

An Antidote against Arminianism

by

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Of Free-will in the Fallen State, and of Effectual Vocation or Conversion to God

The Arminians not only deny election to be an eternal, peculiar, unconditional, and irreversible act of God; and assert that:

- Christ died equally and indiscriminately for every individual of mankind; for them that perish no less than for them that are saved;
- but they also aver that saving grace is tendered to the acceptance of every man; which he may or may not receive, just as he pleases.
- That the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit in conversion is not invincible but is suspended, or depends for its efficacy on the will of man.
- That notwithstanding Christ's death, it was possible (in respect of free-will) that all should perish; that now, by His death for all, true grace is given to all; which they may improve, hold fast, and be saved; or despise, neglect, cast away, and be lost!
- The will of man is naturally a self-determining power and principle, but hath since the Fall the strong bias of sin upon it.
- Freedom is radically and originally in the will, not in the understanding; and it is an essential property of it, that it cannot be compelled by any created external agent, in its own free choice.

Now it is no wonder, if many mistakes arise about this great engine of the Almighty, since the soul knows not itself but by reflection; and though we know its qualities and operations, yet we know not its essence. Man is considered in a fourfold state:

- The state of creation, therein he had free will either to good or evil, but was necessitated to neither.
- The state of degeneration, wherein he is a servant to sin, and necessitated to evil.

- The state of regeneration, wherein he is freed from the slavery and dominion of sin, and from the love of sin, though not at present, from the inbred corruption and in being of it.
- The state of glorification, wherein man is both freely and necessarily good, perfect, and happy.

In the first estate, man is free; in the second, a slave; in the third, set free; and in the fourth, having a glorious liberty. The controversy is concerning the second state, wherein we say, that man is under a necessity of sinning, yet free from coercion; he is free to evil, but not to good; which appears by the following arguments:

1. **That there is no free will to good in the fallen estate** is proved from the Fall itself; if man, in the Fall, lost his free-will to good, then it cannot be found in the fallen estate. The Fall implies the loss of that original righteousness and perfection wherein man was created. If the other faculties of the soul became depraved, and were stripped of their primitive luster by the Fall, then must the will also be a sharer in that depravation. Now the depravity of the will is proved by considering the good it hath lost, and the evil it hath gained, through Adam's sin. The good it has lost is sixfold:
 - power
 - order
 - stability
 - prudence
 - obedience
 - liberty

The evil it hath gained is a threefold rebellion:

- Against the counsel of the mind.
- Against the controls of conscience.
- Against the commands of God.

This king of the Isle of Man (the will), when he come first out of God's mint, was a curious silver-piece, and shone most gloriously; but now, being fallen among thieves, is robbed of all, hath ashes for beauty, and is a tyrant upon a dunghill; yea, is free from righteousness, but a very slave to sin (Rom 6:17-20). Before the Fall, the will had liberty both to good or evil, to do or not to do; but since the Fall, the will is evil, only evil, and continually evil (Gen 6:5). The whole heart now is evil extensively, only evil intensively, and continually evil protensively.

2. **If conversion be a new creation, then fallen man hath not a free-will to good.** A convert is called a "*new creature*," or a "*new creation*" in Gal 6:15, and 2 Cor 5:17. Creation is a production of something out of nothing; but if there be a free-will to do good in man before conversion, then is there something of its own nature spiritually good in unconverted man towards the work of conversion; so can it not be called a new creature. Sure I am every experienced soul finds the contrary in that work; the whole frame is out of frame in the unconverted state and man is a confused chaos, a vast emptiness, when this creating power comes upon him. Yea, a greater power is required to recreate this little world than at first to create the greater; for in this, though there be

no pre-existing good matter, yet is there resisting evil matter. The creation of the great world was the work of God's Word (Ps 33:6); of His fingers (Ps 8:3); or of His hands (Psa 102:25). But to restore (the little world) man, requires God's arm (Luke 1:51); nay, Christ set His sides to it (Luke 22:44); it cost Him tears and agony and blood. New qualities and operations are created in us; the will to will well, and the power to do well, are ascribed to this creating almighty power in the effectual conversion of souls to God. *"It is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure"* (Phil 2:13).

3. **If conversion be a new-begetting, or generation, then fallen man hath no free-will to good.** Generation is the motion to a being, and a proceeding into a being; this presupposes that there is no being before; for we are not, we are nothing before we be begotten; as it holds true in generation, so in regeneration: *"Of His own will begat He us"* (James 1:18). It is not said that God begat us of our wills (yet this should be said were there in us a free-will to good) but of God's will; and till then we are not (1Co 1:28). Unconverted men are nothing creatures.
 - A natural nothing; for what is the great womb whence all things come but nothing?
 - A moral nothing; we are morally worse than nothing, that is miserable; *"Man is vanity,"* or as in Hebrew, Adam is Abel, that is, vanity (Ps 39:5); *"and a lie"* (Ps 62:9). *"The heart of the wicked is little worth"* (Pr 10:20); neither for use nor service; as a shadow is not useful for war, nor a statue for prayer, so fallen man is unfit for the service of God, for his best actions are sin. All this shows we are nothing, and have not a free will to good, till begotten of God.
4. **If conversion be a new birth, then fallen man hath not a free-will to good.** We cannot have a birth of ourselves; a babe cannot be born of itself; nothing can have its original from itself, for it would then be before and after itself; it would be and would not be, at the same time. Thus are we taught to look up above ourselves for our new birth. *"Except a man be born again,"* or from above (John 3:3). We are born, not of the flesh, *"but of the Spirit"* (John 3:6). Our first birth is of the earth, earthy; our second birth is from the Lord, Heavenly; *"Born of God"* (1Jo 3:9).
5. **If conversion be a quickening of one that is dead in sin, then fallen man hath no free-will to good.** This is proved from Eph 2:1: *"You hath He quickened who were dead"* etc. He doth not say half dead, as the man was that fell among thieves (Luke 10:30); but wholly dead, as to spiritual life. There is no manner of good in us (Rom 7:18). And *"we are not sufficient of ourselves to think"* a good thought till Christ quickens us (2Co 3:5). *"Without Him we can do nothing"* (John 15:5).

From Him is our fruit found (Ho 14:8); both the bud of good desires, the blossom of good purposes, and the fruit of good actions. Aaron's rod (a dry stick without a root) is a fit emblem; it budded, blossomed, and brought forth almonds; this was not done by any inward principle or power of nature, but it was solely and wholly the work of God. So Ezekiel's dry bones were made to live; nothing of that life was from themselves, but all

from God. Thus it is in this spiritual life; we can contribute nothing by which to dispose ourselves to will that which is truly good; we cannot so much as call Christ Lord, but by the Spirit (1Co 12:3).

If there be no life, but through union with Christ, then till we be engrafted into that blessed and bleeding vine we cannot bring forth fruit unto God. And it is not any natural power or principle in us that can engraft us into Christ, for faith is the engrafting grace, and that is "*the gift of God*" (Eph 2:8), the grace by which the just live (Hab 2:4), and by which Christ dwells in our hearts (Eph 3:17). Till then we are dead, and have no free-will to good.

6. **If regeneration, or recovery from the state of degeneration, be a resurrection, then fallen man hath no free-will to good.** That regeneration is a resurrection is manifest from the following scriptures: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live*" (John 5:25). "*When we were dead in sins, (He) hath quickened us together with Christ*" and "*hath raised us up*" etc. (Eph 2:5,6).

It requires as much power to raise, quicken, and make alive a sinner dead in trespasses and sins, as to raise Christ from the dead (Eph 1:19,20). To raise up Christ, and to work faith in us, requires "*the exceeding greatness of His power*" (Eph 1:19). Here are three gradations: power, greatness of power, and as if that were too little, the apostle adds, "*according to the working of His mighty power.*" The original words imply not only a working, but an effectual force in working; such strength as in the arms of valiant men who can do great exploits. Nay more, it is beyond all this, it implies a power that can do all things, an omnipotent power.

Surely, had there been an internal principle in us toward this great work, or any free-will in us to good, Paul would not have used those gradations, nor such emphatically, significant expressions. This work of regeneration would not then have required the effectual, forcible power of the valiant arm of God; even such a power as raised up Christ from the dead, by which He was declared to be the Son of God (Rom 1:4).

7. **If moral persuasion be altogether insufficient of itself to recover man from his fallen state, then fallen man hath no free-will to do good.** If moral persuasion could recover man, then faith would be an easy work, and not require such mighty power as has just been proved. Christ did more to the raising of Lazarus than morally persuade him to come out of the grave; when Christ said, "*Lazarus, come forth*" (John 11:43) a mighty power went along with the command, which gave effect thereto. It is not enough to persuade a prisoner to come forth, but his chains must be struck off, and the prison doors must be opened (Ac 12:6,7,10); and man is more than a mere prisoner; he is dead in sin, so must have a quickening grace; which moral persuasion can never accomplish.

8. If Christ be All in all (Col 3:11), in matters of salvation, then man is nothing at all as to that work, and hath not in himself a free-will to good.

- ❖ Christ's work is to bore the ear, which before is stopped like the deaf adder's to the voice of the charmer (Ps 58:4,5). Christ gives the understanding ear; *"He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity"* (Job 36:10). See Ps 40:6, and Isa 50:4, which passages, although spoken of Christ, hold good concerning His people.
- ❖ Christ opens not only the ear, but the heart also (Ac 16:14). The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, not she her own heart; which she might have done had she a free will to good. The key of the heart hangs at Christ's girdle. "He that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (Re 3:7). Moral persuasion will never prove effectual to open the heart of man.
- ❖ Besides Christ there is no Savior (Isa 43:11; Ho 13:4); but free-will Arminianism makes man a co-saviour with Christ; as if there was a halving of it between the grace of Christ and the will of man, and the latter dividing the spoil with the former; yea, deserving the greater share: for if Christ be only a monitor, and persuade to good, then man's own will is the principal author of its own goodness; and he makes himself to differ from others, and hath something, that he received not at conversion, of which to boast before God. *"Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"* (1Co 4:7). Persuasion leaves the admonished will to its own indifferency, not changing it at all; so man becomes his own saviour, at least Christ is not the only Saviour; how then is Christ All in all?

9. If fallen man must be drawn to goodness, then hath he no free-will to good. That moral persuasion will not bring a soul to Christ; that man cannot come himself, but must be drawn, is proved from John 6:44: *"No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him."* Drawing is a bringing of anything out of its course and channel by an influence from without, and not from an innate power or principle from within. In So 1:4, it is not said lead, but "draw;" in drawing there is less will and more power than in leading; and though God draws us strongly, yet He doth it sweetly.

As we are drawn, we have not a free-will to good, else man fell in his understanding only, not in his will; yet are we volunteers (Ps 110:3), a willing people; not that Christ finds us so, but makes us so *"in the day of His power,"* and when He speaks to us with a strong hand (Isa 8:11).

We are naturally haters of God, and at enmity with Him (Rom1: 30; 8:7), but the Spirit gives a new power to the soul, and then acts and influences that power to good; so draws a God-hater to love Him. This is more than a bare persuasion to a stone to be warm, for God takes away the *"heart of stone,"* and gives a *"heart of flesh"* (Ezek 36:26). God the Spirit gives the inclination to come, and the very power of coming to Christ; and Christ finds nothing that is good in us (Rom 7:18).

10. **If the soul of man be passive in effectual calling, then is there in fallen man no free-will to good.** The spirit of grace is compared to precious liquor that is infused; and the called and chosen of God are styled vessels of mercy. "*I will pour upon the house of David . . . the spirit of grace*" etc. (Zech 12:10); "*the vessels of mercy prepared unto glory*" (Rom 9:23).

Now a vessel is a passive receiver of liquor poured into it. "*The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost*" (Rom 5:5); that is, poured out and infused into God's vessels of mercy. The atmosphere is passive when it receives light, and Adam's body was passive when God inspired it with life; though it was formed and organized, yet was it lifeless and breathless (Gen 2:7). So the will of man (in respect of this first reception of grace) hath neither concurrence nor cooperation active; the Lord is alone in that work.

Apart from the influences of Divine grace, it is a very hell to any to be brought from hell; though it be an hell to us to stay after God hath opened our eyes and changed our hearts. Corrupt nature neither can nor will contribute anything to destroy its own corruptions. In the first work, the will moveth not itself, but is moved by God.

The will, as a creature, must obey its Creator; yet as a sinful depraved will, it obeys not willingly till "*made willing*" (Ps 110:3). Man, and the will of man, while in an unregenerate state, may be compared to the tied-up colt in Mark 11:2 (tied and bound with sin's chain), but when "*the Lord hath need of him,*" and the "*day of His power*" is come, the sinner must then be loosed and let go.

11. **To deny grace, irresistible, special grace in conversion, is abominable; and the doctrine of free will is a denial of this.** The advocates for free-will say,

*"If a man improves his naturals,
God is bound to give him spirituals."*

What is this but turning grace into debt?

And to say that the reason why one believes and another does not arises from the co-operation of the free-will of him that believeth, is to deny special irresistible grace as peculiar to the elect. All which is contrary to these scriptures: John 6:37,45; Rom 8:14; 1Co 1:23,24; 1Jo 4:13, and very many others.

God's dispensations towards His people are all of free grace. He quickens whom He will (John 5:21). The heart of one sinner is caused to melt as wax before the fire and receive God's seal, while the heart of another remains as immovable as marble, and as the rock that cannot be shaken; this is the work of God's gracious dispensation. "*He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth*" (Rom 9:18).

The Spirit blows where it listeth (John 3:8). God may drop in grace, even with the first breathings of life, and regenerate a babe as soon as it be brought forth; as John Baptist, who was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). And others He may cast into the womb of the new birth when in the very act of dropping out of the world, at the eleventh, yea, at the twelfth hour, as the thief on the cross. Oh, who can order the ways of grace, and set bounds to the spirit of God in its breathings on man!

12. Free will brings with it so many absurdities that it cannot be received.

- It makes man the cause of his own salvation.
- It puts grace into man's power, not man's will under the power of grace.
- It robs God of the honor of making one to differ from another, and ascribes it to man.
- It allows man a liberty of boasting to God, saying, *"God, I thank Thee that Thou gavest me power to will (yet Thou gavest that to Judas as well as me), but I thank myself for the act of willingness, since I receive from Thee no more than Judas did."*
- It exempts the creature from the power of God, as if man, spider-like, could spin a thread out of his own bowels whereon to climb to Heaven.
- It maketh man the cause why God willeth this or that; so God must attend on the will of man, and not be infallible in His decrees, nor working all things according to the counsel of His own will (Eph 1:11 Ps 115:3). Then the apostle James lied in saying *"every good gift"* is from God (James 1:17); and Paul also was mistaken in Rom 9:11. He should have said, *"It is of man that willeth and runneth,"* and not, *"Of God that showeth mercy."*

Objections in Favor of Free-Will Answered

➤ **Objection.**

There is a law written in the hearts of fallen mankind (Rom 2:15).

Answer.

1. This is conscience bearing witness of right and wrong (see the same verse, Rom 2:15).
2. Impotency is in the will. Adam begat a son "*in his own image*" (Gen 5:3), not only as a man, but a sinner. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one" (Job 14:4). While we are Christless we are without strength (Rom 5:6).
3. The devils have more light than men, yet are they altogether dead in sin, though they believe and tremble (James 2:19), and though they confess Christ (Luke 4:34; Mark 1:24). They sin freely, yet cannot avoid it, but must sin.

➤ **Objection.** Why is man blamed for resisting the Spirit, if there is no free-will (Ac 7:51; Matt 23:37).

Answer

1. They resisted the preaching of the Gospel (which is the outward means of grace) by persecuting the ministers of it. The word "*resist*" in that passage of Scripture signifies a rushing against, and falling upon in a rude and hostile manner, and fitly expresses their ill-treatment of Christ and His ministers by falling upon them and putting them to death. That is the resistance here particularly designed; see also Ac 7:52. The inward work of the Spirit cannot be resisted; as the creature can neither hinder nor further his own creation, nor the dead their own resurrection, so neither can fallen man hinder or further his conversion.
2. Matt 23:37. This scripture, so common in the mouths and so frequently found in the writings of Arminians, so readily produced by them on almost every occasion against the doctrines of grace -- this scripture, taken in its context, will advantage them nothing. "*How often would I have gathered,*" etc., "*but ye would not.*"

This gathering does not design a gathering of Jews to Christ internally, by the Spirit and grace of God; but a gathering of them externally, to hear Him preach, so that they might be brought to an assent unto Him as the Messiah. This reception of Christ would not have been saving faith, but it would have preserved them from that temporal ruin threatened in the following verse (Matt 23:38).

This scripture therefore, as Ac 7:51, only respects a resistance to Christ's outward ministry. Jerusalem, i.e., her rulers, received Him not (John 7:48), therefore their house is to be desolated (Matt 23:38); the city is one thing and her children another. Here is temporal destruction threatened for neglecting temporal visitations (Luke

19:44). Nationally considered, Jerusalem would have been preserved in its peace had the people, upon the rational opportunity afforded them for receiving the Messiah, accepted Christ under that character.

➤ **Objection.**

Why doth God say, "*What could I do more to My vineyard?*" (Isa 5:4).

Answer

1. This is not spoken of grace, that God gives to particular men peculiarly; but of great things done for Israel as a nation (Ps 147:19-20). God dealt not so with other nations. "*These words are part of a parable, representing the state and condition of the people of the Jews; and the design of it is to show the ingratitude of the Jews in the midst of many favors bestowed on them, and the patience and long-suffering of God towards them, and to vindicate His justice in their ruin as a nation*" (Dr. John Gill).
2. God did enough in making man upright, and if he hath lost his uprightness, he must thank himself, and not blame God, who is not bound to restore it. Grace is the Lord's own; he giveth it to whom He will.

➤ **Objection.** Man is a rational creature; his will cannot be determined by anything from without, it being a self-determining principle.

Answer

1. Irresistible grace takes not away that natural liberty which the will hath by creation, but the depravity of it only; knocking off its fetters, but not destroying its nature. We never enjoy our will so much as when God's will overrules ours. If man can determine his own will, and destroy the liberty of it, then much more God who is the maker of it.
2. To will is from nature, to will well is from grace; spiritual fruit must spring from a spiritual root.

*"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God hath given,
Not will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to Heaven.*

*The sovereign will of God alone,
Creates us heirs of grace;
Both in the image of His Son,
A new peculiar race.*

*Thus quicken'd souls awake and rise
From the long sleep of death;
On Heavenly things they fix their eyes,
And praise employs their breath."*