

Lisanne Winslow

A Great and Remarkable Analogy

The Onto-Typology of Jonathan Edwards



The *Jonathan Edwards*
Center at Yale University



New Directions in Jonathan Edwards Studies

Edited by
Harry S. Stout, Kenneth P. Minkema
and Adriaan C. Neele

Volume 5

Lisanne Winslow

A Great and Remarkable Analogy

The Onto-Typology of Jonathan Edwards

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek:
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data available online: <https://dnb.de>.

© 2020, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Theaterstraße 13, D-37073 Göttingen
All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by
any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information
storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Typesetting: 3w+p GmbH, Rimpar
Printed and bound: CPI buchbücher.de, Birkach
Printed in the EU.

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage | www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com

ISSN 2566-7327
ISBN 978-3-647-51701-8

For Dr. Walter J. Schultz, friend and colleague,
who introduced me to Edwards and
who reminds me daily of God's calling
as a Christian Scholar.

I am not ashamed to own that I believe that the whole universe,
heaven and earth, air and seas, and the divine constitution and
history of the holy Scriptures, be full of images of divine things,
as full as a language is of words.....

~Jonathan Edwards
Images of Divine Things

Psalm 97:6
The heavens *proclaim* His righteousness,
and all the people *see* His glory.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the University of Northwestern-St Paul, where I have been on faculty for 18 years. I thank the administration for permitting me the freedom to teach and engage students in two departments, the Department of Biology and Biochemistry, and the Department of Biblical and Theological Studies. This has allowed me a great expanse of intellectual fullness in order to integrate my biological knowledge with theological scholarship. Special thanks to my students in *Jonathan Edwards Seminar* and *Science and Theology* for fruitful discussions of many of the ideas presented in this book.

A special thanks for all the hard work and mind-grinding scholarship of my research student Mr. Daniel Christian who spent two academic years studying with me on Edwards' ideas of beauty in nature. I appreciate your contribution to the presentation we gave together on Edwards' Theology of Beauty in Nature at the Faculty Scholarship Symposium at the University of Northwestern in May 2019.

A heartfelt thanks to Austin Chiappetta, Bishoy Botros, Anastasia Harper, Arianna Winslow, Halle Ginther, and Olivia Jankowski who helped with typing and transcriptions of citations, quotations, and editing. A special thanks to Mr. Tim Meyer for a rendering of the Rhodopson model in Figures 3 and 4.

A special thanks to Dr. Ken Minkema for lively discussions regarding Edwards' typology, for his encouragement in my work as an Edwards scholar, and for his attention to detail in the final edits of the book. I am also in gratitude to colleagues who helped me to relate thinking as a scientist to thinking as a theologian. In special gratitude, I would like to thank Dr. Phil Ziegler and Dr. Tom Greggs, University of Aberdeen; Dr. Alister McGrath, Ian Ramsey Center for Religion and Science, Oxford University; Dr. Walter Schultz, University of Northwestern, Dr. Philip Rolnick, University of St Thomas; Rev. Dr. Lanny Kuester and the faithful at the Mendota Heights Congregational Church, Ms. Leslie Shore and Mr. Ryan Andersen.

A special thanks to my ministry friends in Aberdeen, Scotland, especially the Rev'd Andy and Margaret Cowie and the Rev'd Anne Robertson for delightful

conversations, Christ-centered ministry, and fun outreach activities with the members of the Cove, Northfield, Danestone, and Balmedie Congregational Churches in Aberdeen, Scotland.

Any substantial scholarly work requires those kindred friends that support and walk alongside. I would like to extend gratitude to my dear friends Peggy Novak, Lucy Gibb, Sharon Binger, Cindy Land, Nancy McCreary, and Anne McManus, for their love and support during the arduous task of study, research, and writing toward the completion of this work while serving as Chair of my department, teaching full-time, and parenting two teen daughters. You have saved my sanity on too many occasions.

To my dearest treasures, Ari and Sophie. No matter what accomplishments I may achieve in this lifetime, you will always be, far and above, the greatest joy of my life. I am so proud of who you are and who you are becoming. You are the love of my heart.

Most of all, I would like to thank the Love that Created for providing such a beautifully fascinating world for me to spend my life studying.

Contents

Acknowledgements	7
Tables, Graphs and Figures	11
Works of Jonathan Edwards Cited from the Yale Editions	12
Foreword	13
Preface	16
Book Summary	18
Introduction	19
Chapter One. Edwards as a Natural Theologian	23
Chapter Two. Emanation of the Knowledge and Glory of God <i>into</i> the Creation in <i>Dissertation I: Concerning the End for Which God Created the World</i>	31
Chapter Three. Edwards' Creation Metaphysics Undergirds Natural Typology: Idealism, Panentheism, Occasionalism, and Continuous Creationism	42
Chapter Four. All Natural Types and Antitypes are Ontologically Real: Introducing Edwards' Onto-Typology	54
Chapter Five. The Language of Nature Explored as Analogical	61

Chapter Six. A Method for Discerning Natural Onto-Types as the Analogical Language of Nature	76
Chapter Seven. Setting It Straight with Terms: Type, Antitype, Analogy, Trope, Emblem, Symbol, Copy, Ectype, Archetype	82
Chapter Eight. Jonathan Edwards' Consistent Use of Onto-Typology in the "Miscellanies", Sermons, Treatises, and Discourses	91
Chapter Nine. Onto-Types in <i>Images of Divine Things</i>	99
Chapter Ten. Extending Edwards' Onto-Typology into Contemporary Science: Rhodopsin Mechanism in the Mammalian Visual System as a Molecular Onto-Type	112
A Mechanism from Cell Biology: The Rhodopsin Second Messenger Cascade in the Mammalian Visual System is a Natural Type of Illumination by the Light of Christ	115
Biological Background: The Mechanism of Mammalian Vision	116
Light	124
Rhodopsin	125
G-protein	126
γ PDE Inhibitors and PDE	127
cGMP to Linear GMP	128
Na^+ / Ca^{2+} Gated Ion Channels	129
Depolarization and Hyperpolarization of the Rod Cell Membrane Resulting in Transduction of Visual Signal to the Brain	131
Chapter Eleven. Beauty in the Clouds: Nature's Secondary Beauty as an Onto-Type of God's Primary Beauty	139
Chapter Twelve. Bringing Forth Edwards' Typological Natural Philosophy toward a Trinitarian Theology of Nature	153
Conclusion	158
Bibliography	162
Author Index	169
Subject Index	170

Tables, Graphs and Figures

Table I.	Type/Antitype Repeated Themes in <i>Images of Divine Things</i> .	109
Table II.	Some Natural Types Used Once in <i>Images of Divine Things</i> .	110
Table III.	Types and Antitypes in the Mammalian Visual System	134
Graph I.	Thematic Distribution of Antitypes in <i>Images of Divine Things</i> <i>Made by Lisanne Winslow</i>	111
Figure 1.	Rhodopsin Positioned in the Membrane	135
Figure 2.	Structures of Rhodopsin.	136
Figure 3.	Schematic of the molecular pathway of vision	137
Figure 4.	Schematic of the pathway of vision including onto-types and antitypes	138
Figure 5.	Edwards on beauty in human beings	151
Figure 6.	Edwards on God using nature to communicate to human beings	151
Figure 7.	Edwards on beauty and virtue in nature and man-made entities	152

Works of Jonathan Edwards Cited from the Yale Editions

Freedom of the Will. Vol. 1
The Religious Affections. Vol. 2
Original Sin. Vol. 3
Scientific and Philosophical Writings. Vol. 6
Ethical Writings. Vol. 8
A History of the Work of Redemption. Vol. 9
Sermons and Discourses, 1720–1723. Vol. 10
Typological Writings. Vol. 11
The “Miscellanies”: A–500. Vol. 13
Sermons and Discourses, 1723–1729. Vol. 14
Letters and Personal Writings. Volume 16
Sermons and Discourses, 1730–1733. Vol. 17
The “Miscellanies”: 501–832. Vol. 18
Sermons and Discourses, 1734–1738. Vol. 19
The „Miscellanies“: Entry Nos. 833–1152. Vol. 20
Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith. Vol. 21
Sermons and Discourses, 1739–1742. Vol. 22
The “Miscellanies”: Entry Nos. 1153–1320. Vol. 23
Sermons and Discourses, 1743–1758. Vol. 25
Catalogues of Books. Vol. 26

Foreword

“To have a scientific mind is to respect the consensus facts, which are the resolution of generations of dispute, while maintaining an open mind about the still unknown.” So observes quantum physicist, Lee Smolin. That said, the same words could easily have been written by Rev. Dr. Lisanne Winslow, herself an accomplished scientist, theologian and minister. In this book, Dr. Winslow opens up the beauty and mystery of a twenty-five year career as a marine biologist that led her to pursue theology in order to answer the questions that were too large for science. As she explores these questions into the ontology of nature in terms of the descriptions of science, she beckons and leads the reader into the same sense of mystery and wonder. She found the very conversation partner she needed in the writings of Jonathan Edwards. Consider these words of Edwards that Dr. Winslow begins in the epigraph of this book:

I am not ashamed to own that I believe that the whole universe be full of images of divine things, as full as a language is of words... and that there is room for persons to be learning more and more of this language and seeing more of that which is declared in it to the end of the world without discovering all.

Lisanne Winslow has done just that. She has taken up the baton from Edwards and has explored the ontological reality of messages or shadows of divine things embedded in the natural world. She says, “We are on a journey with Jonathan Edwards who encourages us to press into a revelatory faith. This is a natural spirituality that opens the eyes of our understanding to be enlightened by what nature has to communicate. In Edwards’ hands this is a true *gospel of nature*.” She pursues the clues that Edwards left for us in his corpus of writings to take us, the readers of nature, deeper into that gospel message.

What Edwards did in forming a study of natural types in the macroscopic realm of rainbows, spiders, and rivers, Winslow has done at the cellular and molecular level. Her analysis of the mechanism of vision in the mammalian eye is not only at an advanced level of cellular biology, it is spiritually and biblically grounded. She does just what Edwards did in *Shadows of Divine Things* by

rooting revealed messages in the creation directly to scripture. Having done this typological work throughout her scientific career somewhat in the secret realm of her own mind, she now puts forth the query, "...one wonders if such insight and revelation can be given for *all* mechanisms that comprise the natural realm? What myriad of hidden messages of the divine reality are there for the Spirit to reveal?"

While what she has done here in terms of typological scientific mechanism is a truly extraordinary feat of Edwardsean typology, Lisanne Winslow is an Edwards scholar in her own right. Her entrance into Edwards began while she and I were team-teaching a Metaphysics of Science course at the University of Northwestern. It was in our collegial discourse that we began talking about Edwards. I had been teaching Edwards for more than three decades, and noticed a resonance between her understanding of the natural world and that of Edwards. Dr. Winslow was in seminary at the time and immediately jumped on board. I was struck by the depth and breadth with which she read Edwards, engaging deeply in his treatises, discourses, sermons and of course *Shadows*. Her keen mind and spiritual heart seemed to come alive. She, as an ordained Congregational minister herself, connected not only with Edwards' interest in natural science and theology, but his pastor's heart. She found the kindred spirit she was searching for. Since the inception of our collaboration, we have team-taught Jonathan Edwards Seminar to undergraduates for several years. Her contribution to this course, a course I have taught for many years, expanded its breadth in Edwards scholarship leading to three unique pedagogical curricula.

In this well-constructed monograph, Lisanne Winslow offers us a rigorous analysis of Edwards' creation metaphysics and theology of nature. She uncovers Edwards' bi-fold method of receiving revelation of what she has termed *onto-types* in both the beauty of nature and in the study of scientific information. This is a keen read of Edwards and a very informed one. She searched Edwards for a set of criteria to help guide the theological process of doing onto-typology to avoid subjectivity. However, she is careful not to lapse into solely an intellectual theology, but reminds us that these messages in nature are there to invite us into an Edwardsean mystical spirituality that derives from abandoning one's self to the revelation of God when encountering nature. In her hands, what people actually "see" and experience, either by being in nature or in studying its manifold processes, is the beauty of a God who is ever reaching to the creatures He loves through what has been made.

I will offer here another quote from Lee Smolin who says, "There is not a thing in nature so ordinary that its contemplation cannot be a route to a wordless sense of wonder and gratitude just to be a part of it all." Rev. Winslow has taken us there. She has offered us a new way to see nature, to be part of it, and thus be part of the end for which God created the world. I will end with her own words to us all,

“Might opening ourselves to God’s revelation of the language of nature, through the discoveries of natural science, incite not merely a new theology, but a fresh wave of experiencing the wide, broad, and deep love of God?”

Walter J. Schultz
All Saints Day 2019

Preface

In this book, I propose to fill a long-existing lacuna in the corpus of the Edwards secondary scholarship. While there have been numerous excellent texts written on Edwards' typology, none (to my knowledge) have been written from the perspective of one who has scientific training in addition to theological training and pastoral ministry. I hold a unique position in this conversation. I am a research biologist for more than twenty years. I have taught biology to undergraduate as well as graduate students while conducting an ongoing research program as a cellular marine immunologist with world ocean experience. In my bi-vocational career, I have pursued advanced theological training in seminary leading to ordination as a Congregationalist minister (as was Edwards), followed by a doctorate in Systematic Theology. My training in biology and theology, as well as Congregational ministry in the pulpit, gives me a rare and unique connection to Edwards' mind and heart as a naturalist, theologian, and pastor. It is from this position that I approach Edwards' Theology of Nature, hoping to offer some keen and fresh insight into Edwards' God of creation.

Johnathan Edwards knew God in an extraordinary way. As such, when I read Edwards I feel as if I am welcomed into an intimate sacred space of knowing God. I find myself experiencing an expansive, mystical spiritual knowing. For Edwards, this entrance into experiencing God included an understanding of the created world, not *just* in the beauty of a walk on a crisp fall morning, but through a far deeper communication by God in the very structures and mechanisms that comprise nature. In my life pursuits as a biologist, I also have had such an entrance. I started seeing similar insights early on in my life as I explored the pond in my back yard as a child, then systematically during my college years and graduate career in cell biology. The cells I studied in my research, the mechanisms I taught in my biology classes, all spoke something to me of the Creator, something that the words from science could not adequately express. The questions that were being raised in my mind and the observations I was making felt larger than the scientific language and mechanistic explanations I was given to work with. As a young graduate student, and well into my formative years as

scientist and professor, I felt a growing lack in the ability of my discipline to help me with answers to these questions about the biological world, as botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer portrays, “I should have been told that my questions were bigger than science could touch” (2013, 45). Thankfully, a few decades later, my theological training gave me such a language. Alighting upon the work of Jonathan Edwards along that journey opened a world of thought from the mind, heart, and spirit of a man who lived three centuries ago, who thought and felt as I did about nature and nature’s God.

I found the very conversation partner I needed to do the work broiling up with beauty and fervor within my biologist’s heart; a biologist who conjoined a similar sacred space with the Creator as did Edwards. In Edwards, I resonated with his mystical spirituality that was biblically grounded, while experienced in and through the natural world. As I pursued his writings, I saw a thread throughout the corpus of his works: *God reveals himself through nature*. Nature has something to say, and it was God’s own design to communicate with his beloved creatures in this way. Through Edwards’ discourses, treatises, dissertations, sermons and more, he consistently uses images in nature to teach of God’s ways thereby giving spiritual insight. It is with this same openness to God’s revelation in the structures and beauty of the physical world that I have pursued this work. I hope that this book opens a new wave of spirituality and practice where the language of nature can speak to us. This, for me, is truly a *gospel of nature* proclaiming the glory of God, in Christ. Thanks to the insights of Jonathan Edwards, as we receive such beautiful revelation, and delight it as we so often do in nature, we enter into a life-enriching fulfillment of the end for which God created the world.

–LW

Book Summary

Jonathan Edwards had a keen insight into the ontological significance of the creation, above and beyond Calvin's idea of the theater upon which the drama of redemption unfolds. Edwards proposed that natural types in all of creation served as a communication or *language of God*, pointing to the antitypes of spiritual, biblical, and divine truths. I explore how natural types are not mere poetical assignments of Christian themes onto nature. Rather, these types are *ontologically real*, in that they eternally existed in the mind of God with intent to communicate divine things to the creature. Thus, we call these natural types *onto-types* to reflect their ontological significance theologically and spiritually. In Edwards' scheme, this was an important part of God's end in creating. Emerging out of Edwards' comprehensive metaphysics of creation is a portrayal of God's commitment to emanate *knowledge* of the divine Self *into* the creation. God's Being is not emanated, resulting in a creation, rather the *knowledge and glory* of God are emanated into the creation serving to communicate messages of the divine to the creature out of infinite love and faithfulness. Edwards expounded a two-fold method where revelation of this language of nature can be experienced by direct engagement with the beauty in nature *and* in the study of science and its mechanisms. God's action in revealing takes the form of *willing* the creation into being, *communicating analogically* through onto-types in the physical world, and *revealing* such knowledge to the creature. In this way, all of nature *is* the triune God acting: the Father *willing* into being, Christ *communicating*, and the Spirit *revealing*. God's Trinitarian powerful and magnificent glory is not merely displayed by what has been made, but is intimately shared and delighted in. This, in Edwards' view, is God's ultimate end in creating.

Introduction

The Edwards scholarship presented here seeks to reveal precisely how Edwards used natural typology over the course of his lifetime, across the corpus of his theological works, in his pastoral ministry, and as a missionary to the Mohawk and Mahican Native American tribes. For Edwards, seeing messages of the divine reality embedded into the very structures and mechanisms of nature was no mere human assignment or applied metaphor. In a parallel construction to biblical typology, Edwards put forth a controversial and innovative method of *natural typology* where types in nature prefigure their spiritual antitypes.

I will argue that Edwards viewed these embedded natural types as a crucial part of the end for which God created the world. In Edwards' view, God *intentionally* embedded spiritual messages into his creation as a subordinate end, in a long line of successive ends, in order to communicate the knowledge and glory of the divine Self to the creature who was fashioned to receive it. God's end in creation is accomplished when these messages are received and delighted in by the creature, thus re-emanating God's divine glory back to its eternal and infinite source.¹

Beginning with Edwards' final and most mature work, the *Dissertation I: Concerning the End for Which God created the World* (hereafter referred to as *End of Creation*), I propose that Edwards intended to convey the idea that as part of God's Original Ultimate End in creating, God emanated/communicated the *knowledge and glory of the divine excellencies* into the creation. God did not emanate *himself* into the creation which would be a dangerous approximation to pantheism. Rather, Edwards indicates that it is the *knowledge and glory* of God that is emanated into the creation. This serves the purpose of communicating to the creature toward achieving God's end in creation, i. e., union with Creator. It is proposed that natural types convey this emanation/communication in the physical world as a subordinate end. Edwards was convinced, particularly by the

¹ Much of the work presented in this book was taken, in part, from D'Andrea-Winslow, Lisanne, "A Great and Remarkable Analogy: A Trinitarian Theology of Nature." PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, Scotland, 2018.

end of his life in writing *End of Creation*, that God *intentionally* created everything in the universe with embedded typological messages to reflect attributes of himself, in order that humankind could understand these mysteries in some tangible, analogous way.

We shall explore the possibility of discerning the hidden mysteries of God's eternal attributes in the structures and mechanisms of nature in the form of natural types that are willed into being, emanated/communicated into the structures of the physical world, and revealed by God. However, some criticisms of Edwards' use of natural types will need to be addressed, particularly the danger of subjective interpretations being construed as divine revelation. This sticky point may be, in large part, addressed by relying on Edwards' metaphysics of creation; his idealism, panentheism, occasionalism, and continuous creationism. Edwards' metaphysical commitments are constructed in such a way as to view the entirety of the creation as intended by God, not only to work in beauty, balance, and harmony as the "stage" for life to exist, but also in order to communicate God's eternal attributes and plan of redemption to the beloved creature.

As such, types in nature are not subject to the imagination of the individual in arbitrary assignments and metaphor, but rather represent embedded existing messages in all of creation, instantiated by God and revealed by the divine act of God. It is proposed that Edwards viewed these messages as *ontologically real* and intentionally woven by God into the structures and mechanisms of nature. In this construal, messages of the divine in nature are not mere metaphors, but represent an *onto-typology*. We advance Edwards' theological construct by referring to these messages as *onto-types*. Embedded onto-types are then explored in relation to the Thomistic notion of *analogia*. In Thomas, we find a theology of analogy where communication of the Divine is neither univocal nor equivocal, but rather exists in proportion. Edwards' onto-types are placed in the lineage of the *analogia entis* representing both God's transcendence by creating *ex nihilo* and God's immanence in a moment-by-moment continuous creation where God himself is ever-communicating to the creature out of supreme divine love.

Thus, a deeper, more comprehensive look at Edwards' proposed method of discernment of nature's onto-types is put forth here. It is hoped that what is presented offers a more reliable approach than previous renditions that opened Edwards' natural typology to criticisms and suspicion. Edwards' contribution is explored using his own proposed method of natural typology as a necessary and valid way to understand God's character, love, and plan of salvation in and through the created world and its mechanisms. I propose a *set of criteria* extracted from Edwards to serve as a guide for the theological work of doing natural onto-typology. I then uncover Edwards' use of onto-types in a two-fold method: A) through the mechanisms in nature as explained by exact science, and B) in personal experiences in nature. Edwards used both and saw validity in each. In

this way, God's invisible qualities, eternal power, and divine nature (Romans 1:20) are revealed so that creatures can comprehend with the intellect, as well as the heart. Edwards fully believed that Scripture instructs us that the natural world declares the glory of God.

Going back through Edwards' corpus in his "Miscellanies," sermons, discourses, and treatises, a "natural, mystical spirituality" emerges from the pages of these diverse genres of his works. I show that Edwards consistently uses his theology of onto-types to convey a spiritually transformative *gospel of nature*, spoken through the language of nature, pointing individuals to Christ. This was most intentionally expounded by Edwards in a small, hand-bound folio that Edwards may or may not have intended to publish. In this definitive work, *Images or Shadows of Divine Things* (hereafter referred to as *Images of Divine Things*), Edwards recorded his insights into the natural world and the revelations given to him that parallel biblical truths. Using this short text, we shall explore how Edwards adeptly used his two-fold methodology reflecting his own concise systematic theology. We will explore how this work was not purely theological, but incited a dynamic and beautiful *spirituality*. Next, Edwards' typological method is applied to the molecular mechanism of vision in the mammalian eye seeking to answer the question: Can Edwards' onto-types be found all the way down to the molecular level of the creation? This question will be answered in the affirmative where I explore how each step in this higher order, multi-step cellular mechanisms corresponds to biblically grounded, spiritually informed messages for humankind to learn of spiritual principles.

While the onto-types in the cellular mechanism of vision show that Edwards' method of types in scientific mechanisms exist all the way down to the molecular level, I then take you the reader on the second aspect of Edwards' method which describes direct experiences in the natural world as leading the heart and mind to the Creator. In this way, we explore Edwards' theology of beauty, specifically referring to beauty in the natural world. While much work in the Edwards secondary scholarship provides an analysis on Edwards' theology of beauty in humans and in morality, few explore this in terms of the beauty in nature specifically. Here I propose that the beauty humans find in nature exists because the beauty of a sunset, the vast ocean, mountains, etc., are yet another onto-type pointing to the antitype of God's beauty. Edwards refers to the beauty in nature as secondary beauty pointing to the primary beauty, which is God. Again, an individual's experience of beauty in nature causing delight is yet another fulfillment of God's end in creating the world.

Next, I invite a new Theology of Nature from the brilliant mind of Edwards, one that is expressly *Trinitarian*. Edwards not only saw that messages in the creation exist, but that this mode of divine communication was the unified work of the Triune God. He says,

So all the persons [of the Trinity] are concerned in the creation of the world [. . .]. [E]ach person has a distinct part and, as it were, sustains a distinct character and charge in that affair. [. . .] There is this order [that] is observed by the persons of the Trinity in their acting in all affairs appertaining to the glory of the Godhead [and the] creation of the world (WJE 25, 145–146).

Edwards seems to be proposing that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit each play a distinct role in divine action to produce the cohesive whole of the creation *as we encounter it*. We find in Edwards' writings a view that God is actively *willing into existence* and *communicating/emanating* the knowledge and glory of God into the very structures of the creation. This *willing* and *communicating* (as ways of divine action) in the form of onto-types also include the divine act of *revealing* those *real-ized* types and their antitypes to created minds. Following Edwards' direction, nature, then, is *God's acting*. But even more, it is the Triune God of the Christian faith that is acting, understood in a Trinitarian Theology of Nature (D'Andrea-Winslow, 2020). In this way, all of nature *is* the act-result of the triune God such that the Father is *willing* into being, Christ is *communicating* through onto-types in the creation, and the Spirit is *revealing*. This divine action out of infinite agape love, is a crucial aspect of God's Original Ultimate End in creation.

We are on a journey with Jonathan Edwards, who encourages us to press into a revelatory faith. This is a natural spirituality that opens the eyes of our understanding to be enlightened by what nature has to communicate. In Edwards' hands, this is a true *gospel of nature*. According to Edwards, nature is speaking. Exactly what nature is speaking is explored here in order to comprehend what the Creator wants for us to know through what has been made.

Chapter One.

Edwards as a Natural Theologian

Jonathan Edwards spent many hours each day in his pastor's study writing his sermons, discourses, and treatises. I can imagine him glancing out the window from time to time to collect his thoughts, or stepping out into the Northampton late afternoon air for a contemplative walk at dusk as the sun was setting. In fact, Edwards' biographers tell us that the man spent a good deal of time outdoors, either walking, horseback-riding, or chopping wood. He enjoyed and valued being immersed in God's creation.

What comes out of a careful read of Edwards across the breadth of genres he penned and over nearly thirty years of his ministry, is that his enjoyment of the creation exceeded a mere epistemic engagement with nature on a lovely summer's day. Edwards saw the creation through a metaphysical lens of understanding that framed the entirety of the natural world, and all its mechanisms, as participating in God's Original Ultimate End in creation. For Edwards, nature was far more than just the stage upon which the drama of redemption was carried out.

Edwards constructed a complete creation metaphysics that included a rigorous God-world relation philosophy grounded in idealism and panentheism, as well as a divine action theology that committed him to continuous creationism and occasionalism.¹ These metaphysical and theological commitments concerning an ontology of the natural world allowed Edwards to propose a distinctive role for the creation itself in his own thesis on God's end in creating.

In Edwards' creation metaphysics, a crucial aspect of God's ultimate end in creating included ontologically embedded *natural types* pointing to their supernatural antitypes. Edwards masterfully extended the method of biblical typology where Old Testament persons, events, and images served as types foreshadowing their New Testament antitype fulfillments. Out of this method, he formulated an insightful, original method of *natural typology* where elements in nature prefigure or foreshadow the antitypes of spiritual principles and divine

¹ Edwards' creation metaphysics will be discussed in Chapter Three.

things. As Michael McClymond and Gerald McDermott say, “Edwards considered everything in nature a pointer to something in a world beyond nature” (2012, 116). In other words, Edwards proposed natural typology as a language of God intending to convey spiritual, biblical, and theological messages to the creature within the very world that they lived.² He says it this way:

Tis very fit and becoming of God, who is infinitely wise, so to order things that there should be a voice of his in his works instructing those that behold them and pointing forth and showing divine mysteries and things more appertaining to himself and his spiritual kingdom (WJE 11, 67).

According to Edwards, all of nature declares the glory of God. God’s fingerprints, as it were, exist all throughout nature providing the grounds for *revelation*, pointing to the redemptive work of Christ, and other heavenly truths. Tibor Fabiny says that for Edwards nature *is* God’s acting and communicating himself for the sake of the creature (Fabiny: 2009, 99). Fabiny also summarized Edwards’ position as follows,

When a converted person knows and loves Gods beauty, and when the physical universe is known and delighted in by a converted person as an image of God’s beauty, then God’s knowledge and beauty within the Trinity are repeated and enlarged in time and history, The end for which God created the world, which is to repeat God’s inner glory... is actualized (2009, 122).

As Fabiny indicates here, nature in Edwards’ creation metaphysics serves an important role in accomplishing God’s original ultimate end in creating.

When Edwards stepped out of his pastor’s study and gazed up at the rainbow, he believed he was partaking in God’s present moment action in order to fulfill God’s end in creating; God’s glory received and delighted in by the creature and “remanated” (that is, re-emanated) back to its divine and glorious source. For Edwards, these experiences in nature were the intentional, reflected and embedded spiritual *language of nature*, a language that human minds have been fashioned to understand. Edwards’ understanding of nature’s language is affirmed by botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer, who sees the language science uses to describe the natural world as necessary for conveying the fundamental “working parts,” but missing something essential to the grammar nature is giving us. She says, “The language scientists speak, however precise, is based on a profound error in grammar, an omission, a grave loss in translation from the native languages of these shores” (2013, 49). The elements of nature are speaking something

2 Edwards’ natural types are found in many of Edwards’ writings including his “Miscellanies,” in *Religious Affections*, *Original Sin*, *Freedom of the Will*, in his *Two Dissertations*, and in numerous sermons. However, the main source of this work would be Jonathan Edwards’ *Images of Divine Things*.

far more than the working parts, as profoundly beautiful and complex as they are. Nature's grammar is communicating something of "God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature – [that] have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made."³ Hence, God reaches to the creature, to communicate the divine Self.

One might take all this as a complex unfolding of Romans 1:20, as stated above, perhaps to recover the cry of the Psalmist who declared,

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.
They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.⁴

Edwards fully believed that Scripture instructs us that the natural world declares the glory of God: we are told that the natural world "pours forth speech" and "reveals knowledge." We are encouraged to press into a revelatory faith that can unblock the eyes of the understanding. Although nature does not use words, its metaphorical "voice" has something vital to communicate, "into all the earth...to the ends of the world." According to Jonathan Edwards, nature is speaking. Exactly what is nature speaking, according to Edwards? What are the heavens declaring? What proclamations are the skies pouring forth? This is what we want to know in order to fully comprehend what the Creator is speaking through the creation.

Edwards, in his engagement with the world, might answer thusly: *The voice going out into all the earth pouring forth speech is proclaiming knowledge of God's invisible qualities, His eternal power, and divine triune nature, interwoven within scientific discovery, placed in the creation by God, in order to communicate the knowledge and glory of himself to humankind.* Edwards not only had experiences in nature, on walks observing spider webs, rivers, trees and rainbows. He also engaged with the science of his day, reading Newton and other enlightenment scientists. However, rather than ascribing to a Natural Theology bordering on deism, Edwards formulated a new way to understand both scientific discovery and experiences in nature by locating both in God's absolute sovereignty and divine action. For Edwards, *science itself becomes an investigation of divine action and Self-disclosure that construes nature as creation.* The language of the natural world is proclaiming the gospel, preaching the good news of God to humankind,

³ Romans 1:20

⁴ Psalm 19:1–4.