

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

June 6 - Scripture I Chapter 2 §1-4

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. 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.

Edwards' Logic

2.1 God makes himself his last end in the creation.

2.2 12 positions for arguing from Scripture

1. works of providence in general.
2. some of the works of God = God's works in general.
3. more frequently mentioned in Scripture.
4. the moral world.
5. chief works of his providence.
6. main works of Providence towards the moral world.
7. part of the moral world which are good, in their being and in their being good.
8. God requires the intelligent and moral part of the world to seek as their ultimate and highest end.
9. main end of the goodness of the moral world.
10. approved saints, and set forth as examples of piety, sought as their last and highest end.
11. in the desires of which the souls of the best, and in their best frames, most naturally and directly exercise their goodness.
12. Jesus Christ sought as his last end.

2.3 God's glory is his end

1. making *his glory his end*. *
2. those parts of the moral world that are *good*. ** (7)
3. the *goodness* of the moral part of the creation; and that end, in relation to which chiefly the value of their virtue consists. * (9)
4. it *requires* of men that they should *desire* and *seek* God's glory, as their highest and last end. (8)
5. 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. * (11)
6. Christ sought God's glory, as his highest and last end. (12)
7. last end of that great work of providence, the work of *redemption* by Jesus Christ. (5,6,7)
8. in his *moral government* of the world in general. (4)
9. 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. (3)

2.4 God's name, Manifestation of His excellencies, God's praise is his end

1. God's name

- a. the *end* of his acts of goodness towards the good part of the moral world, and of his works of mercy and salvation towards his people
- b. the *salvation of Christ*
- c. delivering his people from *Egypt*
- d. edemption from the *Babylonish* captivity
- e. showing *mercy*, and exercising goodness, and promoting his people's happiness *
- f. God's people had their existence
- g. end of the *virtue*, religion, and holy behavior
- h. holy persons express their *desire* of this, and their *joy* in it
- i. The *judgments* God executes on the wicked
- j. a *consequence* of the works of creation

2. Manifestation of God's perfections

- a. thing that God sought of the *moral world*
- b. *good part* of the moral world, or the end of God's people
- c. *value*, the proper *fruit* and end of their virtue
- d. *proper tendency* and rest of true virtue, and holy dispositions
- e. God's *moral government*; particularly, the *great judgments*
- f. works of *favour* and *mercy* to his people
- g. eternal *damnation* of the wicked, and also the eternal *happiness* of the righteous
- h. *miracles* which God wrought
- i. *ordinances* he has established
- j. the redemption out of *Egypt*
- k. redemption from the Babylonish captivity
- l. *redemption by Jesus Christ*: both of its *purchase*, and its application
- m. *actual salvation*
- n. God's *common providence*
- o. *day of judgement*
- p. the actual, happy consequence and effect of the work of creation

3. God's praise

- a. being of God's people
- b. of the *moral world*
- c. deprecating a state of destruction
- d. the *virtue* of God's people
- e. *work of redemption*
- f. the forgiveness of God's people, and their salvation
- g. *holy* part of the moral world express desires of this, and delight in it
- h. desirable and glorious consequence and effect of all the works of creation

* Edwards labors in this section that the glory of God not be seen as a *properly subordinate* end to the ultimate end of man's happiness.

Where's he going?

All these terms God's glory, God's name, God's praise, and the manifestation of his excellencies are the same thing. It is one complex end seen from different angles.

"From what has been observed in the last section, it appears, if the whole of what is said relating to this affair be duly weighed, and one part compared with another, we shall have reason to think, that the design of the Spirit of God is not to represent God's ultimate end as *manifold*, but as ONE. For though it be signified by various names yet they appear not to be names of *different* things, but various names involving each other in their meaning either different names of the *same thing*, or names of several parts of *one whole*; or of the same whole viewed in *various lights* or in its *different respects* and relations. For it appears, that all that is ever spoken of in the Scripture as a ultimate end of God's works, is included in that one phrase, *the glory of God*; which is the name by which the ultimate end of God's works is most commonly called in Scripture; and seems most aptly to signify the thing."

God has truly made himself his highest and last end in the creation of the world, and it is most perfectly fitting and suitable that he should because he alone is worthy to be the highest end of all.

We will see next time that God has made the good of the creature his ultimate end, and that God's glory and man's good is one ultimate end.

Implications

You ought to begin to work through the implications of this teaching. If all the things above are what God sought in all his works, how can you best comply with that?

You may start doing this by thinking about the following questions:

1. What is good?
2. What makes a good thing good?
3. What is *goodness*?
4. What does it mean to do good to others or seek the good of others?
5. What is knowledge?
6. Why is man fitted with the equipment to gain knowledge?
7. What is the greatest knowledge?
8. What is the good of gaining knowledge from the world?
9. What should you be looking for in all your knowledge of the world?
10. What should you be leading others to look for in all their knowledge of the world, or in your sharing of your knowledge?
11. Can you learn everything about God from the world/creation?
12. What is the ultimate object of knowledge in the Bible? That is, if there were ultimately one thing you were to learn what is it?
13. Are emotions/affections important? Can you do without them?
14. How are correct affections to be properly sought?
15. How important is praise to God?
16. What place does ACTION or works have in Edwards' scheme?