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The Concept of the Heart
in the
Theological Thought and Experience
of
Augustine of Hippo and Jonathan Edwards

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
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Department of Ancient History and
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ABSTRACT

This study contributes to Edwardsean and Augustinian scholarship by examining the importance of the relationship between the heart and the Trinity in the thought and experience of two seminal Christian thinkers, Jonathan Edwards and Augustine of Hippo. Many scholars have noted similarities between the two theologians but as yet there has not been a systematic attempt to identify the basis for such judgments. This comparative analysis of their Trinitarian spirituality demonstrates that the structure and integrity of Edwards' theology can best be evaluated when recognized as the recovery and renewal of two themes that were paramount in Augustine.

The first is a commitment to the foundational nature of the doctrine of the Trinity in understanding Christian theology. The second is the importance of the heart in conversion and the spiritual life. Underpinning their Trinitarian theology is a strongly aesthetic emphasis that places both theologians within a tradition of Christian spirituality known as "heart-religion" in which the "heart" is understood in its Hebraic sense as the centre of the spiritual life. There is no dichotomy of head and heart in Edwards' commitment to a spirituality that is decidedly Augustinian in mood and literary expression. The affections are rehabilitated in their consideration of the Trinitarian being of God and the relationship between God and the heart of the believer.

After an overview of methodological concerns this study examines the concept of the heart as understood in classical antiquity and in the eighteenth century. It then considers Edwards' kinship with Augustine concerning the relationship between the Trinity and the heart from four perspectives: conversion, the nature of the Trinity, spiritual epistemology and aesthetics. Each chapter comprises an introduction to the theme to be discussed, an examination of Edwards' approach followed by a comparison with Augustine's foundational insights into the themes under discussion. Without claiming any indebtedness on Edwards' part to a familiarity with Augustine's writings, it becomes apparent that Edwards recapitulates an "Augustinian strain of piety" that warrants his title of the "American Augustine."

DECLARATION

I, Christine Dixon, certify that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed:

Date:

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Perhaps Augustine should have the last word: “For anything which I did perhaps manage to track down in my thoughts and set out clearly in my words, you must thank him from whom we all sought, from whom we asked, at whose door we all knocked, so that I might have something to sustain myself on by reflecting on it, and to serve you by preaching it.”

ABBREVIATIONS

- CCSL *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* Turnholti: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii
- FC *Fathers of the Church*. New York and Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947; 1968.
- NPNF *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*. Edited by Philip Schaff. First Series: New York, 1892-99. Reprinted Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994.
- WSA *The Complete Works of St. Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*. John E. Rotelle, ed., New York: New City Press, 1990-
- Works *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* Yale Edition. Harry S. Stout, General Editor, Kenneth P. Minkema, Executive Editor. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957-2006.

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