

**THE WORKS OF
JONATHAN EDWARDS**

SECTION 2

FREEDOM OF THE WILL

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AN ESSAY OF THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL IN GOD AND THE CREATURE.

PART I.

TERMS EXPLAINED (Page 4-12 summarized)

Section 1. Nature of the will.

- i) The “will” is not a metaphysical thing, but rather that by which the mind chooses anything. It is that power or principle of mind which is capable of choosing.
- ii) The matter of choice can be described in the following terms. - refusing choosing, approving disapproving, liking disliking, embracing rejecting, determining and directing, commanding, forbidding etc.
- iii) He refers to Mr. Locke as a philosopher who discusses the difference between will and desire. Will is that which makes a choice between things present and absent, while desire is focused on that which is absent. A man however never desires that which is contrary to his will.
- iv) However it must be clearly understood that in every act of the will there is a choice, that in every act there is a preference according to the inclination of the soul.

Section 2. Determination of the will.

- i) By the word determining of the will, Edwards refers to the cause within the will that leads to a certain result.
- ii) The will therefore “is a cause that acts and produces effects upon itself and is the object of its own influence and action” (pg 5)
- iii) The strongest motive determines the will. i.e. :- the motive is the primary cause, which determines the mind and will to act thus cause the desired effect.
- iv) By motive, Edwards explains that it involves the whole of that which understands and reasons, and that invites the mind to move. - the motive is the cause, which moves the mind to cause the action and the desired result.
- v) However there might be several motives which would seek to influence the will, but the most excitable, with the most perception

is likely to be the stronger motive to which the will is likely to surrender to.

- vi) The stronger motive is however consisting of a perception of that which is “good” in the circumstances or influences of the choice to which the will is faced. It is with this apparent understanding that it is able to gain strength over the “weaker” motive. The Will, always acts towards that which it perceives to be good.

- a) **Good:-** Not in any means that divine Standard only met by God, but rather that which seems pleasing and agreeable to the individual, but this means it is under the notion of that which suits the mind. This can include isolation and excluding all that is evil or displeasing
- b) **Apparent good:-** This is that which the mind finds the most pleasing within the immediate future, with the direct good in view e.g. The drunkard with a drink in front of him only perceives the apparent good of the drink there and then and not the long term effect of bad that happens.
- c) **“Therefore the will is determined by the greatest apparent good.” (pg 6)**

Voluntary action which is the immediate consequence of the mind choice is determined by that which appears most agreeable than the choice itself. There are three things that influence this whole process..

- i) the object i.e. the choice itself
 - i) the mind the state and circumstances as it views
 - 2) the manner in which the mind looks at the above.
- a) What makes the object agreeable to choice
 - i) the apparent nature
 - its looks - is it aesthetically pleasing or not
 - its immediate consequences - does the object bring pleasure or trouble.
 - ii) the state of the object - this has to do with time in which the consequence comes or durability.
- b) the state of the mind - the choice: The connection, between the mind, the object and the choice.
 - i) As the mind is wanting that which will bring future happiness, the mind will seek to

- ascertain whether or not the object will bring a certain happiness - not an uncertain one
- ii) Secondly the more the mind understands the object the more the motive for choosing the object is.
- iii) The persons temperament - established through education, example, custom or some other means. This means that one object might seem totally desirable by one person but because of the next ones customs and traditions, it would bring total unhappiness therefore is totally undesirable.

CONCLUSION

Basically, we do what we please; we each view each and every choice with one essential thing: will it bring us pleasure? The choice is influenced by the temporal beauty of the choice and the time in which the consequence will be released, this pertaining to the object of choice whilst within our own minds we are influenced by our temperaments demanding a certain happiness and one that we understand.

SECTION 3.

1. The meaning of Necessity:-

Necessity overcomes the power of the will.

It is an action that is carried out, and we cannot help ourselves, i.e. biological functions.

2. The meaning of Impossible:-

“Impossible” is a relative term meaning the supposed power needed to bring a thing to pass which is inaccessible.

3. The meaning of Inability:-

We are said to be unable to do a thing when our supposed desires and endeavours are insufficient.

4. The meaning of Irresistible:-

This is when all that overcomes all opposition and resistance and the opposite to what is really desired is carried out.

Edwards seeks to show that necessity is not inconsistent with liberty. He wants to show that all we do despite ourselves is totally consistent with freedom even though it is almost forced upon us and we have not out of free choice sought to carry out the action.

- a. **Necessity for existence:-**
Many things have necessary items which are in their own nature necessary. i.e. God's infinity or $2 \times 2 = 4$ and other such things. (**All that is necessary is absolute truth**).
- b. **Existence is Necessary:-**
All that has already come to pass is necessary therefore, it is considered truth, therefore it existed therefore necessary.
- c. **Consequence is necessary:-**
The reality of this is that all that has come to pass has caused an effect and thus the consequence is necessary.

CONCLUSION:- Showing from these three very brief summaries of what I think Edwards is trying to explain:- "Necessity" when nothing that can be taken into consideration, in or about a person, thing, time alters the case at all, as to the certainty of an event or the existence of a thing, or can be of any account at all, in determining the infallibility of the connection of the subject and predicate in the proposition which affirms the existence of the thing.

SECTION 4. The Distinction between natural and moral Necessity and Inability.

- a. **Moral Necessity:-**
This term is used when a man/woman needs to act in accordance to moral duty or what he is interested in. This moral interest should however be that which is absolutely certain of, rather than a probability.
- b. **Natural Necessity:-**
This is that which a man reacts to other than moral duties, but rather the circumstances of natural causes: - i.e. he feels pain when the body is wounded; their reflexes are stimulated by light, heat, cold etc.
- c. **Moral Inability:-**
This is when the nature and the state of mind and temperament of a person make him unable to carry out an action no matter how much he may want to. e.g. A kind loving child will find himself morally unable to kill his Father.
- d. **Natural Inability:-**
This is whereby the state of mind, desire and choice etc., are all in favour of a certain preferred action and yet due to physical, temporal, or other circumstances beyond themselves are unable to achieve or will that which they desire.

SECTION 5. LIBERTY AND MORAL AGENCY.

a. Freedom and Liberty -

the power and opportunity to do as you please. Only that which have a “will” has the ability to exercise freedom. - The opposite of freedom is constraint, force, compulsion, co-action, and restraint.

But - the term as used by the Armenians and all those who appose the Calvinists has differing meanings.

- i) Freedom - “consists of a self determining power in the will, or a certain sovereignty f the Will has over itself and its own acts”.
- ii) “Indifference belongs to liberty”
- iii) Contingence - “all that is, is all that is opposed to Necessity, or any fixed and certain connection with some previous ground or reason”

b. Moral Agent:

We are agents of the moral faculty in us, meaning that we are capable of good and evil. Our motive to good is influenced, by the praise or reward we will receive. Our moral faculty if governed by a choice, guided by understanding or with a capacity of reasoning and reflection - thus makes us moral agents, differing from the sun and which does good or a fire which can kill or destroy.

God is the supreme moral Agent and all His moral faculties are perfect. He, unlike his creatures is the ruler

- moral agent whilst the subjects can only carry out moral actions and knowledge is received and made known to them.

PART 11: THE INCONSISTANCE OF ARMINIAN LIBERTY.

SECTION 1 : The Armenian view of free will.

1. Self determining power in the will - “ the will itself determines all the free acts of the will” - the “will” is also considered the soul, therefore the soul exercises the power of willing or acting voluntarily. The soul alone chooses the choice, it determines its own choice and then makes a decision upon that.

SUMMARY:- In order for the soul to act as the Armenians should determine freedom is total liberty of all external influence to the soul. The soul is therefore completely independent and alone in existence and this is freedom and it is only then in this individual state is the soul “free” to deliver in itself the choice it has to make.

SECTION 11 : Several supposed ways of avoiding reasoning.

1. There is always an act of the will that proceeds the act of the will.
2. Choice, itself chooses the will to choose . (Therefore the act of choosing has its own power.
3. The soul therefore, is the cause and effect of all actions and this is highly improbable, as this determines the sovereignty of the will.
 - BUT WHAT IS THAT WHICH CAUSES THE SOUL TO DESIRE A CHOICE AND THEN TO CHOOSE OR DETERMINE THE ACTION TO BE TAKEN. (Ref pg 15)
 - BUT SECONDLY WHAT IS IT THAT THEN DIRECTS THE SOUL TO DESIRE A PREFERRED ACTION OVER AND ABOVE ANOTHER IF THE SOUL
 - CHOOSES ITS OWN CHOICE
 - IS TOTALLY FREE FROM ANY EXTERNAL INFLUENCE.

Thus the Armenians claim that freedom - allows that effects (action) happens without a cause (This cannot be as we, the soul, inhabits the world and is influenced by the world)

SECTION 111 : Can any event whatever, and addition in particular come to pass without a cause of its existence.

1. **Edwards definition of “Cause”:** Cause is often used to “signify only that which has a “positive” influence to produce a thing, or bring it to pass. This can include any natural or moral, positive or negative (different from the above positive i.e.:- good or bad thing, present or absent) that brings about a consequence of whatever sort.
 - Cause is essential to all things existing except for God - but God is the cause of all other things (**Rom 1:20**) If we ignore the cause and effect rule in the actions of the freewill, then we must ignore knowledge that has been revealed to us in nature and creation by God - or that God exists at all. We cannot know things without something causing us to perceive them :- no choice can be made.

Although the will, which exists in man alone is caused by the glorious act of God and therefore we cannot suppose that the “will” acts any differently to the whole of creation which ruled by cause and effect has come into being through God. That is even the creation of the will was through cause and effect, how can it then act independently of this rule.

SECTION 1V: Can volition arise without a cause through the activity of the nature of the soul.

- The soul is the resultant of cause (Presupposition)
1. The first objection that Edwards makes towards the Armenians is that towards the way they deal with the argument: instead of the question: how an event can come to pass without a sufficient reason why it is, the Armenians sought to answer the question “What is a sufficient reason why it is and why it is in this manner rather than the other”. This assumes that the problem of events happening has been solved, but Edwards’s shows that their argument is not congruent, leaving out a whole section in their argument. The answer to the problem (question 2) as the person’s active being is determination as being the cause.
 2. The second objection “How a spirit enslaved with negativity comes to act, and why such an act and not another”. The reasons given are:-
 - a) General things re: nature
 - b) Particular acts and this is vital for the soul to determine a cause or choice. (In other words the Armenians are saying that there are causes to the soul’s violation).

3. The third objection: No effect is brought about by his activity, but rather the effect is the consequence of the activity. In other words he is trying to establish that each part of the will, the determination, the choice, the action, are independent from each other, are free agents, so that the soul can be totally free.
4. Objection four: The Armenians state that the soul acts the same way all the time in freedom, but then it is not free but conformed and restrained because it is unable to vary, however, choice is not an option.
5. Objection five: There are three characteristics that are given to cause:
 - a) Designing cause:- This is a quality of the mind which enables it to design its own effects as a result of its own design.
 - b) Elective cause:- This is more to do with choice or that which the will elects to do which will produce an effect.
 - c) Active cause:- Enables it to produce effects in consequence of its own acts, but cannot enable it to determine the cause of all its own actions.

Edwards sees the problem here as there is always a cause needed, one to bring the “design” into being and then one to bring the “elective” cause and the result of that is the active cause. This makes the argument not only incongruent but inconsistent with their own presupposition previously stated that the soul is the originator of all violations, therefore the cause of all choice and choosing to be done.

SECTION V.

Dr Whitley acknowledges these inconsistencies as he refers to the external influences that may affect the soul, but his point is that the soul still has the power to will into being a choice or not and it is that power alone which makes him free. Edwards claims that the argument is then useless because the choice alone to be influenced or not by the exterior influence is the cause of the souls volition. And that it is not “free”. But directed by the sovereignty of God. The liberty is detained and gained by the power that the will has to choose.

SECTION VI. “Indifference”

Here Edwards quotes a great deal of the Armenian’s works. concerning the will, action, and soul.

From “**Essays on the freedom of the will**”

“There are times when the will is determined neither by uneasiness or good nor understanding, nor ignorance but merely by itself”.

- therefore, there is no motive at all and no grounds for preference
- how then does the will decide?

“The will may be perfectly indifferent and yet the will may determine itself to choose one or the other (pg 36 Freedom of the will - Whitley) “I am entirely indifferent to either and yet my will may determine itself and choose. This he calls the act of the will. Choice then has its own design, independent of your souls.

SECTION V11 --- X

Edwards focuses more on the Armenian’s point of view and their inconsistency

Dr Samuel Clark: - Argues from his text “Demonstration of the Being and Attributes Of God” that there is no connection between nature and the determining and understanding of the will, therefore actions are completely independent.

Mr. Chubb however contradicting the Armenian rule has shown that it is motive which act as a bias on the will. He speaks of it as the ground or reason of the exertion of an act of the will... and how the influence that the motive has on the man for the production of an action the will follows the strongest motive or prevailing motive.

Thus he on the side of the Armenians has shown the inconsistency, that the will is not totally free, but rather is influenced by motives.

SECTION X1 - X11 The foreknowledge of God and our Acts of “free will”

Edwards goes about to prove certain things:-

1. That God has an absolute and certain foreknowledge of the free actions of moral agents.

In this section, he discusses the Armenians and the Calvinists point of view.

The evidence of God’s absolute and certain knowledge

ARGUMENT 1

- a) If God does not fore-know, He cannot foretell. That all God is doing is primary guess work

- b) If God does not foreknow the volitions of moral agents (us) then he cannot foretell and organize the events that determine these decisions and the Bible has well enough proof of all the artful actions that man would make and the directives that God would have to take.
- c) Unless God pre-knows the entire acts of Moral Agents all the prophecies about the anti Christ and the end times are uttered without knowing these things for certain.
- d) Likewise if God does not know the future acts of Moral Agents the prophecies of the establishment of the Universal Kingdom Messiah are null and void.
- e) This follows that prophecies in general are without fore knowledge.

ARGUMENT 2.

If God has no foreknowledge, then He was surprised by the fall of man and by the angels fall, and did not know the subsequent events namely the marvelous ones about the Son of Man seeking to die to save man from sin. He also did not know the saints and was surprised by their obedience to Him.

ARGUMENT 3.

This also follows that if God is ignorant of all such volitions of Moral Agents then it is God who should repent of what He has done and the events that have taken place.

ARGUMENT 4

God should also be continuously repenting because apparently the way events happens, it appears that God is continuously changing his mind.

ARGUMENT 5

If God had no future knowledge of man's choices, then after the fall it would be clear that God was liable to be frustrated of His end in creation.

Further more, the world and everything in it are likely to go wrong more until it self-destructs. Edwards shows that if the Bible is true and that God is good, then we have to conclude following these arguments that God does know all actions, and volitions and seeks to restore and secure the world, but it does not stop Him being disappointed in the volitions of mankind.

5. A Necessity of connection or consequence.

The Armenians: Claim that if such foreknowledge be allowed, it is no evidence of any necessity of the event foreknown. But if x leads to y then y's existence makes x necessary and here x is necessary, therefore y is necessary

The Calvinists: concerning the absolute decrees of God - with all His knowledge and the necessity of things does not infer any more fatality in things.

SECTION X111: Summary

Every act of the will has a cause. The will is not active in causing or determining, but purely the passive subject; at least, according to their notion of action and passion. But the causes are design and not chance. Chance is always that which is done without design, but God is the one who orders the world and keeps it going.

PART 111.

SECTION 1 God's moral excellence necessary, yet virtuous and praiseworthy.

The Armenians say that freedom is necessary for us to be blamed for sin. That we are moral agents responsible to God for our actions, Gods designs are necessary and conform to His Holiness. He is Holy and all His ways are good, therefore deserves all our praise. He then focuses on the Armenians and Calvinists "Armenians suppose that God is necessary a good and gracious Being for this they make the ground of some of their main arguments against many doctrines maintained by Calvinists; they say these are certainly false and it is impossible they should be true, because they are not consistent with the goodness of God.

SECTION 11. The acts of the Will of the human soul of Christ necessarily holy.

In this Edwards seeks to show that Jesus in his actions was holy, but that it was necessary:-

- a) God upheld him by his Holy Spirit through all his temptations; therefore, the cause of his sinlessness was the Holiness of the Spirit.
- b) To fulfill all the Messianic Prophecies, God's absolute promise makes the things promised necessary and their failing to take place absolutely impossible.

So the question that Edwards sought to answer was. Did Jesus ever have the freedom to choose to give in to temptation? Because he was a Moral Agent and responsible for his actions? Yes ! But Because of the necessary design and the Holy Spirit and the prophecies he could “freely” choose to do what was right, but they were necessary for him to succeed to that choice.

SECTION 111:

The Armenian’s claim that there is a sinful bias on their will and therefore cannot be blamed for sin, because as the difficulty is increased i.e. to do right so much, the less in required and expected and it is easier to do bad than good. To quote Dr. Whitley “Who can blame a person for doing what he could not help “(pg 14). But this should make it even more clearer of the inability to choose themselves and that the work of Salvation is done by God alone.

PART IV.

The Armenians reckon it is not us, in ourselves that are evil or sinful, but that which tempts us. It is the cause that is evil not your nature, but this is inconsistent as the Armenians show that the will itself chooses the choice. As with goodness, that is within the decisions we choose what ever is good for us, therefore goodness is within us. Secondly with this whole thing of “necessity” reason which causes us to choose what is ‘good’ should not make the blame be ours.

While Calvinists oppose the Armenian notion of the Freedom of Will and of volition and insist that there are no acts of the Will, nor any other acts what so ever, but what are necessity. The Armenians deny the original, innate, total corruption and depravity of the heart, and hold that man has the ability to make himself holy without conformed to God. Furthermore, the Armenian Mr. Hobbes concerning original sin, denies the necessity of supernatural illumination for man to realize to choose greed or decide to choose good, but rather it is totally within themselves to realize and know that.

But God’s Divine Will is necessary. God’s will is totally free but controlled and delivered by supreme wisdom and if this were not so God’s will would be liable to undesigned contingency even evil. God allows and determines every cause to make the Moral Agents react that would seek in the end to fulfill His purposes and plans. GOD, HOWEVER IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF SIN, but it was His design that the tree of knowledge of good and evil was there and by His divine and sovereign foreknowledge he knew the woman’s response. God foreknows sins and those who will sin but that does not make him the author of it (Illustration: The sun is the source of light and warmth but even though it might be present, there is still cold and darkness. Therefore sun is not the author of cold) God has two wills:-

- a) His perceptive will:- That which He has revealed to man
- b) His decretive will: - That which he secretly plans and designs by which all things in heaven and earth work together for His glory. Men, however do will sin as sin, and so are the authors of sin and for evil ends and purposes. God does not will sin as sin or for the salvation of anything evil, though it be his pleasure so to order things that be permitting, sin will come to pass for the sake of the great good, that by His disposal shall be the consequence. He might order things that evil would come to pass for the sake of the final good

CONCLUSION:

It is easy to see how the main problem between Armenians and Calvinists depends on the determination of the free will as a requisite to Moral Agency. Basically man is a Moral Agent and responsible for the actions and decisions he takes. Man is not “free” i.e. he can do whatever he likes with no responsibility or accountability to anyone. Rather we are all answerable to God who determines everything but is not the author of sin.

APPENDIX:

Liberty is the power, opportunity or advantage that anyone has to do as he pleases, in any respect according to his pleasure, without considering how his pleasure comes to be as it is.

Liberty therefore not extending to choosing as I please or acting as I please but rather considering the cause of it, the will acts, therefore liberty is also not indifference. Freedom is only there when there is knowledge God is free - bound only by His Character that is Holy.