



The Atonement Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Response to John McLeod Campbell

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Jonathan Edwards' stature as a Reformed theologian of historic standing is beyond dispute.¹ Yet, on the doctrine of the atonement, it is, in the words of a recent interpreter, "something of a surprise to find how little systematic treatment is offered by Edwards; the doctrine is everywhere assumed, certainly, but not often discussed at any length..."² Edwards' paucity of treatment should not be taken as an indication of the secondary status of the doctrine in his thought. Indeed, it is very much the hub around which his theology revolves. Hence, Jenson has observed that the doctrine of atonement is "the center of Edwards' unifying construal of reality: all things are one harmony, *because* of Christ's reconciling life and death."³ Where the nature of the atonement is concerned, John Murray, in 1959, could still speak of Edwards' atonement doctrine in terms of the Reformed teaching on imputation without having to engage with the question of continuity with Calvin and the Reformation teaching. Murray assumes the existence of that continuity with his acceptance of Edwards' doctrine as

¹ For assessments of Edwards as a Reformed theologian or works that engage with his Reformed heritage, see Harry S. Stout, "The Puritans and Edwards", in Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience, eds. Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout (New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 142-57; Iain H. Murray, Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987); Conrad Cherry, The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal, with a new introduction by the author and a foreword by Stephen J. Stein (First Published, 1966; Bloomington / Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990); Stephen R. Holmes, God of Grace and God of Glory: An Account of the Theology of Jonathan Edwards (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Amy Plantinga Pauw, The Supreme Harmony of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards (Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2002).

² Holmes, 142.

³ Robert W. Jenson, America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards (New York/ Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 125.

cohering with the “common Calvinistic doctrine.”⁴ However, it is now almost impossible to assume that continuity. This is due in part to the commonly perceived cleavage between Calvin’s own teaching and that of his followers,⁵ and in part to the direct charge against Edwards of departing from the teachings of the Reformers. A major proponent of this charge is John McLeod Campbell, a Scottish Presbyterian pastor / theologian of the nineteenth century (1800-1872) whose view of the atonement has often been associated with the theory of “vicarious confession” or “vicarious repentance.”⁶

If the influence of Campbell was confined to the times in which he lived, a passing consideration of his views would suffice in a study of Edwards on the atonement. However, this is not the case. Campbell’s view of the atonement, which involves a repudiation of Edwards’ and federal Calvinism, has recently been reintroduced through the writings of James Torrance,⁷ George Tuttle,⁸ and perhaps most significantly, through the republication of Campbell’s classic work, *The Nature of Atonement*, first published in 1856.⁹ Campbell’s view has also been at the heart of major scholarly dissertations.¹⁰ While there have been some

⁴ This is seen for instance in his agreement with Benjamin Warfield’s assessment of Edwards as espousing the doctrine of “immediate imputation” as opposed to “mediate imputation”, thus concurring with the “common Calvinistic doctrine”. John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam’s Sin* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1959), 54.

⁵ See for instance R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979): “Calvin’s thought, save for the decrees of predestination, is hardly to be found in Westminster Theology” (p. 208); “The architectural mind of Westminster theology, is Beza” (p. 210). Kendall is cited here for the reason that his thesis bears upon the atonement. It involves the claims that the followers of Calvin teach a limited atonement and the concept of faith as an act of the will, both of which are foreign to Calvin according to Kendall.

⁶ These terms are not employed by Campbell but by his interpreters. However, the terms do indeed capture Campbell’s thought accurately if it is borne in mind that they are to be understood in a representative rather than a substitutionary sense. Leanne van Dyk, *The Desire of Divine Love: John McLeod Campbell’s Doctrine of the Atonement* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 113; see also Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 287-317.

⁷ James B. Torrance, ‘The Contribution of McLeod Campbell to Scottish Theology’, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 26 (1973), 295-311; similar issues raised by Torrance which Campbell levels against Edwards can also be found in ‘Covenant or Contract? A Study of the Theological Background of Worship in Seventeenth Century Scotland’, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970), 51-76; “Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology”, in *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today*, ed. Alasdair Heron (Edinburgh: St Andrews, 1982), 40-53; ‘The Incarnation and Limited Atonement’, *Evangelical Quarterly* 55 (1983), 83-94.

⁸ George Tuttle, *So Rich a Soil: John McLeod Campbell on Christian Atonement* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1986).

⁹ John McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement*, with a new introduction by James B. Torrance (Edinburgh: Handsel Press; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996).

¹⁰ Perhaps the most significant study with respect to this dissertation is that of Michael Jinkins, *A Comparative Study in the Theology of Atonement in Jonathan Edwards and John McLeod Campbell: Atonement and the Character of God* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1993). This work is the published form of Jinkins’ PhD dissertation completed under the supervision of James Torrance. Although it is a work that seeks to be critical of both Edwards and Campbell, Jinkins’ own bias is obvious. In his concluding comments where the relative strengths and weaknesses of Edwards and Campbell are supposed to have been compared (pp. 374-386), it is Edwards that is clearly at the center of Jinkins’ critique. Campbell’s atonement theology receives positive commendation throughout except for three statements in half a paragraph (p. 385) whose content is more a warning of its possible reactionary posture than a critique of Campbell’s material content. Van Dyk’s work is undoubtedly superior as a critical work on Campbell. Van Dyk, op cit.

attempts at responding to the alleged discontinuity between the teachings of Calvin and his followers,¹¹ there has yet, to the best of this author's knowledge, been any attempt to critically examine the claims of Campbell against Edwards apart from an article by Helm.¹² Even then, Helm's article is seriously limited in scope. Although he brings to light some of the logical fallacies of Campbell's charges, there is however no attempt to draw from Edwards' own writings to demonstrate the validity of his rebuttals. This dissertation is an attempt to fill that void. Part I examines in detail the alleged problem with Edwards' doctrine of atonement which sets the whole dissertation in its systematic and polemical context. This is followed by a careful reading of the work *Of Satisfaction for Sin* in Part II, which is the work upon which Campbell's understanding of Edwards' atonement theology is based.¹³ The aim is to delineate the key movement of thought and set it against Campbell's own reading of it. This establishes the platform for Part III, in which the charges brought against Edwards will be addressed in the light of Edwards' doctrine of Christ, God, and the Spirit, in relation to his doctrine of atonement. It is important to state at the outset that a critical analysis of Campbell's own atonement theology is not the main concern in this study although reference to some of its features is inevitable. Rather, our purpose is to examine the extent to which Campbell is justified in his criticisms of Edwards, and in the course of doing so, offer an account of Edwards' atonement theology.

Part I: The Alleged Problem and Its Implications

Campbell charges Edwards for placing the consideration of God's attributes prior to that of Christ's life in his doctrine of the atonement, thus allowing the conception of the atonement to be regulated by the former instead of the latter. In Campbell's assessment, such a methodological approach distances itself from Luther's warning "to abstain from the curious searching of God's majesty."¹⁴ It is not the search after an apprehension of God's attributes

¹¹ For instance, Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982); Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth, 1986; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988); Joel R. Beeke, *The Quest for Full Assurance: The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1999).

¹² Paul Helm, 'The Logic of Limited Atonement', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 3 (1985), 47-54.

¹³ *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2 vols., with a memoir by Sereno E. Dwight, revised and corrected by Edward Hickman (First Published, 1834; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1995), 2:565-78. Henceforth cited as Works (BT). *Of Satisfaction* is chapter five of "Remarks on Important Theological Controversies".

¹⁴ Campbell's reading of Luther comes from his commentary on Galatians. In it, Campbell finds both the evidence for the remission of sins (retrospective aspect) and for the appropriation of the atonement (prospective aspect). Both, in his analysis, are founded on the basis of the identity of Christ with humanity, which is the very factor that is lacking in Edwards' doctrine of atonement according to Campbell's reading of it. Campbell, 53-63; cit., 66.

whose conclusion is then brought to bear upon the nature of Christ's work that leads one to an accurate conception of the atonement. Rather, it is by first being acquainted with the life of Christ as Son of the Father that an accurate conception of the atonement can subsequently be worked out: "Not that I would presume to speak of their (i.e. Owen and Edwards) solemn weighing of the question 'what is divine justice? And to what conclusions does it lead on the subject of the atonement?' as 'curious searching;' but that it seems to me that it would have been well that they had used the *life* of Christ more as their *light*."¹⁵ If Campbell had meant by these words, an inadequacy in the relation of Christology to the doctrine of the atonement in terms of emphasis or degree, his criticism may not need to be taken as seriously. However, he goes on to show that his contention against Edwards is not merely a matter of material inadequacy but is of a fundamental nature: "it will be felt by those of them who are familiar with the theological writings of Owen and Edwards, that, however clear their reasonings are as reasonings, they must appear to me open to this fundamental objection, that they leave out of account certain first principles."¹⁶ In Campbell's words, this is Edwards' "axiomatic defect."¹⁷ Specifically, the nature of the defect is to begin with the axioms that "God is just" and "God is immutable" and bringing these to bear upon the atonement.¹⁸ According to Campbell, certain results follow.

First, such a "defective" grounding of the atonement results in the limitation of the atonement's extent since the history of redemption is but an outworking of what God has predetermined in eternity concerning the ultimate destinies of the reprobate and elect in accordance with his justice. As for the life of Christ, his suffering is viewed as "penal suffering", the punishment for the sins of the elect; the holiness and obedience of Christ is taken as accomplishing that perfect righteousness for the elect's eternal blessedness.¹⁹ Campbell supplies evidence for such a stance from Edwards' *Of Satisfaction for Sin*.²⁰

The limitation of atonement entails two further implications: it removes the warrant for the universal offer of salvation to every individual,²¹ and jettisons the revelation that "God is love"

¹⁵ Campbell, 67. Words in parentheses added.

¹⁶ Campbell, 67.

¹⁷ Campbell, 68.

¹⁸ Campbell, 69. In the immediate context, these words are said in relation to John Owen. However, Campbell clearly meant for them to be applied to Edwards as well for his specification of the two axioms comes immediately after his comments on Edwards in p. 70.

¹⁹ Campbell, 68.

²⁰ Campbell, 70.

²¹ Campbell, 71f.

in the life and work of Christ.²² Campbell demonstrates the interrelation of these implications in the following manner: “while they (i.e. Owen and Edwards) set forth justice as a necessary attribute of the divine nature, so that God must deal with *all men* according to its requirements, they represent mercy and love as not necessary, but arbitrary, and what, therefore, may find their expression in the history of only *some men*.”²³ He understands this interrelation to be more nuanced: the expression of God’s justice towards the elect and reprobate, although universal in extent, is borne by Christ on behalf of the elect only, while the expression of God’s love or mercy is particularistic, limited only to the elect. For Campbell, such an arbitrary act of God with respect to his love renders the character of God a mystery because “*an arbitrary act cannot reveal character*.”²⁴ Hence, his analysis of limited atonement of which Edwards was a key representative, concludes with the argument that its presentation of atonement fails to reveal that God is love despite the undoubtedly authentic experience of God’s love in the lives of its proponents.²⁵

The second result of Edwards’ axiomatic defect is “the substitution of a legal standing for a filial standing as the gift of God to men in Christ.”²⁶ Edwards’ account of Christ’s perfect obedience, in Campbell’s understanding, is fixed upon the fulfillment of legal requirements, and justification entail the Father’s acceptance of that fulfillment. By faith, the elect are included in this acceptance whereby Christ’s perfect obedience or righteousness is imputed to them. On account of this legal emphasis, Campbell claims that Edwards undermined the atonement as perceived and appropriated from the standpoint of Christ’s sonship, alleging that “the *life of sonship* in which this fulfillment has taken place, *is left out of view*.”²⁷ Against Edwards, Campbell insists that what Christ did on humanity’s behalf was not to secure a perfect legal standing that meets the demands of the law but a filial standing which places humanity above the law and under God’s grace. Our justification is thus viewed as God’s vindication of Christ in his *natural relation* to humanity by virtue of his life as the Son, and not God’s vindication of Christ in his *legal relation* to humanity by virtue of his having met the righteousness demanded of the law with its subsequent imputation.²⁸ The one is externally

²² Campbell, 73f.

²³ Campbell, 73. Words in parentheses added.

²⁴ Campbell, 73.

²⁵ Campbell, 74-6.

²⁶ Campbell, 76.

²⁷ Campbell, 77.

²⁸ The word “natural” appears frequently throughout Campbell’s work but remains undefined. By “natural” Campbell seemed to have meant “an interpretation which starts from the facts of Christ’s life on earth as recorded in the Scriptures

related, as represented by Edwards; the other, naturally related, as advanced by Luther and further explicated by Campbell. This is not to say that Campbell abandons entirely, the notion of the law's demands and its necessary fulfillment for justification. What Campbell does is to reinterpret the fulfillment of the law from the standpoint of Christ's sonship instead of Christ's perfect obedience.²⁹

However innovative Campbell's reinterpretation may have been deemed by some, there is no doubt that what drove his criticism of Edwards on the atonement is the assumption that the centrality of legal over filial conceptualities of God is incompatible with the Gospel as it is revealed in the life and work of Christ. Hence, the alleged problem with Edwards' system is not merely one of material inadequacy but of formal error. The disposition of God towards humanity in the atonement is not the demand that his justice be met but that his love be revealed: "the purpose of *giving a title* to a *legal* confidence, and that of quickening with a *filial confidence*, are manifestly different; and, the latter being recognized as that in the contemplation of which the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, we must conclude that that conception of the nature of the atonement which has led to the *substitution* of the former in men's thoughts, cannot be the true conception."³⁰

Thus, the case leveled against Edwards can be summed up in terms of a twofold God-man relation. With respect to God, the problem is an inherent arbitrariness in God which arises from the "axiomatic defect" of starting with the conception of God as just and reading that conception into the nature of the atonement. With respect to man, or more specifically the elect, the problem is that of displacing their filial for a legal standing. In both cases, Edwards is seen as departing from what is revealed in the life of Christ. A corollary to these matters is the problem of assurance or rather the lack of it and of faith's relation to assurance.³¹ However, this corollary is beyond the scope of this study. We will now proceed to a detailed examination of the writing upon which Campbell's criticisms of Edwards are based.

rather than an interpretation which starts from an external point of inquiry such as the necessity, or possibility of the atonement." Van Dyk, 41-2; cf. for instance, Campbell, 77: "Surely to bestow on us in Christ the life that has taken outward form in that work, is at once a more natural, and a far higher result of that work." The comparatives "more" and "far higher" are introduced with reference to Edwards' view of the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

²⁹ Campbell, 77.

³⁰ Campbell, 76-7. Emphasis added.

³¹ In fact it was the issue of assurance that led him to revise the doctrine of the atonement as it is represented by Edwards, for which he was charged with heresy. See Campbell's Reminiscences and Reflections, Referring to his Early Ministry in the Parish of Row, 1825-31 (London, 1873), 27, cited in Torrance, 291-2.

Part II: On Christ's Satisfaction for Sin

Edwards did not write any major treatise or discourse on satisfaction for sin. What he did leave behind are various entries on the subject in his personal notebook, the *Miscellanies*.³² The work that Campbell draws from in his exposition and criticisms of Edwards is a compilation of entries from the *Miscellanies*, strung together by the editor with the header, "Of Satisfaction for Sin", and the title, "Concerning the Necessity and Reasonableness of the Christian Doctrine of Satisfaction for Sin."³³

Preliminary Matters

Since the work at hand is drawn from the *Miscellanies*, two preliminary questions need to be raised to aid us in a detailed analysis of this compiled work: (a) How should the *Miscellanies* be read? (b) To what extent can the *Miscellanies* be employed towards getting at a more or less stable account of Edwards on the atonement or of any doctrine attributed to Edwards for that matter? The first has to do with the method of approach in handling the source material; the second, its relative weight in the corpus.

As to the first, Schafer has pointed out two possible approaches and their difficulties. The *Miscellanies* can either be read straight through with the experience of "being lost in a labyrinthine complexity of ideas", or be read topically as is the case with *Of Satisfaction*, with the concomitant risk of bifurcating Edwards' thought and life.³⁴ Schafer's own proposal is to marry the best of both approaches.³⁵ For this study, it is expedient that a *primarily* topical approach be taken but not exclusively, in view of the way *Of Satisfaction* is compiled and Campbell's reading of it. If it can be shown that despite our primarily topical approach, there are strands of evidence which are not accounted for by Campbell, then our case is strengthened. Yet, not dismissing Schafer's warning, we will give due attention to Edwards'

³² In this study, citation of entries in Edwards' *Miscellanies* notebook follows the format of the Yale edition of Edwards' works, with "No." followed by a numerical reference.

³³ It contains observations from the following entries in the order in which it was compiled: Nos. 779, 245, 1352, 1360, 1232, 1217, 1214, 1212, 764, 1005, 912, 1035, 1076, 797, 1145, 1173, 1208, 846, 449, 451, 1295, 915, 779. I am indebted to Stephen Holmes for this list given in the course of our personal conversation. This compilation along with five other items were first inserted into the 1843 reprint of the earlier Worcester edition and published as The Works of President Edwards, in four volumes (New York: Leavitt, Trow & Co.; London: Wiley and Putnam, 1843), which is most likely the edition Campbell used. Apart from editorial preferences in spelling (e.g. "honor" / "honour"; "connection" / "connexion"), the text of *Of Satisfaction* (vol. 1, pp. 582-611) remains as it is in the Banner of Truth edition.

³⁴ Thomas A. Schafer, ed., The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 13 (New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 1994), 8-9. Subsequent references to the Yale edition will be cited as Works (Yale).

³⁵ Works (Yale), 13:9-90.

context whenever necessary. Our analysis will be confined mainly to those entries that constitute *Of Satisfaction*. Other entries will be referred to only when they indicate important development in Edwards' atonement theology that is not found in the compiled work.

With regards to the second question, an awareness of the way Edwards employed his Miscellanies will provide some answers. It is widely known that Edwards drew upon his Miscellanies for composing his sermons, discourses, and treatises. For instance, his discourse on *A History of the Work of Redemption* began as a series of thirty sermons preached between March and August of 1739, all of which were compiled together and published posthumously in 1774. Entries in the Miscellanies from this period demonstrate that he was not writing the work from scratch but had already thought through much of its contents.³⁶ Indeed, the evidence begins even earlier. In Wilson's opinion, Nos. 710 and 702 "offer the earliest evidence of his intentions concerning the Redemption Discourse and show how thoroughly he developed his grand plan of the project some time before he actually wrote and preached the sermons."³⁷ This is also true of his treatises. The reason a major treatise like *Freedom of the Will* can be composed in less than five months in the midst of Edwards' labors at Stockbridge, is due both to the fact that he had already worked out much of what he intended to write in the Miscellanies, and also the ease with which he could obtain materials from it with the help of his Table, a sophisticated index to his Miscellanies and manuscripts.³⁸ The crucial point to be emphasized here is the provisional character of the Miscellanies.³⁹ They were never intended to be definitive with regards to doctrinal matters, but were nevertheless employed as resource materials whose contents aided the outworking of projects which were intended for the public. Thus, it is not uncommon to observe that new entries on a certain issue that had already received attention in an earlier entry were subsequently introduced to revise and expand on the contents of the same subject.⁴⁰ Even if the whole corpus of the Miscellanies were compared on a certain doctrinal matter, the fact that it was not intended for publication would mean that it is best to take conclusions obtained from it as tentative in nature. Hence, it is necessary that we take into consideration, Edwards' published works and not only his Miscellanies in order to arrive at a settled conviction on his

³⁶ Works (Yale), 20:2; cf. Nos. 833, 834, 835, 907, 932, 935, 946, 949, 952, 991.

³⁷ John F. Wilson, ed. Works, (Yale), 9:15.

³⁸ Works (Yale) 13:6; cf. pp. 113-50.

³⁹ Cf. Holmes, 35-6.

⁴⁰ See for instance, Holmes' analysis of development in the Miscellanies towards Edwards' mature statement in *Concerning the End for Which God Created the World*. Holmes, 35-44.

view of the atonement. However, this will only be done in Part III. Part II will be confined to an analysis of the key developments in *Of Satisfaction*.

Of Satisfaction: An Analysis of Its Key Developments

Of Satisfaction contains a total of twenty-one sections.⁴¹ It includes selection of entries that span Nos. 245 to 1360, which corresponds with the period 1727 to the 1750s.⁴² The editor chose No. 779, a lengthy entry entitled, “THE NECESSITY OF SATISFACTION for sin, the reasonableness of that Christian doctrine”, as §1, and modified the above title to “Concerning the Necessity and Reasonableness of the Christian Doctrine of Satisfaction for Sin” in order to capture the thrust of his compilation.⁴³ As the modified heading makes plain, subsequent entries in *Of Satisfaction* were probably chosen with the contents of No. 779 as the reference point. This is confirmed by Campbell’s reading of the work. However, before its influence upon Campbell can be shown, it is necessary to consider in detail the argument of the entry from §1-8.

Edwards’ twofold concern is obvious from the titles. With respect to the reasonableness of satisfaction, Edwards argues his case on the basis of natural law, that is, what is naturally accepted without question with regards to the way things work in the world. In this case, it is the way justice works. Words like “fitting”, “suitable”, “natural”, “proper”, “meet”, and “becoming”, are employed in the course of argument to express the reasonableness of the issue considered. It is therefore not surprising that the entry does not begin with the justice of God but justice as it is naturally understood. According to Edwards, it is fitting that justice seeks the punishment of crimes for what they deserve: “*None will deny* that some crimes are so horrid, and so deserving of punishment, that it is requisite that they should not go unpunished, unless something very considerable be done to make up for the crime; ... otherwise the desert of punishment remaining, *all will allow*, that *it is fit and becoming*, and to be desired, that the crime be severely punished.”⁴⁴ Not only is it required that crimes be punished, it is necessary that it be done in a way that is proportionate to the heinousness of

⁴¹ For reasons unknown, §16 is missing and the whole work ends with §22. This is probably an editorial error.

⁴² Dating for No. 245 is found in Table 2, Works (Yale) 13: 91ff.; No. 1360 is still unpublished but is certainly written after 1751 since No. 1152 was not written before that year. See Works (Yale) 20:39.

⁴³ Works (BT) 1:565-9; Works (Yale) 18:434-48.

⁴⁴ Works (Yale) 18:434. Emphasis added. Cf. p. 436-7: “The consciences not only of Christians, and those that have been educated in the principles of divine revelation, but also the consciences of the heathen, inform them of this. And therefore, unless conscience has been stupefied by frequent violations, when men have done wickedness there remains a sense of guilt upon their minds, a sense of an obligation to punishment.”

the crime or the abhorrence which it engenders. This proportionality in the administration of justice is termed by Edwards as meeting the “demerit” of sin or of the crime committed.⁴⁵ Hence, the greater the crime, the greater the demerit and the punishment deserved. For lesser crimes, the equation is reversed in accordance with the same principle. So reasoned, the measure of sin’s demerit and its deserved punishment is infinite when the offended party is God himself:

“... it is requisite that God should punish all sin with infinite punishment; because all sin, as it is against God, is infinitely heinous, and has infinite demerit, is justly infinitely hateful to him, and so stirs up infinite abhorrence and indignation in him. Therefore, by what was before granted, it is requisite that God should punish it, unless there be something in some measure to balance this desert, either some answerable repentance and sorrow for it, or other compensation.”⁴⁶

That Edwards introduces a proviso in the last statement does not mean that repentance or sorrow on the part of humanity is somehow able to avert or lessen divine punishment and obtain pardon. Edwards is sufficiently aware of the Arminian threat in his day not to allow for such a weakness in his logic.⁴⁷ On the contrary, he asserts in traditional Calvinistic fashion that there is nothing humanity can do that is answerable to the demerit of sin, repentance notwithstanding.⁴⁸ Since the demerit is infinite, any act of repentance or sorrow on the part of humanity will inevitably fall “infinitely short” of what is required for obtaining satisfaction for sin.⁴⁹

From this observation of the natural connection between sin and its deserved punishment, Edwards draws the logical implication that “therefore the justice of God obliges him to punish sin.”⁵⁰ As if aware of the danger of reasoning from natural law to God and so subjecting God

⁴⁵ Works (Yale) 18:434-5.

⁴⁶ Works (Yale) 18:435.

⁴⁷ Assuming the accuracy of Ava Chamberlain’s dating, No. 779 would have been composed between Oct 1738 and Feb 1739. Works (Yale) 18:48. There is no doubt that Edwards’ was already informed of the Arminian threat by the time of this entry. In his letter to Rev. Benjamin Colman, dated 30th May 1735, where an account of the 1734 and 1735 awakenings were given, Edwards spoke of “the great noise that there was in this part of the country about Arminianism, which seemed strangely to be overruled for the promoting of religion.” Works (Yale) 16:50. His constant desire to write against the tenets of Arminianism which eventually resulted in *Freedom of the Will*, is sufficient evidence that he took this threat seriously. Cf. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 137-41; Murray, Jonathan Edwards, 106ff.

⁴⁸ Works (Yale) 18:435.

⁴⁹ Works (Yale) 18:435.

⁵⁰ Works (Yale) 18:437.

to nature, Edwards immediately makes plain that the “obligation” arises from the perfection of God’s nature as just,⁵¹ which predisposes him to maintain order as “the supreme Rector of the universality of things.”⁵² Hence, the ultimate reference point for grasping the naturalness of relations is the nature of God. God’s holiness, of which his justice is a part, “naturally and necessarily disposes him to punish sin”,⁵³ since it is infinitely opposed to the infinite odiousness of sin. Taking vengeance is the proper exercise and token of God’s displeasure against sin. However, this cannot be said to be equally applicable to man because vengeance properly belongs to God who is the Lord and Supreme Judge of the world.⁵⁴

As for the necessity of satisfaction, Edwards argues for it in two ways. Negatively, it is necessary because of the inadequacy of repentance *alone* in securing pardon for sins in view of its disproportionate relation to sin’s demerit. However, he is careful not to present his case at the expense of repentance but in its proper relation to satisfaction. It is best to quote him more extensively on this:

“And if any ask why God could not pardon the injury on repentance, without other satisfaction, without any wrong to justice; I also ask the same person, why he could not also pardon the injury without repentance? For the same reason, could he not pardon with repentance, without satisfaction: for all the repentance man is capable of, is no repentance at all, or is as little as none in comparison to the greatness of the injury, for it bears no proportion to it; and it would be as dishonorable and unfit for God to pardon the injury without repentance at all, as merely on the account of a repentance, that bears no more proportion to the injury, than none at all.”⁵⁵

The kind of repentance Edwards promotes is one that is related to a satisfaction that is made antecedent to repentance. It is what he terms, “evangelical repentance”, or repentance that has respect to an antecedent compensation for sin’s infinite demerit.⁵⁶ Thus, the actuality of sin’s forgiveness is not obtained solely by virtue of repentance without satisfaction; hence, the necessity of satisfaction for sin.

⁵¹ That is, not from a natural law external to God. This is implied although not explicitly stated by Edwards.

⁵² Works (Yale) 18:437.

⁵³ Works (Yale) 18:437.

⁵⁴ Works (Yale) 18:438.

⁵⁵ Works (Yale) 18:435.

⁵⁶ Works (Yale) 18:435-6.

Positively, satisfaction is necessary because the majesty and law of God requires it.⁵⁷ We will first consider the former. Sin injures the majesty of God by casting contempt upon it. To vindicate God's majesty, it is needful to demonstrate his worthiness to the sinner, "by his appearing in the fearful, dreadful event to the person guilty, that he is an infinitely fearful and terrible being."⁵⁸ However, the revelation of God's wrath does not yet vindicate God's majesty fully. God will be fully vindicated when satisfaction is made. Thus, "it is not fit that this infinite and glorious majesty should be left under this contempt, but that it *should* be vindicated *wholly* from it; that it *should* be raised perfectly from the dust wherein it is trodden by something opposite to the contempt that is equivalent to it, or of weight sufficient to balance it, either an equivalent punishment, or an equivalent sorrow and repentance, so that sin *must* be punished with an infinite punishment."⁵⁹ What motivates the necessary and full vindication of God's majesty is not merely the administration of compensative justice to the guilty sinner so that order among creatures is maintained. It is also the case that "justice *to himself* requires that God should punish sin with infinite punishment."⁶⁰ In other words, God seeks to maintain the rights of his creatures as well as his own rights and the honor of his perfections. For these to happen, satisfaction is necessary.

Secondly, satisfaction is necessary because God's law requires it.⁶¹ For an expression of will to be properly construed as law, there has to be authority that comes with it that manifests itself in both threats of punishment should it be transgressed, and the actual execution of that threatened punishment.⁶² For Edwards, the divine law must be executed and cannot be relaxed or abrogated on account of sinners for several reasons: its quality of stability or fixedness requires it;⁶³ its design to regulate the life of sinners and not to be subjected under their regulation requires it;⁶⁴ its perfection, derived from and as an expression of the perfections of God for the world's good requires it;⁶⁵ the sacredness of God's authority as Lawgiver requires it;⁶⁶ God's truth requires that the law be maintained.⁶⁷

⁵⁷ Works (Yale) 18:439f.

⁵⁸ Works (Yale) 18:439.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁶⁰ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁶¹ Works (Yale) 18:440-8.

⁶² Works (Yale) 18:441.

⁶³ Works (Yale) 18:442-3.

⁶⁴ Works (Yale) 18:443.

⁶⁵ Works (Yale) 18:443-4.

⁶⁶ Works (Yale) 18:444-5.

⁶⁷ Works (Yale) 18:445-8.

Edwards does not go as far to insist explicitly that the divine law requires the infinite punishment of sin against God and therefore sin's satisfaction. Nevertheless, his acknowledgement of God as the author of the law by which his creatures are governed,⁶⁸ and the necessity of the law's execution as indicated above, would suggest that satisfaction is indeed necessary. For if God is its author, then transgressing the law is not merely an impersonal legal offense, but also a deeply personal one directed against the being of God and his perfections. This would then bring us back to Edwards' prior argument for satisfaction's necessity by virtue of God's majesty. No. 779 ends at this point on the divine law and its execution.

What have been worked out so far are the grounds of satisfaction's necessity and reasonableness.⁶⁹ They consist of God's perfections in relation to humanity of which justice is the prominent element, the nature of God's law and his keeping of it, and the fitness of sin's punishment as demanded by justice, be it the justice of God or justice as naturally conceived in human relationships. It is apparent that several features of what Campbell observed in Edwards' system is not treated in this entry. There is for instance no mention of the mechanism of satisfaction which for Edwards is that of penal substitution. Neither is there any explicit mention of Christ's mediatorial work in penal terms and its effects upon its recipients as amounting to a legal standing. Nor has predestination come into play. The emphasis throughout has clearly been placed on demonstrating the import of the words "necessity" and "reasonableness" rather than "satisfaction."

It is probably this lack of treatment on the nature of satisfaction, particularly with respects to the crucial role of Christ, that led the editor to immediately include No. 245 as §2, which moves the argument a step further by introducing the Christological element. It is entitled, "Faith, Saving, and Satisfaction of Christ", obviously an extension of No. 244 on "Faith, Saving."⁷⁰ This short entry picks up the language of reasonableness as with No. 779.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Works (Yale) 18:440.

⁶⁹ Gerstner's analysis of this entry does not acknowledge the element of "reasonableness" at all as a main concern. John H. Gerstner, The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards, 3 Vols. (Powhatan, Virginia: Berea Publication; Orlando Florida: Logonier Ministries, 1992), 2:429-31.

⁷⁰ Works (Yale) 18:359.

⁷¹ No. 244 makes this abundantly clear. In it, Edwards observes that sin will not be overlooked by God unless there is repentance and sorrow which are proportionate to its aggravation, or the presence of a substitute that obtains full satisfaction. In addition, the offender needs to consciously depend on the substitute and acknowledge the adequacy of satisfaction secured on his behalf by him. For Edwards, these matters cohere with "the very light of nature." Works (Yale) 18:359.

Edwards insists that the satisfaction of Christ by his death is “a very rational thing.”⁷² Satisfaction is obtained when an offender’s friend suffers and pleads with the offended on behalf of the offender, along with a “sense” in the offender’s mind of the sufficient extent to which his friend has suffered for his sake to obtain satisfaction. In other words, the mediatorial work of the friend must be coupled with the realization of its magnitude in the consciousness of the offender for satisfaction to occur. Edwards relates this directly to Christ in §9.⁷³ Likewise, “a sense of Christ’s sufficiency seems necessary in faith.”⁷⁴ The notion of suffering as part of what is necessary for satisfaction is given attention again in §4, with specific reference to the suffering of Christ and the dignity of his person.⁷⁵

Following §2, another lengthy section made up of Nos. 1352 and 1360, is inserted as §3.⁷⁶ With this third section, the argument is further advanced, for it is here that the concepts of substitution, imputation, and union, are first introduced explicitly in *Of Satisfaction*. Indeed, all the features of the atonement that are found in *Of Satisfaction* are captured in this section. At the heart of it are observations on the nature of patron-client relationships and its relation to satisfaction. In view of its significance for our task, we will give more attention to it below. However, it will suffice to note for the moment, that apart from §2-4, there is no real advance in argument from what has already been established in §1 within the scope of §1-8. §5 (No. 1217) reiterates the inability of man to meet the recompense demanded by God on account of his honor and majesty;⁷⁷ §6 (No. 1214) rehearses the relationship between punishment and its threats, God’s law and its exercise;⁷⁸ §7 (No. 1212) consists of a series of Scripture passages which support the necessity of sin’s punishment in view of God’s holiness and justice;⁷⁹ §8 (No. 764a) states the conditions necessary for one to be considered a mediator, which are the concepts of union and imputation, reiterating some features of §3.⁸⁰ Thus, we have covered the movement of thought in §1-8.

§9 is of crucial importance for our task. It is this section which is first quoted by Campbell with a revealing description of how he understood §1-8. It consists of entry No. 1005 with the

⁷² Works (Yale) 18:359.

⁷³ Works (BT) 2:574-5.

⁷⁴ Works (Yale) 18:360.

⁷⁵ No. 1232 is the entry inserted here. It consists of a quotation from an edited work, “Deism Revealed”, rather than Edwards’ own reflections.

⁷⁶ Parts 1-11 is the text of No. 1352 while parts 12-19 are 1360. Holmes, 144 n.62.

⁷⁷ Works (BT) 2:573.

⁷⁸ Works (BT) 2:573-4.

⁷⁹ Works (BT) 2:574.

⁸⁰ Works (BT) 2:574; Works (Yale) 18:410.

title, “Christ’s Suffering the Wrath of God for the Sins of Men. Satisfaction. Wisdom of God in the Work of Redemption.”⁸¹ The various strands of Edwards’ thoughts on satisfaction for sin introduced previously are all brought together in this entry and explicitly related to Christ and his substitutionary atonement. Christ, who is infinitely holy, suffered the wrath of God on account of the infinite demerit and offense incurred due to men’s sin. In so suffering, “he especially stood for them (the elect), and was substituted in their stead; and his love and pity fixed the idea of them in his mind, as though it really was his.”⁸² Therefore, it is not surprising that Campbell’s first citation comes from it. He summarizes its thrust in the following manner: “After premising that ‘Christ suffered the wrath of God for men’s sins in such a way as He was capable of, being an infinitely holy person who knew that God was not angry with Him personally – knew that God did not hate Him but infinitely loved Him’, he goes on to specify two ways in which he conceives that Christ could endure the wrath of God.”⁸³

These two ways, which Campbell was not concerned to state or assess in detail, are as follows. Firstly, Christ could endure the wrath of God on men’s behalf because of his clear knowledge of “the infinite wrath of God against the sins of men, and the punishment they had deserved.”⁸⁴ Secondly, Christ could endure God’s wrath because he could endure its effects as experienced in the full onslaught of the powers of men and of the devil on the one hand, and the agony of being forsaken by the Father on the other.⁸⁵ The point that Campbell was raising with reference to §9 is this: “that his sufferings are regarded as implying, that it would be unjust that those should themselves eventually suffer punishment for whom He had suffered, as in the same way it was held, that it would be unjust that those should not eventually inherit eternal blessedness for whom Christ had merited eternal blessedness.”⁸⁶ Hence, from §9, Campbell understood Edwards’ notion of Christ’s suffering as penal in nature and necessary because of God’s justice. Then comes the point that makes our extended analysis of §1-9 above crucial for our task:

“We are not to wonder that, having come to such conclusion as these from such axioms as that ‘God is just’ and that ‘God is immutable’, texts of Scripture such

⁸¹ Works (Yale) 20:329-34.

⁸² Works (Yale) 20:331-2. Words in parentheses added.

⁸³ Campbell, 69.

⁸⁴ Works (Yale) 20:329.

⁸⁵ Works (Yale) 20:333-4.

⁸⁶ Campbell, 70.

as those who believe that the atonement was for all men, ...were, urged with little effect.”⁸⁷

In Campbell’s interpretation, the conclusion arrived at in §9, which entails Christ’s penal suffering, logically proceeds from the axioms of God’s nature as established in §1-8. Such an interpretation naturally leads to the conclusion that for Edwards, God’s justice is the key factor in the atonement. Clearly, Campbell’s grasp of Edwards’ atonement theology is to a large extent determined by the movement of thought in *Of Satisfaction*. At this point, it is necessary to raise the question of whether such a reading is indeed the case with Edwards? We will go on to show that it is not. While we may grant the validity of Campbell’s pastoral concern over a theological system that emphasizes God’s justice and the legal aspects of the atonement at the expense of God’s love and the atonement’s filial aspects, we cannot honestly concur with him that this is true of Edwards for the following reasons.

First, the entries in *Of Satisfaction* are distributed in a way that accentuates the legal aspects of the atonement. Perhaps the most obvious is the fact that No. 779 begins and closes the whole work. Our analysis of this entry above has demonstrated that it is primarily concerned with establishing the grounds for satisfaction within a judicial context which include the fitness of sin’s punishment according to God’s justice, the nature of God as holy and just, the threatenings of God’s law and its exercise. The former three elements are included in §1, while the fourth is left for the concluding section, §22. Thus, the whole compilation is read in the light of No. 779 whose concerns are legal in nature.

Second, entries within and outside *Of Satisfaction*, that either balance the legal with non-legal aspects of the atonement, or that introduce a non-opposing alternative to a legal way of expressing the nature of the atonement, are not considered. A good example of the former is No. 450. In it, God’s mercy and justice are properly related; neither divorced nor prioritized. God’s mercy “is called his truth as it is in fulfillment of his covenant.” “It is called his righteousness as it is what he determines for them (the elect) as he is judge of the world.”⁸⁸ To show mercy to the righteous is as much part of God’s justice as is his punishment of the wicked.⁸⁹ It is unfortunate that such a significant development of Edwards’ view of the

⁸⁷ Campbell, 69-70.

⁸⁸ Works (Yale) 13:497. Words in parentheses added.

⁸⁹ Works (Yale) 13:498; cf. his exegetical comments on the word “righteousness” in his sermon on Isaiah 51:8: “By God’s righteousness here is meant his faithfulness in fulfilling his covenant promises to his church, or his faithfulness towards his church and people in bestowing the benefits of the covenant of grace upon them. ... God’s righteousness or covenant mercy

atonement should be passed over, while its surrounding entries, Nos. 449 and 451, both of which reiterates the legal aspects of the atonement, are chosen as §18 and §19 respectively. An example of an entry that presents a non-opposing alternative to legal conceptions of the atonement is No. 306, on “Satisfaction.”⁹⁰ In it, God’s holiness is paired with his wisdom to account for the necessity of sin’s punishment. The reason for so pairing is to appeal to God’s wisdom in the beautiful ordering of the world to answer the possible charge that God is wrong should he choose not to punish sin since he is obligated by his justice to do so. Hence he observes: “It hardly carries a right idea with it, to say that God is obliged in justice to punish sin. ...It seems to me to exhibit the thing more properly to say that God is obliged in holiness and in wisdom to punish sin.”⁹¹ Then he asserts:

“It would not be a prudent, decent and beautiful thing for a being of infinite glory and majesty, and the sovereign of the world, to let an infinite evil go unpunished. And as God’s nature inclines him [to] order all things beautifully, properly and decently, so it was necessary that sin should be punished; God in his infinite wisdom saw that there was such a necessity as this ... besides what arises from the [verac]ity of God.”⁹²

Edwards’ “system” of atonement, if there is one, is clearly not confined to legal conceptualizations of the atonement. No. 306 indicates that it also includes an aesthetic element. Within *Of Satisfaction*, there is indication of this element as well. It is worked out from the standpoint of sin’s complete satisfaction. In §15 (No. 1208), Edwards argues that if God has determined to forgive those who are guilty of offending his infinite majesty, then it is reasonable to suppose that God will also see to it that the infinite injury incurred should be *fully* repaired.⁹³ What is significant is that the full reparation to be done is conceived of and required by “a perfectly wise, holy, and disinterested Author” who regulates and disposes all things “most fitly and beautifully.”⁹⁴ As with No. 306, §15 juxtaposes the wisdom of God alongside his holiness, leading to a view of the atonement and its requirements that is

is the root of which his salvation is the fruit.” Works (Yale) 9:114-5.

⁹⁰ Works (Yale) 13:391.

⁹¹ Works (Yale) 13:391.

⁹² Works (Yale) 18:391.

⁹³ Works (BT) 2:576-7.

⁹⁴ Works (BT) 2:576.

conceived as part of God's beautiful ordering of the world. This is in agreement with Edwards' conception of the universe as one where ultimately, all is order and harmony, reflecting the order and harmony of God's attributes.⁹⁵

Thirdly, in the light of Nos. 1352 and 1360 (§3), Campbell's interpretation of Edwards' atonement theology is in need of serious revision. Of the twenty one selections from Edwards' Miscellanies in *Of Satisfaction*, only these two entries present the atonement in terms that are primarily non-legal. Indeed, it is surprising that despite their combined length,⁹⁶ Campbell did not take their contents into consideration. Either they were simply ignored, which is unlikely since Campbell read Edwards "with so solemn and deep an interest as listening to a great and holy man",⁹⁷ or they were read in the light of the predominantly judicial setting of the other nineteen entries, which is more likely the case. To justify this observation, it is necessary to examine their contents in §3.

§3 is a piece of closely argued writing. In it, Edwards works out the intricate relationship between a patron and client as the kind of relationship that suitably conveys the various elements that together establish the mechanism of satisfaction for sin. What is emphasized throughout is the union that exists between a patron and his client. Union is the ground for imputation and substitution, that is, for reckoning the patron's merit as belonging or transferred to his client, and for viewing the patron as standing in his client's stead and seeking his client's interest as his own. He observes:

"As it is the relation of one to another, or his union with him, that is the ground of the respect that is exercised towards him for the other's sake, and so the ground of substitution of the other in his stead, and the imputation of the other's merit in some degree, ...so it is manifest that the greater or nearer that relation is, and the stricter the union, so much the more does it prevail for the acceptance of the person as the object of respect for the sake of him to whom he is united."⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Works (Yale) 18:54. Cf. No. 38, "Harmony of God's Attributes in the Work of Redemption", p. 221.

⁹⁶ The entry can be conveniently divided into three sections. The first consists of exegetical comments. Edwards' own definition of "merit", "patron", and "client" are found in the second. The third section is the longest, consisting of twenty segments of observations on the nature of patron-client relationships and its bearing upon the atonement. This entry is given the title, "Christ's Satisfaction or Atonement, etc." Subsequent citations from it are taken from a transcribed version of the entry by Stephen Holmes.

⁹⁷ Campbell, 67.

⁹⁸ Works (BT) 2:571.

In speaking of imputation and substitution, Edwards does not speak of them in merely judicial and impersonal terms. They fit into Edwards' "system" as part of what ensues given the relational and personal setting of the patron-client dynamic. Such a relational reading of the patron-client relationship is supported in three ways.

First, the social context of Edwards' day suggests that neither a legalistic nor commercial reading of the patron-client analogy is the most natural way of understanding patron-client relationships. Society in eighteenth century colonial America understood the ties that bound people together in terms that took its cue more from the past than from the future. That is, the personal world of the family, where dependence was the main characteristic governing family relationships, was still very much part of Edwards' social world despite the increasing impersonality of a world characterized by commercial transactions and the celebration of independence.⁹⁹ This patriarchal dependence was evident in society in many ways. In business for instance, partnerships with relatives were common; in politics, family names were used to designate political groups since political parties were often constituted by kinship relations.¹⁰⁰ Yet, however paternalistic and hierarchical these relationships of dependence were, they cannot be said to be purely legalistic and impersonal: "Society was held together by intricate networks of personal loyalties, obligations, and quasi-dependencies... Indeed, every variety of personal attachment and connection no matter how unequal, could be described as friendship...Kin relations could be friends; so too could patrons or customers."¹⁰¹ In even the most legal and contractual context, this remains a truism.¹⁰² Personal relationships working within a web of hierarchies was the way things functioned naturally in Edwards' day: "Personal relationships of dependence, usually taking the form of those between patrons and clients, constituted the ligaments that held this society together and made it work."¹⁰³ It is from this social context that Edwards' patron-client analogy is drawn, whose context its understanding is to be set against.

Second, Edwards' own definitions of "patron" and "client" reveal the relational context within which his observations were worked out. Edwards defines "patron" as "a person of superior dignity or merit that stands for and espouses the interest of another, interposes between him and a third person or party in that capacity, to secure, maintain, or promote the

⁹⁹ Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 43-56.

¹⁰⁰ Wood, 48.

¹⁰¹ Wood, 57-8.

¹⁰² Wood, 68, 70f.

¹⁰³ Wood, 63.

interest of that other by his influence with him, improving his merit with him, or interest in his esteem and regard for that end.”¹⁰⁴ By “client” he means “that other person, whose interest the patron thus espouses and, in this manner, endeavors to maintain and promote.”¹⁰⁵ It is self-evident that the definitions are coined in relational terms.

Third, and most decisively, Edwards’ use of the patron-client analogy demonstrates beyond doubt, that it is the relational aspects of its dynamic that is prominent while legal transactions whenever mentioned are discussed within that larger and more prominent setting. A good example is Edwards’ discussion of the patron who suffers in his client’s stead the penalty that is incurred by the client. To be an appropriate substitute of the client, the patron’s own inherent merit or virtue must not be compromised in his desire to seek the client’s interest as his own because the recommending influence of the patron is contingent upon the merit or dignity of his person. For this to happen, two conditions need to be met by the patron: he is required to pay the incurred debt to the offended party, and also to be subjected to and fulfill the demands of the “rule of righteousness” which has been violated by the client in relation to the offended party.¹⁰⁶ Here, similarities with our analysis of §1-9 are apparent: justice requires sin to be punished for what it deserves with an equivalent repentance or sorrow that is answerable to the demerit of sin. In §9, Christ pays that penalty as our substitute, bearing upon himself the wrath of God. In §3, it is the patron – doubtless referring to Christ – that takes on that punishment in the form of suffering. At this point it is entirely possible to construe the patron-client relationship in purely legal terms. But the details of the section disallow legal factors to be the governing heuristic. To begin with, the offended party is no stranger but the patron’s friend in Edwards’ choice of analogy.¹⁰⁷ Then, there is the decisive evidence of the cause of suffering:

“When the effect of the patron’s love to the client is a suffering for the client, that is equal in value or weight to the client’s suffering, considering the difference of the degree of persons. It shows that the love to the client that is the cause of this suffering is also equal or equivalent to his love to himself, according to the different degree of persons.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Works (BT) 2:570-1.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Works (BT) 2:572.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Works (BT) 2:573.

The cause of the patron's suffering is his love for the client. Penal suffering is not negated here for it is still necessary for the patron to undergo suffering that measure up to that of the client's. However, it is the patron's love for the client that is accentuated and not the demands of the law.¹⁰⁹ Following what has been quoted above, Edwards makes a move that is arguably the climax of §3:

“The most proper and clear trial of the measure of love or regard to the interest of another is the measure of suffering or expense of personal interest for the interest of the beloved. For so much as the lover regards the welfare of the beloved, so much in value or weight of his own welfare will be willing to part with for it.”¹¹⁰

Again, penal suffering is present, but it is introduced in a context that is governed by an analogy that emphasizes its relational dynamic with the language of intimacy and love as indicated by the move from patron-client relationships to the relationship between lovers. Thus, to interpret §3 within a purely judicial context is to present a seriously defective interpretation of Edwards' atonement theology in the light of the above evidence.

Summary

What we have done in Part II, is to explicate in detail, the key movements of thought which are inherent in the way *Of Satisfaction* is compiled. This is an important task since it is on the basis of this compilation that Campbell's understanding of Edwards' atonement theology is based. In the process, we have paid particular attention to Nos. 779 (§1 and 22), 1352 and 1360 (§3), in view of the nature of critique Campbell has raised against Edwards. No. 779, along with the entries in §2-9 except §3, are set within an essentially judicial context as Edwards' treatment of the reasonableness and necessity of the satisfaction for sin demonstrate. The case is different for Nos. 1352 and 1360, both of which are set within an essentially relational context in which legal aspects of the atonement are introduced. With the exception of No. 1208 (§15), we have not ventured to explore the details of the entries in §10-21 since what they contain do not add any new development to the foregoing sections. In the course our analysis, we have shown that *Of Satisfaction* is skewed towards a legal reading of the atonement. We have also seen how Campbell is influenced by the way the argument

¹⁰⁹ Cf. also section 4 of §3. Works (BT) 2:571.

¹¹⁰ Works (BT) 2:573.

moves within it and that his interpretation is in serious need of revision in the light of §3. Furthermore, our consideration of entries apart from those that constitute *Of Satisfaction* has revealed evidence of a richer understanding of the atonement that unites the legal with the aesthetic and relational elements. Given that Edwards was a coherent thinker we would expect our findings to have bearing on his other doctrines. It is to some of these matters that we now turn.

Part III: The Atonement and Its Systematic Relations

For Edwards, the atonement is the hinge around which other Christian doctrines turn. Without it, it is impossible that doctrines find their proper relation: “For that great Christian doctrine of Christ’s righteousness, his vicarious sufferings and righteousness, by which he offered an infinite price to God for our pardon and acceptance to eternal favor and happiness, is that to which all evangelical doctrines, all doctrines besides the truths of natural religion, have relation; and they are of little importance, comparatively, any other way, than as they have respect to that.”¹¹¹ In this respect, Jinkins’s thesis that Edwards’ doctrine of God to a great extent shapes the nature and extent of his doctrine of the atonement has some weight to it.¹¹² Jinkins is right to the extent that he sees the doctrinal relation. However, the influence need not be one-directional as he argues. There is an interdependence of these loci in Edwards. Indeed, for Edwards, there is a sense in which the atonement is the point of departure for doctrinal reflections, since in his mature thought, it is within the history of redemption that doctrinal matters are to be worked out, which is the reverse order of doctrinal relation that Jinkins proposes.¹¹³ *A History of the Work of Redemption* contains sketches of what was to be that mature thought.¹¹⁴ It is not the final version of that work as Edwards had envisaged, but consists of its outlines “as contained in a series of sermons, preached at Northampton in 1739.”¹¹⁵ Edwards referred to it in his letter to the trustees of the College of New Jersey, describing it as “a body of divinity in an entire new method, being thrown into the

¹¹¹ Works (BT) 2:497.

¹¹² Jinkins, 10-11, 29-228.

¹¹³ Cf. John F. Wilson’s observation on Edwards’ reflections of how redemption seen in relation to creation is the means to comprehend the world’s relation to God: “His continuing reflection on these questions led him to carry the question even further back, into conjecture that the human understanding of the Work of Redemption established the nature of the Godhead as irreducibly trinitarian.” Works (Yale) 9:31

¹¹⁴ Its subtitle captures the gist of the work: “containing the outlines of a body of divinity, including a view of church history, in a method entirely new.” Works (BT) 1:532-619.

¹¹⁵ Jonathan Edwards, Jr., Preface, Works (BT) 1:532.

form of an history, considering the affair of Christian theology, as the whole of it, in each part, stands in reference to the great work of redemption by Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁶ We will use this work as the starting point for Part III but will not be confined to it since it is obviously not the completed work. It will be supplemented with Edwards’ other published writings. The reason for this is polemical. If the regulating concept for all doctrinal reflections is *redemption* in its historical development of which Christ’s work is the climax, then Campbell’s criticism of Edwards’ “axiomatic defect” will be called into question, at least as far as Edwards’ mature writing goes.¹¹⁷

Christ, Atonement, and the History of Redemption

The great event of Christ’s humiliation for the world’s redemption is the controlling event for the history of redemption. For Edwards, what God did in the intervening period between the fall of man and Christ’s incarnation was preparatory for Christ’s coming; the period between Christ’s incarnation and resurrection saw the purchase of redemption made; what God did after Christ’s resurrection and is continuing to do until the end of the world concerns the effective accomplishment of that purchased redemption.¹¹⁸ These are the three governing theological propositions of the entire history of redemption whose center and point of reference is the person and work of Christ. They correspond to the three periods of history as proposed by Edwards in the propositions, with the second having the most weight: “For though it be so much shorter than either of the other, being but between thirty and forty years whereas both the other contain thousands, yet in this affair that we are now upon, it is indeed more than both the other.”¹¹⁹ Several observations are noteworthy in this second period for our study.

First, while Edwards’ Christology was assumed in *Of Satisfaction*, it is made explicit in *History of Redemption*. He does not divide his treatment of the second period into different dispensations as with the first and third, but starts with a treatment of the incarnation,

¹¹⁶ Works (Yale) 9:62; cf. John Erskine’s introductory remarks in Works (BT) 1:532.

¹¹⁷ Earlier in 1729 or 1730, Edwards had intended to work on another project that was outlined according to traditional dogmatic works where treatment of doctrinal issues was arranged logically according to different loci. It was entitled, “A Rational Account of the Main Doctrines of the Christian Religion Attempted.” A section on “The being and nature of God” was to head the list. However, he abandoned the idea sometime after preaching the *History of Redemption* sermons in 1739. Cf. Marsden, 482f. Since *A Rational Account* was not worked out in full and was replaced by the projected work based on “an entire new method”, we can safely take *A History of the Work of Redemption* as containing his mature *approach* on doctrinal matters although materially it is far from complete.

¹¹⁸ Works (Yale) 9:128.

¹¹⁹ Works (Yale) 9:127-8.

followed by the purchase of redemption itself. Edwards' Christology is standard orthodox doctrine. Christ was conceived supernaturally by the Holy Spirit, born naturally of the Virgin, was without sin, and his birth is in accordance with Biblical prophecies.¹²⁰ Christ is infinitely more worthy and honorable than angels, "for he was the eternal Son of God, and his person was equal to the person of the Father."¹²¹ Edwards' rationale for the incarnation is soteriologically oriented: "Christ became incarnate, or, which is the same thing, became man, to put himself in a capacity for working out our redemption. For though Christ, as God, was sufficient for the work, yet to his being in an immediate capacity for it, it was needful that he should not only be God, but man."¹²² He elaborates its necessity in three ways. The incarnation is necessary because: (a) it is needful to answer the law given to man which only man can answer; (b) it is needful to answer the law that requires death which human nature is capable of, on account of sin; (c) "God saw meet, that the same world which was the stage of man's fall and ruin, should also be the stage of his redemption."¹²³ All these, of course, amount to the standard patristic argument in Christology,¹²⁴ although Edwards was not confined to it.¹²⁵ Having established that it is the God-man who is able to purchase redemption,¹²⁶ Edwards moves on to consider the purchase itself, which brings us to the second observation.

In *Of Satisfaction*, the most prominent metaphor respecting the atonement is legal, albeit not exclusively as we have shown. In *History of Redemption*, the governing metaphor is clearly mercantile. Christ purchases redemption by his *satisfaction* and *merit*.¹²⁷ Their difference is not essential but relative. Christ's satisfaction respects the payment of debts by his suffering while his merit respects his procurement of man's happiness by his obedience to the commandments of God. In both cases, an infinite price is paid because Christ's suffering is infinite and his obedience is perfect.¹²⁸ Hence, redemption is purchased. We need not

¹²⁰ Works (BT) 1:572.

¹²¹ Works (BT) 1:577.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ One thinks for instance of Athanasius' *de incarnatione*, VIII, 4-IX, 1, where he argues that human redemption is dependent upon the incarnation, or of his *contra Arianos*, III, 33, where the argument for Christology is made by appeal to soteriology. Cited in Alister E. McGrath, ed., *The Christian Theology Reader* (Malden, Mass. / Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 178-9.

¹²⁵ His view of the union of Christ's human nature with the Logos by the mediation of the Spirit goes beyond but not against patristic arguments. It is similar to the Christology of the puritan, John Owen. See Holmes, 136ff.

¹²⁶ For Edwards' historical narrative that expounds the key Christological issues highlighted above, see Works (BT) 1:572-4.

¹²⁷ Works (BT) 1:574.

¹²⁸ Works (BT) 1:574ff.

cover again the ground of Edwards' social context in order to understand how such language functioned in his day.¹²⁹ As with the patron-client analogy, there is no doubt that Edwards' use of mercantile language is set within a relational context. It will suffice to note the comments of Holmes on this: "...Edwards' first, mercantile metaphor can be seen as a picture of personal relationships in a context where money retains its old function of smoothing the interpersonal exchanges of goods, knowledge, and skill that would have happened in any case."¹³⁰

Thirdly, what is more significant for our case against Campbell in relation to satisfaction and merit is the fact that it is the entire life of Christ from his incarnation to his resurrection that secures that purchase. Campbell expresses regret that Edwards had not used the life of Christ more as his "light" to comprehend the atonement.¹³¹ Nothing can be further from the evidence:

"Both Christ's satisfaction for sin, and also his meriting happiness by his righteousness, were carried on through the *whole* time of his humiliation. Christ's satisfaction for sin was not by his last sufferings only, though it was principally by them; but all his sufferings, and all his humiliation, from the first moment of his incarnation to his resurrection, were propitiatory or satisfactory."¹³²

Thus far, we have delineated the key christological issues that have arisen in the course of Edwards' narrative of the history of redemption. For Edwards, Christology and the atonement are interconnected: the Word became flesh in order to purchase redemption. What then is the systematic relation between the atonement and the doctrine of God for Edwards? It is helpful to obtain answers to this question by testing the answers that Campbell would give. For Campbell, the relation would be as follows: Edwards' judicial reading of the atonement is dependent upon the conception of God as arbitrary in his exercise of mercy. We will respond to this charge in the following section.

God and the Atonement: the Polemical Issues

¹²⁹ See above, pp. 26-7.

¹³⁰ Holmes, 146.

¹³¹ Campbell, 67.

¹³² Works (BT) 1:574.

Edwards' system, it is claimed, set forth justice "as a necessary attribute of the divine nature, so that God must deal with *all men* according to its requirements" but with respect to God's mercy and love, "as not necessary, but arbitrary, and what, therefore, may find their expression in the history of only *some men*."¹³³ It would have been helpful if Campbell defines what he means by arbitrary, but he does not. From the way his criticism is framed, arbitrariness could have been understood on one of two levels or both: with respect to God's *nature* and with respect to the *basis* of his actions. The criticism could have arisen from the perception that in the exercise of God's justice to punish the sins of all men, God acts according to the demands of his law, but that in the exercise of his mercy to save some men, there is an absence of governing principle.¹³⁴ If this is Campbell's understanding of what is inherent in Edwards' system of atonement, then by arbitrary, he means to be unprincipled or without system.¹³⁵ In this case, the arbitrariness respecting the *basis* of God's acts towards the elect lies in its randomness or capriciousness since they are performed without any principled basis.

On a different level, the criticism may have been motivated in this way: that what ought to be the case with God is that both his justice and mercy are necessary to his nature such that the extent of the exercise of any one particular attribute ought to be of the same extent as the exercise of any other. When both justice and love are considered as essential to God's nature, then any unequal exercise of one attribute relative to the other is the result of arbitrariness in God. Since Campbell perceives Edwards' system as entailing the exercise of God's justice upon all men and his mercy upon some, an asymmetry pertaining to the unequal exercise of attributes is present and hence arbitrariness is implied. In this case, arbitrary means inconsistency in relation to God's *nature* as revealed in the unequal exercise of his attributes with respect to the extent to which they are exercised.

In response to the first interpretation of what arbitrary may mean for Campbell, Edwards' doctrine of the covenant of redemption is a sufficient answer. To shed light on this matter, we look to Edwards' opening sermon to the series of his *History of Redemption*.¹³⁶ Isaiah 51:8 is chosen as the main text whose doctrine is as follows: "The Work of Redemption is a work

¹³³ Campbell, 73.

¹³⁴ This is highly possible from our above analysis of *Of Satisfaction* where the legal demands of the law and its penalty are the dominating factors.

¹³⁵ Cf. *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), 74: "If you describe an action, rule, or decision as arbitrary, you think that it is not based on any principle, plan, or system."

¹³⁶ Works (Yale) 9:113-26.

that God carries on from the fall of man to the end of the world.”¹³⁷ Being the first sermon in the series, Edwards was at pains to define his use of terms carefully and to clarify possible implications which arose from his stated doctrine. Obviously, the key phrase is “the Work of Redemption”. It can be understood in two ways. Using it in a more limited sense, it refers to the work of Christ in purchasing salvation while he was on earth.¹³⁸ Thus understood, the work of redemption would cover all that Christ had done during the intervening period between his incarnation and resurrection, which corresponds to Edwards’ second period in redemption’s history. However, it can also be used in an inclusive way that encompass all that God does before and beyond the entire span of the history of redemption to prepare for, apply, and bring to success, Christ’s purchase of redemption. Coined in Trinitarian and covenantal terms, it includes “not only what Christ the mediator has done, but also what the Father and the Holy Ghost have done as united or confederated in this design of redeeming sinful men; or in one word, all that is wrought in execution of the eternal covenant of redemption.”¹³⁹

The covenant of redemption is “that agreement which the persons of the Trinity came into from eternity as it were by mutual consultation and covenant”¹⁴⁰ whereby “all things to be accomplished in their work were stipulated and agreed.”¹⁴¹ It is an intratrinitarian covenant which concerns God’s work of redemption *ad extra*. Within the Reformed tradition that Edwards inherited, the covenant of redemption is understood as constituting what was contracted in eternity between the Father and the Son in the counsel of the Trinity, but as a technical term it has not always been coined as such.¹⁴² Both Persons of the Godhead entered into it voluntarily with mutual and perfect consent, with the aim of admitting the church into the family of the triune Godhead as the Son’s “spouse”.¹⁴³ The Father freely

¹³⁷ Works (Yale) 9:116.

¹³⁸ Works (Yale) 9:117.

¹³⁹ Works (Yale) 9:117-8.

¹⁴⁰ No. 993, Works (Yale) 20:323. For more extensive treatments, cf. Nos. 1062 (pp. 430-43), 1091 (pp. 475-9).

¹⁴¹ Works (Yale) 9:118.

¹⁴² For the Reformed Scholastic influence, see Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols., trans. George Musgrave Giver, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. (Philipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1994), 2:177-8: “The pact between the Father and the Son contains the will of the Father giving his Son as a *lytrōtēn* (Redeemer and head of his mystical body) and the will of the Son offering himself as a sponsor for his members to work out that redemption (*apolytrōsin*). ... Now that covenant can be considered in three periods. (1) With regard to destination, when from eternity in counsel of the most holy Trinity he was given as a sponsor and Mediator to the church.”; Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*, 2 Vols., trans. William Crookshank (London, 1822; Kingsburg, CA: den Dulk Christian Foundation, 1990), 1:165ff. For the influence of the English Puritans, see Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony*, 94-101.

¹⁴³ No. 741, Works (Yale) 18:367.

“appoints” his Son as Mediator, and the Son freely “undertakes” all that is necessary for the fulfillment of that office for the elect’s salvation. Edwards agreed with this essentially, but he was not satisfied with the apparent negligence of the Spirit, of which we will have more to say below. It will suffice for now to note the following assertion on the Spirit: “It is not only true, that the Holy Ghost is concerned in the work of redemption equally with the other persons; but that He is also concerned in the covenant of redemption, as well as they. And his concern in this covenant is as great as theirs, and equally honorable with theirs, and yet his concern in the covenant is not that of a party covenanting.”¹⁴⁴

There are of course apparent strengths and weaknesses with such a basis for divine action towards the elect. While it lends gravity to the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation and bridges the economic with the ontological Trinity, it is however open to the danger of jeopardizing the unity of God’s being with its anthropomorphism of contracting individuals.¹⁴⁵ However, these are of secondary status in the light of our task.¹⁴⁶ We are concerned merely to demonstrate that there *is* a system upon which God acts in mercy towards the elect and not its viability. For Edwards, the covenant of redemption is that system or principle. Therefore, it cannot be said that Edwards’ system of atonement is guilty of an inherent arbitrariness in God, assuming that our first interpretation of arbitrary is correct.

In response to the second interpretation of arbitrariness which relates to God’s nature, a closer consideration of God’s attribute of mercy is necessary. The charge of arbitrariness here requires the twin assumptions that the necessary attribute of God’s mercy, like justice, *must* be exercised and exercised upon *all men*. If these assumptions are not in effect, as in the case of Edwards on mercy, then there is no consistency with God. The negative corollary is the understanding that God’s mercy cannot be withheld. However, Edwards presents a different view of the nature of God’s mercy. In the course of his sermon on Rom 9:18, he argues that the exercise of mercy is an act of God’s sovereignty.¹⁴⁷ Mercy does not only agree with justice but also the attribute of sovereignty. He defines sovereignty as God’s “absolute, independent right of disposing all creatures according to his own pleasure.”¹⁴⁸ Any

¹⁴⁴ No. 1062, Works (Yale) 20:442.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV.1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 64-5: “Can we really think of the first and second persons of the triune Godhead as two divine subjects and therefore as two legal subjects who can have dealings and enter into obligations one with another? This is mythology, for which there is no place in a right understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity...”

¹⁴⁶ For critical assessments, see Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony*, 101-18.

¹⁴⁷ Works (BT) 2:849-54.

¹⁴⁸ Works (BT) 2:850.

act of God done for his own pleasure has three characteristics: (a) it is opposed to constrain of any kind; (b) it is freely performed under the will of no one but God himself; (c) it is opposed to any form of obligation.¹⁴⁹ Since God's exercise of mercy upon some men in the bestowal of salvation is for his own pleasure, it follows that God's exercise of mercy must agree with his sovereignty. While it is the case that God administers his justice as Supreme Judge of the world, yet it is as a sovereign that he exercises his mercy.¹⁵⁰ For Edwards, mercy can be withheld, for it is in the nature of God's mercy that this be so. Hence the text of his sermon: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy..." (Rom 9:18). If Edwards' account of mercy is true, then Campbell's criticism of Edwards arises from an incorrect assumption about the nature of mercy. Helm puts it like this:

"McLeod Campbell's contention involves a misunderstanding of the logic of mercy understood as 'undeserved love'. What is essential to such love is that it could, consistently with all else that God is, be withheld by him. If God cannot but exercise mercy as he cannot but exercise justice, then its character as *mercy* vanishes. If God has to exercise mercy as he has to exercise justice then such 'mercy' would not be mercy."¹⁵¹

Furthermore, Helm points out that the logical implication of Campbell's argument is problematic.¹⁵² If apparent angularities in the exercise of God's attributes amount to arbitrariness, then Campbell commits himself to the conclusion that God's ordination of a universe with manifest differentiations is impossible because it implies arbitrariness. Since the alternative position would probably not be accepted by Campbell either – that this universe is not created by God, therefore the logical alternative is to accept that with all its angularities, this universe is indeed created by God. However, this would mean that the existence of differentiations in the matter of redemption is a reasonable postulation which Campbell would not want to accept. Hence, the logic goes on in the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*.

Edwards' "system" knows of no such logical problem. Salvation is sometimes bestowed upon the lowly and mean while it is denied to the wise and great.¹⁵³ At other times God calls

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Works (BT) 2:851: "God does not show mercy as a judge but as a sovereign."

¹⁵¹ Helm, 50.

¹⁵² Helm, 53-4.

¹⁵³ Works (BT) 2:852.

the wicked to salvation, but passes by others who are religious.¹⁵⁴ For Edwards, God's sovereignty is not compromised with the exercise of his mercy. Whether arbitrariness is taken to mean without system or the unequal exercise of God's attributes, Campbell's charge against Edwards is unfounded.

There is another related charge that has been pointed out earlier in Part I which needs to be addressed here, but only in brief. It is the charge that Edwards' "system" fails to reveal the love of God.¹⁵⁵ Again we need to be clear about what is being claimed by Campbell. He asserts: "if any one attribute might be expected to shine full-orbed in the revelation which testifies that 'God is love', that attribute is love; and feeling this strongly, I have ventured to say, that it would be well that these reasoners had 'used the life of Christ more as their light'."¹⁵⁶ He is claiming that the revelation which came through Christ is primarily the love of God. Other attributes of God are revealed through Christ of course, but that which is most prominently revealed or that shines "full-orbed" is the attribute of God's love or mercy. At this point, it appears that his problem is with the perception that Edwards *prioritizes* God's justice over God's love as Torrance seems to suggest.¹⁵⁷ However, this is at best a red-herring. Campbell's real difficulty is found in these words: "the illustration of the divine love is presented in the history of the election alone; what I feel is, that so *presented* the atonement ceases to *reveal* that *God is love*."¹⁵⁸ In other words, Campbell is not charging Edwards' "system" for failing to reveal the love of God as primary in relation to his justice, but that it fails *entirely* to reveal the love of God. The sole basis for his argument is the principle that "*an arbitrary act cannot reveal character*."¹⁵⁹ Since we have shown that the charge of arbitrariness in God is untenable, this related charge does not stand either.

The Spirit and the Application of Atonement

Finally, we move on to address the charge that Edwards is guilty of displacing a filial for legal standing for recipients of God's saving grace: "not a legal standing, however high or

¹⁵⁴ Works (BT) 2:852-3.

¹⁵⁵ See above, p. 7.

¹⁵⁶ Campbell, 73.

¹⁵⁷ Torrance, "Introduction", in Campbell, 1: "If our basic concept of God is primarily that of the Lawgiver...then our doctrine of atonement will imply that God has to be conditioned into being gracious...Conversely, however, if our basic concept of God is that of the Triune God of grace...then our doctrine of atonement will be seen rather as God in grace bringing these loving purposes to fulfillment in redemption...On such a view we see the priority of grace over law, the filial over the judicial...No Scottish theologian saw this more clearly than John McLeod Campbell..."

¹⁵⁸ Campbell, 73.

¹⁵⁹ Campbell, 73.

perfect, but a filial standing, is that which is given to us in Christ.”¹⁶⁰ Van Dyk has pointed out that a serious weakness in Campbell’s atonement theology is the absence of much reflection on the Holy Spirit.¹⁶¹ This is equally true of Campbell’s interpretation of Edwards’ atonement theology. There is a serious lacuna in his reading of Edwards here which if sufficiently filled, will show that Campbell’s charge is entirely unfounded. Our evidence is adduced from Edwards’ treatment of the Spirit as it bears upon the application of Christ’s atoning work.

What is distinctive about Edwards on the application of redemption arises from his refusal to slavishly employ doctrinal distinctions within the Puritan tradition which he inherited in exactly the same way which the matter was expressed. It is common within the tradition, to conceive of the church’s redemption as the consequence of the Father’s appointment of the Son as head of the church, the Son’s accomplishment of redemption by his propitiatory sacrifice, and the Spirit’s application of the benefits secured by the Son’s death upon the elect members of the church.¹⁶² Such systematization of the Biblical data is defective according to Edwards, for it promotes the Spirit’s subordination to the Father and the Son. That the Spirit is spoken of as merely an agent and not the progeny of the work of redemption seriously diminishes the Spirit’s deity. This is poignantly expressed in his *Treatise on Grace*:

“If we suppose no more than used to be supposed about the Holy Ghost, the honor of the Holy Ghost in the work of redemption is not equal in any sense to the Father and the Son’s; nor is there an equal part of the glory of this work belonging to Him. Merely to apply to us, or immediately to give or hand to us blessing purchased, after it is purchased, *is subordinate* to the other two Persons...”¹⁶³

Edwards circumvents this conundrum by making two moves. The first is to identify the Spirit as the divine essence of love.¹⁶⁴ This is not to impersonalize the Spirit, for he only proceeds to deal with this identification after he has established the Spirit’s divine

¹⁶⁰ Campbell, 76.

¹⁶¹ Van Dyk, 169f.

¹⁶² See for instance, William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, trans. John Dykstra Eusden (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), I.XXIV.

¹⁶³ Alexander B. Grosart’s edition, Paul Helm, ed., *Treatise on Grace and Other Writings* (Cambridge / London: James Clark & Co., 1971), 68-9. Emphasis added. Sereno Dwight’s edition has “as subordinate to the other two Persons” to provide more continuity to the ensuing phrases. Whichever the case, the sense of subordination remains unaffected. Works (Yale) 21:191.

¹⁶⁴ Works (Yale) 21:181ff.

personhood.¹⁶⁵ Rather, he labors to demonstrate from a host of Scripture references, that the Spirit is the “personal love of God” just as the Son is said to be the *logos* and “personal wisdom of God”.¹⁶⁶ Within the communion of the Godhead, the Spirit is breathed forth from the Father and the Son towards each other in mutual delight of infinite measure in which the infinite happiness of God consists.¹⁶⁷ The second move is to relate this communication of the Spirit *ad intra* to its overflow *ad extra*: “the Holy Ghost is that love of God and Christ that is breathed forth primarily towards each other, and flows out secondarily towards the creature.”¹⁶⁸ With this second move, the logical implications for the atonement are obvious: “The Son is the Redeemer and the price that is offered for the purchased good. And the Holy Ghost is the good purchased.”¹⁶⁹ However, the logic has not gone far enough. If the Holy Spirit is the love of God and is communicated to the saints, then surely, commercial metaphors of the atonement are inadequate. This applies equally to legal metaphors. Thankfully, Edwards does not leave us in a flux here. His logic closes in his reflections on the perfect union and love between the Father and the Son by the Spirit who is “the bond of this union”:

“Therefore this Spirit of love is the ‘bond of perfectness’ (Col 3:14) throughout the whole blessed society or family in heaven and earth, consisting of the Father, the head of the family, and the Son, and all his saints that are the disciples, seed and spouse of the Son.”¹⁷⁰

The metaphor employed to depict God’s relationship with believers is that of a family. This language is a familiar one in the Puritan tradition. Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) could speak of the church as Christ’s “spouse” whose union is “so familiarly and livelily set forth by that union which is between the husband and the wife that, though ungodly men might take offense at it, yet the godly may be bettered by it.”¹⁷¹ So while Edwards felt at liberty to modify the tradition where it jettisoned the Spirit’s deity, it was clearly a modification within the bounds of that tradition. On other occasions he speaks of the elect as the “children of God” and hence

¹⁶⁵ Works (Yale) 21:181.

¹⁶⁶ Works (Yale) 21:183.

¹⁶⁷ Works (Yale) 21:184.

¹⁶⁸ Works (Yale) 21:186.

¹⁶⁹ Works (Yale) 21:189.

¹⁷⁰ Works (Yale) 21:186.

¹⁷¹ Richard Sibbes, Complete Works, 4:24-5, cited in Pauw, The Supreme Harmony, 34.

employs the metaphor in a slightly different way.¹⁷² Nevertheless, it is still essentially within the familial setting. Since the metaphor arises from his Trinitarian theology, it cannot be said to be incidental but integral to his thought. However, this is not to say that the metaphor is the exclusive one. His doctrine of justification by faith makes it clear that legal metaphors are also at work.¹⁷³ The point is this: whatever one may make of the relation between these metaphors, the one thing that cannot be said of Edwards is that his “system” displaces a filial for legal standing for those who are in Christ. Thus, Campbell is again mistaken in the light of the above evidence.

Conclusion

This study examines the criticism of John McLeod Campbell against the atonement theology of Jonathan Edwards. It began with a detailed account of Campbell’s charges in Part I, which were subsequently addressed in two stages. In the first stage, or Part II, the work upon which Campbell’s understanding of Edwards’ is based, was examined in detail. We demonstrated that as a compiled work consisting of various Miscellanies entries of Edwards, *Of Satisfaction* is seriously skewed towards a legal understanding of the atonement. Consequently, Campbell’s reading of it is influenced by its inherent movement of thought even in the presence of evidence that reveals the multifaceted nature of the atonement. Besides the legal metaphors, relational and aesthetic ones were also identified and shown to be non-antithetical to legal metaphors. In this way, Campbell’s charges were addressed indirectly. In the second stage of our argument, these charges were addressed directly by examining their validity against Edwards’ doctrines of Christ, God, and the Spirit, in their systematic relation to the atonement. Within the history of redemption, the whole of Christ’s life is not only necessary for sin’s satisfaction but is also the point of departure for doctrinal reflections. This answers Campbell’s criticism of Edwards’ “axiomatic defect”. Regarding the doctrine of God, we argued that God’s exercise of mercy towards the elect is not arbitrary in view of Edwards’ covenant of redemption since it is the system on the basis of which God acts. Furthermore, Campbell’s assumption of the nature of God’s mercy is mistaken and problematic. Its logic is in the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*. In contrast,

¹⁷² Cf. his comments in a Sermon on Rom 2:10: “Herein Christians are the children of God in more honorable way than the angels themselves; for the angels are the sons of God by virtue of that relation which they have to God, as they are in themselves singly and separately. But Christians are the children of God, as partaking with Christ, the only-begotten Son, in his sonship, whose sonship is immensely more honorable than that of the angels.” Works (BT) 2:889.

¹⁷³ Cf. Gerstner, 3:196-221; Cherry, 90-106.

Edwards' concept of God's sovereign mercy is free from such conundrums. As for the doctrine of the Spirit, we showed that Edwards identified the Spirit as the love of God who is breathed forth between the Father and the Son and who is breathed out upon the elect, thus uniting them with the "family" of the Triune Godhead. Edwards clearly perceived the elect's standing in familial terms, albeit not exclusively. This modified version of the Puritan tradition on the covenant worked out in familial terms, answers Campbell's charge that Edwards displaces filial for a legal standing in relation to the elect. Thus, Edwards' doctrine of the atonement is vindicated and an account of it is given in the course of doing so.

It is unfortunate that modern proponents of Campbell's atonement theology do not seem to have examined the writings of Edwards before accepting and promulgating his interpretation of Edwards. Our study has demonstrated that it is imperative to do so. This is both for the sake of setting the record straight and perhaps more so, for the reason that the church will be all the more impoverished for neglecting the contributions of so profound a theologian on so central a doctrine as the atonement. Given the constraints of this study, which arises from locating it within an essentially polemical context, the rich tapestry of the atonement metaphors have not been portrayed as fully and vividly as the author of this study would have liked. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the multifaceted nature of the atonement which has been identified and described, along with the theological suggestiveness of the atonement's systematic relations, will pave the way for apprehending, in the words of Edwards, the glory of God's wisdom displayed in the way of salvation.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ A paraphrase of the discourse entitled "The Wisdom of God Displayed in the Way of Salvation." Works (BT) 2:141-56.

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