct natures with the mind having a superior ontological status.<sup>30</sup>

When Edwards wrote "Of Being," he followed the work of Henry More and concluded that space is a necessary spiritual being--spirits are extended and

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<sup>25</sup> Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 111.

<sup>26</sup> Edwards, "The Mind," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 332.

<sup>27</sup> Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 84.

<sup>28</sup> Edwards, "The Mind," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, pp. 341-342.

<sup>29</sup> Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 97.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

do occupy space.<sup>31</sup> In "The Mind" a body consists in nothing but the ideas of sensation as they are expressed externally and "immediately communicated to the mind by God." Anderson further points out that for Edwards in "Miscellanie" No. 267, "it appears that a mind itself is nothing but various thoughts, perceptions, etc., which are likewise immediately produced and sustained by God."<sup>32</sup> The identity of the mind, then, depends on the essential being, God. Edwards therefore in "The Mind" substantially revised his acceptance of Henry More's "space as necessary being."

In rethinking More's proposition, Edwards was influenced by John Locke's idea of "consciousness and immediate self-consciousness" as the "marks of the mental."<sup>33</sup> Edwards conceives of a mind as "nothing but consciousness, and what is included in it."<sup>34</sup> This consciousness "is to all intents and purposes the very same spirit or substance, as much as the same particle of matter can be the same with itself at different times."<sup>35</sup> Substance or the material world is "absolutely dependent on the conception of the mind." As we have seen, the mind's conceptions depend upon God, for the substance of all bodies is "the infinitely exact and precise and perfectly stable idea in God's mind."<sup>36</sup> God's stable will, the idea in God's mind, "shall gradually

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 111-113.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>34</sup> Edwards, "The Mind," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 342.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 342-343.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 344.

be communicated to us, and to other minds" according to the laws of the universe.<sup>37</sup>

Just as the universe and nature are governed by "certain fixed and exact established methods and laws," humans, too, have certain fixed dispositions. For example, Edwards notes that human beings have an "innate moral disposition" that guides their actions.<sup>38</sup> Human action requires thought and judgment by the mind and the mind must first perceive before it acts; it requires knowledge. Not only do we have an innate disposition to guide our thought processes before we act, but humans also have a will. In Edwards's psychology and anthropology the will is paramount, for in any action by the mind the will is solicited. The will, however, is only one component of Edwards's psychology.

The psychology of Edwards's forefathers, the faculty or scholastic psychology, compartmentalized the faculties of the mind. On one hand, the Puritans explained how humans have an intellect which is the king of the faculties, also known as the reasonable soul, which is located in the head, while on the other hand they described a separate faculty, the queen of the faculties, the will, which is found in the heart and is the power of the reasonable soul. Edwards rejected the faculty psychology of his Puritan forefathers in favor of a monistic psychology.

In Edwards's thought the will and the inclination to action are one and the same: "the will is no otherwise different from inclination, than that we commonly call that the will that is the mind's inclination with respect to

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 119.

its own immediate actions."<sup>39</sup> Edwards's writings on the will in "The Mind" set forth the principles which he explains in detail in Freedom of the Will. "The Mind" is important in that it points to further development. It shows Edwards "moving away from the traditional concept of will and intellect as distinct powers or faculties of the mind, and toward the conception of distinct kinds or modes of apprehension of perception of objects."<sup>40</sup>

For Edwards the relationship between the will and intellect eventually is described as being "conjoined in our perception of objects." Through the perception of objects the will and intellect, collectively the mind, apprehend the relations between the mind and the object. Truth and goodness are not discerned by intuition or demonstration by the fallen creature.<sup>41</sup> "Truth is the agreement of our ideas with existence . . . their consistency with themselves." Insofar as Edwards's whole cosmology is theological truth is "an agreement of our ideas with that series in God."<sup>42</sup> In scientific language Edwards describes the process as one of forming concepts, judging objects, and reasoning about the relations between the concept and the object. The key term for Edwards is "relations," for knowledge "is not the perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas, but rather the perception of the union or disunion of ideas, or the perceiving whether two or more ideas belong to one another." There is a puzzling aspect to "relations" because something may be true yet a mystery--"we cannot

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<sup>39</sup> Edwards, "The Mind," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 376.

<sup>40</sup> Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, p. 134.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>42</sup> Edwards, "The Mind," Scientific and Philosophical Writings, vol. 6 of Works, pp. 344-345.

comprehend, or see the manner how the several ideas that belong to the proposition are united. . . . but we may perceive that they are united and know that they belong to one another, though we do not know how they are tied together."<sup>43</sup> The ability to discern relations is one of the laws of individual wills and intellects, which it seems varies from person to person.<sup>44</sup>

Edwards in "The Mind," No 67, further explains the workings of the will, intellect, understanding, and disposition in a discourse about pleasure and pain: "pleasure and pain are not properly ideas" even though they "may imply perception in their nature, yet it does not follow that they are properly ideas." The mind does act in discerning pleasure and pain, for Edwards states that "all acts of the mind about its ideas are not themselves mere ideas." This is because "pleasure and pain have their seat in the will, and not in the understanding."<sup>45</sup> Will and choice are "nothing else but the mind's being pleased with an idea, or having a superior pleasedness in something thought of, or a desire of a future thing, or a pleasedness in the thought of our union with the thing."<sup>46</sup> The understanding at this point in Edwards's thought is not clearly defined. Later in the Religious Affections Edwards defines the understanding as the perceiving, speculating, and guiding of the soul.

Will, intellect, and understanding are all parts of Edwards's psychology that rests upon his epistemological and metaphysical ideas, which are in

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 385.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 384.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

turn tied to his theological beliefs. The ideas from which Edwards constructs his epistemological, metaphysical, and psychological explanation of human beings surface in his scientific and philosophical writings, "Of Being," "Of Atoms," and "The Mind." At some points he depends upon the work of the Cambridge Platonist Henry More, at others his ideas stem from John Locke, and at still others he draws upon the work of Isaac Newton. In each of these works Edwards scientifically describes phenomena of the universe. At each base of explanation, however, lies not a scientific explanation but a theological belief that places everything within the realm of the omnipresent creator God. The ideas Edwards posited in his philosophical and scientific writings continued with him throughout his life. At times he revised his thought and presented something new. From these writings one would not suspect that the whole of Edwards's anthropology would emphasize the negative aspects of humanity. Metaphysically, Edwards's concept of human nature is void of all of the contempt he showered on humanity when describing human nature based on scripture.

## II

The biblical view of human nature that Edwards espoused can be discovered in some of the sermons of the Northampton period, 1726-1751. His ideas about humanity are clear in an examination of nine sermons: "God glorified in Man's Dependence," "Man's Natural Blindness, in the things of Religion," "Men Naturally God's Enemies," "Justification by Faith Alone," "Wicked Men useful in their Destruction only," "Sinners in the hands of an

Angry God," "A Divine and Supernatural Light . . . ," "Natural Men in a dreadful Condition," and "Wicked Men Inconsistent with themselves."<sup>47</sup>

Edwards's first published work was the sermon "God Glorified in Man's Dependence." This sermon was given as the Thursday lecture to the ministers of Boston on July 8, 1731. If Perry Miller is correct, this sermon served to draw the lines of the battle that continued for the remainder of the century between Edwards and his followers, and Charles Chauncy, Jonathan Mayhew, and their followers.<sup>48</sup> Edwards named I Corinthians 1:29-31 the text for the sermon and builds upon and expands his belief that everyone and everything is wholly dependent upon God. The only good that humans have is "in and through Christ: He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption."<sup>49</sup> The only good that the fallen and redeemed creature has is concerned with these four things. Through the free gift of Christ and the faith which the Holy Spirit nourishes in us by Christ, we discern the dependence of the creature upon God.

A correlative point in this sermon is that God is glorified in the work of redemption. Before the Fall, humans cleaved to God for their holiness. Now, after the fall of Adam and humankind, humans more than ever must rely upon God's arbitrary and sovereign good pleasure. Edwards emphasizes

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<sup>47</sup> For the full text of these sermons see Jonathan Edwards, The Works of President Jonathan Edwards (1808; reprint, New York: Leavitt and Allen, 1855), "Worcester Edition," vol. 4; idem, The Works of Jonathan Edwards (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1865), "Hickman Edition."

<sup>48</sup> See Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards (1949; reprint, Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), pp. 23-34.

<sup>49</sup> Edwards, Works, "Worcester Edition," 4: 62.

the fact that human beings are helpless; we have a "helplessness in ourselves," and "are more apparently dependent on God for holiness, because we are first sinful, and utterly polluted, and afterwards holy."<sup>50</sup> Though humanity is utterly polluted, "we are not only without any true excellency, but are full of, and wholly defiled with, that which is infinitely odious," and the only good we have comes from God.<sup>51</sup> God brings the "sinner from his low state" of the total corruption of his nature, "from the depths of sin and misery, to such an exalted state of holiness and happiness."<sup>52</sup> For humans to have saving faith "it is necessary" that they "should be emptied" of themselves and recognize that they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked."<sup>53</sup> Edwards's emphasis is clear. Scripture shows that the human creature is in a "low, lost and ruined state" and that the creature is "wholly and universally dependent on God."<sup>54</sup> From this description "it appears that the creature is nothing and that God is all." Evident in this sermon is Edwards's upholding of orthodox Puritanism, the fall of humanity, its utter depravity, and its dependence upon God for any good whatsoever.

In the sermon "Man's Natural Blindness, in the things of Religion," published posthumously, Edwards speaks about human nature and its capacity for religion. With Psalm 94 as the text, Edwards begins by showing that vanity is common to all. This leads him to state that in the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 176, 177.

ways of religion "there is an extreme and brutish blindness" in humans.<sup>55</sup> "This doctrine," he states, "is not to be understood as any reflection on the capacity of the human nature; for God hath made man with a noble and excellent capacity."<sup>56</sup> Humankind is created with certain natural capacities and is "capable of true wisdom and divine knowledge."<sup>57</sup> There is, however, a "blindness" in the heart that is a part of human nature. What is the cause of this blindness? Humans are blind not because of a flaw in their mental faculties or in their ability to know, but because of a positive cause, the Fall. Through the Fall, human nature became corrupted, the heart lost its sight and henceforth is prone to delusion. The mind became "exceeding dark" and now is as "contrary as possible to reason."<sup>58</sup> There is a "woeful tendency of the mind of man since the fall, notwithstanding his noble powers and faculties; even to sink down into a kind of brutality, to lose and extinguish all useful light, and to sink lower and lower into darkness."<sup>59</sup> Yet, human beings are deceived about their own state. They "think themselves something when they are nothing."<sup>60</sup> Again Edwards's anthropology rests on a scriptural basis that accentuates the wretched state of humanity.

Revelation, an aspect of Edwards's metaphysical description of humanity, is also tied to his biblical view of human nature. In 1733 or 1734 Edwards

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

delivered the sermon "A Divine and Supernatural Light" which is based on Matthew 16:17. In defining the exact nature of the divine and supernatural light Edwards uses the "via negativa" and tells us what it is not, and by doing so he reveals an aspect of human nature. Spiritual light is not "the conviction of the sin and misery of natural man," or "an impression made on the imagination," or "the suggesting of any new truths or propositions not contained in the word of God," nor is it "thought about the things of religion."<sup>61</sup> The divine and supernatural light is "a real sense and apprehension of the divine excellency of things revealed in the word of God."<sup>62</sup> Human beings, Edwards stresses, by nature have the capacity to comprehend this divine emanation. The divine light comes from God, and thus we see again that humankind is dependent upon God in the things of religion.

Edwards's emphasis on the dependence of the creature upon God led him on a Sunday in July 1734 to name as his text Ezekiel 15:2-4. With "Wicked Men Useful in their Destruction Only" Edwards reiterates the creature's dependence upon God in the analogy of the vine. Humanity is "very fitly represented by the vine." Just as the vine is weak in comparison to and dependent upon "other things which support it," it "well represents to us what a poor, feeble, dependent creature man is, and how if left to himself, he must fall into mischief, and cannot help himself."<sup>63</sup>

Another prominent analogy in this sermon is that of the "chain of being." Edwards herein shows how humans were given a rational soul to the

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 439-441.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 441.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 300.

exclusion of the other creatures.<sup>64</sup> We are the creature "nearest to God, of any in this lower world; and therefore [our] business is with God. Our superior end then is to serve and glorify God, while our inferior end shows that we were "made for one another," made for our "friends and neighbors, and for the good of the public."<sup>65</sup> With these statements one can see that humans are not totally vile, corrupt, and evil. Is Edwards contradicting himself by allowing humans the possibility of doing good? Edwards is not contradicting himself, for his explanation of the source of these benevolent characteristics is consistent with his fundamental premise that everything is dependent upon the Creator. Even though this world is fallen, "and is under a curse, and is a miserable place to what it once was," it still has "streams of divine goodness."<sup>66</sup> The key term is "divine," for the goodness is from God and not from humans. The human condition is still inferior.

Edwards explains how far the natural human condition fell short in the sermon "Natural Men in a Dreadful Condition." Choosing Acts 16:29-31 as his text, Edwards shows how at one time humans were a "noble piece of divine workmanship," but with the Fall they became "dreadfully defaced."<sup>67</sup> He decries the fact that "so excellent a creature . . . should be so ruined."<sup>68</sup> As in "Man's Natural Blindness," so here the "dreadfulness of their depravity appears in that humans are sottishly blind and ignorant."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 304.

<sup>67</sup> Edwards, Works, "Hickman Edition," p. 817.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

God gave humans a faculty of reason and understanding. God "exalted" them above all the other creatures, and with that endowment it became possible to "know God, and to know spiritual and eternal things."<sup>70</sup> After the Fall, however, the whole of humanity is debased. Humanity has lost its glory with respect to knowing God and has "become as ignorant of the excellency of God as the very beasts."<sup>71</sup> The human understanding is now inundated by darkness. The human mind is blind. We are "ignorant" of God, Christ, the way of salvation, and of our own happiness.<sup>72</sup> A "spirit of atheism" prevails in the hearts of humans.<sup>73</sup>

Humans are blind and have no goodness because no higher principle than self-love exists in their hearts. With nothing but self-love there can be no "good exercises of heart, never one good thought or motion of heart in them," especially no love to God.<sup>74</sup> Besides self-love, the hearts of humans are "exceedingly full of sin." The heart is full of lust to a "dreadful degree" and is a "mere sink of sin, a fountain of corruption."<sup>75</sup> To support these charges Edwards quotes Mark 7:21,22. "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." In effect, natural humans "are in the image of the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 818.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

devil."<sup>76</sup> Humanity lost the image of God, yet God graciously restrains their wickedness, "principally by fear and respect to their credit and reputation and by education." And were it not for these restraints, "there is no wickedness [humans] would not commit."<sup>77</sup> Humans in their natural state are unconcerned with the future. From external appearances they might look to be "happy in this world," but they are "truly destitute."<sup>78</sup> Humanity is bereft because the only happy creature is one "who is entitled to happiness," and the miserable creature is one "who is in danger of misery," in their "eternal state." In a natural condition human beings cannot be happy for they have no "title to any inheritance in another world."<sup>79</sup>

Justification, which in Edwards's thought is secured by faith alone, shows that humans can yet be granted the gift of life. Edwards points to Romans 4:5, which states that "justification respects a man as ungodly." He explains how these words imply that God, "in the act of justification has no regard to anything in the person justified, as godliness, or any goodness," for God looks upon the creature as "ungodly or wicked." Therefore, according to Edwards, the natural human prior to justification is abominable in the eyes of God. Through God's gracious act, however, the creature is justified.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 820.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Edwards, Works, "Worcester Edition," 4: 64-66.

Until justified, the sinner is under the sway of an infinite guilt "which arises from the infinite evil or heinousness of sin." The heinousness of sin is a result of forsaking an obligation, the obligation to love or respect any being "in proportion to the greatness or excellency of that being."<sup>81</sup> Accordingly, "if a being be infinitely excellent and lovely [i.e., God], our obligations to love him are therein infinitely great."<sup>82</sup> Because of our "infinite comparative meanness" since the Fall, humans can only exercise a finite goodness.<sup>83</sup> The obligation the creature owes to the infinite creator is itself infinite. Human beings, however, can only put their finite being into the scales. For Edwards, then, humans are "still infinitely unworthy and hateful in God's sight."<sup>84</sup> The infinite sin of the Fall outweighs whatever finite goodness natural humanity might have.<sup>85</sup>

Basing his arguments on scripture, Edwards shows how human beings are like "filthy swine" wallowing in the mire of their sins, and that justification by faith alone must necessarily come from the infinite God, the gracious creator. Edwards, in his biblical view of human nature, continues as he did in his metaphysical descriptions to ground his thought in the omnipotent creator. In his biblically based anthropology, however, humanity could not be characterized as good.

The sermon, "Wicked Men Inconsistent with themselves," contains both the metaphysical view and the scripturally based view of humanity. The

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

main emphasis of this sermon is to show how wicked humanity is inconsistent. Edwards lists several examples of how humans in their natural state are inconsistent. First, the understanding of the creature and the creature's end are inconsistent with each other. This does not mean, Edwards states emphatically, "that the faculty of reason and understanding is inconsistent with itself; for the faculty of understanding with which God has endowed man is wholly good and right."<sup>86</sup> The inconsistency lies, however, in that "the understandings of natural men are perverted by sin" and therefore, practical judgment is inconsistent with reason, and hence, some judgments do not agree with others.<sup>87</sup>

A consequence of this first inconsistency is that the human will disagrees with its reason, "for the will ever follows the dictate of practical judgment."<sup>88</sup> This has two inferences. First, humans will those things which their reason tells them are inconsistent with their duty, i.e., their wills are inconsistent with their consciences. The "conscience," a principle implanted in the heart of every human being, is "essential to" their nature "as the faculty of reason."<sup>89</sup> The wills of sinful humans, acting contrary to their consciences, "choose those things which they know to be evil . . . that which their own reason tells them is unreasonable and vile."<sup>90</sup> The divergence between the will and conscience brings forth "an inward war" in

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<sup>86</sup> Edwards, Works, "Hickman Edition," p. 919.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

the mind. In the second instance, wicked human beings "will those things which their reason tells them are contrary to their own interest."<sup>91</sup>

Not only is the will at war with the conscience, but it is at odds with itself. Edwards characterizes this situation as that of wicked creatures who wish to be converted from their sinful ways to the way of God, but who are unwilling to part with their sins; their sins they love too well.<sup>92</sup> Next, he tells how the creature's "outward show disagrees" with the heart. Humans are like wolves in sheep's clothes, for "many of them profess to believe that God is an infinitely excellent being, when indeed they think the meanest of their carnal enjoyments is more excellent than God."<sup>93</sup> In this case the professions of the creatures are not congruent with their practice. And likewise, practice disavows their hopes. Sometimes their practice is inconsistent with itself as well. For example, some people are honest "with respect to strict commutative justice, but they are not charitable"--"they are selfish, covetous, close, and unmerciful."<sup>94</sup>

As if it were not enough for humans to be inconsistent with themselves, Edwards shows how they are also at war with God. In the sermon "Men Naturally God's Enemies," with Psalm 94:8 as text, Edwards repeats the dictum that human beings "are or have been sinners," and most of them will confess that they have bad hearts.<sup>95</sup> Unregenerate humanity has a "very mean esteem of God." They have "very low and contemptible thoughts of

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 922.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 925.

<sup>95</sup> Edwards, Works, "Worcester Edition," 4: 37.

God."<sup>96</sup> As in "Wicked Men Inconsistent with Themselves" the human will is contrary to itself. Not only is the natural human's will at war with itself, but it is in opposition to the will of God. In their natural state humans are "wholly destitute of any principle of love to God."<sup>97</sup> They are as destitute of love of God as a "dead, stiff, cold, corpse is of a vital heart."<sup>98</sup> Again, Edwards states his belief in the natural human principle of atheism. Then, returning to his fundamental premise of the sovereignty of God, Edwards shows that humans "cannot overcome their own enmity"; they never strive to do so.<sup>99</sup> The only way to overcome this absence of love is through the gracious act of God.

Edwards's most famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," preached on the eve of the Great Awakening, takes as its text Deuteronomy 32:35, "Their foot shall slide in due time." This sermon portrays humanity at its worst, and it is sad that most people who know of Jonathan Edwards know of him only through this sermon, for statements about Edwards's theology or anthropology based on this sermon are only an attenuated view of Edwards. One cannot deny the power of this tract or the vivid images it promotes. God is portrayed as vengeful and sometimes wrathful: God "holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

wrath towards you burns like fire, he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire."<sup>100</sup>

In "Sinners" Edwards tells how humans are a "burden to the earth." They are such a burden that "the creation groans," and God looks upon them as worth nothing but to be cast into hell.<sup>101</sup> These statements are in accord with everything we have discussed in Edwards's other sermons. In comparison with the infinite beauty of God, the natural human is an ugly creature.

The biblical view of humanity that Edwards presented in his sermons, like his metaphysical anthropology, rests upon his fundamental belief in the sovereignty of God. Humanity in this theological anthropology is debased in every respect. Human beings are like "filthy worms" with their only good derived from the all powerful creator, God.

### III

Edwards's published treatises, Religious Affections, Freedom of the Will, Dissertation on the End in Creation, Nature of True Virtue, and Original Sin, bring together his metaphysical and scriptural views of humanity, sometimes even in the same essay. These works outline the extent to which he reflected upon the human condition.

Religious Affections, published in 1746, constitutes Edwards's apologetic for the emotional upheaval of the Great Awakening. In the Religious Affections Edwards continues the line of argumentation he set forth in Distinguishing Marks and Thoughts on the Revival. The main question in

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 317.

these works is "how shall the presence of the divine Spirit be discerned?"<sup>102</sup> Many, including Charles Chauncy, had denounced the Great Awakening and the revivals as spurious expressions of piety. Edwards himself questioned the genuineness of some of the affections produced by the revivals, but never did he think that the Great Awakening was not the work of God.

Fundamentally, the problem for Edwards became "what are the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favor with God, and entitled to his eternal rewards?" In other words, "what is the nature of true religion?"<sup>103</sup> To answer these questions Edwards investigated the nature of the affections. He sought to explain what were true and false religious affections. Part and parcel of this explanation for Edwards were the questions what causes the affections, what is their relationship to the divine Spirit, and also in what manner are the affections "connected" to the understanding and will.<sup>104</sup>

To define the nature of true religion Edwards begins with Scripture, for he quotes I Peter 1:8, "Whom having not seen, ye love: in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." In his exegesis of I Peter, Edwards states that true religion "consists in holy affections," a love and joy in Jesus Christ. The affections

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<sup>102</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Religious Affections, vol. 2 of The Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 1.

<sup>103</sup> Edwards, "Author's Preface," Religious Affections, vol. 2 of Works, p. 84.

<sup>104</sup> Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Religious Affections, vol. 2 of Works, p. 11.

of joy in Christ manifest itself through spiritual insight, are unseen, and are the fruit of faith.<sup>105</sup>

What is the nature of these affections? The affections, Edwards answers, "are no other, than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul."<sup>106</sup> They are lively enough to go beyond indifference, to the point where "the motion of the blood and animal spirits begins to be sensibly altered," whereupon some change occurs in the heart.<sup>107</sup> True religion and its affections alter the internal sense of the creature. For Edwards, the affections ultimately indicate the direction of the soul, either towards God or the world. The natural human's affections are concerned with this world while the affections of the saint are focused on the divine Spirit.

Both the natural and saintly humans have affections that are the "sensible exercises" of the will and inclination of the soul. The soul is the unifying force in Edwards's psychology, and as in "The Mind," the soul is "indued" with two faculties: the understanding and the will.<sup>108</sup>

John E. Smith, editor of Religious Affections, in the Yale edition of Edwards's Works, stresses that Edwards continued to follow the points he outlined in "The Mind." Regarding the two faculties, the will and

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<sup>105</sup> Edwards, Religious Affections, vol. 2 of Works, p. 95.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

understanding, Edwards, though he made distinctions, nonetheless argued for a unifying psychology.<sup>109</sup>

The origins of Edwards's unifying psychology can be found in the thought of John Locke. Locke argued against the scholastic psychology that held that the faculties were distinct agents and form a psychology of the mind wherein the will and understanding are two powers, not distinct faculties. Edwards used Locke as his source but went beyond him and abolished any differentiation between the powers of the mind. The powers of the mind for Edwards, however, were not indistinguishable. What this means is that the will and understanding could not oppose each other.<sup>110</sup> This stand by Edwards is in direct opposition to the position taken by some of his Puritan predecessors, who emphasized the distinctions between the will and understanding in their faculty psychology.<sup>111</sup>

If Edwards's only reason for writing the Affections had been to show the nature of the affections, he would have ended with Part One, the psychological description of the human creature. Edwards, however, was also concerned with showing how true religion consists in the affections. God, the author of the human nature, not only indued the human creation with affections, "but has made 'em very much the spring of men's actions."<sup>112</sup> And "the affections do not only necessarily belong to the

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<sup>109</sup> Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Religious Affections, vol. 2 of Works, p. 11.

<sup>110</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Freedom of the Will, vol. 1 of The Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957) pp. 49-50.

<sup>111</sup> Fiering, "Will and Intellect," pp. 551-558.

<sup>112</sup> Edwards, Religious Affections, vol. 2 of Works, p. 100.

human nature, but are a very great part of it; so . . . holy affections do not only necessarily belong to true religion, but are a very great part of that."<sup>113</sup> Therefore, "as true religion is of a practical nature, and God has so constituted the human nature, that the affections are very much the spring of men's actions, this also shows, that true religion must consist very much in the affections."<sup>114</sup> We see that the human creature would be inactive, "any otherwise than he is influenced by some affection, either love or hatred, desire, hope, fear or some other."<sup>115</sup> Take these away "and the world would be, in a great measure, motionless and dead; there would be no such thing as activity amongst mankind, or any earnest pursuit whatsoever."<sup>116</sup> Consequently, Edwards declares that religion is one of the fundamental aspects of human nature.<sup>117</sup> There is, however, always the difference between the natural and religious affections, between natural and regenerate humans.

The distinction made between the natural and saintly human is analogous to the difference between the terms describing the natural and moral attributes in humans. In Part III of the Religious Affections Edwards summarizes the essence of these terms and their meaning. Humans can conceive of two kinds of attributes in God "which are summed up in his holiness and . . . natural attributes, of strength, knowledge, etc. that

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

constitute the greatness of God."<sup>118</sup> Similarly, there is a corresponding twofold "imago Dei" in humans: God's "moral or spiritual image, which is his holiness, that is the image of God's moral excellency (which image was lost by the Fall); and God's natural image, consisting in men's reason and understanding, his natural ability, and dominion over the creatures, which is the image of God's natural attributes."<sup>119</sup> This twofold distinction echoes the work of William Ames and continues to reinforce Edwards's general supposition of the differences between the natural and regenerate human and between God and humans. Edwards in the Religious Affections defended the Great Awakening on the basis of his scriptural views within the context of his metaphysics. The treatise on the affections shows how Edwards's psychological and theological views came together to form a unified concept of human nature.

In Freedom of the Will, published in 1754 after he left Northampton, Edwards continued to base his arguments and anthropology on a synthesis of his metaphysical, psychological, biblical, and theological views. Freedom of the Will, like the Religious Affections, is an apologetic tract. Edwards states in the conclusion that Freedom of the Will "obviate[s] some of the chief objections of Arminians against the Calvinistic doctrine of the total depravity and corruption of man's nature."<sup>120</sup> The Arminians rejected this doctrine, which holds that the human heart is "wholly under the power of sin," making one "utterly unable, without the interposition of sovereign grace, savingly to love God, believe in Christ, or do anything that is truly

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Edwards, Freedom of the Will, vol. 1 of Works, p. 432.

good and acceptable in God's sight," for they felt "it is inconsistent with the freedom of man's will, consisting in indifference and self-determining power."<sup>121</sup> They believed that this doctrine makes human beings "no more than mere machines."<sup>122</sup> They in turn advocated a theory of contingency which Edwards rejected because it gave too much power to the human creature.<sup>123</sup> The theological issue for Edwards, according to Paul Ramsey, was that "either contingency and the liberty of self-determination must be run out of this world, or God will be shut out."<sup>124</sup>

Edwards's argument against the Arminian notions of contingency as the basis of the freedom of the will rests upon two foundations, the proof from Scripture and the proof from reason.<sup>125</sup> The major portion of Edwards's tract consists of philosophical and semantic proofs defending his notion of the freedom of the will. What Edwards proved on the basis of scripture reinforces what he had said else-where.

Many times Edwards chides the Arminians for their imprecise use of language. In Part I he begins by defining his terms. What is the nature of the will, he asks. "I observe," he states, "that the will . . . is plainly, that

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 370.

<sup>123</sup> For a full discussion of Edwards's relationship with the Arminians, see Norman Fiering, Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1981), pp. 292-305.

<sup>124</sup> Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Freedom of the Will, vol. 1 of Works, p. 9.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

by which the mind chooses anything."<sup>126</sup> From thence Edwards proceeds through the philosophical argument.

To clarify the discussion, Edwards defines the term "liberty." Freedom or liberty is "power, opportunity, or advantage" to do as one pleases.<sup>127</sup> Freedom of the will means simply acts of volition wherein one is "free from hindrance or impediment in the way of doing or conducting in any respect."<sup>128</sup> In other words, a human being is free to do what he or she wills but not to do what he or she does not will. Therefore, in any act of volition the mind or inclination is pleased with one thing rather than another.<sup>129</sup>

How does the will choose? In explaining the will and its processes Edwards states that the human will "always is as the greatest apparent good, or as what appears most agreeable, is."<sup>130</sup> He says this rather than the greatest apparent good determines the will or that what seems most agreeable does. He does so "because an appearing most agreeable or pleasing to the mind, and the mind's preferring or choosing, seem hardly to be properly and perfectly distinct."<sup>131</sup> What then determines the will? Initially, Edwards states that the will is always determined by the strongest motive.<sup>132</sup> He later qualifies this statement with "or by that view of the

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<sup>126</sup> Edwards, Freedom of the Will, vol. 1 of Works, p. 137.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

mind which has the greatest degree of previous tendency to excite volition."<sup>133</sup> The will determines an act by willing and choosing. Humans have the ability to choose as they please under this explanation.<sup>134</sup>

The Arminians, however, could not see how the Calvinist doctrines allowed this capacity. They felt that Calvinism bound the will and that it therefore could not be held accountable. Edwards denies the Arminian objection and shows that the will is worthy of praise and blame.

Building upon his explanation of the connection between the will and any action going forth from it, Edwards states that "when a thing is from a man, . . . that it is from his will or choice, he is to blame for it, because his will is in it: so far is the will in it, blame is in it, and no further."<sup>135</sup> Human actions are subject to moral and ethical judgment "not so properly because they are from us, as because we are in them, . . . not so much because they are from some property of ours, as because they are our properties."<sup>136</sup> Actions are a property of the human nature guided by the soul and the will. For the "soul of virtue and vice," praiseworthiness or blameworthiness is "a certain beauty or deformity that [is] inherent in that good or evil will."<sup>137</sup>

If moral accountability relies upon an inherent attribute, then is the will independent and self-moved as the Arminians believed? Edwards replies with an emphatic no. Paul Ramsey points out that causation is the central

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., pp. 161, 190, 193.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 427.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 428.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 340.

focus of Freedom of the Will.<sup>138</sup> Edwards defines causation as "that whatsoever begins to be, which before was not, must have a cause why it then begins to exist."<sup>139</sup> Inherent in this explanation is Edwards's refutation of the Arminian notion of the self-determined will. Edwards "can conceive of nothing else that can be meant by the soul's having power to cause and determine its own volitions, as a being to whom God has given a power of action, but this; that God has given power to the soul, sometimes at least, to excite volitions at its pleasure or accord as it chooses."<sup>140</sup>

Another point of Freedom of the Will that is relevant to Edwards's anthropology concerns the refutation of the Arminian notion of freedom and liberty. The Arminian position is clear to Edwards: the more the soul has "disengagedness in its actings, the more liberty"; the more liberty, the greater the disinterestedness, and if the soul has perfect liberty, then, as Edwards points out, it is completely disengaged and cannot be held responsible.<sup>141</sup> Here Edwards turns the table on the Arminians, who themselves objected to the Calvinist doctrines for not allowing room for praiseworthiness and blameworthiness. If humans do not will according to the dictates of reason, the agreeableness of the good to them, and from their own dispositions and characters, it is not choice that determines their actions but "it is therefore a contingency, that happens to the man, arising

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<sup>138</sup> Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Freedom of the Will, vol. 1 of Works, p. 24.

<sup>139</sup> Edwards, Freedom of the Will, vol. 1 of Works, p. 181.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

from nothing in him."<sup>142</sup> Therefore, according to Edwards, the Arminian notion of freedom is not freedom at all, for if freedom is only contingency, humans could not be praised or blamed for their actions. Contingency is anathema to Edwards, for there is an "universal sense" of humankind that there is sincerity of virtue only in "actions which proceed from a heart well disposed and inclined," and the greater the virtue "the stronger, and more fixed and determined the good disposition of the heart."<sup>143</sup> Fundamentally, Edwards argues for the freedom of the will and in turn the freedom of the person with respect to its act of volition. These acts are worthy of praise or blame because they are properties of the human nature. Accordingly, virtue is a "quality of mind."<sup>144</sup> The amount of virtue a person has is in direct proportion to the inherent disposition of the mind.

Edwards probes deeper into the subject of virtue in the second essay of a two-essay work. In the first essay, entitled Dissertation Concerning the End for which God Created the World, Edwards deals, as the title suggests, with the reasons for God's creating the world. The second essay, The Nature of True Virtue, focuses on the human side and expounds Edwards's form of Calvinism, Christian ethics, and understanding of the New Testament commandment of love.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 321.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>145</sup> Jonathan Edwards, The Nature of True Virtue, foreword by William K. Frankena (1765) (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), p. viii.

The Nature of True Virtue, written in 1755 but not published until 1765, seven years after Edwards's death, focuses on the virtue of the human creature. Edwards's fundamental supposition rests not in reason but in sentiment. Moral judgments, virtue, and vice find approval or disapproval in the sentiments among humankind. The "sensible" notion that Edwards introduces in the sermon "God Glorified in Man's Dependence" resurfaces. Edwards identifies sense in the human realm with a sense of beauty, i.e., a sense wherein pleasure is immediately perceived from the objects of perception. Virtue in this instance reflects a type of beauty, a beauty of the heart.<sup>146</sup>

There are two kinds of beauty: beauty of disposition and beauty of action, and there are two corresponding senses by which they are relished. Primary beauty, the highest, true, spiritual and divine beauty, consists of benevolence or love of Being in general. Only a spiritual or divine sense relishes this type of beauty. The secondary, inferior, or natural beauty, perceived by a "fleshy" natural sense, reveals itself in harmony, proportion, and uniformity.<sup>147</sup>

Because virtue corresponds to beauty there are two types of virtue: virtue and true virtue. True virtue consists in primary beauty. It is consent and good will to Being in general. In other words, Edwards explains true virtue to be "love of intelligent Being in general," for "beings that have no perception or will . . . are not properly capable objects of benevolence."<sup>148</sup> Virtue concerns itself with intelligent beings loving in proportion to their

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., pp. viii, ix.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Edwards, Works, "Worcester Edition," 2: 263.

dignity, their degree of existence, and the extent to which they love Being as Being.<sup>149</sup> "To speak more accurately," Edwards states, "it is that consent, propensity and union of heart to being in general which is immediately exercised in a general good will."<sup>150</sup> Because God is infinite, both in dignity and existence, then true virtue is essentially love of God, "the Being of beings, infinitely the greatest and best."<sup>151</sup> True virtue in humans consists of benevolence to being in general, and benevolence to virtuous being. Therefore, any human being with true virtue "must necessarily have a supreme love to God, both of benevolence and complacence."<sup>152</sup>

The natural creature does not have this divine sense. Humans, the inferior creatures, have a notion of a form of excellence but not true virtue. Basically, humans inherently rely on a sense of justice, which is no more than "a relish of uniformity and proportion" that involves no true virtue. This sense of justice combines common morality with a love of consistency and reflects the conscience of each human. A sense of justice does not have its roots in love to Being in general but lies in "an inclination to feel and act as one with ourselves," and therefore reflects not true virtue but self-love.<sup>153</sup>

Humans, however, Edwards points out, have a "moral sense that is natural

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<sup>149</sup> Edwards, True Virtue, p. 3.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., pp. x, xi.

to all."<sup>154</sup> This moral sense "consists in a natural relish of the beauty of true virtue, and so arises from a principle of true virtue implanted by nature in the hearts of all."<sup>155</sup> They also have a natural conscience which consists of two parts: a "disposition to approve or disprove" and "a natural agreement, proportion and harmony, between malevolence or injury, and resentment and punishment."<sup>156</sup> Through the workings of the natural conscience humans are able to discern and "will approve of true virtue and condemn the want of it, and opposition to it."<sup>157</sup> If the human conscience is "fully enlightened, . . . delivered from being confined to a private sphere, and brought to view and consider things in general, and delivered from being stupified by sensual objects and appetites, as they will be at the day of judgment, they will approve nothing but true virtue."<sup>158</sup>

The general nature of true virtue is love. It is love to Being in general, a love of God. In his introduction to The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended, Clyde A. Holbrook summarizes Edwards's depiction of the human relationship to true virtue:

A truly virtuous deed involves the heart of man, his inclination to savor the divine riches, but the heart can have no tendency to make it self better, till it begins to have a better tendency. And this is precisely the essential factor in true virtue, which is quite beyond the capacity of the self to achieve.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Original Sin, vol. 3 of The Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 37.

Underlying these words about the human capacity for true virtue is Edwards's defense of the doctrine of original sin and the depravity of the human nature.

Original Sin, published in 1758, the year Edwards died, completes Edwards's theological anthropology. The controversy over the precise essence of the human nature, whether depraved or not, is much too complex to recount the vicissitudes of the argument that preceded Edwards.<sup>160</sup> Suffice it to say that the doctrine of original sin defaced the image of humanity that the Enlightenment in the clear light of reason developed. Edwards stepped into the battle as defender of the "hated doctrine," the champion of an orthodox dogma that was being attacked in Europe, England, and America in the eighteenth century.<sup>161</sup>

Edwards wrote chiefly in opposition to John Taylor's The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Proposed to Free and Candid Examination.<sup>162</sup> Edwards's defense rests upon three pillars: first, that all humans, throughout all time and ages "without fail in any one instance, run into that moral evil, which is in effect their own utter and eternal perdition"; second, the explication of this fact lies in and was precipitated by the fall of Adam; and third, that God, though sovereign in all things, could not be charged with being the author of human depravity.<sup>163</sup> Edwards propounds these positions on original sin solely in terms of the

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<sup>160</sup> For a full discussion please see H. Shelton Smith, Changing Conceptions of Original Sin: A Study in American Theology Since 1750 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955).

<sup>161</sup> Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Original Sin, vol. 3 of Works, p. 1.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

natural human without the interposition of divine grace. He implied that his opponents spoke about the human creation which had received divine grace. From Edwards's standpoint, however, scripture and human experience taught that humankind is depraved and that humanity flourishes in its baseness.<sup>164</sup>

The plight of the human condition, sin, inaugurated by Adam, is a function of membership "in a history of human conduct."<sup>165</sup> In Original Sin Edwards develops a "historical notion of human nature in which it is the history of the race that assumes a unified metaphysical identity."<sup>166</sup> In Edwards's history, humans originally possessed two sets of principles: the inferior, natural principle of mere human nature, which is self-love, and the superior, divine principle, being the spiritual image of God. Both are necessary for the happiness of the human nature. Before the fall of Adam, humans had a supernatural sense, but when Adam sinned the divine principles were withdrawn. The inferior principles consequently became the reigning principles and self-love now dominates.<sup>167</sup> Humans share with Adam an inclination or a principle of human action that conveys a moral responsibility.<sup>168</sup> Humankind sinned in Adam and continues in its transgressions. Humanity fell short of the moral law given by God, and,

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>165</sup> David Weddle, "Jonathan Edwards on Men and Trees, and the Problem of Solidarity." Harvard Theological Review 67 (1974): 175.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>167</sup> Thomas A. Schafer, "The Concept of Being in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1951), p. 244.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

therefore, human beings fail to possess a "relish" and "taste" for the divine and supernatural things.<sup>169</sup>

The human condition subsists in "moral depravity." Evil and pernicious is the state of human nature.<sup>170</sup> For the natural state of the human mind is "attended with a propensity of nature" to sin.<sup>171</sup> Therefore, humanity is "corrupt and depraved with a moral depravity, that amounts to and implies their utter undoing."<sup>172</sup> Edwards cites scripture: I Kings 8:46, Ecclesiastes 7:20, and Job 9:2-3 and concludes that every human being who is capable of acting as a moral agent is guilty of sin.<sup>173</sup> Then he calls upon Deuteronomy 3:22 and Galatians 3:10 to support the claim that sin is universal.<sup>174</sup> The propensity of all humankind to sin belongs to their nature because sin is observed in humankind in general.<sup>175</sup> Humankind exists "naturally in such a state, as is attended, without fail, with this consequence or issue, that they universally are the subjects of that guilt and sinfulness, which is, in effect, their utter and eternal ruin, being cast wholly out of the favour of God, and subjected to his everlasting wrath and

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<sup>169</sup> Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Original Sin, vol. 3 of Works, p. 36.

<sup>170</sup> Edwards, Original Sin, vol. 3 of Works, p. 109.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

curse," death.<sup>176</sup> The "universal reign of death" proves the sinful nature of all humans.<sup>177</sup>

But is it human nature to sin? Edwards explains,

If any creature be of such a nature that it proves evil in its proper place, or in the situation which God has assigned it in the universe, it is of an evil nature. That part of the system is not good, which is not good in its place in the system: and those inherent qualities of that part of the system, which are not good, but corrupt, in that place, are not justly looked upon as evil inherent qualities. That propensity is truly esteemed to belong to the nature of any being, or to be inherent in it, that is the necessary consequence of its nature, considered together with its proper situation in the universal system of existence, whether that propensity be good or bad.<sup>178</sup>

Humankind then, is evil in its natural state, yet Edwards finds goodness in the human creature as well. One of the objections raised to the doctrine of original sin is that it "pours contempt upon the human nature." Edwards's response states that "no contempt is by this doctrine cast upon the noble faculties and capacities of man's nature, or the exalted business, and divine and immortal happiness he is made capable of."<sup>179</sup> The key words in this passage are the last three, "made capable of." Despite all of the evil characteristics of human nature there exists a flicker of divine goodness.

#### IV

Edwards's anthropology, comprising his metaphysical and scriptural ideas about human nature, stresses the negative characteristics of human beings.

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 423.

If looked at by themselves, however, Edwards's metaphysical ideas would not lead one to conclude that humanity is base. How does one square this positive outlook with the negative conception of humanity that emerges from his anthropology based on scripture? First and foremost, Edwards's metaphysical and biblical ideas about humanity are not opposing viewpoints. That one is positive and the other negative does not mean that they conflict. The epistemological and metaphysical explanations Edwards posits fall into line with his scriptural beliefs. For at the center of Edwards's world rests a theological belief in the sovereignty of God. Fundamentally, his ideas, be they epistemological, metaphysical, or scriptural, all return to this premise. It was characteristic of a Puritan to theologially declare humans impotent, while at the same time to admit psychologically that humankind was quite capable of doing the good. In this sense Edwards was a true Puritan.

As Samuel Willard and John Wise are examples of the Puritan anthropologies of late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century New England, Jonathan Edwards emerges in the mid-eighteenth century as a defender of orthodox Puritanism. His metaphysical view of humankind, however, goes beyond earlier Puritan views in its adoption of Newtonian science and Lockean psychology. The biblical aspect of his anthropology is entirely orthodox. Though he denies the label of "Calvinist" in Freedom of the Will, Edwards defends the main tenets of Calvin, for he subscribes to the orthodox doctrines of divine sovereignty, original sin, and total depravity. The fact that his anthropology is orthodox, while at the same time incorporating the new science and psychology of the eighteenth century, makes Jonathan Edwards's anthropology unique.

The Benevolence of the Deity:  
Jonathan Mayhew and Charles Chauncy

While Jonathan Edwards is best described as one who attempts to re-ground New England in orthodox Puritanism, Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew, following in the tradition of John Wise, embraced the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and questioned the orthodoxy of their forebears.

I

Jonathan Mayhew, minister of West Church in Boston from 1747 to 1766, explicated an anthropology that emphasizes the rational strain of Puritanism. The concept of human nature that is apparent in Mayhew's sermons describes human beings as innately neither good nor evil but endowed unequally with the capacity of reason.

Whereas the theology and anthropology of Edwards revolves around the fundamental precept of the sovereignty of God, Mayhew's theology, centers on the goodness of God. Mayhew states that the benevolence of the creator is the focus of Christian revelation and that any description of a wrathful God was improper. Mayhew's description of creation depicts God's acts as rational. These acts are comprehensible by the human mind and they disclose the goodness of God. The implications of this are twofold: first, humans can know the nature of God through the works of God, i.e., on the basis of what exists in nature human beings can discern the essence

of God without the assistance of revelation; second, this world in turn is the best of all possible worlds.<sup>1</sup> Mayhew's belief in the goodness of God stands in stark contrast to Edwards's defense of the orthodox Puritan view of a God of divine sovereignty. This fundamental difference led each to espouse contrasting anthropologies.

Mayhew's insistence on God's goodness led him to preach a gospel that flatly rejected the orthodox doctrine of native depravity.<sup>2</sup> Instead of preaching orthodox Puritan doctrine, he preached a gospel of "supernatural rationalism" and individualism.<sup>3</sup> He expounded a liberal, natural, and rational religion. Therefore, the doctrines of original sin, innate depravity, and predestination are not the focus of the thought of Mayhew. Though Mayhew abhorred orthodox Puritan doctrine, he in essence remained a true Puritan because he detested prelatic institutions and was versed in scripture enough to follow in the footsteps of traditional Puritan piety.<sup>4</sup>

James Jones in The Shattered Synthesis claims that John Norton opened the door for the humanism that Mayhew preached and that as a result "in Mayhew the Ramist tradition, and all of Puritanism with it, degenerates into moralism."<sup>5</sup> The support for such an argument lies in Mayhew's theological

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<sup>1</sup> James Jones, The Shattered Synthesis: New England Puritanism Before the Great Awakening (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 145-146.

<sup>2</sup> H. Shelton Smith, Changing Conceptions of Original Sin: A Study in American Theology Since 1750 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> John A. Corrigan, "Religion and the Social Theories of Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew." (Ph.D. diss. University of Chicago, 1982), p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Merle Curti, Human Nature in American Thought (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), pp. 77-78.

<sup>5</sup> Jones, The Shattered Synthesis, p. 160.

assertion of the benevolence of God. Mayhew correlated the manifestation of God's goodness with the belief that its intent was to make human beings happy. Consequently, this is the best of all possible worlds. This world of natural and moral spheres in which humans live is "under the same common direction or government." God's end in this and all things, "however various and diverse, is really one and uniform." The end of God's creation is "the moral perfection and happiness of the creatures capable of it, or the glory of God; which in any good and intelligent sense, seems to amount to the same thing."<sup>6</sup>

Jonathan Edwards's answer to the question, what is the end of humankind and the end of creation seems at first glance, at least semantically, to be the same as Mayhew's answer: the glory of God and God's goodness. A closer comparison reveals a paradigmatic difference. Edwards's understanding of the glory and goodness of God is only manifest as the happiness of the human creature insofar as it is the happiness of God, and if God's supreme end, God's own pleasure, is to make humankind happy, then so be it. But the chief end of God, according to Jonathan Edwards, is not the happiness of humanity. The supreme difference between the theology and anthropology of these two Puritan divines rests in their world views. Edwards subscribed to a theocentric world view wherein God is the center and focus of everything; Mayhew advocated an anthropocentric concept that placed humankind in an elevated position wherein God can be described as responding to human desires.

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<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, The Expected Dissolution of All Things, A Motive to Universal Holiness (Boston: Edes & Gill and R. Draper, 1755), p. 59.

A question that arises with either explanation is how does one explain evil in the world? Some of Edwards opponents pointed out that a theocentric theology and anthropology would make God the author of human sin and depravity. Edwards flatly rejected this notion. God is not the active author of sin. Sin is not the result of a "positive influence" by God nor is it "infused" into human nature.<sup>7</sup> God merely permits sin to enter this world and humankind to be depraved. Mayhew's response to a question about the nature of evil is to return to his precept of the goodness of God and the consequent happiness for human beings. Human beings in their present state "actually need trials and afflictions, as a means of promoting their moral good, and future happiness."<sup>8</sup> Evil, then, exists for the good of humanity.

Mayhew's belief in the goodness of God made it impossible for him to accept the doctrines of original sin, innate depravity, and predestination. "If any persons really hold such a doctrine," Mayhew asks, how can they "reconcile [it] with the goodness of God?"<sup>9</sup> This doctrine is "most false and unscriptural, horrible to the last degree, to all men of an undepraved judgment, and blasphemous against the God of heaven and earth." It is impossible for anyone "who really believes what the Scriptures teach concerning the goodness of God even to think" of these doctrines "but with

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<sup>7</sup> For a more complete discussion of this topic see Jonathan Edwards, "Editor's Introduction," Original Sin, vol. 3 of The Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 41-64; H. Shelton Smith, Changing Conceptions, Chap. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, Two Sermons on the Nature, Extent and Perfection of the Divine Goodness (Boston: D & J Kneeland, 1763), p. 58.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

great indignation."<sup>10</sup> Mayhew's insistence on the goodness of God led him to disavow these fundamental Puritan doctrines and instead profess an anthropology that is different from that of Edwards. Edwards described humankind as depraved; Mayhew could not do so.

The theology of Mayhew, if pursued further with respect to salvation, reveals its anthropocentric character. Mayhew espoused a governmental theory of atonement and a theory of salvation wherein human creatures save themselves. Their sins are atoned for and they are assured of their salvation through obedience to the commands of Christ. Mayhew described humans as being the active authors of their own salvation.<sup>11</sup> For Edwards and orthodox Puritanism this was anathema--sinners could not be saved by any initiation of their own. Human beings are active in orthodox Puritan theology but only in the sense that they respond to the stirrings of grace that God imparts to them.

In Seven Sermons . . . Preached as a Lecture in the West Meeting House (1750), Mayhew's first published work, he made clear that he abhorred the doctrine of natural depravity and disagreed with the orthodox theories of atonement and salvation. One reason Mayhew dissented from orthodox opinion was because it did not allow for the natural capacities of the human being, specifically, the ability of all human beings to discern the truth of a proposition by means of natural reason. Humans are able to perceive the "natural" difference between right and wrong because "truth and moral rectitude are things fixed, stable and uniform; having their

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Jones, The Shattered Synthesis, pp. 153-154.

foundation in the nature of things."<sup>12</sup> Through their rational nature and free will Mayhew depicts humans as having the ability to choose one proposition over another.

Right and wrong, truth and moral rectitude are fixed and stable propositions that exist in this world. The world in which humans live is God's world. God upholds, rules, controls it and, "in some way or other, perhaps inconceivable by us, actually orders and determines the events of it."<sup>13</sup> The origin of all events is God's will. God's will, the purposefulness of nature, is coterminous with the harmony, coherence, and consistence of the universe. The plan God has for the world, however, is not always comprehensible by the human understanding. God's works at times can be so "marvelous" that "we cannot penetrate into, or fully comprehend them, by reason of the narrowness of our faculties . . . and it is but a little way that we can see into the nature and causes and reasons of things."<sup>14</sup> It is "infinitely absurd to imagine" that humans with "such limited capacities . . . should be able to fully comprehend the immense designs and works of an infinite being."<sup>15</sup> This explanation upholds the abilities of human beings as they exist within the realm of God's world.

Mayhew's statement about the "circumstances and events" of life reflects his world view which made the most of human capacities while still

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<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, Seven Sermons (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1749), p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, Two Discourses Delivered November 23d 1758 (Boston: Draper, for Edes & Gill and Green & Russell, 1758), pp. 36-37.

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, A Discourse on Revelation XV. 3d. 4th (Boston: Edes & Gill and R. Draper, 1755), pp. 22-23.

<sup>15</sup> Mayhew, Expected Dissolution, p. 28.

assenting to the dominion of God. The events of life, he states, "must be ascribed at last to that divine providence, which superintends and over-rules all things."<sup>16</sup> The popular analogy that Mayhew resorts to is "the fabulous golden chain of the poets." This golden chain is "hung down from heaven to earth; the upper end whereof is far above mortal reach and sight, and there fastened to the throne of God."<sup>17</sup> God in this schema governs the moral good and evil of the natural world. The insight of the human creature, being finite, "cannot see into the connections and dependences of things and events in the moral world."<sup>18</sup> Yet, humans "do, or may know so much, both of him and them, as may serve the ends of practical religion; which is the end of man."<sup>19</sup> Since practical religion is the end for human beings, they "have a religious sense" of God's "wisdom, power and goodness, and of the obligations which we are under."<sup>20</sup> Human beings have the ability to discern their place in the universe.

The human understanding "holds the same rank in the order of beings" as does the body in the material universe. And the only knowledge that human beings can attain reflects the middling position that humans hold between God and the brute creatures. Human beings are endowed with a faculty of reason that the brute creatures do not have, but humans do not have the complete reason of God. Knowledge in Mayhew's psychology allows humans to "discern somewhat of the middle of things, under an

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<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, Two Discourses Delivered October 9th 1760 (Boston: n.p., 1760), p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Mayhew, Discourse on Revelation, p. 30.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

eternal Despair of comprehending either their Beginning or the End." This middle state of knowledge is a condition that describes all human faculties--"our senses can bear no extremes, too much noise or too much light are equally fatal; and make us deaf or blind: Too great Distance or too great nearness do alike hinder a Prospect and etc." Such is the proper place of the human creature that "confines all our Attainments within certain limits we can never pass."<sup>21</sup>

The human method of reasoning also reflects the middling position. Essentially, Mayhew depicts reasoning as keeping an open mind. It is important to let the mind "lie in equilibrio" in order for one to judge "solely by reason and argument."<sup>22</sup> The "Sobriety of the mind," this "medium," corresponds to the Puritan sense of the dialectical. It is founded in a belief in God's being and perfection, moral governance, and universal providence. In other words, it is agreeable to natural reason and expresses the revelations of Holy Scripture.<sup>23</sup> This dialectic between scripture and natural reason is not a contradiction since each confirms and helps to illustrate the other. Mayhew's use of the dialectic between biblical truths and natural reason is a manifestation of his Puritan heritage.

Like every orthodox Puritan, Jonathan Mayhew adhered to the idea of justification by faith. However, he was not content with "faith" as it was expressed by some of his forebears. Mayhew advocated faith in the one and supreme God. He supported an expanded meaning of faith that included

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<sup>21</sup> The information in this paragraph is from the Mayhew Papers, Boston University, Folder 10, pp. 6-7, as found in Corrigan, "Social Theories," p. 141.

<sup>22</sup> Mayhew, Seven Sermons, p. 42.

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, Christian Sobriety (Boston: R. & S. Draper, 1763), p. 50.

acts of repentance and obedience that the Christian performs as faith increased.<sup>24</sup> To an extent the contrast between faith and works seems to be lost. Mayhew speaks of faith and works as mutually dependent upon each other, for "the necessity of the former arises only from the necessity of the latter." Works in Mayhew's theology are pronounced as being "whatsoever is necessary, in order to our being at peace with God." Faith in turn is merely the "uprightness of heart" or a freedom from habitual sinning.<sup>25</sup> This follows upon Mayhew's explanation of knowledge and reason both within a mutually concerned dialectic wherein the human aspect is fitly represented as the middle ground.

Jonathan Mayhew, in the tradition of the Puritan propensity for the dialectical, upheld the dialectic between good and evil in the soul of human beings, but the emphasis was different. In Seven Sermons Mayhew's thought is divided into three distinct propositions: 1) that there exists a distinct natural difference between right and wrong, good and evil, 2) that human beings, endowed with certain faculties, e.g., reason and understanding, can judge and discern the difference between right and wrong, and 3) that humans are obliged to exert these faculties and to judge for themselves.<sup>26</sup> A corollary to the third point is that all Christians should read the Bible and judge for themselves in matters of religion.

A question arises in Mayhew's mind when the difference between right and wrong is described as being clearly distinct: why do some human beings choose wrong; why do they choose to do evil? As did Edwards, Mayhew

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<sup>24</sup> Corrigan, "Social Theories," p. 147.

<sup>25</sup> Mayhew, Seven Sermons, pp. 109, 215, 327.

<sup>26</sup> Corrigan, "Social Theories," p. 150.

answers that the difficulty lies in the fact that "in some cases" it is hard "to determine the boundaries." Sometimes things are "so intricate and complicated, that it is difficult, or even impossible, to determine them."<sup>27</sup> The world in this system of thought then, can be both good and evil and so it is--"But alas! there is never any great good in this present evil world without some mixture of evil, at least if what seems to us to be so."<sup>28</sup> This leads to a further question, one which Mayhew did not address. If a theology is centered on or backed by the goodness of the creator God and this is the best of all possible worlds because the end of God and humanity is then happiness, why is the present world evil? Mayhew could have answered this question as Charles Chauncy did, that the world fell with Adam and that sin now abounds, but he simply did not address the issue. The inherent nature of humanity can be maintained as in the way of the middle ground, neither good nor evil, by asserting that we are not born morally depraved but with an imperfect nature. Yet, what are the implications when one asserts a theology of salvation, as Mayhew does, wherein the sinner saves his or her own life? What would this mean to an orthodox Puritan such as Jonathan Edwards, John Cotton, or Samuel Willard? The implications of Mayhew's theology as a result of a subtle change in emphasis in the dialectic between good and evil are that the world is no longer Godcentered but human-centered. The world view is no longer theocentric; it is anthropocentric, for the emphasis lies on the happiness of humanity.

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<sup>27</sup> Mayhew, Seven Sermons, pp. 13, 16.

<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, Two Thanksgiving Discourses (Boston: R. Draper, 1759), p. 63.

Mayhew's advocacy of a dialectic of the middle ground between good and evil and between faith and works can also be seen in his description of the Great Awakening. The reason and the affections, the head and the heart, were out of balance, according to Mayhew. He felt that the revivals placed too much importance upon the affections. Though Mayhew joined the great debate over the significance of the revivals only nominally he still referred to the "vain Enthusiasts" as "enlightened Ideots" who "endeavour to palm the grossest absurdities upon their neighbours, under the notion of their being divine truths and holy mysteries."<sup>29</sup>

Mayhew then offers a paean to reason: "It is by our reason that we are exalted above the beasts of the field. It is by this that we are allied to angels, and all the glorious intelligence of the heavenly world; yea, by this we resemble God himself."<sup>30</sup> Mayhew's sympathies clearly lay with reason but only in so far as to return the things of religion to a state of equilibrium. The affections had upset the balance between the heart and head in the things of religion.

The source for Jonathan Mayhew's middle ground was his subscription to the faculty psychology of Puritanism. Mayhew's psychology grounded in the distinct faculties of the soul holds that "the Heart has its Arguments and motives, with which the Reason is not acquainted." The heart, according to Mayhew, and not the reason contains the "perception of God."<sup>31</sup> The affections in turn are the proper seat of religious thankfulness. Religious

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<sup>29</sup> Mayhew, Seven Sermons, p. 39.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 39-40.

<sup>31</sup> The information in this paragraph is from the Mayhew Papers, Boston University, Folder 10, pp. 7-8, as quoted by Corrigan, "Social Theories," p. 153.

thankfulness is different from "the mere sensation of joy or account of the blessing received." It is also distinguished from "a mere speculative notion in the head, and all the operations of that which is peculiarly and strictly called, the intellectual or rational faculty."<sup>32</sup> What is religion and from where does it arise, the heart or the reason?

Religion is a passion and passions are from God, but it is a passion "excited by reason presenting the proper object of it to the mind." With the experience of the Great Awakening present in his thoughts Mayhew returns to his idea of the middle ground and explains how religion is really a mixture of the heart and the reason. We ought not to

be so solicitous about avoiding one extreme, as to fall into the contrary. We ought not to run so far from enthusiasm, as to lose sight of real direction; we ought not to be so fond of a rational religion, as to suppose that religion consists wholly in cold, dry speculation, without having any concern for the affections.<sup>33</sup>

Religion, according to Mayhew, requires both the heart and the reason to be in balance.

To claim that Mayhew advocated reason over the heart and the affections would be incorrect. Reason, however, does play an increasingly important role in Jonathan Mayhew's theology and anthropology. Mayhew read the works of Dr. Samuel Clarke and Bishop Benjamin Hoadley and pointed out the place of reason in a world that he felt had forsaken reason. He did not preach a gospel that appealed to and excited one's affections; he would not dangle his parishioners over the fire pit of hell. Mayhew noted the fact that human beings are "certainly weak, indigent creatures" and that indeed humans are "in some degree conscious of their own imperfection,"

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<sup>32</sup> Mayhew, Two Discourses Delivered November 23d 1758, p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> Mayhew, Seven Sermons, p. 95.

but he assured his congregation that they could distinguish between right and wrong with their own faculty of reason.<sup>34</sup> Humans are weak and ignorant on one hand, but on the other they are also quite capable of goodness. More often than not Mayhew emphasizes the essential goodness of human nature. Mayhew's sermons reflect this fact in that he attempted to persuade his parishioners by appealing to their reason in setting concrete examples of fact before them. For instance, he set ominous natural events such as earthquakes and fires before them as a means of persuading the human reason rather than exciting the affections. Earthquakes and fires were proof of the power of God and were "indeed very peculiarly adapted to rouse and awaken the minds of the inconsiderate, and if those who forget God; and to beget in them that fear him, which is the beginning of wisdom."<sup>35</sup>

Jonathan Mayhew thus espoused a different anthropology from that of Edwards. Edwards believed in the innate depravity of humankind and showed how humans could not do anything for their salvation, while Mayhew argued against an innate depravity of humanity and stressed the goodness of the human in reference to reason. In Mayhew's eyes human beings are essentially good and, if they would follow their reason, they might combine faith with works to earn their salvation. Absent from the anthropology of Jonathan Mayhew is the theocentric world view that Jonathan Edwards proclaimed.

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<sup>34</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, A Sermon preached at Boston in New England, May 26, 1751. Occasioned by the much-lamented death of His Royal Highness Frederick, Prince of Wales (Boston: R. Draper and D. Gookin, 1751), p. 5; Smith, Changing Conceptions, p. 25.

<sup>35</sup> Mayhew, Discourse on Revelation, p. 51.

## II

Similar to the anthropology of Mayhew is that of Charles Chauncy. Chauncy, like Mayhew combined the human-istic ideas of the eighteenth century with Puritanism and, like Mayhew, placed emphasis on the human faculty of reason. Both men based their theologies on the idea of the benevolence of the deity. Chauncy affirmed "supernatural rationalism" as did Mayhew, but Chauncy would abhor the title in favor of being labeled simply a good Congregationalist.<sup>36</sup> Charles Chauncy, perhaps the most important cleric in Boston during the mid- to late-eighteenth century, published more than Mayhew.

The theology of Charles Chauncy, based on the assertion of the benevolence of the deity, is best expressed in his "Body of Divinity." As Bezaleel Howard defines it, Chauncy's "Body of Divinity" consists of The Benevolence of the Deity (1784), Five Dissertations on the Scripture Account of the Fall (1785), and Salvation for All Men (1784). Chauncy began work on these essays in early 1752, and the project was completed seven years later.<sup>37</sup>

The fundamental work to the whole "Body of Divinity" is The Benevolence of the Deity. Benevolence is "a principle disposing and prompting to the communication of happiness."<sup>38</sup> Conrad Wright, in The Beginnings of Unitarianism, notes that Chauncy, in defining benevolence, "took great

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<sup>36</sup> Edward M. Griffin, Old Brick, Charles Chauncy of Boston: 1705-1787 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Chauncy, The Benevolence of the Deity (Boston: Powars and Willis, 1784), p. 11.

pains" to insist "that the word has exactly the same meaning when ascribed to God as when applied" to humans. Chauncy in this instance was arguing against the high Calvinist notion of a gulf between God and humans.<sup>39</sup> Chauncy states that "Every Being, in heaven and earth, to whom this attribute may be applied, partakes of the same quality, though not in the same manner, nor in the same degree and proportion."<sup>40</sup> Divine benevolence is "analogous to kind affection" in humans, but "only as kind affection in us is attended with frailty." In God "it is absolutely perfect" in both mode and manner of exercise. Benevolence in the deity explicitly denotes the same thing with a "disposition freely to communicate all the good that is consistent with wise and fit conduct." God, the benevolent deity, "knows all the ways of producing happiness."<sup>41</sup>

Human beings in The Benevolence of the Deity are portrayed as intelligent moral agents who have the "ability and freedom to Will, as well as to do."<sup>42</sup> They have mental and moral capacities of perfection and happiness that depend upon themselves. As in Mayhew's universe, humans, for Chauncy, occupy a middling position between God and the brute creature. Human beings are "partly animal and partly rational, being allied both to the highest, and the lowest orders of being in the universe."<sup>43</sup> The "chain of being," an idea found in many Puritan theologies such as those of Perkins, Ames, Edwards, and Mayhew, reappears again in Chauncy's

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<sup>39</sup> Conrad Wright, The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America (Boston: Starr King Press, 1955), p. 171-172.

<sup>40</sup> Chauncy, Benevolence of the Deity, p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 18, 38-39.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., title page.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 62, 86.

thought. Humans within Chauncy's chain of being constitute "one person" or "living agent." The human constitution, formed by God is an "illustrious instance of the Divine goodness. Because of this, humans are able to "conceive of the Deity as absolutely and perfectly benevolent."<sup>44</sup>

The ability to discern the benevolence of the deity is not the only mental capacity humans have. There are two others that Chauncy describes humans as having. The first "furnishes us with the materials of knowledge; the other qualifies us for the proper use of them."<sup>45</sup> The materials of knowledge are furnished by sensation. Sensation "is that capacity by means of which impression from without become perceptions within." These impressions affect the mind and give rise to sensible ideas. Reflection qualifies the proper use of the ideas of sensation and includes the mind's capacity for introspection.<sup>46</sup>

Knowledge in Chauncy's psychology reflects the two mental capacities of sensation and reflection.

Knowledge is an assent grounded on the perception of the bodily senses, or the operation of our reasonable powers. External objects strike our senses, and we at once know what impressions we receive from them. And we have an ability of mind to reason upon things, comparing them together, deducing consequences from them, forming a judgment how far this or that is true or false, and giving or with-holding our assent accordingly.<sup>47</sup>

Chauncy's psychology is Lockean in one sense because knowledge is gained through the senses, but it is scholastic in its insistence on the division of

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 86-87.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Charles Chauncy, Twelve Sermons On the following seasonable and important Subjects (Boston: D. & J. Kneeland, 1765), pp. 71-72.

the faculties. The capacities and faculties of the mind are separate in Chauncy's psychology just as they are in the faculty psychology of earlier Puritans. The unifying sense of Locke's psychology did not have the same impact on Charles Chauncy that it did on Jonathan Edwards.

Besides having a mental faculty and mental capacities, humans are also endowed with a moral faculty. Moral knowledge, "a new sort of knowledge," is non-material and concerns the moral world. The attributes of the human moral faculty reside in their moral sense, their ability of self-determination, and their conscience. The moral sense, implanted by God, enables humans at once "to distinguish between moral good, moral evil."<sup>48</sup> Self-determination is the human capacity to attain happiness for themselves, and the conscience is a witness to testify for or against us.<sup>49</sup> All of these attributes are derived from God, the benevolent deity. Reflecting upon the moral world allows humans to "perceive a difference of powers in [their] own constitution, some superior, others inferior." Becoming acquainted with these powers and the governance thereof consists in a "moral economy" which is humankind's "greatest glory."<sup>50</sup>

The constitution of human beings, being both material and moral, intellectual and moral, and rational and sensi-ble, "evidently carries with it the marks of benevolence." Human nature therefore is "adorned and endowed" wonderfully with a "supreme and perfect goodness."<sup>51</sup> These powers, intellectual and moral, however, are not fully developed. Human

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<sup>48</sup> Chauncy, Benevolence of the Deity, p. 120.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 120, 144.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 106

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

beings are born with weak and feeble intellectual powers and only "in a slow and leisurely way, under due cultivation, and in the use of labor and pain," do "they gain strength, and advance to any considerable degrees of their attainable perfection." Every human is born capable of "attaining still higher degrees." This progression towards perfection "is the most natural and rational one that could have been contrived."<sup>52</sup> Human beings depend upon themselves in Chauncy's schema, for humans can only attain to perfection by their own endeavors.

The moral sense of the human nature, implanted by God, allows for an easy distinction between moral good and moral evil. There are points, however, where it is hard to discern the difference. Mayhew felt that at points the line between good and evil became blurred and therein some chose wrongly. Chauncy considered both sides of the issue of good and evil like Mayhew did, but he pushed for a greater connection between the opposing sides of the dialectical struggle in the soul. In Benevolence of the Deity Chauncy denies that good and evil are two opposite and independent principles. Good and evil are connected; humans just cannot see how. The connection "surpasses our ability particularly to trace the ways wherein it may tend to good."<sup>53</sup> This points out Chauncy's insistence on the coherency and consistency of creation and allowed him to state that evil can be good. Evil is not a theological problem; it is a human problem. Evil and suffering occur in this world as a trial: "the proper tendency and

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

final cause of evils and suffering . . . are to do us good, in the natural and moral sense, or both. They are a suitably adapted mean to this end."<sup>54</sup>

The only basis of moral obligation for Chauncy is the ability of self-determination. Human beings "are at liberty to will or not to will, to chuse or not to chuse, the doing of these and those actions." As free agents endowed by God it is the human nature that constitutes them as free. Free agency is "the grand supporting pillar of the world, considered as moral" and the author is God.<sup>55</sup>

The self-determination of the will argument that Chauncy puts forth stands in direct contrast to that of Jonathan Edwards in Freedom of the Will. Edwards rejected the Arminian notions of Chauncy and others because they put too much power into the hands of human beings--they shut God out of the world. Edwards denied the self-determination of the will. Chauncy, however, felt the will had a power of self-determination and that this free agency rests in the benevolence of the deity in endowing human nature with such. This difference between Chauncy and Edwards over self-determination points to the fundamental difference in their anthropologies. Edwards discussed the issues in terms of Locke's unifying psychology, while Chauncy spoke in terms of the faculty psychology, and as a result they disagreed. The debate between Edwards and Chauncy went beyond the psycho-logical realm, into the theological arena.

One of the theological disagreements between Edwards and Chauncy centers around the fall of Adam and the subsequent innate depravity of

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<sup>54</sup> Charles Chauncy, The Mystery Hid from All Ages, Made Manifest by the Gospel Revelation (London: C. Dilly, 1784), p. 324.

<sup>55</sup> Chauncy, Benevolence of the Deity, pp. 128, 132, 135.

humankind. Edwards defended the orthodox doctrine of Puritanism, the depravity of humankind. Jonathan Mayhew denied the depravity of humankind and so did Charles Chauncy.

A more shocking idea can scarcely be given of the Deity, than that which represents him as arbi-trarily dooming the greater part of the race of men to eternal misery. Was he wholly destitute of goodness, yea, positively malevolent in his nature, a worse representation could not be well made of him. And yet, this is the true import of the doctrine of absolute and unconditional repro-bation, as it has been taught, even by those who profess faith in God as a benevolent, yea, an infinitely benevolent Being.<sup>56</sup>

The result of Chauncy's belief in the benevolence of the deity is an anthropology that could not assert that humans were inherently evil.

Chauncy asserts in dissertation one of Five Dissertations on the Scripture Account of the Fall; and its consequences that human beings are created in the image of God. What he means is that humans have "naked capacities" and by using these humans can attain unto perfection. Human beings have the "capacity" for God's likeness.<sup>57</sup> Just as there is a progression towards perfection of the intellectual and moral powers there is a corresponding progression in the spiritual and religious abilities of humans. These beliefs led Chauncy, like Mayhew, to affirm the connection between faith and works. Chauncy states "instead of denying faith to be a work. I avow it to be one."<sup>58</sup> The connection between faith and works is expressed as a "duty" and it is every human being's "duty" to strive for perfection in things spiritual. In Chauncy's mind, how could humans be depraved if they could attain unto perfection?

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. viii.

<sup>57</sup> Charles Chauncy, Five Dissertations on the Scripture Account of the Fall (London: n.p., 1785), p. 23.

<sup>58</sup> Chauncy, Twelve Sermons, p. 121.

Chauncy's argument against the orthodox doctrine of innate depravity also focused on a rejection of imputed sin and Jonathan Edwards's "one complex person," Adam.<sup>59</sup> Adam was not formed in a state of moral perfection as the Calvinists held but was created, Chauncy states, "with nothing more than those capacities which are proper to a being of that order in which he was created."<sup>60</sup> God "endowed" Adam with "naked capacities" which would enable him to "attain to that perfection in resembling the Deity he was originally formed and designed for."<sup>61</sup> Adam, however, broke his covenant with God. Adam's forsaking the covenant resulted in two types of evil in this world: 1) natural evil such as physical death, fear, shame, and a sense of guilt, and 2) judicial evil which required labor, sorrow, and suffering that eventually ends with the loss of life.<sup>62</sup> Adam's posterity, however, according to Chauncy, did not participate in his sin. Human beings are not guilty of the original sin, but "the human race descends from Adam in his lapsed state" and as a result humanity inherits mortality.<sup>63</sup> Chauncy therefore asserted that humanity is not innately depraved.

If humanity is not depraved, then why do sin and evil persist? Chauncy answers this question by pointing out the personal rather than the corporate nature of sin. Sin is "a moral irregularity" that "stands in necessary connection with the agent who commits it, and must therefore, in

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<sup>59</sup> Smith, Changing Conceptions, p. 53.

<sup>60</sup> Chauncy, Five Dissertations, p. 23.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, Changing Conceptions, p. 52; Chauncy, Five Dissertations, pp. 108-112.

<sup>63</sup> Chauncy, Five Dissertations, p. 129.

the nature of things, be Personal."<sup>64</sup> Human beings suffer in Adam's sin and death, but they are not guilty of it. Chauncy denies the interpretation of I Corinthians that holds that humankind comes into existence as morally corrupt. Adam's sin is "merely the instrument or medium . . . through which God communicated" the human nature. Humans cannot be inherently sinful or depraved because there is no agency involved. They are born mortal and imperfect, according to Chauncy, but not depraved or sinful. Human beings in Chauncy's eyes are nothing but "corruptible mortal creatures by nature."<sup>65</sup>

Charles Chauncy, as Edward Griffin describes him, felt that "by insisting" upon the depravity of human nature the evangelical New Lights of the Great Awakening "influenced the people to define themselves as unworthy of the great task before them." The task that Chauncy saw before the colonists was that of being a "redeemer nation." Chauncy believed that, by using only their unaided reason, human beings could discern the basics of religion: the existence of God, the necessity of religion, and the existence of a future life that held forth reward or punishment.<sup>66</sup> In the full scope of things, however, reason also needed the affections. During the Great Awakening the question became, how much of the revivals is the working of God? Because Chauncy consistently affirmed the benevolence of the deity and because he affirmed God's justice, we have two distinct answers. Did the revivals rely too much upon the affections at the expense of reason? Chauncy, like Mayhew, thought they did.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>66</sup> Griffin, Old Brick, pp. 4-5.

Jonathan Edwards through his preaching initiated the revivals that grew into the Great Awakening. Consequently, he defended the revivals as the work of God. At one point the enthusiasm exceeded the limits of Edwards's approval, and in the Religious Affections he noted the excesses of the revivals and qualified God's role in the stirrings of grace that were rampant throughout New England. The excesses of the revivals were the results of the corruption of human-kind. Chauncy, on the other hand, though he never stated that the revivals were not the work of God, felt the revivals were not wonderful or glorious instances of the workings of God. Too much disorder, doctrinal error, and enthusiasm prevailed. The errors of the revivals were not the result of the corruption of humankind for Chauncy, but they were the effects of itinerant preachers and a preaching style that appealed to the affections.<sup>67</sup>

The differences between Chauncy and Edwards can be condensed into a disagreement over the workings of the Spirit and opposing theories of psychology. Edwards, as defender of the revivals, upheld the affections and their efficacy in the things of religion and never denied the powers of reason of the human mind. Charles Chauncy never rejected the importance of the affections, but he felt that things had gone awry in the Great Awakening. In Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England, Chauncy states that "an enlightened Mind, and not raised Affections, ought always to be the Guide of those who call themselves Men; and this, in the Affairs of Religion, as well as other Things."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp. 79-85.

<sup>68</sup> Charles Chauncy, Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1743), p. 327.

Chauncy's psychology rests upon his ideas about the universe, its hierarchical arrangement, and its chain of being. The human being was organized in a like manner. The capacities of humans were ordered, ascending from the lower bodily functions to the highest faculties of the mind, willing and reasoning. The affections in Chauncy's system of thought reside below the faculty of reason. With religion the importance lay in keeping a balance between the reason and the affections. The "heart" might influence the "head," for the "passions, when suitably mov'd, tend rightly to awaken the reasonable powers, and put them on a lively and vigorous exercise." The obverse could take place as well; humans could be struck by the beauty of creation and its amiability and then be moved to love God. The problem with the Great Awakening, according to Chauncy, lay in its unbalanced nature: the affections swayed the balance. For Chauncy the affections needed to be balanced with the understanding because fundamentally, the higher powers govern; an "Enlightened Mind" guides the "raised Affections."

The anthropology that emerges from the thought of Chauncy, similar to that of Mayhew, begins and ends with the theological assertion of the benevolence of the deity and revolves around an outdated faculty psychology that emphasizes the faculty of reason. Chauncy's anthropology, anthropocentric in character, when coupled with that of Mayhew, stands in contrast to the concepts of human nature espoused earlier in New England's history.

## Conclusion

Samuel Willard, John Wise, Jonathan Edwards, Jonathan Mayhew, and Charles Chauncy, New England divines, left sermons and treatises that disclose their thoughts about human nature. The concepts of human nature that are found in their works reveal much about how they viewed life. When taken as a whole, these concepts point to and reinforce the thesis of change in New England from 1676 to 1776. Many factors were involved in this transformation, and many scholars have aptly demonstrated the economic, political, intellectual, religious, and social changes that occurred in eighteenth-century New England.

Merle Curti, in Human Nature in American Thought, describes the emergence in America during the eighteenth century of an anthropocentric world view from the theocentric bastion of orthodox Puritanism. The thesis of this essay is the same: that in the one hundred years before the American Revolution the concept of human nature in New England changed. The emergence of an anthropocentric theological anthropology in the minds of such men as Chauncy and Mayhew is not something which has gone undiscovered, and Curti was not the first to advance the notion that religious thought in America went from being almost singularly theocentric to rather anthropocentric in the eighteenth century. There are many reasons for the appearance of anthropocentric concepts of human nature during these years. It has not, however, been the objective of this thesis to answer questions about causation. This essay merely discovers the

"what," the substance of the change in the theological anthropology of New England.

The theocentric foundation for most concepts of human nature in the seventeenth century eroded in the eighteenth but did not fall into ruin as an anthropocentric alternative emerged. From the eighteenth century to the present, these two world views have opposed each other for control of the religious mind in America. The concepts of human nature that Willard, Wise, Edwards, Mayhew, and Chauncy espoused rested on one or the other of these two foundations or world views, and each of these figures represents a significant aspect of what became an ever-expanding argument in American religious thought.

Willard's concept of human nature as depraved reflects the theocentric foundation of his orthodox heritage. John Wise, drawing upon the natural rights theory of Samuel Pufendorf, rejected this view. Wise represents the early phase of the Enlightenment in New England thought wherein a universe infused with Reason could not support a Calvinist concept of human nature. Rather than opting for the theo-centric world view of Willard, Wise chose an anthropocentric world view that focused upon the right reason of human beings.

Jonathan Edwards represents Puritan orthodoxy in the mid-eighteenth century. Edwards's concept of human nature, theocentric in its foundation, emphasizes the depravity of humanity as well as the native abilities of humankind. Perry Miller, in describing seventeenth-century Puritan psychology and anthropology, noted how Puritans could declare humanity depraved but at the same time capable of many noble achievements. Edwards fits this description well. The scripturally-based writings of Edwards reveal a concept of human nature as depraved, while his scientific

and philosophical writings portray humans as noble creatures. It may appear that Edwards's thought about human nature is contradictory, but it is not. Edwards's anthropology is clearly theocentric in character, for his scriptural, scientific, and philosophical writings are based on a belief that everything depends upon God.

The anthropology of Jonathan Edwards stands in contrast to the anthropologies of Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew. Edwards upheld the theocentric world view of Willard and seventeenth-century Puritanism. Chauncy and Mayhew picked up and carried on the tune that Wise began in the early eighteenth century, a tune of "supernatural rationalism." Like Wise, Chauncy and Mayhew advocated an anthropocentric theological anthropology. What is ironic, as Perry Miller has pointed out, is that the orthodox Puritan, Edwards, embraced the unifying psychology of the Enlightenment and that Chauncy and Mayhew, advocates of the Enlightenment doctrine of reason, the coherence of the universe, and the harmony of nature, could not break out of the bounds of medieval scholastic or faculty psychology.<sup>1</sup>

The emerging anthropocentric character of the concept of human nature that Wise, Mayhew, and Chauncy represent stands in opposition to the theocentric concept of human nature of Willard and Edwards. The anthropocentric concept of human nature advanced by Wise, Mayhew, and Chauncy points to the fact that New England Puritanism was changing. No longer would the world be explained from a theocentric stance without being challenged by an opposing anthropocentric argument. An

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<sup>1</sup> Perry Miller and Alan Heimert, eds. The Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and its Consequences (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), p. xi.

anthropocentric world view would now vie with the theocentric world view for dominance in American religious thought.

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