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JONATHAN EDWARDS' IDEALISM.

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ESSAY "OF BEING" AND TO WRITINGS NOT IN HIS COLLECTED WORKS.

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Andover.

IN 1829 the Rev. Sereno Edwards Dwight, D.D., published, in an appendix to the first volume of his edition of the works of President Edwards, his great-grandfather, two series of papers, one entitled "The Mind," and another named by their editor "Notes on Natural Science." In the preceding "Life" Dr. Dwight claimed that most of these essays were composed by Edwards between some time in his sophomore year at college and his call to the church in Northampton, Mass.—that is, between the fifteenth and twenty-third years of his age, inclusive. Many of these articles, including some of the most remarkable, were assigned by Dr. Dwight to the period of Edwards' college life. That discussions so independent and original in conception, acute in distinction, sequacious and persistent in reasoning, and embracing so great a variety of subjects, often complex and difficult, should emanate from a youth from fourteen to sixteen years of age is indeed extraordinary. It is not, therefore, surprising, especially as Dr. Dwight makes but brief reference to the grounds of his opinion and affords his readers no means for its verification, that the more critical spirit of the present day has questioned, or hesitated to accept, its conclusiveness, and has suggested a renewed examination of the manuscripts.¹ Having an opportunity to make such an investigation through the originals of some of the early writings of Edwards, including the series on science, but not the one called "The Mind," and also through copies of a large number of remarks on subjects in

¹ Cf. GEORGES LYON, *L'Idéalisme en Angleterre au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1888, pp. 429-31; A. V. G. ALLEN, *Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 16, 17.

divinity, belonging to a series also supposed to have been begun in college days, and which was continued through life, I have presented the evidence thus obtained in a paper which has been published by the American Antiquarian Society in its *Proceedings*.² Dr. Dwight's judgment of the early date of the compositions is confirmed.

The inquiry thus made developed satisfactory reasons for the opinion that a paper whose title, given by its author, is "Of Being" was one of the earliest that were prepared, whether for the series in science or philosophy or divinity. Nor merely this. It has a special importance in relation to its author's subsequent thinking. It expresses metaphysical presuppositions and judgments which entered into the first definite and independent formation of his theological opinions. It sets forth *in nuce* a view of the universe which, so far as appears, he never lost. It helps to a better understanding of some of his teachings which are most repugnant to his critics. Its idealism is a fitting philosophical counterpart to a main article of his faith, to a leading principle of his theology, and to an effective and permanent element of his power as a preacher. I refer to his well-known doctrine of an immediate divine communication to men of spiritual light and life.

It is the object of this paper to point out some indications — mainly derived from writings not contained in Edwards' collected works, but known to me through the manuscripts referred to above — of this importance which attaches to the essay on Being, and, more largely, to its author's idealism.³

As preliminary I will adduce some statements of the essay just recalled: Something exists. It is impossible to think otherwise. The supposition that Nothing is "is the greatest contradiction, and the aggregate of all contradictions;" "it is

² *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society at the annual meeting held in Worcester, October 23, 1895*; new series, Vol. X, Part 2, pp. 212-47, Worcester, 1896. Also, *ibid.*, October 21, 1896, Vol. XI, pp. 176, 251, 252.

³ The essay "Of Being," as edited by Dr. Dwight, may be found in his edition of the *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 706-8. An exact reprint from the original, with a facsimile of a part of it, is given in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, above referred to.

necessary some being should eternally be." This eternal being must be infinite, omnipresent, not solid, something we can never conceive of as not being. It is space; and space, to "speak Plain," is God. This necessary universal, eternal Something exists "nowhere else but either in created or uncreated consciousness." The universe exists "nowhere but in the divine mind;" "spirits only are properly substance;" all else is "more like a shadow."

One indication of the importance to Edwards of the thought and argument of this paper, and especially of its idealism, is the frequency and manner with which he recurs to it. It stands practically at the head of the "Notes on Natural Science," since the only preceding portion, which treats "Of the Prejudices of Imagination," is introductory to the series. It is immediately followed by, and connected with, the elaborate essay on "Atoms," with its numerous corollaries, in which the conclusion that "there is no proper substance but God himself" is variously reaffirmed and applied. It forms thus a basis for subsequent physical discussions. It appears also to have been one of the earliest of all in the three series, viz., "The Mind," the "Notes on Natural Science," and the "Miscellanies," or discussions of topics in divinity. In the list of subjects set down to be handled in the first of these divisions, or books, the external world is mentioned as a topic to be treated in the "Introduction;" the subject of "Prejudices" is entered second, and this direction is given: "In treating of Human Nature, treat first of Being in general." Proceeding to the essays, we find in the ninth in order of composition this statement: "Space, *as already observed,*⁴ is a necessary being, if it may be called a being; and yet *we have also shown* that all existence is mental, that the existence of all exterior things is ideal."⁵ The previous observation and proof on which stress is here laid do not appear in any preceding number or numbers of the series entitled "The Mind." They are to be found in the essay "Of Being." Pass-

⁴The *italics* in this and the following quotations are inserted by the writer of this article.

⁵*Works*, ed. DWIGHT, Vol. I, p. 673.

ing to the "Miscellanies"—whose notation begins with the letters of the alphabet, used first singly, then doubled, and proceeds with Arabic numerals—we read in f, that is, in the sixth of a long succession which mounts up beyond at least fourteen hundred numbers, and includes some hundred and fifty which Dr. Dwight assigns to the last two years of college life and the two following of graduate residence :

Spiritual happiness, *as we have shown and demonstrated*⁶—contrary to the opinion of [most who believe] that nothing is substance but matter—*that no matter is substance but only God*, who is a Spirit, and that other spirits are more substantial than matter ; so also it is true that no happiness is solid and substantial but spiritual happiness, although it may seem that sensual pleasures are more real, and spiritual only imaginary ; just as it seems as if sensible matter were only real and spiritual substance only imaginary.⁷

Following the series entitled "Miscellanies" further, we read in an Observation marked pp, that is, the forty-second in the series :

We know there was Being from eternity ; and this being must be intelligent, for how doth the mind refuse to believe that there should be being from all eternity, without its being conscious to itself that it was ; that there should be from all eternity, and yet nothing known, all that while, that anything is. This is really a contradiction ; and we may see it to be so, though we know not how to express it. For in what respect has anything had a being, when there is nothing conscious of its being ; for in what respect has anything a being that [of which] angels nor men, nor created intelligences know nothing, but only as God knows it to be ? Not at all more than there are sounds where none hears it, or colour where none sees it. Thus, for instance, supposing a room in which none is ; none sees the things in the room ; no created intelligence. The things in the room have no being any otherways than only as God is conscious [of them] ; for there is no colour there, neither is there any sound, nor any shape, etc."⁸

Here there is a reaffirmation of the idealistic thought, and even of the argumentative illustration, which appear in "Of Being."

No. 27a reasons thus :

God is a necessary Being, because it is a contradiction to suppose him not to be. No being is a necessary being but he whose nonentity is a contradic-

⁶ A superfluous "that" is omitted.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp, p. 1.

⁷ MS. copy, f, p. 1173.

tion. *We have shown* that absolute nothing is the essence of all contradictions; but being includes in it all that we call God, who is, and there is none else beside Him.⁹

In No. 94 = 146, whose theme is the Trinity, Edwards boldly applies his philosophy to this mysterious doctrine. I will recur to this paper later, and reproduce at this point merely a reference in it to the essay "Of Being":

I will frame my reasoning thus: If nothing has any existence at all but in some consciousness or idea or other; and therefore the things that are in us created consciousness have no existence but in the divine idea; or, supposing the things in this room were in the idea of none but of God, they would have existence no other way, *as we have shown in the natural philosophy*, and if the things in this room would nevertheless be real things; then God's idea, being a perfect idea, is really the thing itself; and if so, and all God's ideas are only the one idea of Himself, as has been shown,¹⁰ then God's idea must be his essence itself, it must be a substantial idea, having all the perfection of the substance perfectly; so that by God's reflecting on Himself the Deity is begotten: there is a Substantial Image of God begotten. I am satisfied that though this word *begotten* had never been used in Scripture, it would have been used in this case; there is no other word that so properly expresses it.¹¹

In No. 108 = 160, a charming paper in which an accomplished man of letters and affairs has recognized an anticipation of a leading thought in Wordsworth's theory of poetry, occur these words:

Now we have shown that the Son of God created the world for this very end, to communicate Himself in an image of his own excellency. He communicates Himself, properly, only to spirits, and they only are capable of being proper images of his excellency, for they only are proper *beings*, *as we have shown*.¹²

No. 365 = 417, on "The Being of God," affirms:

The only reason why we are ready to object against the absolute, universally unconditional, necessity of God's being is, that we are ready to conceive as if there were some second cause. We are ready to say, Why could

⁹ *Ibid.*, 27a, p. 1.

¹⁰ In a preceding part of this number, viz., 94.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 94, pp. 80, 81. The word *begotten* is underscored in MS. copy.

¹² *Observations concerning the Scripture Economy of the Trinity, etc.*; New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1880; Appendix, p. 94. *Library of the World's Best Literature*, Vol. VIII, under *Jonathan Edwards*; New York, J. A. Hill & Co. MS. copy, 108, p. 695.

not there have been nothing? as if this were a second cause. It is because of the miserableness of our conceptions that we are ready to imagine there is any such supposition, we cannot tell whether there be any such supposition or no, except we know what nothing was, but we cannot know what it is, because there is no such thing.¹³

Again, in No. 587 :

God is a necessary Being, as it is impossible but that God should exist, because there is no other way. There is no second to make a disjunction, there is nothing else supposable. To illustrate this by one of God's attributes, viz., Eternity. It is absolutely necessary that eternity should be, and it is because there is no other way. To say, Eternity, or not Eternity, is no disjunction, because there is no such thing to make a supposition about as no eternity, nor can we in our minds make any such supposition as not any eternity. We may seem to make such a supposition in words, but it is no supposition, because the words have no sense in thought to answer them; they are words as much without any sense in thought . . . as these: A crooked straight line, or A square circle, or A six angled triangle. If we go to suppose that there is no eternity, it is the same as if we should say or suppose that there never was any such thing as duration, which is a contradiction, for the word never implies eternity, and it is the same as to say that there never was any such thing as duration from all eternity, so that in the very denying the thing we affirm it.¹⁴

In the same vein is Observation 650=702 :

It is from the exceedingly imperfect notions that we have of the nature or essence of God, and because we cannot think of it, but we must think of it far otherwise than it is, that arises the difficulty in our mind of conceiving of God's existing without a cause. It is repugnant to the nature of our souls, and what our faculties utterly refuse to admit, that anything, that is capable of being one part of a proper disjunction, should exist, and be as it is, rather than not exist, or exist otherwise, without cause. Our notions of the divine nature are so imperfect, that our imperfect idea admits of a disjunction; for whatsoever is not absolutely perfect doth so. With regard to everything that is imperfect there is dependence, or contingent existence, implied in the nature of it, or we can conceive of its being a part of a disjunction. There is a *Thus*, and an *Otherwise*, in the case. As soon as ever we have descended one step below absolute perfection possibility ceases to be simple; it divides and becomes manifold. Thus, for instance, we cannot conceive of God without attributing succession to Him; but that notion brings along with it contingent existence, and introduces with it a manifold possibility. There is nothing that exists in a successive duration but it will necessarily follow from thence that it is simply possible that it might exist infinite otherwise than it doth, and that it

¹³ *Ibid.*, 365, p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 587, p. 10.

might not exist at all. It is a contradiction to suppose that Being itself should not be. If any one says, No, there may be nothing; he supposes at the same time that nothing has a being. And, indeed, nothing, when we speak properly, or when the word has any meaning, *i. e.*, when we speak of nothing in contradiction to some particular being, has truly a being.¹⁵

No. 880—932 is an elaborate and powerful exposure of the unreasonableness of the supposition that the order of the universe may arise from the eternity of the process, irrespective of an intelligent and purposive cause. The necessity of being is argued as in previous citations. I will give a brief extract:

There is a reason to be given why God should have a Being; the reason is because there is no other way, there is nothing else supposable to be put with the Being of God as the other part of the disjunction. If there be, it is absolute and universal nothing. A supposition of something, a supposition is of the being of God; it does not only presuppose it, but it implies it: it implies it not only consequentially but immediately. God is the sum of all being; and there is no being without his Being: all things are in Him, and He in all. But there is no such thing supposable as an absolute universal nothing; we talk nonsense when we suppose any such thing; we deceive ourselves when we think we do, in our minds, suppose it, or when we imagine we suppose it to be possible. What we do when we go to think of absolute nihility (if I may so speak) is only to remove one thing to make way for and suppose another. In this case there is no such thing as two parts of a disjunction; when we are come to being in general, we are come to one single point, without a disjunction. Therefore God is, because there is no other way; God therefore is because there is nothing else to make a supposition of.¹⁶

The idealism, explicit or implicit, in the foregoing citations, and clearly and strongly stated in the youthful treatise "Of Being," appears in the treatise on *Original Sin*, posthumously published, and written towards the close of Edwards' life.¹⁷ In it he maintains

. . . that all dependent existence whatsoever is in a constant flux, ever passing and returning; renewed every moment, as the colors of bodies are every moment by the light that shines upon them; and all is constantly pro-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 650, pp. 10, 11. The words *Thus* and *Otherwise* are underscored in the MS. copy.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 880, pp. 22, 23.

¹⁷ The Preface, by the author, is dated May 26, 1757. He died March 22, 1758.

ceeding from *God*, as light from the sun. *In Him we live and move and have our being.*¹⁸

Another indication of the importance to Edwards of the idealism affirmed in the paper "Of Being" is his extension of it to finite spirits. In the essay named he limits his reasoning to material things, and recognizes, in contrast, spirits as "properly substance." So in the paper "Of Atoms" he says: "Speaking most strictly, there is no proper substance but God himself. We speak at present with respect to *Bodies* only."¹⁹

Later, under date of February 12, 1725, he writes in his diary:

The very thing I now want, to give me a clearer and more immediate view of the perfections and glory of God, is as clear a knowledge of the manner of God's exerting himself with respect to Spirits and Mind, as I have of his operations concerning Matter and Bodies.²⁰

In the copies of *Observations* which I am using there is one which I suppose to have been composed, at the latest, not far from his settlement at Northampton February 15, 1727:

267. God's Existence. The mere exertion of a new thought is a certain proof of a God; for certainly there is something that immediately produces and upholds that thought. There is a new thing, and there is a necessity of a cause. It is not antecedent thoughts, for they are vanished and gone; they are past; and what is past is not. Do we say, It is the substance of the soul; if we mean that there is some substance besides that thought, that brings that thought forth; if it be God, I acknowledge it; but if there be meant something else that has no properties, it seems to me absurd. If the removal of all properties, such as extension, solidity, thought, etc., leaves nothing; it seems to me that no substance is anything besides them; for if there be anything besides, there might remain something when these are removed.²¹

This is an extension and form of idealism distinct from Berkeleyanism. It might easily pass on to mere phenomenalism

¹⁸ *Works*, New York ed., Vol. II, p. 490. Edwards' thinking was early and powerfully affected by Sir Isaac Newton's *Optics*. See his papers, written when a youth, "Of Insects," *Andover Review*, Vol. XIII, p. 10; "Of the Rainbow," *Proc. Am. Antiq. Soc.*, New Series, Vol. X, pp. 239-41; "Of Being," *ibid.*, p. 244; *Works*, ed. DWIGHT, Vol. I, pp. 708, 716, 755, 756; II, p. 555, note [New York ed., II, pp. 89, 90, note].

¹⁹ *Works*, ed. DWIGHT, Vol. I, p. 713.

²¹ MS. copy, 267, p. 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 105.

and skepticism, or else to an idealistic pantheism. But Edwards was neither a skeptic nor a pantheist. He is simply in this "Observation," according to his wont, reasoning a given thesis out. He is developing his theistic idealism of matter into a theistic idealism of finite mind. Such a use of a principle shows the importance it had for him.

To avoid leaving a wrong impression as to his conception of created spirits, I would call attention to the fact that in No. 383 = 435, written perhaps from two to three years after the one just cited (267 = 319), Edwards, in order to sustain the position that the first principle of all things is "an intelligent willing agent" gives reasons for supposing that man's soul is "the image of that first principle." "It is only the soul of man," he remarks,

that does as that supreme principle does; this is a principle of action, has a power of action in itself, as that first principle has. . . . Man's soul determines things in themselves indifferent, as motion and rest, the direction of motion, etc., as the supreme cause does. Man's soul has an end in what it does, pursues some good that is the issue of its actions, as the first universal principle does. Man's soul makes, forms, preserves, disposes, and governs things within its sphere, as the first principle does the world. . . . So that, if there be anything amongst all the beings that flow from this first principle of all things, that bears any sort of resemblance to it, or has anything of a shadow of likeness to it, spirits or minds bid abundantly the fairest for it.²²

Elsewhere, and in various ways, Edwards recognizes man's likeness to God. "Many," he writes in an earlier Observation, No. 150 = 202, "have wrong conceptions of the difference between the nature of the deity and that of created spirits. The difference is no contrariety."²³

We cannot explain away the apparent difference of representation by the supposition that when Edwards attributes to man distinct agency, personal causality, the selection of ends of action and their realization, he is accommodating himself to ordinary and unscientific modes of apprehension. He uses such forms of expression when he is reasoning carefully and with precision of statement.

The explanation lies in the peculiarity of his idealism. It

²² *Ibid.*, 383, pp. 6, 7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 150, p. 63.

did not, to his thought, empty the common ways of speaking of meaning and reality. He points this out in reference to the material universe. He says:

Though we suppose that the existence of the whole material Universe is absolutely dependent on Idea, yet we may speak in the old way, and as properly, and truly as ever.²⁴

The external world, ultimately, exists only mentally in God's idea, yet it is not a mere act or state of the divine consciousness; it is God operating *ad extra*, expressing himself in finite modes, forms, creations, according to a stable purpose and by an established constitution. In the same way the human soul is not a mere wave or bubble in the boundless ocean of being, or simply an element or momentum in the infinite life, but a divinely created being, capable of receiving, by divine communication, intelligence and inclination akin to the divine knowledge and holiness and blessedness. Only, Edwards would say, we may not think of it as a substance unrealized in its properties and capable of subsistence, even in conception or by way of abstraction, apart from and without its attributes. Its constitution, like that of atoms, is God working in the sphere of mind, as Edwards supposes God to work in the sphere of matter. We may use his definition of matter to set forth his conception of a soul:

That which truly is the Substance of all Souls [Bodies], is the infinitely exact, and precise, and perfectly stable idea, in God's mind, together with his stable Will, that the same shall gradually be communicated to us, and to other minds, according to certain fixed and exact established Methods and Laws: or in somewhat different language, the infinitely exact and precise Divine Idea, together with an answerable, perfectly exact, precise and stable Will, with respect to correspondent communications to Created Minds, and effects on their minds,

only remembering that minds, as thus referred to, are images or reproductions *ad extra* of the creative spirit, so that their substance, in which all their properties inhere, is simply his idea and will thus expressed. Personal identity to Edwards, after he saw the insufficiency, as he did very early, of Locke's definition

²⁴ *Works*, ed. DWIGHT, I, p. 669.

of it as sameness of consciousness, seems to be a divine constitution, that is, God working according to a fixed plan, and realizing a fixed idea and purpose. Or, in terms of modern metaphysics, God is the *continuum* of all finite existence, material or spiritual. A soul, as to its substance, is God's exact and stable idea of it, together with his stable will that it shall be a spirit, in his image, having its subsistence by constant communication from him, according to fixed and established methods and laws.

"Man's reason and conscience," he writes, "seems to be a participation of the divine essence."²⁵ And again: "An inclination is nothing but God's influencing the soul according to a certain law of nature."²⁶ God comprehends the "entity of all his creatures, . . . they are but communications from him: communications of being are not additions of being."²⁷

We may obtain further light upon the importance to Edwards, and in his theology, of his early idealism, by observing various applications of it.

It drove from his mind a mechanical interpretation of nature. One of the corollaries to the essay on atoms, that follows "Of Being," reads thus: "Hence we learn that there is no such thing as *Mechanism*; if that word is intended to denote that whereby bodies act, each upon the other, purely and properly by themselves."²⁸

Edwards' idealism is variously and intimately connected with his thought of God as triune. He began early to write on this subject, and from time to time through his life recurred to it. He fully realized its mysteriousness, but did not regard it as a blank to human reason. His speculations upon it, I may say in passing, deserve to be gathered together and suitably published. They would now be more impartially judged, and probably better appreciated, than at any time since they were written. In pro-

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 210, p. 108.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 301, pp. 489, 490.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 697, p. 69. Edwards distinguishes spirit from matter in various ways. Matter is absolutely dependent for existence on mind. Mind is necessary to matter, not *vice versa*. "Perceiving Being only is properly Being." *Works*, ed. DWIGHT Vol. I, pp. 671, 679, 5.

²⁸ *Works*, ed. DWIGHT, I, p. 714.

fundity of thought, acuteness and subtlety of reasoning, and spirituality of atmosphere, they rank with the best that has been said from Augustine to Dorner. Their underlying philosophy is that which first appears in his writings in the essay on Being. His Trinity is the biblical revelation, the Father, Son, and Spirit. It is, rationally and philosophically, "three, distinct, in God, each of which is the same," "God and the Idea of God, and the Love of God."²⁹ Each is substantial, each is God, "an infinitely perfect substance, even the essence of God."³⁰ This essence or substance is a "pure Act." There is nothing passive, nothing unrealized in the divine nature. Substance becomes, in Edwards' thought, life; being is perfect knowledge, perfect love. It is remarkable that a youth in college, not yet seventeen perhaps, who had been stirred and fascinated by John Locke, should have struck out for himself, against the tide of English philosophy, such an application of idealism to a doctrine then so remanded to obscurity or to the realm of a faith that, at least in this particular, renounced the aid of reason. "I think it is within the reach of naked reason," he writes, "to perceive certainly that there are three, distinct in God, each of which is the same, three that must be distinct; and that there are not, nor can be any more, distinct, really and truly distinct, but three."³¹ Later he writes: "It the more confirms me in it that the perfect idea God has of himself is truly and perfectly God, that the existence of all corporeal things is only ideas."³² Some thirty years or more later, while at Stockbridge, after his dismissal from Northampton, he copied into his "Miscellanies" extracts from Chevalier Ramsay's *Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion*,³³ which contain thoughts similar to those which he had elaborated and committed to paper not far from the time of his graduation, as in the following extract: "If God has an idea of himself there is really a Duplicity, because if there is no duplicity it will follow that Jehovah thinks of himself no more than a stone; if God loves himself and delights in himself, there is really a Triplicity;

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 308, p. 99.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 94=146, p. 79.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 94, p. 79.

³² *Ibid.*, 179=231, p. 93.

³³ Published in 1748-9. [Copied by E. ca. 1751.]

three that cannot be confounded; each of which are [is] the Deity substantially."³⁴

His christology shows not a few traces of his idealism. I have elsewhere published³⁵ some of his thoughts respecting the person of our Lord, its divinity, its humanity, its Trinitarian significance, its relation to creation and redemption, and man's knowledge and love of God and delight in him. He anticipated many of the best conceptions in later discussions—the affinity of the two natures as a presupposition of personal union, the genuineness, the activity and value of our Lord's humanity, his eternal mediation.

I will not, for the reason just intimated, cite passages on these topics. Their examination shows the constant influence of his early and spiritual philosophy. It will suffice for the present purpose to quote these words:

From what insight I have into the nature of minds I am convinced that there is no guessing what kind of union and mixtion by consciousness, or otherwise, there may be between them; so that all difficulty is removed in believing what the Scripture declares about spiritual union of the persons of the Trinity, of the two natures of Christ, of Christ and the minds of saints.³⁶

"Observations" not used in any edition of Edwards' works abundantly confirm that interpretation of his "Treatise on the End of God in creation" which makes it wholly antagonistic to an imputation of selfishness to God. They also connect the entire expression of God in creation with the ontological Trinity. God's manifestation of himself in and towards the creatures corresponds with the inward revelation through Fatherhood and Sonship and the procession of the Holy Spirit. Edwards' noblest utterances on this subject—and much is in his highest strain—is an amplification of the thought founded in his philosophy of nature and mind, that the Son is the perfect idea of God, and the world is a communication and image of the Son.

How closely his conceptions of spiritual holy life in man, of regeneration and sanctification, of eternal peace and blessedness,

³⁴ MS. copy, 94, p. 86.

³⁶ MS. copy, 184, p. 93.

³⁵ See *Observations concerning the Scripture Economy of the Trinity*, Appendix, pp. 72-89.

depend on his thought of the immediateness of the divine activity in the soul is familiar to every reader of his published writings. His unpublished *Observations* show their intimate connection, in some respects their identity, with his philosophy of being.

Most of all, I think, they relieve the impression his published writings sometimes make of a certain quantitative valuation of being which obscures, to say the least, the spirituality and ethical value of his theory of virtue.

Being, we see, was to Edwards no mere mathematical quantity or sum of magnitudes. "The Infiniteness of God," he says, consists in his perfect comprehension of all things, and the extendedness of operation equally to all places. . . . We ought to conceive of God as being Omnipotence, Perfect Knowledge, and perfect Love, . . . and not as if he were a sort of unknown thing, that we call Substance, that is extended.³⁷

Even his doctrine of the arbitrariness of God in his choice of the objects of his recovering grace becomes, from the point of view of his philosophy, a way of setting forth God's supreme personality and of exalting our conception of human personality. Arbitrariness means to Edwards that God has not tied himself down to particular methods and rules and proportions, revealed at certain stages and in special phases of his universe, but is ultimately determined by the laws and proportions of a perfect and absolute wisdom, and by the motive of a love which is at once the complete realization and only perfect expression, and indeed the very substance and essence, of his infinite being.

My purpose is accomplished if I have by the foregoing references to unpublished or neglected *Observations* called attention to the philosophical presuppositions of Edwards' theology. I have given but hints. The subject deserves a far more adequate treatment, which requires a command of all his philosophical and theological manuscripts.

I am disposed to believe that Edwards has a future in American theology which, in some respects, will be greater than his influence in his own generation or since. It will come by his being better understood,³⁸ by a more just and adequate apprecia-

³⁷ 194, p. 63.

³⁸ For such a better understanding there is need of a new edition of Edwards

tion of his deficiencies as well as of his excellencies, by an estimate of his thought, not so much as heretofore by his controversial treatises, and more than as yet has been possible through his ultimate conception of God, of His relation to the universe, of the immediateness of His presence and agency in nature and the human soul, in creation and its end, in history, in redemption, in His kingdom. The severity, the harshness, of some of his accents will be judged in the light of his intense appreciation of the divine holiness. His defective views of freedom, his failure to attain a just apprehension of personality, will appear in due connection with inherited and abstract logical methods and principles, and with conceptions derived from the philosophy of Locke which he himself rose above in his religious life and in his thought of God and of man as created in the image of God and for God. His spiritual philosophy, his sense of God, the light and radiance of his pure and lofty character, the penetrativeness of his insight into the unity of the *cosmos*, the depth of his thinking, will attract and enlighten and quicken. Better premises than those from which he at times argued with a tireless inexorableness will be found to be really his own, and he will be valued more for his reason than his reasonings. We shall not go back to him, nor yet go forward without him. In American theology he is the one peerless thinker whom no one can afford to neglect who would worthily cultivate the science of the highest, even the supreme, Being, Reason, and Life.

works, conformed to the standards of critical historical scholarship now accepted. In this opinion, formed in part by a study of some of the manuscripts, I am happy to be confirmed by the judgment of one of the ablest metaphysicians and most accomplished and best-known editors of philosophical writings in our time, who remarks, in a letter received a few months since: "I think we ought to have a critical edition of the works of Edwards by one competent philosophically and theologically—a work as yet unexecuted, but which I should rejoice to see done. . . ."