



Timothy Ministries

# Mini-Seminary

## THEOLOGY 1

### THE NUPTIAL THEORY OF EVERYTHING

#### Why Pursue A Grand Unified Theology?

### **1** Understanding the “Big Picture” helps us make sense of the details.

Cf. Proverbs 9.10: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

### **2** A comprehensive theology dictates the spirit in which we fulfill our prime directives.

Our comprehensive theology will dictate whether we advance God’s kingdom in a spirit of love, or in a spirit of militant self-righteousness.

### **3** A comprehensive theology provides an interpretive key for ambiguous passages of Scripture.

For example, even with the precision of Greek, Acts 2.38 can grammatically be interpreted two ways: “Repent for the forgiveness of sins,” or, “Be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.” A comprehensive theology of reconciliation dictates which interpretation is correct.

### **4** A comprehensive theology will help us prioritize our tasks in the work of the kingdom.

A comprehensive theology should point us to what is ultimately important. Our lives and ministries will never be properly aligned until we have settled on what *one thing* is more important than anything else, because it is God’s ultimate intention.

## How Shall We Assess A Comprehensive Theology?

### **1 Is it biblical?**

Is our comprehensive theology consistent with the clear statements in Scripture regarding God's acts and purposes? Are all of its main ideas complimentary to the central teachings of the historic Christian faith? If Scripture does not declare the core idea of our comprehensive theology explicitly, **is the core idea the inference to the best explanation** in light of the biblical data (see Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 2nd Edition p. 55).

### **2 Is it anchored in God's eternal character?**

Does our comprehensive theology describe God as acting according to His eternal intentions rather than simply responding to developments in human history? Will it still have force throughout the coming ages, after the Great Commission is fulfilled?

### **3 Does it have strong explanatory power?**

Does our comprehensive theology provide answers for historically challenging questions; will it help us answer any of mankind's **ultimate questions** (see next page)? Does it answer more questions than it raises? Does it integrate a high percentage of the established truths of historic Christianity?

### **4 Is it a practical improvement over other theologies?**

Is it more apt to promote holiness among God's people, and does it provide lasting impetus for fulfilling the Great Commission?

### **5 Does it exalt Christ and His interests above human concerns?**

Does it provide a greater purpose for the Church beyond the priority of "getting people saved"?

## The Ultimate Questions That People Tend To Ask

1. **Teleology:** What is the purpose and meaning of life?
2. **Happiness:** What is the most direct path to true fulfillment?
3. **Ethics:** What is right and what is wrong?
4. **Theology:** What is God's nature and character?
5. **History**
  - A. Why has history unfolded as it has? Why is evil in the world?
  - B. What are the ultimate origins of competing religions?
6. **Epistemology**
  - A. What forms of knowledge are reliable?
  - B. Can the observable universe be rationally understood?
7. **Ontology**
  - A. What is the nature of existence?
  - B. Is there a supernatural realm?
  - C. What was the origin of life?
  - D. What does it mean to be human?

The ultimate questions are those whose answers provide a working framework for life. As such, they are integral to what we call our worldview. A worldview is simply the mental framework by which we understand the world and our place in it. The more directly we study the ultimate questions, the more consciously, consistently and effectively we will live out our worldview. Few people do the hard work to answer all the ultimate questions, but every person either answers them or makes assumptions about them in order to function as a human being. For a much fuller explanation of the ultimate questions, please download our pdf document, in which I introduce them: [http://www.tmin.org/pdfs/THE\\_THEO\\_A.pdf](http://www.tmin.org/pdfs/THE_THEO_A.pdf)

If you would like to explore these questions further, I highly recommend starting with a copy of Tom Morris's book, misleadingly titled, *Philosophy For Dummies*. A better title for this book would be *Philosophy Well Taught*.

# The Theology Of The Bride

## A Synopsis

### THE THEOLOGY STATED

The reason for all creation is the overflow of the Father's love for the Son. The expression of the Father's love for the Son will be multiplied through the building<sup>1</sup> of a suitable, corporate bride, who loves much for having been forgiven much (cf. Luk 7.47). The preparation of the bride (Rev 19.7) involves the Father's love being perfected in her (1Jo 4.12) as she learns deep obedience to the greatest commandment (Mat 22.37-38), and does all things for God's glory (1Co 10.31) in order to attract others to the heavenly Bridegroom (Rev 22.17). In this theology, Eve is the archetypal bride, Israel is the prototype of the corporate bride, and the Church is the bride in her fullness who absorbs the other two.

### THE THEOLOGY OF THE BRIDE IS BASED UPON THESE TRUTHS:

1. God has no inherent lack or deficiency.
2. God is inherently relational, i.e., a Trinity.
3. God is love (1John 4.16).
4. The Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world (John 17.24).
5. The eternal Son of God became man without ceasing to be God (John 1.1-3,14).
6. The greatest commandment is not to glorify God, but to love God (Matthew 22.37-38). Scripture commands us to do all things for God's glory (1Corinthians 10.31), but this mandate is ancillary to the greater commandment.
7. Among all His creatures, God created only one species in His relational image (Genesis 1.26-28).

### THE THEOLOGY OF THE BRIDE DEPENDS UPON:

1. Monotheism (contra pagan polytheism).
2. An inherently relational God (taught by biblical Trinitarianism, but downplayed by Economic Trinitarianism,<sup>2</sup> and contra Hinduism and Islam).
3. A God who is love personified (1John 4.16).
4. A God-Man who is unique among all other human beings (cf. John 3.29-30; contra Gnosticism and New Age).
5. Christocentrism (contra Secular Humanism).
6. Creatures made in God's relational image (contra Darwinism).
7. A high view of marriage (contra Gnosticism; contra post-modern sexual ethics).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Septuagint of Gen 2.2 with Greek New Testament of Matthew 16.18.

<sup>2</sup> See Kelly, J. N. D., *Early Christian Doctrines*, Fifth, Revised (London; New Delhi; New York; Sydney: Bloomsbury, 1977), ch. 4, sections 5 and 6. In Economic Trinitarianism, more than *as persons*, Christ is seen as the Father's mind, and the Spirit is seen as the Father's wisdom.

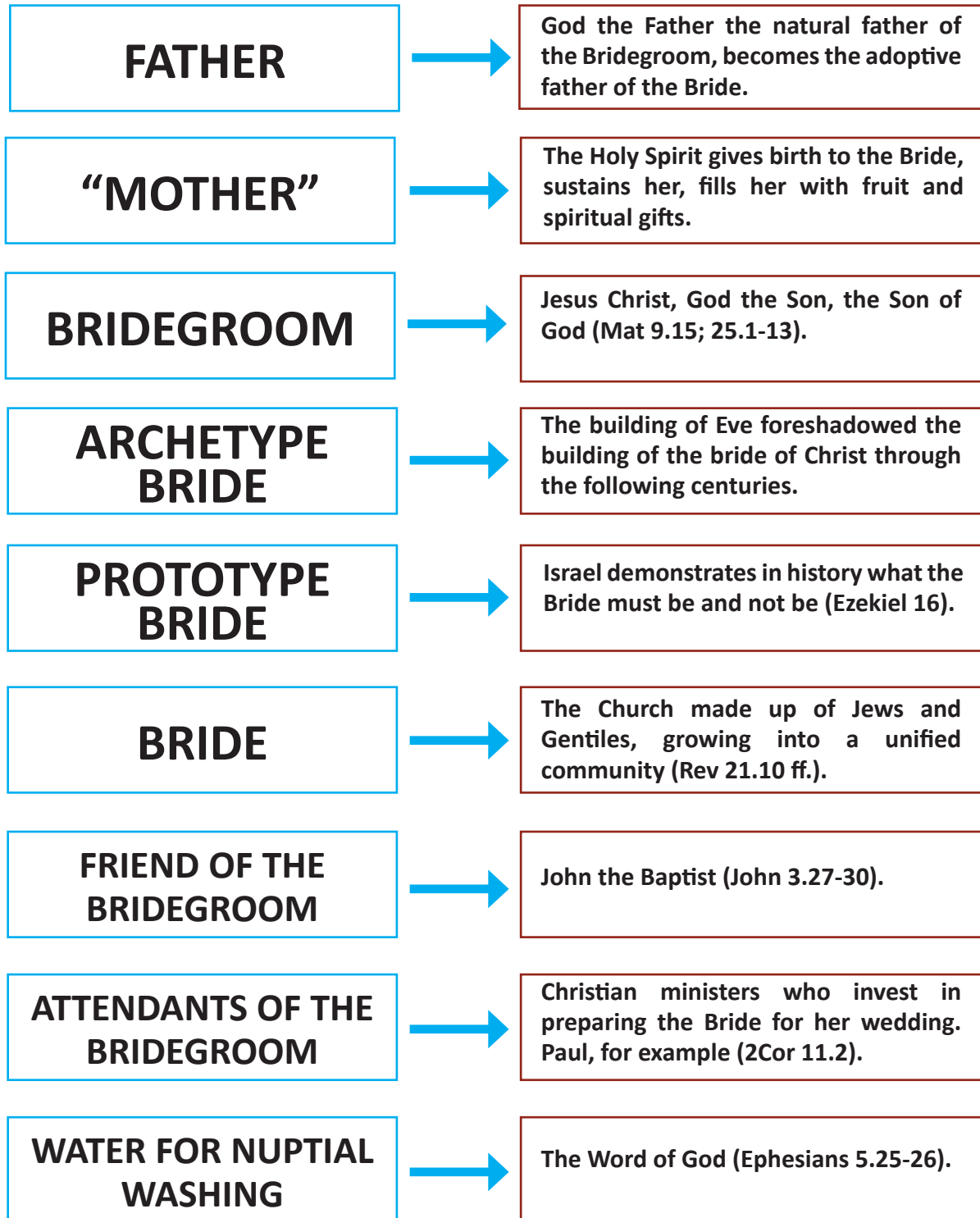
## Questions That Can Be Addressed By The Theology Of The Bride

1. What is central to God's nature and character?
2. What is God's ultimate intention?
3. Why is loving God the greatest commandment (instead of glorifying God)?
4. Why did Lucifer rebel? If from envy, of what was he envious?
5. Why did God create; what is the purpose of everything (all creation)?
- 6. Why did God make creatures in His own image?**
7. Why, in contrast to his forming of the other creatures, did God give special attention to building a suitable counterpart for Adam?
8. Why did God institute marriage and family for mankind?
9. Why is homosexual practice abominable?
10. What is the true basis for determining right and wrong?
11. Why did God allow evil to enter the universe and planet earth?
12. Why did God allow man to fall into sin?
13. Why are there so many religions in the world, and what makes us think Christianity is the right one?
14. What was the "joy set before Him" (Hebrews 12.2; cf. Isaiah 61.10; 62.5; Zephaniah 3.17)?
15. What is "His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1.18)?
16. Why has God purposed to produce sons of God and siblings of Christ (Romans 8.19,29)?
17. Why is the Song of Solomon in the Bible, and how should we interpret it?
18. Why is the essence of eternal life to know God and Jesus Christ (John 17.3)?
19. Why is true happiness found in loving God and loving people?
20. What does it mean to be human?
21. Is the question, *who am I* rational? If so ... who am I?

*All life is courtship ....*

Peter Kreeft, *Three Philosophies Of Life*, p. 94.

## Persons And Entities In The Bridal Drama



# The Redemption Connection

## Widowed Humanity

### Leviticus 25 (NIV)

23 “The land must not be sold permanently, because **the land is mine** and you are but aliens and my tenants.  
24 Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.  
25 “If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold. 26 If, however, a man has no one to redeem it for him but he himself prospers and acquires sufficient means to redeem it, 27 he is to determine the value for the years since he sold it and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it; he can then go back to his own property.  
28 But if he does not acquire the means to repay him, what he sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and he can then go back to his property.

Eschatological parallels to the kinsman-redeemer scenario from Lev 25.23-28 and Jer 32.1-15:

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| <b>A. A man receives a property as a perpetual inheritance.</b>                      | <b>• Adam receives dominion of the earth, Genesis 1.26.</b>                      |
| <b>B. The man sells his inheritance and does not have the means to redeem it.</b>    | <b>• Adam &amp; Eve “sell out” their domain to Satan, Genesis 3.6.</b>           |
| <b>C. A near relative buys (redeems) the property to keep it in the family.</b>      | <b>• Christ pays man’s debt at the cross, 1 Corinthians 1.30.</b>                |
| <b>D. The deed is sealed and witnessed.</b>  | <b>• Redemption sealed by the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1.13,14.</b>                |
| <b>E. Sometime later the sealed deed is brought forth.</b>                           | <b>• The sealed scroll held forth in heaven, Revelation 5.1.</b>                 |
| <b>F. The redeemer takes possession of the property.</b>                             | <b>• Christ takes possession of the earth, Revelation 11.15.</b>                 |
| <b>G. Widow without heir is married to redeemer.</b>                                 | <b>• Humanity, widowed from law, married to the Lamb, Rom. 7.4; Rev. 19.7-9.</b> |
| <b>H. The original family line once again exercises authority over the property.</b> | <b>• Holy humanity again rules the earth, Revelation 5.10.</b>                   |

He is the Bridegroom and the Apostles are the ‘Betrothers’, and we are the Bride; let us prepare our dowry. — Aphrahat, c. AD 340.

# The Covenant Connection

## Marriage At Mount Sinai

In the garden of Eden, God had a family consisting of Adam, Eve, and His triune Self. Before Adam and Eve's rebellion, God and His children enjoyed a fellowship unrestricted by material barriers and unhindered by sin. Theologians refer to that primeval, familial fellowship with the Latin phrase *familia dei*.

After Noah's flood, God introduced a method by which He would progressively rebuild the *familia dei*. The effective instrument of that method is called a covenant. Though the word *covenant* is sometimes used metaphorically in the Bible, when it refers to an arrangement between God and man, it refers to **an elective kinship bond**. An elective kinship bond is a (1) binding (2) family relationship (3) that persons enter into by choice, rather than by natural procreation. We commonly form biblical-type covenants when we marry or legally adopt a child. So, God's method for rebuilding the *familia dei* is to form **progressively more comprehensive elective kinship bonds**, and the instrument for forming those bonds is called a **covenant**.

The **Sinaitic Covenant** introduced wonderful enhancements to God's relationship with His covenant people. One of those enhancements was to elevate the covenant to a nuptial bond. In effect, God married the nation of Israel granting her the privileges *and* obligations of a bride.

### Parallels between a traditional Jewish wedding and the establishment of the Sinai Covenant

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|---|--|
| <p>A. The betrothal (<i>eyrusin</i>) when valuable ornaments are exchanged.</p>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God gives Israel favor so as to obtain articles of gold and silver from the Egyptians (Ex 11.2-3; 12.35-36).</li></ul>                                     |
| <p>B. The bride undergoes a ritual immersion in water (<i>mikveh</i>) before the wedding.</p>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Israel is baptized "in the cloud and in the sea" (1Co 10.1-2).</li></ul>   |
| <p>C. The bridegroom or his attendants convey the bride from her ancestral home to his own house.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God and Moses lead Israel from her "house of bondage" (Jos 24.17; Jer 34.13) to the "mountain of God" (Ex 19.4).</li></ul>                                 |
| <p>D. The consecration (<i>kiddushin</i>) transpires under the wedding canopy (<i>chuppah</i>).</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The people of Israel are consecrated (Ex 19.1-11,14), then brought out by Moses "to meet God" under the canopy of smoke and cloud (Ex 19.16-17).</li></ul> |
| <p>E. The marriage contract (<i>ketubah</i>) is read to the bride.</p>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Moses speaks God's words of mutual obligation to the elders of the people (Ex 19.5-7).</li></ul>   |
| <p>F. The bride vows to uphold her obligations to the bridegroom.</p>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All the people of Israel promise to do all the LORD has spoken (Ex 19.8; 24.3,7).</li></ul>  |
| <p>G. The wedding feast is held.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Moses with 70 elders enjoyed a banquet with God (Ex 24.9-11).</li></ul>  |



## Typological Passages

### Undergirding The Theology Of The Bride

**The Forming Of Adam And Building Of Eve** — Genesis 2; cf. Matthew 16.18.

**Abraham (Exalted Father) Obtains A Bride For His Only Begotten Son** — Genesis 24; cf. Hebrews 11.17.

**Suffering Joseph Saves His World And Wins A Priestly Bride** — Genesis 41.

**The Sojourning Shepherd-Prince Marries A Priestly Bride** — Exodus 2.16-22.

**The Betrothal And Marriage of God and Israel Established By The Sinaitic Covenant** — Exodus 12-24.

**The Redeemer Responsible For The Fruitfulness Of The Widowed Bride** — Deu 25.5-10; cf. Romans 7.2-4.

**Rahab The Harlot, Redeemed With Her Family, Becomes A Bride In Israel** — Joshua 2; 6.17-25; Matthew 1.5.

**Othniel Wins The Bride** — Joshua 15.15-19; Judges 1.12-15.

**The Redeemer Marries The Humble Widow** — Ruth

**The Anointed David Marries Abigail (Delight Of The Father), Widowed From Nabal (Futility)** — 1Samuel 25.

**The Royal Bride Who Intercedes For Her People** — Esther

**Marriage Of The King** — Psalm 45.

**Woman Of Peace, King Of Peace And The Pursuit Of Intimacy** — Song of Songs.

**Parable Of The Wedding Feast** — Matthew 22.2-14.

**A Woman With A Non-Husband And The Man Who Fulfills** — John 4.1-42.

**A Tale Of Two Cities: The Great Prostitute And The Bride Of The Lamb** — Revelation.

## Prophetic Foundations

**The Bridegroom Like The Sun** — Psalm 19.

**The Shepherd Bridegroom Brings The Bride To His Home** — Psalm 23.5-6; cf. John 14.2-3.

**Jerusalem The Bridal Crown** — Isaiah 62.1-7.

**Messiah In Wedding Garments** — Isaiah 61.10-11.

**Remembering The Honeymoon In The Wilderness** — Jeremiah 2.1-3.

**God's Betrothal Of The Proto-Bride** — Ezekiel 16.1-14.

**God Calls For The Return Of His Wayward Bride** — Hosea.

**Ten Virgins And The Commission To Bring The Bride Safely Home** — Matthew 25.1-13.

**A Reminder From The Friend Of The Bridegroom** — 2 Corinthians 11.2

**The Glorious Promise** — Revelation 19.7-9.

*Intimacy*

*To be completely loved while fully known.*

1 Corinthians 13.12

## A Fresh Way To See The Sections Of The Bible

### **P**entateuch

The first five books of the Bible record God's creation of the environment in which the great romance can unfold. They tell the origins of the archetype bride, Eve, and the prototype bride, Israel. They reveal the Bridegroom as a Holy Redeemer, and call the Bride to priestly dominion (Exodus 19.6).

### **H**istory

The history section of the Bible (Joshua to Esther) is about the Bride being called to join her warrior Bridegroom (see Exodus 15.3) in the battle to reclaim dominion (see Judges 2.1-3.4).

### **P**oetry

The five books of poetry teach relational principles. They rehearse the glories of the Bridegroom (e.g., Job 38.1-42.6; Song of Songs 5.9-16) and call the Bride to fruitfulness (Job 42.7-17; Song of Songs 4.16).

### **P**rophecy

The books of prophecy emphasize the faithfulness of the Bridegroom and call the Bride back to the holiness that will make her a suitable helper for her Lord.

### **G**ospels and Acts

The first five books of the New Testament introduce the long awaited divine-human Bridegroom with two surprises: the Bridegroom is *a servant* and the Bride He seeks is one who is *forgiven* (cf. Luke 7.47). These books record the explicit invitations to the wedding.

### **E**pistles

The epistles are about the wedding preparations. They emphasize the graciousness of the Bridegroom, and the Bride's need to become a servant like Him.

### **R**evelation

The Revelation proclaims the marriage of the Lamb and its necessary antecedents in human history. At last the victorious Bridegroom and the ruling Bride are fully revealed.

## Want To Continue Learning About This Topic?

Here are some recommended resources:

### A Few Books

**Note: There are many ancient writings on the bride of Christ, as well as some contemporary *technical* works. Here we list only a few contemporary and accessible works. Inclusion of a book in this list does not imply complete endorsement of a work's contents by Roderick Graciano or Timothy Ministries.**

Calhoun, Rhonda. *The Bride of Christ: An Allegory Based On The Song Of Solomon*, 3rd Edition, (Grandview, MO: Heart Publishing, 2006).

— *The Bride of Christ* (Study Manual), (Grandview, MO: Heart Publishing, 2005). In this manual, along with her interpretation of the Song of Songs, Calhoun has correctly identified a good many scriptural passages with nuptial connotations that we have too often read with insufficient attention. The final section of her manual describes the parallels between Jewish betrothal customs and our covenant with Christ; this section is helpful but lacks source information for verifying the accuracy of the customs she describes.

Edwards, Gene. *The Divine Romance*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1984, 1992).

Gage, Warren Austin. *The Romance of Redemption: Biblical Types of the Bride of Christ*, (Fort Lauderdale: St. Andrews House, 2014).

Pitre, Brant. *Jesus The Bridegroom: The Greatest Love Story Ever Told*, (New York: Image, 2014). A Roman Catholic perspective, but includes some good insights.

Villeneuve, André. *Divine Marriage from Eden to the End of Days: Communion with God as Nuptial Mystery in the Story of Salvation*, (Wipf and Stock, 2021).

Viola, Frank. *From Eternity To Here: Rediscovering The Ageless Purpose Of God*, (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009).

### E-mail The Instructor

You may e-mail your questions about this and other biblical topics to Rod Graciano at any time. Write to: [roderick@tmin.org](mailto:roderick@tmin.org).

The creation of the world seems to have been especially for this end, that the eternal Son of God might obtain a spouse towards whom he might fully exercise the infinite benevolence of his nature, and to whom he might, as it were, open and pour forth all that immense fountain of condescension, love, and grace that was in his heart, and that in this way. — Jonathan Edwards, 1746