

DISSERTATION ON THE END FOR WHICH GOD CREATED THE WORLD. by Jonathan Edwards

A Study- Scott Doherty May 9 – June 13 2014 Reformed Presbyterian Church, Oswego, NY 7:00PM-8:30PM

5 Weeks

May 9 - Introduction

May 16 - Reason I CH1 §1-3

May 30 - Reason II CH1 §4

June 6 - Scripture I CH2 §1-4

June 13 - Scripture II CH2 §5-7

Introduction—Explanation of terms. (terms and 9 positions)

CHAPTER I. What Reason dictates concerning this affair.

SECTION I.	<i>Some things observed in general, which reason dictates.</i>	(6 dictates of reason)
SECTION II.	<i>Some further observations concerning those things which reason leads us to suppose God aimed at in the creation of the world.</i>	(4 things)
SECTION III.	<i>Wherein it is considered how, on the supposition of God's making the forementioned things his last end, he manifests a supreme and ultimate regard to himself in all his works.</i>	(in the 4 things)
SECTION IV.	<i>Some objections considered, which may be made against the reasonableness of what has been said of God making himself his last end.</i>	(4 objections)

CHAPTER II. What may be learned from the Holy Scriptures.

SECTION I.	<i>The Scriptures represent God as making himself his own last end in the creation of the world.</i>	
SECTION II.	<i>Wherein some positions are advanced concerning a just method of arguing in this affair, from what we find in the Holy Scriptures</i>	(12 positions)
SECTION III.	<i>Particular texts of Scripture, that show that God's glory is an ultimate end of the creation.</i>	(9 arguments from § 2 and Scripture)
SECTION IV.	<i>Places of Scripture that lead us to suppose, that God created the world for his name, to make his perfections known; and that he made it for his praise.</i>	(3 name, excellency, praise)
SECTION V.	<i>Places of Scripture from whence it may be argued, that communication of good to the creature, was one thing which God had in view, as an ultimate end of the creation of the world.</i>	(10 arguments)
SECTION VI.	<i>Wherein is considered what is meant by the glory of God and the name of God in Scripture, when spoken of as God's ends in his works.</i>	(glory, name)
SECTION VII.	<i>Showing that the ultimate end of the creation of the world is but one, and what that one end is.</i>	

ANALYTICAL OUTLINE

Introduction—Explanation of terms.

1. A *subordinate* end is what an agent aims at, not at all upon its own account, but wholly on the account of a *further* end, of which it is considered as a means.
2. An *ultimate* end is that which the agent seeks, in what he does, for its *own* sake; what he loves, values, and takes pleasure in on its own account, and not merely as a means of a further end.
3. A *chief* end, which is opposite to an *inferior* end, is something diverse from an ultimate end; it is most valued, and therefore most sought after by the agent in what he does.
 - a. That two different ends may be both ultimate, and yet not be chief ends.
 - b. An ultimate end is not always the chief end, because some subordinate ends may be *more* valued and sought after than some *ultimate* ends.
- *First*, When it is said, that some *subordinate* ends may be *more* valued than some *ultimate* ends, it is not supposed that ever a subordinate end is more valued than *that* to which it is subordinate.
- *Secondly*, The ultimate end is always *superior* to its subordinate end, and more valued by the agent, unless it be when the ultimate end entirely depends on the subordinate.
- *Thirdly*, If any being has but *one* ultimate end, in all that he does, and there be a great variety of operations, his *last* end may justly be looked upon as his *supreme* end.
- *Fourthly*, Whatsoever any agent has in view in any thing he does, which is agreeable to him *in itself*, and not merely for the sake of something else, is regarded by that agent as his *last* end.
- *Fifthly*, From hence it will follow, that, if an agent has in view *more things than one* that will be brought to pass by what he does, which he loves and delights in on their *own* account, then he must have *more things than one* that he regards as his *last* ends in what he does. But if there be *but one thing* that an agent seeks, on its *own* account, then there can be *but one* last end which he has in all his actions and operations.
 - i. (1.) What is in itself grateful to an agent, and valued on its own account, *simply* and *absolutely* considered; antecedent to, and *independent* of all conditions, or any supposition of particular cases and circumstances.
 - ii. (2.) What may be said to be in itself agreeable to an agent, *hypothetically* and consequentially; or, on supposition of such and such circumstances, or on the happening of such a particular case.
- *Sixthly*, It may be further observed, that the *original* ultimate end or ends of the creation of the world is *alone* that which induces God to give the occasion for consequential ends, by the first creation of the world, and the original disposal of it.
- *Seventhly*, If we use the phrase ultimate end in this highest sense, then the same that is God's ultimate end in creating the world, if we suppose but one such end, must be what he makes his ultimate aim in all his works, in every thing he does either in creation or providence.
- *Eighthly*, On the other hand, whatever appears to be God's ultimate end, in any sense, of his works of providence in *general*; that must be the ultimate end of the work of *creation* itself.
- *Ninthly*, If there be but *one thing* that is originally, and independent on any future supposed cases, agreeable to God, to be obtained by the creation of the world, then there can be *but one last end* of God's work, in this highest sense. But if there are *various* things, properly diverse one from another, that are absolutely, and independently agreeable to the Divine Being, which are actually obtained by the creation of the world, then there were *several* ultimate ends of the creation in that highest sense.

CHAPTER I. What Reason dictates concerning this affair.

- SECTION I. *Some things observed in general, which reason dictates.*
 1. That no notion of God's last end in the creation of the world, is agreeable to reason, which would truly imply any indigence, insufficiency, and mutability in God; or any dependence of the Creator on the creature, for any part of his perfection or happiness.
 2. Whatsoever is good and valuable *in itself*, is worthy that God should value it with an *ultimate* respect. It is therefore worthy to be made the *last end* of his operation; if it be properly *capable* of being attained.
 3. Whatever that be which is *in itself* most valuable, and was so originally, prior to the creation of the world, and which is *attainable* by the creation, if there be any thing which was superior in value to all others, *that* must be worthy to be God's *last end* in the creation; and also worthy to be his *highest end*.
 4. That if God *himself* be, in *any* respect, properly *capable* of being his own end in the creation of the world, then it is reasonable to suppose that he had respect to *himself*, as his last and highest end, in this work; because he is *worthy* in himself to be so, being infinitely the greatest and best of beings.
 5. Whatsoever is good, amiable, and valuable *in itself*, *absolutely* and *originally*, (which facts and events show that God aimed at in the creation of the world,) must be supposed to be regarded or aimed at by God *ultimately*, or as an ultimate end of creation.
 6. Whatsoever thing is *actually* the *effect* of the creation of the world, which is simply and absolutely valuable in itself, that thing is an ultimate end of God's creating the world.
- SECTION II. *Some further observations concerning those things which reason leads us to suppose God aimed at in the creation of the world.*
 1. It seems a thing in itself proper and desirable, that the glorious attributes of God, which consist in a *sufficiency* to certain acts and effects, should be *exerted* in the production of such effects as might manifest his infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, &c.
 2. It seems to be a thing in itself fit and desirable, that the glorious perfections of God should be *known*, and the operations and expressions of them seen, by *other beings* besides himself.
 3. As it is desirable in itself that God's glory should be known, so when known it seems equally reasonable it should be esteemed and delighted in, answerably to its dignity.
 4. As there is an infinite fulness of all possible good in God—a fulness of every perfection, of all excellency and beauty, and of infinite happiness—and as this fulness is capable of communication, or emanation *ad extra*; so it seems a thing amiable and valuable in *itself* that this infinite fountain of good should send forth abundant streams.
- SECTION III. *Wherein it is considered how, on the supposition of God's making the forementioned things his last end, he manifests a supreme and ultimate regard to himself in all his works.*
 1. Now, with regard to the first of the particulars mentioned above—God's regard to the *exercise* of those attributes of his nature, in their proper operations and effects, which consist in a *sufficiency* for these operations—it is not hard to conceive that God's regard to *himself*, and value for his own perfections, should cause him to value these exercises and expressions of' his perfections; inasmuch as their excellency consists in their relation to use, exercise, and operation.
 - 2-3. And with respect to the second and third particulars, the matter is no less plain. For he that loves any being, and has a disposition highly to prize and greatly to delight in his virtues and perfections, must from the same disposition be well pleased to have his excellencies known, acknowledged, esteemed, and prized by others.
 4. And with respect to the fourth and last particular, *viz.* God's being disposed to an abundant communication, and glorious emanation, of that infinite fulness of good which he possesses, as of his own knowledge, excellency and happiness, in the manner he does; if we thoroughly consider the matter, it will appear, that herein also God makes himself his end, in such a sense, as plainly to manifest and testify a supreme and ultimate regard to himself.
 - a. One part of that divine fulness which is communicated, is the divine *knowledge*.
 - b. Another emanation of divine fulness, is the communication of virtue and *holiness* to the creature:
 - c. Another part of God's fulness which he communicates, is his *happiness*.
 - d. And it is farther to be considered, that what God aimed at in the creation of the world, as the end which he had ultimately in view, was that communication of himself which he intended through all eternity.

- SECTION IV. *Some objections considered, which may be made against the reasonableness of what has been said of God making himself his last end.*
 1. Some may object against what has been said as being inconsistent with God's absolute independence and immutability: particularly, as though God were inclined to a communication of his fulness, and emanations of his own glory, as being his own most glorious and complete state.
 - a. Many have wrong notions of God's happiness, as resulting from his absolute self-sufficiency, independence, and immutability.
 - b. If any are not satisfied with the preceding answer, but still insist on the objection, let them consider whether they can devise any other scheme of God's last end in creating the world, but what will be equally obnoxious to this objection in its full force, if there be any force in it.
 - c. The doctrine that makes God's *creatures* and not *himself* to be his last end, is a doctrine the furthest from having a favorable aspect on God's absolute self-sufficiency and independence.
 2. Some may object, that to suppose God makes himself his highest and last end, is dishonorable to him; as it in effect supposes, that God does every thing from a selfish spirit.
 - a. Such an objection must arise from a very ignorant or inconsiderate notion of the vice of selfishness and the virtue of generosity.
 - b. In created beings, a regard to self-interest may properly be set in *opposition* to the public welfare; because the private interest of one person may be inconsistent with the public good; at least it may be so in the apprehension of that person. That, which this person looks upon as his interest, may interfere with or oppose the general good. Hence his private interest may be regarded and pursued in opposition to the public. But this cannot be with respect to the Supreme Being, the author and head of the whole system; on whom all absolutely depend; who is the fountain of being and good to the whole.
 - c. God seeking himself in the creation of the world in the manner which has been supposed, is so far from; being inconsistent with the good of its creatures, that it is a kind of regard to himself that inclines him to seek the good of his creature.
 3. To what has been supposed, that God makes himself his end—in seeking that his glory and excellent perfections should be known, esteemed, loved, and delighted in by his creatures—it may be objected, that this seems unworthy of God.

This objection is specious. It hath a show of argument; but it will appear to be nothing but a show, if we consider,

- a. Whether it be not worthy of God, to regard and value what is excellent and valuable in itself; and so to take pleasure in its existence.
 - b. I would observe, that it is not unworthy of God to take pleasure in that which is in itself fit and amiable, even in those that are infinitely below him. If there be infinite grace and condescension in it, yet these are not unworthy of God, but infinitely to his honor and glory.
 - c. As to what is alleged, that it is unworthy of great men to be governed in their conduct and achievements by a regard to the applause of the populace; I would observe, What makes their applause worthy of so little regard, is their ignorance, giddiness, and injustice.
4. To suppose that God makes himself his ultimate end in the creation of the world, derogates from the freeness of his goodness, in his beneficence to his creatures; and from their obligations to gratitude for the good communicated.
 - a. God and the creature, in the emanation of the divine fullness, are not properly set in opposition; or made the opposite parts of a disjunction. Nor ought God's glory and the creature's good, to be viewed as if they were properly and entirely distinct, in the objection.

CHAPTER II. What may be learned from the Holy Scriptures.

- SECTION I. *The Scriptures represent God as making himself his own last end in the creation of the world.*
- SECTION II. *Wherein some positions are advanced concerning a just method of arguing in this affair, from what we find in the Holy Scriptures*
 1. That which appears to be God's ultimate end in his works of providence in general, we may justly suppose to be his last end in the work of creation.
 2. When any thing appears, by the Scripture, to be the last end of some of the works of God, that thing appears to be the result of God's works in general.
 3. The ultimate end of God in creating the world being also the last end of all his works of providence, we may well presume that, if there be any particular thing, more frequently mentioned in Scripture, as God's ultimate aim in his works of providence, than any thing else, this is the ultimate end of God's works in general, and so the end of the work of creation.
 4. That which appears, from the word of God, to be his ultimate end with respect to the moral world, or the intelligent part of the system, that is God's last end in the work of creation general.
 5. That which appears from the Scripture to be God's ultimate end in the chief works of his providence, we may well determine is God's last end in creating the world.
 6. Whatever appears, by the Scriptures, to be God's ultimate end in his main works of Providence towards the moral world, that we may justly infer to be the last end of the creation of the world.
 7. That which divine revelation shows to be God's ultimate end with respect to that part of the moral world which are good, in their being and in their being good, this we must suppose to be the end of God's creating the world.
 8. That which the word of God requires the intelligent and moral part of the world to seek, as their ultimate and highest end, that we have reason to suppose is the last end for which God has made them; and consequently, by position fourth, the last end for which he has made the whole world.
 9. We may well suppose, that what is in Holy Scripture, stated as the main end of the goodness of the moral world—so that the respect and relation their goodness has to that end, is what chiefly makes it valuable and desirable—is God's ultimate end in the creation of the moral world; and so, by position the fourth, of the whole world. For the end of the goodness of a thing, is the end of the thing.
 10. That which persons who are described in Scripture as approved saints, and set forth as examples of piety, sought as their last and highest end, in the instances of their good and approved behaviour; that, we must suppose, was what they ought to seek as their last end: and consequently by the preceding position, was the same with God's last end in the creation of the world.
 11. What appears by the word of God to be that end, in the desires of which the souls of the best, and in their best frames, most naturally and directly exercise their goodness, and in expressing their desire of this end, they do most properly and directly express their respect to God; we may well suppose that end to be the chief and ultimate end of a spirit of piety and goodness, and God's chief end in making the moral world, and so the whole world.
 12. Since the Holy Scriptures teach us that Jesus Christ is the Head of the moral world, and especially of all the good part of it; the chief of God's servants, appointed to be the Head of his saints and angels, and set forth as the chief and most perfect pattern and example of goodness; we may well suppose, by the foregoing positions, that what he sought as his last end, was God's last end in the creation of the world.
- SECTION III. *Particular texts of Scripture, that show that God's glory is an ultimate end of the creation.*
 1. What God says in his word, naturally leads us to suppose, that the way in which he makes himself his end in his work or works, which he does *for his own sake*, is in making *his glory his end*.
 2. The glory of God is spoken of in Holy Scripture as the last end for which those parts of the moral world that are *good* were made.
 3. The Scripture speaks of God's glory, as his ultimate end of the *goodness* of the moral part of the creation; and that end, in relation to which chiefly the value of their virtue consists.
 4. There are some things in the word of God which lead us to suppose, that it *requires* of men that they should *desire* and *seek* God's glory, as their highest and last end in what they do.

5. The glory of God appears, by the account given in Scripture, to be that event, in the earnest desires of which, and in their delight in which, the *best part* of the moral world, and when in their *best frames*, most naturally express the direct tendency of the spirit of true goodness, the virtuous and pious affections of their heart.
 6. The Scripture leads us to suppose, that Christ sought God's glory, as his highest and last end.
 7. It is manifest from Scripture, that God's glory is the last end of that great work of providence, the work of *redemption* by Jesus Christ.
 8. 8. The Scripture leads us to suppose that God's glory is his last end in his *moral government* of the world in general.
 9. It appears, from what has been already observed, that the glory of God is spoken of in Scripture as the last end of many of his works: and it is plain that this is in fact the result of the works of God's common providence, and of the creation of the world.
- SECTION IV. *Places of Scripture that lead us to suppose, that God created the world for his name, to make his perfections known; and that he made it for his praise.*
 1. Here I shall first take notice of some passages of Scripture that speak of God's *name* as being the object of his regard, and the regard of his virtuous and holy intelligent creatures, much in the same manner as has been observed of *God's glory*.
 2. So we find the manifestation of God's perfections, his *greatness*, and *excellency*, is spoken of very much in the same manner as God's glory.
 3. In like manner, there are many scriptures that speak of God's praise, in many of the forementioned respects, just in the same manner as of his name and glory.
 - SECTION V. *Places of Scripture from whence it may be argued, that communication of good to the creature, was one thing which God had in view, as an ultimate end of the creation of the world.*
 1. According to the Scripture, *communicating good* to the creatures is what is *in itself* pleasing to God.
 2. The work of *redemption* wrought out by Jesus Christ, is spoken of in such a manner as, being from the grace and love of God to men, does not well consist with his seeking a communication of good to them, *only subordinately*.
 3. The communications of divine goodness, particularly forgiveness of sin, and salvation, are spoken of, from time to time, as being for God's *goodness' sake*, and for his *mercies' sake*, just in the same manner as they are spoken of as being for God's *name's sake*, in the places observed before.
 4. That the government of the world in all its parts, is *for the good* of such as are to be the eternal subjects of God's goodness, is *implied* in what the Scripture teaches us of Christ being set at God's right hand, made king of angels and men; set at the head of the universe, having all power given him in heaven and earth, *to that end* that he may promote their *happiness*; being made head over all things to the church, and having the government of the whole creation for their good.
 5. That God uses the whole creation, in his government of it, for the good of his people, is most elegantly represented in Deut. xxxiii. 26. "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven."
 6. God's *judgments* on the wicked in this world, and also their eternal damnation in the world to come, are spoken of, as being for the *happiness of God's people*.
 7. It seems to argue, that God's goodness to them who are to be the eternal subjects of his goodness, is the end of the creation; since the whole creation, in all its parts, is spoken of as theirs.
 8. All God's works, both of creation and providence, are represented as works of *goodness* or *mercy* to his people;
 9. That expression in the blessed sentence pronounced on the righteous at the day of judgment, "Inherit the kingdom *prepared for you* from the foundation of the world," seems to hold forth thus much, that the fruits of God's goodness to them was his end in creating the world, and in his providential disposals: that God in all his works, in laying the foundation of the world, and ever since the foundation of it, had been preparing this kingdom and glory for them.
 10. Agreeable to this, the good of men is spoken of as an ultimate end of the virtue of the moral world.

- SECTION VI. *Wherein is considered what is meant by the glory of God and the name of God in Scripture, when spoken of as God's ends in his works.*
 1. Let us begin with the phrase, the glory of god
 - The word *glory* denotes sometimes what is *internal*.
 - The word *glory* is used in Scripture often to express the exhibition, emanation, or communication of the internal glory.
 - That the happiness and salvation of men, was an end that Christ ultimately aimed at in his labours and sufferings.
 - The glory of God, and the emanations and fruits of his grace in man's salvation, are so spoken of by Christ on this occasion in just the same manner, that it would be quite unnatural to understand him as speaking of two distinct things.
 - Again, the word *glory*, as applied to God in Scripture, implies the *view* or *knowledge* of God's excellency.
 - Again, *glory*, as the word is used in Scripture, often signifies or implies *praise*.
 2. Having thus considered what is implied in the phrase, *the glory of God*, as we find it used in Scripture; I proceed to inquire what is meant by the name of God.
- SECTION VII. *Showing that the ultimate end of the creation of the world is but one, and what that one end is.*