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Qualifying Exam in Systematic Theology for the Theology Department

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I. Method

2. Discuss what is at stake in the structure of a systematic theology. Focus on the architectonic of Friedrich Schleiermacher's *The Christian Faith* and Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. Why does the one end with the doctrine of the Trinity and the other begins with it? What, if any, are the material consequences of the formal shape that each theologian gives to his dogmatics? Discuss their respective strengths and weaknesses.

The structure of a systematic theology is not arbitrary or merely aesthetic; it has material consequences. Although it does not strictly determine one's positions, structure does condition doctrinal exposition by opening up certain avenues of reflection and closing off others. In order to show the material significance of structural decisions, I will (1) identify the theological consequences of the shape Schleiermacher gives to *The Christian Faith*, (2) show how Karl Barth addresses key issues by means of the structure of his *Church Dogmatics*, and (3) critically discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each structure.

(1)

Schleiermacher developed a complex structure for his work in dogmatics, *The Christian Faith* (*CF*). In order to identify the material significance of this structure, I will describe two key structural factors, show how they are combined, and discuss the material results.

The two key structural factors in the organization of the *CF* are the distinction of three types of dogmatic propositions and the division of the dogmatic system into two

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parts. The distinction of three types of dogmatic proposition arises out of Schleiermacher's understanding of the relationship between piety and doctrine. Piety is the concrete form in which the religious self-consciousness comes to expression when modified by historical factors. Pious language is expressed variously in rhetorical, poetic, and descriptive-didactic forms. The descriptive-didactic form of religious speech provides the material that is arranged and analyzed by the discipline of dogmatics. These dogmas become the hypotheses of the theologian, as they are evaluated in terms of their adequacy to their source in the feeling of absolute dependence as it is modified by redemption in Christ. In order to proceed in an orderly and scientific manner, Schleiermacher distinguishes these dogmatic propositions into three types: (a) descriptions of human states, (b) conceptions of divine attributes and modes of action, and (c) utterances regarding the constitution of the world (*CF* §30). Because all dogmatic statements emerge from human states, type (a) bears a logical priority and so is always treated first. However, this does not mean that the other two types of proposition can be folded into and reduced to propositions about human states, because religious speech arises from the human states themselves, not from the propositions about human states.

The second key structural factor is the division of the dogmatic system into two parts. Part I concerns notions that are presupposed by and contained in every Christian religious affection. Part II develops the Christian religious self-consciousness as it is determined by the consciousness of sin and grace. Part II is further divided into two aspects, dealing with the consciousness of sin and grace respectively. Schleiermacher admits that the division into two parts is an abstraction of sorts. All religious self-consciousness is modified by concrete historical factors. There is no natural religion from

which one could glean propositions. So the whole of dogmatics trades in Christian content. However, one can still speak intelligibly of the *presuppositions* of Christian religious affections. So, the general propositions of Part I are meant to be understood as the conditions for the possibility of the religion-specific propositions of Part II.

Schleiermacher coordinates the three types of dogmatic proposition with the two parts of the dogmatic system in order to organize the *CF*. Within Part I and within each Aspect of Part II, Schleiermacher addresses all three types dogmatic propositions. Into this schema he distributes the traditional doctrinal loci. So, for instance, the doctrines of creation and preservation are treated as descriptions of human states presupposed by Christian religious affections (Part I, Section 1). Election, ecclesiology and eschatology are discussed as utterances regarding the constitution of the world that arise from the consciousness of grace (Part II, Aspect 2, Section 2).

For the most part, this complex structure perpetuates a rather traditional linear pattern: creation, fall, Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology. However, there is at least one major structural revision: the doctrine of God is divided up and distributed throughout the *CF* according to the coordination of the types of propositions with the parts of the system. The eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience of God are dealt with as conceptions of divine attributes and modes of action that arise from the consciousness of the general relation between God and the world (Part I, Section 2). The holiness and justice of God are discussed in conjunction with the consciousness of sin (Part II, Aspect 1, Section 3). The love and wisdom of God are treated in relation to the consciousness of grace (Part II, Aspect 2, Section 3). The doctrine of the Trinity is placed at the end of the whole dogmatic system as its conclusion (*Schlüß*).

The contribution of this structural move is that the doctrine of God is not treated as an independent speculative enterprise, but is linked with the history of Christian redemption. In addition to this methodological concern, this structural revision also has material consequences for Schleiermacher's exposition of the doctrine of God that are less than satisfactory. Two such consequences should be noted.

First, the treatment of the doctrine of God in Part I is abstracted from the history of redemption, of which it is supposedly a presupposition. For instance, eternity is defined as timelessness and omnipotence is defined as omni-causality. These sorts of abstract accounts can be contrasted with the richer and more concrete accounts of divine love and wisdom found at the end of Part II. This difference is a direct result of treating Part I in relative independence from Part II. The feeling of absolute dependence functions as a formal apparatus in Part I. Despite Schleiermacher's protestations to the contrary, the material would have been affected by a different order of presentation.

Second, the placement of the doctrine of the Trinity at the end is not intended as a marginalization. Rather, the move is a direct result of Schleiermacher's organizational schema. The doctrine of the Trinity is not a single dogmatic proposition per se and so does not fit within any of the sections. But it does function as cumulative way of drawing together numerous utterances divided across the parts and aspects of the system. It states that the God spoken at each stage along the way is one and the same God. Fitting this structural function, the emphasis in Schleiermacher's doctrine of the Trinity falls on the unity of God to the detriment of God's three-ness, as he argues in favor of a Sabellian position against the Athanasian position. He sets an agenda for further analysis of the doctrine of the Trinity in its relation to piety, but offers very little himself.

These two instances indicate that material doctrinal positions are at stake in the structure of a systematic theology, at least for Schleiermacher.

(2)

At first glance, Barth's *Church Dogmatics* seems like a return to a more traditional organizational structure. After discussing a number of structural options, Barth selects the loci method because it does not claim any unity higher than that of the Word of God (*CD* I/2, §24.2). The four loci that structure his dogmatics are the doctrine of God (vol. II), creation (vol. III), reconciliation (vol. IV) and redemption (vol. V). These are preceded by a prolegomena focusing on the Word of God. However, despite this apparently straightforward ordering, Barth makes a number of structural moves with explicit material consequences in view.

First of all, Barth places his prolegomena *within* dogmatics, rather than treating it as an external foundation or speculative starting-point. The church's proclamation is presupposed from the start. So the prolegomena volume contains and is shaped by explicit dogmatic content. This structural decision not only reflects Barth's commitments but also opens up ways of developing his own exposition of doctrine. The most significant result is the placement of the doctrine of the Trinity in the prolegomena and therefore at the beginning of dogmatics. The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be delayed because of the triune shape and trinitarian content of the revelation of God, which is the starting-point of dogmatics. So, after an introduction to the threefold word of God and its function as the criterion of dogmatics (*CD* I/1, §3-7), Barth discusses the revelation of God in terms of the Triune God (*CD* I/1, §8-12), the Incarnation of the Word (*CD* I/2, §13-15) and the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (*CD* I/2, §16-18). This ensures that all that

follows (from the doctrine of scripture to God's attributes and beyond) is shaped by the prior revelation of God as triune. However, this does not mean that the doctrine of the Trinity functions as a foundational principle with automatic, logical consequences. Rather, by bringing up the Trinity at the beginning in the context of the Word of God, Barth is free to discuss the Trinity again and again in the exposition of other doctrines, such that many traditional loci (eternity and election, to name a few) are reformulated with explicit reference to God's triunity.

Barth's placement of the doctrine of the Trinity at the head of dogmatics is not the only structural move with material consequences. One of the most structurally complex and innovative portions of the *CD* is the doctrine of reconciliation (vol. IV). Barth combines Christ's two natures, threefold office, and two states to organize the doctrine of reconciliation into three aspects. Each aspect begins with a lengthy Christological section organized by the narrative pattern of incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. The resurrection sub-section in each case serves as a transition to the remaining material in each aspect: sin, soteriology, the church and the Christian life. The three sub-sections together supply the hinge on which the doctrine of reconciliation turns. This organizational scheme makes possible the exposition of an important function of the resurrection: Christ's movement from his finished work to include others in his self-revelation as obedient witnesses. Barth identifies this as the solution to the modern problem of faith and history. And so here again a structural move has material significance.

Barth makes a number of other structural moves with material consequences, such as the distribution of ethics sections throughout dogmatics and the placement of the

doctrine of sin within the doctrine of reconciliation. But the above instances are sufficient to show the extent to which structure matters to Barth.

(3)

We have shown that, at least for Schleiermacher and Barth, the structure of a systematic theology matters because it opens up avenues of reflection and closes off others. Structure not only reflects but also conditions the exposition of doctrine. In light of the material significance of structure, what are the strengths and weaknesses of these two theologians' respective structures?

The strength of Schleiermacher's structure is its integration of the doctrine of God into the whole of dogmatics. In view of the limits of human knowledge of God, the doctrine of God should not be disconnected from God's revelation in history. And so explicitly connecting the doctrine of God to God's action toward the world is headed in the right direction. This structural move may be distinguished from Schleiermacher's own understanding of revelation. One could replace his understanding of the ground of doctrine in religious self-consciousness with a more objective revelation of God in the life-history of Jesus Christ, while retaining the structural insight that the doctrine of God should be treated with constant reference to the human encounter with God.

The weaknesses of Schleiermacher's structure have been noted above with reference to the doctrine of God. Parts I and II are far too abstracted from one another, with the result that the different conceptions of divine attributes in each create tensions in the system. Furthermore, the placement of the doctrine of the Trinity at the end of dogmatics is inherently dangerous and instable. Perhaps he is right that the doctrine of the Trinity is qualitatively different than other kinds of doctrinal statements. However, its

unique function could be served just as well at the head of dogmatics, which would ensure that it would exercise a measure of influence over the exposition of other doctrines.

The strength of Barth's structure is that nothing is placed outside dogmatics. There is no independent prolegomena. Ethics is not separated from dogmatics. The triunity of God shapes everything, including the doctrine of creation. This move to bring everything inside dogmatics, however, is executed with open-endedness. This is the advantage of the loci method, which indicates the basic ordering of topics but does not establish their structure too far in advance. Instead, at each loci the structure most amenable to the exposition of the subject-matter is developed. He is free to "begin again at the beginning" at each point.

The weakness of Barth's structure is that this open-endedness results in an unfinished project. By remaining free to reintroduce explicitly any number of key concepts while dealing with the doctrine at hand makes for a lengthy enterprise. The prolixity of Barth's *CD* is not accidental. It is a result of his decision to hear the Word of God afresh with regard to each loci and develop new complex structures for each volume and part-volume. Perhaps a more detailed systematic plan from the beginning would have helped Barth finish his *CD*. However, in the final analysis, Barth's structural decisions have better material consequences than do Schleiermacher's.

II. Christology

3. Discuss the Chalcedonian Definition and its implications for christology. What were the major controversies that led to the Council of Chalcedon? Was Nestorius a Nestorian? Was Cyril's christology docetic? Did Nestorius believe that Jesus Christ was the proper object of worship? Did Cyril believe that the Logos suffered and died on the cross? What are the strengths and weaknesses, respectively, of their various approaches to christology?

Chalcedonian Definition sets the conditions under which reflection on the identity of Jesus Christ can proceed properly. It does this by rejecting extremes in both directions and by affirming certain theological values concerning Christ's person. In order to draw out these implications for christology, I will (1) identify the extremes being rejected by briefly narrating the controversial road to the Council of Chalcedon, (2) discuss in greater detail the christologies of Nestorius and Cyril, and (3) assess the respective strengths and weaknesses of these two figures with respect to their ongoing significance for Christological reflection.

(1)

The development of Christology after the Council of Nicaea (325) was advanced by three major controversies: the Apollinarian, the Nestorian, and the Eutychian. At each point, an extreme position is ruled out from Christological reflection.

The roots of the Council of Chalcedon (451) reach back into the 4th century, where an Alexandrian working in Laodicea named Apollinaris drew heat for his creative explanation of the constitution of Jesus Christ. In the incarnation, the Logos became the driving principle of a human body. This body did not have its own human soul/mind (*nous*), as that would introduce a division within the incarnate Word. Apollinaris was concerned to protect the singularity of Christ's person, as is evident throughout his extant fragments in which he makes repeated reference to Christ as a single biblical character

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who cannot be divided in two. Apollinaris feared the doctrine of incarnation in the hands of some would result in a competition between divinity and humanity in Christ. Despite this laudable concern, his speculative solution to this problem resulted in a truncated view of the humanity of Christ. Gregory of Nazianzus famously criticized Apollinaris' by employing the formula "what is not assumed is not healed." At the Council of Constantinople (381), Apollinaris' views were rejected. This was the first crucial step in the development of Chalcedonian christology: the incarnation does not undermine the genuine humanity of Jesus Christ.

The second major controversy surrounded the preaching of Nestorius, newly elected Bishop of Constantinople and a student of the great Antiochene Theodore of Mopsuestia. In response to an inquiry concerning the appellation *theotokos* ("God-bearer") to Mary the mother of Jesus, Nestorius recommended the alternative *Christotokos*, reserving *theotokos* for God the Father. Nestorius was concerned that the talk of God's birth and suffering bore too much resemblance to pagan mythologies and threatened the dignity of God's being. In addition to creating a stir among the pious women of the imperial court (including Empress Pulcheria), Nestorius' views caught the eye of Cyril of Alexandria. Cyril took Nestorius' teaching to imply a separation between the divine Son of God and the human Jesus. In Cyril's mind, this threat to the unity of Christ undermined the soteriological consequences of the incarnation and the theological basis for the worship of Christ. After much intrigue, the imperially approved Council of Ephesus (431) rejected Nestorius' views. This was the second step in the road to Chalcedon: the incarnation does not undermine the singular personhood of Jesus Christ.

At this point in the story, a tension remains between the distinction that protects

the integrity of Christ's humanity and the unity that protects the singular personhood of Christ. This tension rose to the surface in the third and final controversy leading to the Council of Chalcedon. A monk named Eutyches took the logic of unity to its extreme by stating that the incarnate Son has only one nature (the divine), into which the human nature is mixed. Flavian presided over a synod at Constantinople in 448 that condemned Eutyches and his "monophysite" position. In the following year, Dioscorus (Bishop of Alexandria) initiated a Council at Ephesus that deposed Flavian and reinstated Eutyches. At the encouragement of Pope Leo the Great and the newly enthroned Emperor Marcian, a council was held at Chalcedon in 451 that quickly rejected Dioscorus and his "robber" council. However, Chalcedon did not simply reject the unitary emphasis so poorly represented by Eutyches. Instead, the Council rejected extremes on both sides of the debate by confirming both Leo's *Tome* criticizing Eutyches and Cyril's letters. It went on to issue a new statement known as the "definition" of Chalcedon. The definition marked an advance by strictly distinguishing person (*prosopon*) and nature (*physis*) so that parties on both sides could be satisfied. The incarnate Son Jesus Christ is one person with two natures. In their unity, the natures remain distinct. So the Council of Chalcedon affirmed the full deity and humanity of Christ, preserved the personal unity of Christ, and clarified the relationship of Christ's natures in terms of unity-in-distinction.

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In order to show what was at stake in this debate, I will focus the remainder of my attention on the specific views of Nestorius and Cyril. These two figures represent the two main tendencies in the debate: one stressing distinction and the other stressing unity. They continued to shape the debate after their own stage was completed. Each has left

extended mature works: Cyril's *On the Unity of Christ* (444) and Nestorius' *Bazaar of Heraclides* (452).

As representative figures of opposing tendencies in the debate, both Nestorius and Cyril have been accused of crossing the line into heresy. Nestorius has been criticized of the heresy that bears his name. But was Nestorius a Nestorian? The Nestorian position rejected at Ephesus (a rejection upheld by Chalcedon) was the notion of two persons or *prosopon* in Christ. In other words, there is not one Son but two Sons, one human and one divine, which are united by their wills. This voluntary union was rejected in favor of a hypostatic (or substantively personal) union. Now it is certainly true that Nestorius spoke of a voluntary union between the Logos and the human Jesus. But did he speak of two sons? After the discovery of Nestorius' so-called *Bazaar of Heraclides* at the turn of the century, it has been argue by Loofs and others that Nestorius did not in fact teach the two sons idea. Instead, the dominant motif in Nestorius' writings is indwelling. The divine son indwelled the human being and so were united in all willing and action. The structure of Nestorius' thought still leaves open the problem of two persons, but his teaching was certainly more complex and subtle than the "Nestorian" position rejected at Ephesus.

Cyril's emphasis on the unity of the incarnate Son has been accused of a docetic view of Christ's humanity. Docetism is an ancient heresy that understands Christ to be only apparently or seemingly human (*dokeo* = to appear, to seem). If the incarnate Son is one person, and that person is the eternal Son of God, then it would seem that any humanity remaining would be truncated by being fit to the divine person. Now this is certainly a possible trajectory of Cyril's thought, and the monophysite position of

Eutyches and some post-Chalcedonian figures and communities fall into docetism.

However, did Cyril speak in docetic terms? Cyril's letter to John of Antioch (443) speaks

volumes of his careful attention to protect the integrity of both humanity and deity in

Christ. Furthermore, John McGukin has successfully argued that despite some

appearances to the contrary, Chalcedon was a victory for Cyril. Three of the four terms of

union (without confusion, with change, without division, without separation) can be

found in Cyril's writings. So, despite a docetic risk in the structure of his thought when

taken too far, Cyril's position does not undermine the genuine humanity of Jesus Christ.

Although Nestorius' and Cyril's views cannot be quickly dismissed by the

application of heretical labels, there are certain issues in matters of detail that must be

addressed. For Nestorius, there is a serious problem concerning the worship of Christ.

Not only did Marian piety occasion the Nestorian controversy, but the sense in which

Jesus can be worshipped fueled the debate throughout. Nestorius was from the beginning

concerned with the worthiness of God. He did not think a God who undergoes change or

suffers in any sense would be worthy of worship. And so he emphasized the distinction

between the second person of the trinity and the human Jesus. He did not separate them

entirely, but brought them together under the rubric of indwelling. God is incarnate *in* a

human, but not *as* a human. Within the rubric of indwelling, he made it clear that the

object of worship was the God who indwells Christ and never the humanity of Christ.

Christ as human worships God just as do we. Christian devotion to Christ remains

appropriate because Christ is the means by which we see God. But the distinction in

Nestorius' terms meant that Jesus Christ was not the proper object of worship per se.

Cyril too was concerned with God's worthiness of worship in terms of his

immutability and impassibility. However, on account of the unity of the Logos with the human flesh of Jesus, this incarnate God-human may be properly worshipped. But Cyril's assumption of impassibility had consequences elsewhere in his thought. Although he spoke more freely than Nestorius of the encounter of God with suffering, at the crucial point of the cross Cyril made some qualifications that have concerned some interpreters. First, Cyril states that the Logos suffered *in the flesh*. Now this may sound like the only the flesh suffers. But the Logos remains the subject of the sentence. So the Logos does suffer, but only because the Logos has flesh through which he can suffer. Second, Cyril states paradoxically that the Logos suffers impassibly. The logic of this paradox is that the Logos encounters suffering in order to overcome it. Mortality is taken on so that immortality may defeat it. The Logos really does come into contact with death, although he does not strictly "die" because by this contact death is destroyed. In view of these qualifications, it might be fair to say that Cyril believes the Logos *experienced* suffering and death on the cross. There was a real encounter with death, but it was an encounter unlike any before.

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To what extent are Nestorius or Cyril helpful guides for ongoing Christological reflection within the boundaries of the Definition of Chalcedon? The strength of Nestorius' position lies in his emphasis on a distinction that protects the integrity of both God and humanity. A simply human God without qualification is neither a God worth worshipping nor a God capable of saving us. Nestorius' respect for the deity of God should be upheld, even if his prior notion of God is constricting. In the same way, the humanity of Jesus must not be undermined even as he is identified as the Son of God.

Although a prior notion of humanity should not put Christology in a straightjacket, the genuineness of Jesus' humanity is crucial soteriologically and hermeneutically.

The weakness of Nestorius' position is the instability at the heart of his Christology. If God only indwells this human being, then Jesus Christ is not a single character in the biblical story. He cannot speak and act as God for us. The implication is that God is not really with us and among us. There is no solidarity of God with humanity in the incarnation for Nestorius. This also has soteriological repercussions, as salvation can be so easily reduced to willing in the way Christ wills and so repeating his voluntary union with God. Nestorius' strong distinction between God and humanity in Christ ultimately undermines the distinction between Christ and the Christian.

The strength of Cyril's approach is his starting-point in the unity of Christ. By starting with Christ as one unique person and then moving to an understanding of how deity and humanity relate in him, one is able to respect the necessary distinctions without undermining Christ's singularity in the narrative of redemption. So Cyril is better able to assimilate the concerns of Nestorius. In order words, Cyril's approach is superior to Nestorius' in its assimilative power. The weakness of Cyril's position comes with his tendency to treat Christ's humanity as so pristine that he explains away some statements in the biblical witness. His position would be helped by a stronger distinction between sin and suffering, so that the sinless perfection of Christ is not undermined by his real trembling in the face of suffering. But this could be executed as an adaptation within his approach, rather than a rejection of it. Ultimately, Cyril's approach is preferable to Nestorius' when engaging in Christological reflection today within the boundaries of the Chalcedonian Definition.

III. Creation

Discuss Jonathan Edwards' conception of God's creation of the world, and compare Edwards' conception with that of one of the following: Aquinas, Schleiermacher, Barth. Give a special attention in your answer to how each of the two theologians preserve both God's prior actuality and dynamic creativity in their conception of creation, and also to the issue of the purposefulness of the creation. Assess the strengths and weakness of each of the two theologians.

In this essay I will argue that a perfect God can have a purpose. God's creation of the world can be conceived in such a way that God may be said to be accomplishing his own purposes in creating without entailing that God is therefore dependent on creation. In order to substantiate this claim, I will (1) outline a more traditional account of God's perfection *vis-a-vis* the creation as found in the work of Thomas Aquinas, (2) show how Edwards speaks of God's purpose in creating while still affirming traditional concerns about God's perfection, and (3) assess the strengths and weaknesses of each account.

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Within the *Prima Pars* (Ia) of the *Summa Theologiae* (*ST*) Thomas Aquinas takes up the doctrine of creation as the first order of business after treating the doctrine of God *in se*. His talk of creation follows immediately after his discussion of the trinitarian processions in God. This is important to note because Thomas moves smoothly from the procession of persons in God to the procession of all things from God. The doctrine of creation (taken in the large sense to include both the origin and preservation of the world) runs from qq. 44 to the end of the *Prima Pars*.

For Thomas, God is the creator in the sense of being the *first cause* of all that is. This notion is already up and running from the second question of the *ST* (the proofs of God) and exercises a measure of control over Thomas' whole doctrine of God. As first cause, God is the source of all things in general and the fashioner of all things in

particular. As the source, all things are said to emanate from God (Ia, q. 44). This language of emanation is necessary since God cannot be thought to move from potentiality to actuality in the act of creation. Rather, creation is an overflow or gift of God's already perfect and purely actual being. However, Thomas sets strict limits on the language of emanation by indicating that the mode of emanation is *creatio ex nihilo* (Ia, q. 45). All things find their source in God, but that does not mean that all things are God.

Thomas identifies the prior actuality of God as *pure* actuality in contrast to the flux of creation from potentiality to actuality. God in eternity is pure actuality such that form and substance are identical in him (Ia, q. 3). This absolute actuality of God requires that God does not engage in creative activity in any sense for himself or his own purpose. As pure actuality, God has always been at his perfect end. Creation is solely the gift of being to beings.

However, this does not mean that creation is a wholly purposeless affair, for God does give purpose to the created order itself. This is true in two senses. In the mundane sense, all things are created with their own natural purpose within the created order. In a stronger sense, all things have God as their purpose. It is an implication of the perfection of God that what God creates would be brought to its end (Ia, q. 103, a. 1). But this is not so much a purpose in creation as a purpose for it, because God is an extrinsic end for creation (Ia, q. 103, a. 2). So, in the case of sentient creatures, they must be deified in order to reach their end in God, the beatific vision (Ia, q. 12). So, although God does not accomplish his own end in creating, God does set himself as the end of created things.

(2)

Jonathan Edwards affirms many of the concerns of a more traditional account like

that found in Thomas Aquinas, while introducing and emphasizing God's dynamic relationship with the world in view of God's purposiveness in creating. Edwards develops these thoughts throughout his corpus, but especially in his dissertation entitled *Concerning the End for Which God Created the World*.

This treatise is divided into two chapters, the first concerning what reason teaches on the matter and the second investigating the relevant Scriptural texts. The basic shape of Edwards' position can be seen in the theses of the first three sections of chapter one: (1) that in creating, God makes himself his own end, (2) that the consequences of God's creating are themselves intrinsic ends, and (3) that (1) and (2) are compatible in view of the union between God and humanity in Christ. This position is made concrete in chapter two with reference to the biblical concept of *glory*, which embraces both God's own happiness and the creature's happiness in God. So, for Edwards, God creates for his own sake, and this creative purpose includes within it God's purpose for his creatures.

How does this purposive conception of creation shape Edward's understanding of the act of creation itself? For Edwards, God is the creator in the sense that he establishes the occasions in which his disposition to self-communicate will be exercised. God is eternally disposed to communicate his goodness. For Edwards, a disposition or habit is a general law that certain actions will take place given certain occasions. But prior to creation, there are no "occasions." What makes God's disposition unique is that it is absolute and it therefore supplies its own occasions. God is so disposed to communicate his goodness that he creates a situation in which he will do so.

However, the exercise of the divine disposition in creating does not imply that God needs the world in order to be God. In the eternal processions of the trinity, God's

disposition to self-communicate is fully actualized. For Edwards, God is not *pure* actuality, because an aspect of potentiality via the notion of disposition has been introduced. But God is *fully* actual. Therefore, God does not need the world to be God.

This coincidence of actuality and disposition in God is crucial for Edwards' doctrine of the Trinity and illustrates how he combines traditional affirmations of God's prior actuality with an emphasis on dynamic creativity. If God's disposition to self-communicate is not fully actualized, then there would be a prior time at which either (a) the Son and Spirit had not yet proceeded from the Father or (b) there would be a divine being prior to the trinitarian processions. Both (a) or (b) undermine the eternality of the Trinity. But God the Father does communicate his entire being (as dispositional actuality and actualized disposition) to the Son and the Spirit. The positive implication of the coincidence of actuality and disposition is that God is inherently creative in eternity and yet does not need to create in order to become God.

Given that Edwards affirms the prior actuality and perfection of God, how can he still maintain that God accomplishes his own purpose in creating? Does not talk of God accomplishing something for himself imply a deficit in God? Edwards combines these concerns by speaking of God's purpose in terms God's *repetition* of himself in time and space. Edwards states that God's happiness (and therefore his very being) is in some sense enlarged and enhanced by creating. The sense in which God's being is enlarged is not by addition but by repetition. God repeats his eternally perfect and actualized self-communicative being in time and space by communicating himself to others. By so repeating himself, it is really God who is known and loved and knowing and loving in history. Therefore, history matters to God, even though God does not need history to be

God.

<center>(3)</center>

What can be learned from Thomas and Edwards for contemporary reflection on the doctrine of creation? In order to glean their best insights while avoiding their problems, I will indicate the strengths and weakness of each.

The strength of Thomas' position is his emphasis on the perfection of God prior to and over against creation. The perfection of God is a necessary concept. Any God who is not perfect in himself would be caught in the becoming of creation rather than stand as Lord over his creation. Such a God is neither worthy of creation's praise nor capable of redeeming a fallen creation.

The weakness of Thomas' position is that history does not ultimately matter to God. By conceiving of God's perfection as utterly pure actuality, God's interaction with the world is unidirectional. This does not mean that God exercises tyrannical control over creation, since Thomas is clear that God determines things according to their modality (e.g., he determines contingent things contingently). But God does not accomplish anything for himself in the creation of the world. Creation is merely the overflow of God's goodness. God is ultimately not invested in created temporality.

The strength of Edwards' position is his emphasis on the purposiveness of God in creating. His development of God's purpose in terms of his dispositional ontology enables him to affirm God's prior actuality yet speak of God as inherently creative. The implication is that history and temporality matter to God. Although God is already perfect, God is invested in the created order as a repetition of his being. God is involved in the becoming of the world without being dependent on this becoming to be God.

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The weaknesses of Edwards' position are found in some remaining problems that need to be addressed. Especially in his replies to objections (*End for Which*, chap. 1, sect. 4), Edwards creates some tensions in his position when trying to relate traditional affirmations with his innovations. This is particularly true of the way he relates eternity to time. For instance, Edwards says God eternally knows all things at once, but it is unclear whether this is with or without reference to their temporal sequence. If the sequentiality of time is obliterated in God's knowledge, it would undermine God's stake in temporality as such. The same tension emerges with reference to the eschatological union of God with humanity in Christ. This union is the condition for the possibility that God's end in himself and the creature's end in God are both in view as God's singular purpose in creating. But it is unclear whether God has in view the terminus of this union (and therefore a divinized pantheism which Edwards rejects) or the process of this union as a unending whole. These problems in matters of detail could be ironed out without undermining Edwards' whole project, and therefore his approach to creation remains the most helpful for further reflection and development.