

Freedom of the Will

By Jonathan Edwards

Glossary

Will – that by which the mind chooses anything

Act of the Will – an act of choosing

Will – applies to things present and absent

Desire – applies to things absent

The Will is determined when its choice is directed to, and fixed upon a particular object, action, or act

Motive – that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition (i.e. choice and action)

Strongest Motive – that which appears most inviting and has the greatest degree of previous tendency

Good – whatever is perceived or apprehended which has the nature and influence of a motive to volition or choice. *“The will is as the greatest apparent good is.”* (“Good” = agreeable)

Things that have a hand in rendering an object positively agreeable or negatively disagreeable:

1. Is it beautiful or irksome?
2. Will it bring me pleasure or trouble in the near-term?
3. Will it bring me pleasure or trouble in the farther out term?
4. Manner of view – Is it certain to occur or not? (i.e. probability)
5. Temper - The individual person’s state of mind which he has due to his innate nature, or through education, custom, examples he has observed, or other means
6. Reason

Arminian notion of “Liberty” (which Edwards disagrees with)

1. Self-determining power in the will
2. Indifference = the mind being in equilibrium
3. Contingency of the will (i.e. no necessity to choose or act one way rather than another)

Moral Agent – being capable of those actions which are of a moral quality (i.e. “good” or “evil” in a moral sense); also having a “moral faculty” (i.e. a knowledge or sense of moral “good” and “evil”)

Necessary – when a thing must be, and cannot be otherwise; it is impossible that it should not be

Philosophic Necessity – things necessary in their own nature (i.e. $2+2=4$), things that have already come to pass, or things that are necessary due to something else making them a certain consequence

Natural Necessity – something that is necessary through a force of natural (i.e. nature) causes, such as gravity

General Necessity – in the most general view of things, it must occur

Particular Necessity – something being necessary “at that specific time”

Contingent – something which has absolutely no previous ground or reason, nor with which its existence has any fixed and certain connection

Moral Necessity – that necessity of connection and consequence which arises from moral causes

Natural Necessity – that necessity as men are under through the forces of natural causes

Natural Inability – when we cannot do a thing if we will because nature will not allow it (e.g. we cannot fly)

Moral inability – because of want of inclination, or the strength of contrary inclination, or the want of sufficient motives to induce or excite the act of the will

General and Habitual Moral Inability – inability in the heart to all acts of will of the nature or kind through positive or negative inclination

Particular and Occasional Moral Inability – inability of the will to a particular act on that occasion through positive or negative inclinations or motives

Freedom & Liberty – power or opportunity to do as one pleases

Constraint – a person being necessitated to do a thing contrary to his will

Restraint – not having the power to do according to one's will