

The reason for the use of the subjunctive in the objective clause obviously does not exist after verbs of affirming and the like, as *Dicam quod sentio*. This may, indeed, be regarded as an attributive use of the verb.

The foregoing illustrations will suffice to explain the meaning and application of the principle we have proposed. This is our object in adducing them, and not to extend the induction, so far as might be thought necessary in order to establish, beyond doubt, the correctness of the view we have taken.

ARTICLE IV.

THE CONSISTENCY OF THE ETERNAL PURPOSES OF GOD WITH THE FREE AGENCY OF MEN.

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ONE of the most plausible objections ever urged against the doctrine of God's eternal purposes, is its alleged inconsistency with man's freedom of action. As this objection is, probably, more frequently advanced and more sensibly felt than any other, it may not be amiss to give it a careful examination. And it may be proper to remark at the outset, that the objection lies with as much force against the government and overruling agency of God, as against the doctrine of his eternal purposes. I would then ask those who object to the doctrine of the divine decrees on the supposed ground, that it is inconsistent with the free agency of man: do you believe that God reigns in the natural and moral world—that he does all his pleasure in the armies of heaven above and among the inhabitants of this lower world? If not, you have dethroned the monarch of the universe. You have taken from him his sceptre and driven him from his kingdom. You are, to all intents and purposes, an atheist. You do not believe in the existence of a perfect moral Governor of the world. And the first question to be discussed with you must be,—not, has God from eternity formed a perfect plan of government? has he foreordained whatsoever comes to pass?—but, is there a perfect God who reigns on the throne of the universe? But if, on the other hand, you admit this truth, if you admit that God does

reign and govern the universe, doing his pleasure in heaven and upon the earth, then I would ask: do you believe that this government of God is consistent with man's free moral agency? If you say, "No," then you cannot believe in man's free moral agency. You have therefore no right to offer, as an objection to the divine decrees, the supposed fact that they are inconsistent with man's free moral agency. You do not believe that man is a free moral agent. And if he is not, then the doctrine of the divine decrees may be true, even though it be inconsistent with the free agency of man. It is only inconsistent with a falsehood (i. e. with what you believe to be a falsehood), and may therefore well be true, for truth is inconsistent with falsehood. Instead therefore of bringing objections against the doctrine of the divine decrees, you ought to receive it as truth. But if, on the other hand, you say, "Yes," then I would ask you to reconcile your belief in God's universal government and overruling agency with your belief in man's free moral agency. And when you have gone through with the work and wrought out the problem, you may, by the very same process, demonstrate the consistency of God's decrees with man's freedom of action. If God governs the world he certainly *chooses* to do it. He chooses to perform what he does perform. And now, if you suppose this choice to have been *eternal*, you have the doctrine of the divine purposes or decrees, for all that is meant by this doctrine is, that God in eternity purposed to perform all that he actually does perform in time. And if God may *perform* what he does perform and man still be free, then he may *purpose*—and he may *eternally* purpose to perform what he does perform, and man still be free. The great difficulty, in fact the whole difficulty on this subject, lies in the work of reconciling God's agency with man's agency. And you admit that God rules throughout the universe and does all his pleasure. And you admit, too, man's freedom of action. You must therefore, and you do, admit the consistency of God's agency with man's free agency. If the two things are facts, as you believe, they must, of course, be consistent with each other. And when you have shown *how* they are consistent, you have solved the problem of the consistency of God's purposes with human freedom; for man's freedom, if infringed on in any way, is infringed on, not by what God *purposes*, but by what he *does*. If then you have relieved your own system from embarrassment on this point, you have relieved ours also. If you have ascertained how God may *do* all that he does do and man still be free, you have also ascertained

how he may purpose—and *eternally* purpose to do all he does do and man still be free. If you have not as yet seen *how* these two parts of your own system harmonize with each other,—if you say they are both truths, but still there is something dark about them, something a little mysterious, something which you do not fully understand, that you believe they *are* consistent, though you cannot precisely see *how* they are so, then I say, you ought not to ask us to do your work for you, and relieve your system from a difficulty which you are not able yourselves to remove, or to shed light on a point in your system which you admit is enveloped in darkness. Yet in asking us to remove the darkness which you think rests on this point in our system, you do ask us also to remove that which you admit rests on the same point in your own. Is this reasonable? Is it reasonable to bring against the doctrine of the divine purposes an objection which lies with equal or greater force against the truth of the divine government, a truth which you fully admit? If, notwithstanding this objection, you believe in the fact of the divine government, may you not also believe in the doctrine of the divine decrees? If the darkness which rests on one point in your own system is no bar to your believing your system, then surely the same darkness—for the darkness is no denser in our system than in yours—the same darkness, on the same point in our system, can be no bar to your believing our system. Is it not thus plainly evident, that those who believe in the government and overruling agency of God, cannot consistently object to the doctrine of the divine decrees on the ground that the doctrine is inconsistent with the free moral agency of man?

But though they cannot *consistently* make this objection, still they and others *do* make it. It may be well therefore to ask whether they have any good reason for making it. If they say that the doctrine of the divine decrees is inconsistent with man's free moral agency, it would seem as though they must have some good evidence of this inconsistency. It has been so long and so often asserted that an inconsistency does exist between the two, that it would seem as though somebody must have ascertained precisely where this inconsistency lies and be able to point it out to others. Yet, strange as it may appear, this has never been done. The existence of an inconsistency somewhere between the two, has been reiterated again and again, but when the inquiry has been made: "*where* is the inconsistency? let us see it, point it out to us and show us precisely where it lies;" no one has been able to put his finger on it or tell exactly where it is to

be found. All the answer we can get from the objector is, "Why, there must be an inconsistency somewhere, I *feel* that there is one. If God has foreordained man's actions, man *cannot* be free." But *why*, we ask, can he not be free? And the answer is, "I cannot exactly tell *why*, but I feel that he cannot be free. It is a dark metaphysical subject, and I cannot tell precisely *where* the inconsistency is, but I have no more doubt that there is one than I have that I am alive." Now is it not a very strange, a very suspicious circumstance, that no one has ever been able to tell where this inconsistency lies and point it out to others? When its existence has been so often and so long asserted, does not the fact that no one has yet been able to ferret it out of its secret lurking place and bring it clearly into view, cast ominous conjecture on its reality of being? What should we think of the man who should tell us he was troubled with a severe pain, but he could not say precisely where the pain was. He rather thought it was in his head, but still it might be in his feet. At any rate he was certain that he had a severe pain somewhere, though he could not always really feel it, or tell precisely where it was. Should we in such a case be very unreasonable if we had some faint doubts whether there might not, after all, be a mistake as to the real existence of the pain. And when no one can tell where the inconsistency between God's purposes and man's freedom lies, have we not some reason to question whether there be any? A *man* may purpose to regulate in various particulars the conduct of a child, and may actually do it; and still, as all will admit, the child may act freely in what he does. The influences employed by the man may be such that all will concede that the child acts freely. No inconsistency can be seen, none will be affirmed to exist between the guiding agency of the man and the freedom of the child. But when *God* purposes to direct in certain particulars the conduct of a man and actually does it, it is thought that the case is different, and that there is an inconsistency between God's purposes and agency and man's freedom of action. But when you ask the objector why there is any more inconsistency in the one case than in the other, or where the inconsistency is, he is utterly unable to inform you. He feels that there is an inconsistency, but he cannot tell *where* it is. He feels that the decrees of God do lay him under a necessity of action, but he can't tell *how* they do it. There is a necessity, he feels that there is, but he does not exactly *feel necessitated* to act, and he cannot say precisely *where* a necessity is on him, but he fully

believes there is one somewhere. He is in the same predicament with the man who did not really feel the pain, nor could he tell in what part of his body it was, but he had no doubt of its existence. Now when this is the state of the case, have we not some reason to doubt whether there is any inconsistency between God's purposes and man's free agency? Is it not reasonable that we insist on having it pointed out to us before we are required to remove it; as reasonable as it would be for a physician to demand that the locality of a pain should be designated before he were required to prescribe for its removal? It certainly is not enough that we be pointed to a dark spot in the doctrine and told, "why, there it is, covered up in that darkness." We ask, "has any body ever seen it there?" And in reply it is said, "why, no indeed, how could you expect any body should see it when it is in a dark place." We ask, and it is but right that we insist on an answer, "how then do you know it is there?" And when no good reason is given for the belief that it really exists there, have we not as much reason to question its existence as the parent has when his child says, "I do not wish to go out of doors in the dark, there is a lion there," to doubt whether the lion exists anywhere else than in the child's imagination? And may we not justly demand that the lion be shown us before we are required to attack and destroy it? Still we will waive this right and proceed to enquire whether there is any inconsistency between God's purposes and the free agency of his moral subjects.

I presume it will be admitted, that if the purposes of God interfere with man's freedom of action, they do it in one of the following ways: first, by an efficacious power *in the purposes themselves* necessitating their accomplishment; or secondly, by an agency which, in consequence of his purposes, God employs in bringing such a *special* influence on the minds of men as necessarily and irresistibly secures the fulfilment of his purposes; or thirdly, by an agency he employs, in so ordering the circumstances and condition of men and the motives or *common* influences which operate on their minds, as to necessitate them to act in accordance with his purposes; or finally, by producing a *certainty* that the actions of men will correspond with the purposes of God, a certainty which leaves men no liberty of choice, no freedom of action. Let us inquire, then, if man's freedom is destroyed in any of these ways.

1. Do the mere purposes of God possess any inherent power to accomplish themselves? Do they by an immediate energy

efficiently produce all the acts of men and matter necessary to their accomplishment? This is not our view of the mode in which God executes his decrees. We suppose he does it partly by his own immediate action, partly by the action of the powers or properties he has given to matter, and partly by the voluntary conduct of his moral subjects performed in the unfettered use of those powers of free agency with which he has endowed them; i. e. he executes them by his "works of creation and providence." And we suppose the work of providence to differ from that of creation. This objection then does not touch our system. There are indeed those who adopt the theory that the purposes of God do by an immediate energy cause or *create* all the moral actions of men, and as they believe the doctrine of the divine purposes, they must meet and answer this objection as they best can. We have no such theory, and, of course, have nothing to do in removing an objection drawn from a theory which we do not adopt. Is it said that whether we adopt the theory or not, it is true, and we ought to adopt it and meet the objections that lie against it? What then is the evidence of its truth? Is it drawn from *analogy*? But when a man forms a purpose to build a house, does the mere purpose accomplish the work? does it build the house? It may lie for months or years inactive in his bosom. It is not till he puts forth an active energy and engages in the work, that the house is reared. And may it not be so with the divine purposes? Are they not eternal? Did they not lie for countless ages inactive in the mind of God? And was not something more than the mere purpose, some active energy accompanying the dormant purpose, necessary in order to the production of results? Can any one show that there was not? If not, then it cannot be proved that the purposes of God by any inherent and immediate power, effect their accomplishment and necessitate human action. It may be that God has created moral agents who will, without any compelling influence from his purposes, fulfil his decrees of their own free will. It is not absolutely denied here that the volitions of God do, at times, act as causes producing their appropriate effects. It may have been so in the creation of matter, though even this cannot be proved. But, supposing it so, does the Deity thus accomplish *all* his purposes? Look at analogy again. How does man effect his purposes? Sometimes by his own immediate action. Sometimes through the medium of the laws of nature. And sometimes by the voluntary agency of other beings. So is it with the merchant and manufacturer. And may not God

accomplish his purposes in the same way? Analogy then surely affords no evidence that the purposes of God by a power inherent in themselves effect their own accomplishment. Can any evidence of the truth of this theory be found in *human experience*? Has any one felt a resistless creative force from the purposes of God pressing on his will and necessitating his volitions? Has even one of all the multitudes of the human species ever said that he had consciously experienced it? Has a single instance of this kind ever been found among the millions who now live and act on the earth, or in all the generations of the past? But if all have experienced it, could not some one have been conscious of it? And if instead of feeling a compelling or restraining influence from the purposes of God, mankind have, on the other hand, universally felt free, must we not believe that no such influence exists, and that they are in reality free? Must we not just as fully believe it as we believe that men are not destitute of the power of memory, but really possess that faculty? We have the same evidence in the one case as in the other. We have felt, we have used,—*all* have felt and used their power of memory, and all have felt and used their power of choice, their freedom of will. There is no evidence then, from analogy or human experience, that the voluntary acts of men are necessitated by an inherent energy of the divine purposes, but the very best evidence to the contrary. And therefore we cannot believe that the purposes of God do, by their own productive energy, compel human action. Notwithstanding any inherent power of production which they may possess, man is still free. His voluntary acts are all his own, and his own by his own free choice. He has the same evidence of it that he has of the existence of any of his mental powers or acts. And being thus his own, thus wholly his own, he may be justly, and he will be held responsible for them. They are not God's acts, caused or necessitated by God. They are wholly man's. God's purposes are his own, and the honor of them and of all their influence he is ready to take on himself. He claims it all to himself. And man's volitions are as free as God's, and his voluntary conduct is entirely his own. And the glory or the shame of it all must attach and inseparably cleave to himself alone forever.

2. Does God, in consequence of his purposes, employ a *special influence on men* to secure the accomplishment of his purposes, an influence which destroys or impairs their freedom of will? He doubtless exerts an influence on the minds of men. So one

man is continually exerting an influence on the minds of his fellow men. And if liberty of choice is compatible with the latter influence (which all will admit), it may be also with the former. And God may indeed sometimes exert what may be termed a *special* influence on the human mind. But the question is, does this special divine influence subvert human freedom? And certainly there is no evidence that it does. The Bible declares no such thing. Human consciousness teaches no such thing. Reason intimates no such thing. And many of those who deny the doctrine of the divine decrees, admit that a *special* divine influence by the Holy Spirit is consistent with free agency. There is no evidence then that any special divine influence ever impairs human freedom. But there is, as we have already seen, evidence that it does not; for every human being has in himself an abiding consciousness of his own freedom. He has in himself the surest evidence that he is free. And the Bible always recognizes the fact that he is so. And God, *as far as we can see*, always deals with men as with free agents. And if he uses any *special* influence upon them, we may analogically conclude that, in using it, he deals with them, as he does in all other cases, in perfect consistency with their freedom of choice and action. This conclusion we are bound to form, unless we have some evidence that, in this particular case, he deviates from his usual method of dealing with his moral creatures. But there is no such evidence, not a particle of it. We have no reason to suppose then, that he uses any special influence on men which destroys their freedom. For aught any one can affirm to the contrary, his decrees may all be fulfilled without his being shut up to the necessity of employing, in order to secure their accomplishment, special and necessitating influence on the human will. He may, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, use a special influence on men, and it may secure the fulfilment of his purposes by securing human action; but it secures only *right* action. And it leaves them free to act right or not. It cannot be shown to possess any *irresistible* force. It may be *unresisted*. It may convert the soul. It may lead the subject of it in the ways of piety and religion. It may do this in perfect consistency with his freedom of will. He may choose the service of God, he may choose the ways of piety just as freely as he would if prompted by any common influences, just as freely as he would if no special divine influence were on him. There is no possible evidence that he may not. He is free to choose and competent to choose the ways of duty either with or without

this influence. Without it indeed he never *will* make this choice. So inspiration teaches. But, if given, it necessitates no action. It infringes on none of his powers of free action. It may secure right action. And so, with holy beings, may *common* influences. It is a boon for which he cannot be too grateful. If cherished and followed it will renew and sanctify and save the soul. If resisted, as it may be, and expelled from his mind, it will aggravate his doom and sink him to the lowest depths of perdition. But the work of resistance will be all his own, the guilt will be his own, and the awful consequences, the dire results, in unmitigated and unremitted agony, must be his own forever.

3. Does God, in consequence of his purposes, employ an agency in so ordering the circumstances and condition of men, and the motives or *common* influences which operate on their minds, as to necessitate them to act in accordance with his purposes? He does order the lot of men. He brings them into being. He appoints the time and place and circumstances of their birth. He provides the influences which fall on their minds and tend to form their characters. But this agency it is, from the nature of the case, necessary for him to employ. And not only so, but it leaves man's freedom wholly unimpaired. It does not resistlessly secure human volition. True, man does not order the circumstances of his own birth and life. But it is not requisite to freedom of choice, that a person himself provide the influences which affect or secure his volitions. The motives to choice may be presented by others in perfect consistency with his freedom. All that is requisite is, that when these influences or motives are upon him, he have full power to choose contrary to their impulsion. If he only possess this power he is perfectly free. These influences and motives he *cannot* always provide for himself. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that he should do it. He cannot order the circumstances of his own birth. He cannot say who his parents shall be, or what their character. These things must all be determined before his existence, and therefore it is impossible for *him* to do it. God or some other being must do it for him. God or some other being must order the circumstances and motives which lead to the *first* choice of every human being. He cannot order them himself without *choosing* to do it. And to suppose him to choose to do it, would be to suppose him to have a choice before his *first* choice, which is absurd. And besides, he could not choose to do it unless there were some motives prompting to the choice. And these motives he could not provide without again

choosing to do it. And he would need motives again for this choice, and so on *ad infinitum*. The influences then which lead to the *first* choice of every human being must be ordered by some other one than himself. And in the case of the first created being they must have been ordered by God. If then God may not order the circumstances and influences which lead to choice, and man still be free, then free moral action in created beings is in the nature of things utterly impossible. The *first* free act can never be performed. It would thus be put out of the power of Omnipotence to create a free moral agent; for that agent must necessarily be influenced in his first choice by motives, and those motives could not be of his own providing, they must have been provided by God. But we must admit that God can make a free agent, or else the objection against the divine decrees, that they destroy man's free agency, is utterly absurd. It asserts that the decrees destroy what does not exist and what cannot be brought into existence even by Omnipotence itself. But if free moral agency is a possible thing, if free moral agents can be created by God, then they may be free and yet the influences that lead to their first choice may be provided by God. The fact that he, in this case, provides these influences, does not then destroy their freedom of will. And if God may provide the influences that lead to the *first* choice and man still be free, he may also provide those that lead to the second and third and all the choices, and man still be free. If God's agency and man's free agency are consistent in the first case, they are in the second and in all subsequent cases. God may then *always* supply the influences and *all* the influences which prompt to choice; he may order all the circumstances of his moral subjects and the motives which guide their conduct; he may reign supreme in the armies of heaven above and among the inhabitants of the earth, and yet their freedom of action remain wholly unimpaired and unmolested.

Men *may* then be free notwithstanding God orders all the circumstances and motives that influence their conduct. *Are* they thus free? They surely are unless these motives possess a causative power which necessarily produces human action. Do they possess any such power? Do the *purposes* of God impart to them any such power? There is no evidence that they do. There is none from *the nature* of the divine purposes. A purpose is a mere mental act. But a mental act does not necessarily change the character of an object without the mind, or impart to it any new quality. The thought of fire does not change the character of

fire. Nor can we find in the nature of the divine purposes anything which must exert such an influence on human motives, as to alter their original character, and give them a necessitating power over the will. Is there then any evidence from *analogy* that the purposes of God impart any causative power to motives? The purpose of a master mechanic to direct the conduct of his operatives, communicates no new power to the motives he employs to effect his purpose. That power all existed in the motives previous to his forming the purpose. So is it in all other cases where one man forms purposes which respect the voluntary actions of others. And surely no one has *experienced* in himself a change in the motives which were pressing on his own mind, a change by which they acquired a necessitating force, and a change which he could distinctly trace to the divine decrees as its cause. And no one has ever *observed* any such event. And the *Scriptures* nowhere teach that the purposes of God effect a change in the native character of motives, imparting to them a power of necessitating human volition. There is then no shadow of evidence that they ever do it. Does God then, in order to the fulfilment of his purposes, impart any such power to motives? He nowhere tells us that he does. And no one has ever seen him do it, or known of his doing it. Do motives then possess *in themselves* a causative energy? Have they any inherent power of compelling human action? But what if they have? In that case it surely is not the decrees of God, but the nature of motives, that destroys human freedom. If, then, motives possess inherently any necessitating energy, even supposing that God has formed no purposes, mankind are utterly divested of the attribute of free agency, and are all subject to the iron dominion of motives. By the unyielding force of motives they are all driven along the pathway of human life, with as little power of effectual resistance, as the dust of the street when swept by the wind. But motives possess in themselves no such compelling force. If they do, there is no such thing as free agency in the universe, and there can be none. It is vain, therefore, to object to the decrees of God, that they are inconsistent with free agency, for there is no such fact as the free agency of man.

We find, then, no evidence that motives possess a resistless, causative power, but rather the reverse. In an inferior sense, viz. that of prompting influences, not that of necessitating powers, they may be called causes. They are in truth only the prerequisites, not the compulsory causes of choice. They are

necessary to all choices, but they never necessitate any choice. They afford an opportunity of choosing one way or another, but do not compel a man to choose one way rather than another, or to choose at all. They are necessary to free agency or free action, but they do not force any action. The agent, notwithstanding he feels the full power of motives, is left perfectly free to choose or not to choose, and to choose one way or its opposite. God always treats men as if it were so. They always treat each other as if it were so. They always act in laying out their own plans as if it were so. They know by their own consciousness that it is so. And if it is so, mankind are free, though God does order their circumstances and condition and provide the motives which prompt their volitions and actions. The agency of God leaves their free agency wholly unmolested. He acts freely in his department of action, and they as freely in theirs. He is free in so ordering their life and lot that such and such motives fall on their minds, and they as free in choosing in coincidence with or in opposition to these motives. God's agency in bringing motives to bear on the human mind, no more compels choice than the agency of one man in presenting motives to others to prompt them to a specific course of action, forces their action. Men act just as free under those common influences which the agency or providence of God presents before them, and through which they are led to fulfil his purposes, as they would under any prompting influence which the agency of a fellow man might supply. The one is no more compulsory than the other. If men are free when persuaded to action by a fellow man, (and they know they are,) they are also free when excited to action by the influences which God has thrown around and upon them. God's agency, then, in executing his decrees by ordering the circumstances of their lot and bringing motives to bear on their minds, leaves them perfectly free in their choices and actions. Notwithstanding this agency, they, as we have seen, may be and are entirely free. When, therefore, by their voluntary conduct, they bring evil on themselves, they cannot complain of the circumstances in which they are placed or the influences which urged them to action and over which they had no control. They cannot say that these must bear the blame of their sins. The providence of God has never forced any man to commit a single sin. The agency of God in presenting motives before him has never done it. The whole black catalogue of his sins was his *own* work, his *freely-chosen* work, his much-loved work. In eve-

ry act of sin, no matter what the influence upon him, he felt that he was free. He knew that he was free. And therefore it was, that conscience laid the charge of guilt on his soul. She never allowed it to be cast upon the circumstances in which he was placed, or the influences upon him, or the agency of others, men, angels or God. She laid it on his own soul and fastened it inseparably there. She did it because he was free in his guilty conduct, and because he knew he was free. Had he not been free, she neither would nor could have done it. But there she has laid it, and there it will lie, an amply sufficient, an abiding, ever present, and painful proof that, notwithstanding any influence which the agency or providence of God may throw upon the minds of men, all their choices and actions are perfectly free and wholly their own.

4. Do the divine purposes produce a *certainty* that the actions of men will correspond with those purposes, a *certainty* which leaves men no liberty of choice, no freedom of action? Do the purposes of God deprive men of their freedom, by rendering it certain that they will so act as to fulfil his purposes?

Is it said that men *always* choose in accordance with the divine purposes, that they *never* deviate from them and that therefore they cannot be free to do it? But does it follow because a person always acts in a particular way, that he has no power to act otherwise, or that he is compelled to act as he does? Here is a man who has *always* lived in his native State. Does this fact prove that he has been compelled to live there, that he has had no power to go out of it? Angels have always practised holiness. Does this prove that they are compelled to do it? that they have no natural power to sin? Uniformity of conduct only proves stability of character, not compulsion of action. And suppose men should act *contrary* to the purposes of God. You must admit that, in such a case, they would be free. But they would be no freer than they are in acting in accordance with his purposes. If so, in what respect? Not in having more ability of choice. Not in having less or more motive to choice. Not in *having* more power to choose contrary to God's purposes, but simply in *using* this power. But freedom does not consist in *using* our powers of choice but in *possessing* them. Freedom is not the *actual* choosing or the power of choosing in one way *rather* than another, (e. g. of choosing in opposition to, rather than in accordance with the divine purposes,) but the power to choose at all. The being that *CAN choose*, that can make an election, that can take one

course or its opposite, or neither, where the nature of the case admits of his taking neither, that being is free. He is just as free if he chooses and acts as another being wishes him to do, as he is if he chooses and acts contrary to that other being's wishes or purposes. And man is just as free, if his volitions and conduct correspond with the purposes of God, as he would be if they all ran counter to the divine purposes. He *has* the power to choose contrary to these purposes.¹ And whether he *uses* this power or not, makes no difference in respect to his being free. He *has* the power, and the possession of it gives him all the freedom of choice that any being can justly ask for, or possibly conceive of or obtain.

Is it said that if all events are decreed, they are *certain* to be, and that they therefore must be and cannot be avoided, and so man is not free to leave them undone? This form of the objection assumes, that certainty destroys freedom, that the certainty of an event necessitates the event. But is it so? If so, how? Certainty has reference to knowledge. That which is fully *known*, is certain. Certainty may relate to *past* events as well as to *future* ones. I may say, "It is certain that he *has* done it," as well as, "It is certain that he *will* do it." But though the word *certainly* refers mainly to knowledge, yet it also implies the *reality* of an event. It implies, when used in reference to a future event, that the event will without fail come to pass. It implies, in other words, that the event *will* be, for that evidently will be which it is known or it is certain will be. Now if the certainty of a future event is inconsistent with human freedom in the production of that event, it must be so, it would seem, either because foreknowledge and human freedom are inconsistent, or because the fact that an event will really be, is inconsistent with human freedom in producing it. Does foreknowledge then interfere with human liberty? Not at all. Every man in as far as is possible, foreknows his own purposes and conduct. He foreknows what he shall, under particular circumstances, purpose and perform. But this foreknowledge does not interfere with his freedom. It does not compel his choices or actions. And a man may, in certain particulars, foreknow the conduct of his neighbor, he may be informed of it, or he may ascertain it from circumstances, and yet that neighbor's conduct be perfectly free. The foreknowledge of the one does not produce the action, nor necessitate the action, nor

¹ Men always have natural power to frustrate those divine decrees which they are appointed to fulfil."—*Emmons's Works*, Vol. IV. 304.

have any influence at all upon the action of the other. Just so it is in respect to God's foreknowledge. It leaves men free, perfectly free, free to choose and free to act. They are just as free as they would be, if he were perfectly ignorant how they would act. His foreknowledge no more necessitates their action or causes it to be as it is, than man's foreknowledge of an eclipse necessitates or causes the eclipse. The eclipse would occur whether men foreknew it or not. So, in as far as any productive influence from the mere foreknowledge of God is concerned, their conduct would be the same whether foreknown by God or not. His foreknowledge has no influence whatever in producing their conduct. It would be just what it is, all other influences remaining the same, even if he had not foreknown it. God's foreknowledge then is not inconsistent with the freedom of men. They are precisely as free with it, as they would be without it. It is an act of God's own mind, and unless revealed, exerts no influence on any one but himself. It leaves them just where it finds them, in the full and unrestrained use of their powers of volition and action.

Is then the fact that an event will really be, inconsistent with human freedom in producing it? No; for foreknowledge implies that it will really be; and if foreknowledge does not interfere with free agency, then what is implied in foreknowledge cannot. The mere fact that an event will be, has no influence on the production of that event. It does not determine how the event is to be brought to pass, whether by compulsory or free agency. It has no reference whatever to the manner in which the event is to be produced. And yet, if human freedom is impaired, it must be done by the manner in which events are produced, not by the fact, that they come to pass or will come to pass; for future events *will* come to pass whether they are compulsory or free. It must be done by some influence on the will, necessitating its action. But the mere fact that an event will be, does not exert any such influence. It exerts no influence at all. It is perfectly inefficient. The fact that the universe was to be created, evidently did not create it, nor in any way necessitate its creation, nor exert any influence in creating it. But for the creative energy of God, exerted at the appointed time, the world never would have had an existence. And that energy was freely put forth. The fact that the work of creation was to be done, did not compel God to do it. No more does the fact that events are to take place through human instrumentality, necessitate their existence or compel

men to produce them. It leaves the manner in which they are to be brought about wholly untouched and undetermined. And if so, the certainty of future events is perfectly compatible with human freedom in their production. And though the purposed conduct of men is certain, still mankind are free and accountable in what they do. Their conduct is their own. It is freely performed. They might have refused to perform it. Notwithstanding the certainty of its occurrence, they had the ability to make the refusal. But they chose to perform it. They did it freely. And if the conduct is wrong they must bear the guilt of it. They cannot lay it upon the purposes of God. It does not belong there. It will not lie there. It slides off when put there, and falls back upon their own heads; and there it must lie as a heavy burden, as long as the consciousness and the fact of their freedom remains; there it must lie, unless the God they provoke, by changing the guilt of their conduct on his decrees, takes off the burden and nails it to the cross of Christ.

Let us look at the objection, that God's decrees produce certainty and that certainty implies necessity, in the light of facts, and we shall find that it lies as much against prophecy as against the doctrine of the divine purposes. Whatever is foretold is certain. It is *foreknown*, and it also will *really come* to pass. Both these circumstances then, the *foreknowledge* of the event and the reality of its future occurrence, lie in the way of prophecy. And yet the conduct of men in a multitude of instances has been foretold. Take for examples, the conduct of Pharaoh in refusing to let Israel go, of the Jews in rejecting and crucifying Christ, and of Peter in denying him. Now it was certain that these individuals would act just as they did act. And if certainty necessitates human conduct, then their conduct was necessary and could not have been avoided. But God treated them as free. He called their conduct wicked. He blamed them for it, and punished them for it. But he could not justly have done this and he would not have done it, had they not been free. Just as surely then as God is a God of justice, certainty is compatible with human freedom. Besides, this objection is adduced to disprove the doctrine of the divine decrees. It runs thus, "men's actions, if decreed, are certain and therefore necessary, hence it cannot be that they are decreed." But this argument proves too much. Apply it to prophecy and it is, "men's actions if foretold are certain and therefore necessary; hence it cannot be that they ever are foretold." But we know well that they are foretold. We find them often fore-

told in the Bible. The certainty of the occurrence of an event is then no objection to the divine decrees. It lies no more heavily against God's decrees than against his prophetic announcements. If it disproves the doctrine of decrees, it also disproves the fact of prophecy. If it destroys the free agency of moral beings in one case, it does so in the other also. But in truth it does so in neither case. The fact that events are certain, that they are foreknown and really to be, leaves the question *how* they are to be brought into existence, whether by free agency or by necessitating causes, wholly undetermined. They are certain whether produced in one way or the other. If they are *voluntary* acts, then they are certain, i. e. foreknown and really to be, as *free* acts. And if their certainty, i. e. their being foreknown and really to be, necessitates their existence (which it does *not*), it also necessitates their existence as *free* acts, or it in other words necessitates their freedom. The certainty of an event then is not inconsistent with its freedom. It may be certain and yet be brought to pass by the perfectly free action of perfectly free agents.

Again, if certainty does destroy human freedom, then human freedom would be destroyed whether God has formed any purposes or not. If he has formed no purposes, still he either foresees all that actually takes place or he does not foresee it. If he *does* foresee it, then it is all certain. Whatever he foresees, will certainly come to pass. So then the objection does not lie against the doctrine of the divine decrees. It exists whether that doctrine be true or not. Its whole weight bears rather on the prescience than on the purposes of God.

But if to escape this horn of the dilemma it should be maintained, that God would not foresee future events unless he first decreed them, still the events that were to be, would as *truly* be, as if he had decreed and foreseen them. They would as *really* be, they would as *truly* come to pass, as when decreed and foreseen; they would *certainly* take place. In the one case they would certainly, in the other they would really or truly come to pass. The difference between the two cases surely cannot be great. It cannot be so great but that if the certainty in the one case would necessitate the events and destroy the agency, the fact that particular events were future and would really come to pass, would necessitate their occurrence and destroy free agency in the other case. And as there was a point in eternity when *all* events were *future*, as, in fact, they are all future till they actually occur, it follows, on this supposition that all events are ne-

cessary, and there is no freedom in the universe and can be none. In short, if certainty implies necessity, then it follows, first, that no free agents can possibly be created; for God foresees all events and so they are all certain, or at least all future events will truly and really come to pass. And these events which are really to occur, might be seen to be future before they occur, as well as they can be known to be past after they have occurred, i. e. they might be foreseen and therefore certain, if any being only had the means of foreseeing them. But it can in no way be shown that the non-existence of these means secures a freedom of choice to men, which would be destroyed if these means were in being. The fact that these events are really to come to pass, that they truly will be, it is this fact (if anything) which destroys human freedom. And if certainty precludes free agency, this fact precludes it too. But it is a fact that all future events will really and truly occur; it always has been a fact; it always will be a fact. And if this fact precludes free agency, then free agency is in the nature of things impossible. A free agent is necessarily excluded from the catalogue of beings that Omnipotence *can* create. And if certainty implies necessity, it follows, secondly, that God himself is not a free agent, for he foresees all his own future actions and so they are certain; or, if he does not foresee them, still they will *really* be just *as* they will be, and this fact, it must be allowed, as much destroys his freedom as his foreseeing his future actions would do it. So then there is, on this supposition, no such thing as freedom for men, angels, or God; there can be none, but relentless iron fate reigns triumphant throughout the universe. Such are some of the formidable consequences of supposing that the certainty of future actions is inconsistent with free agency in performing them. Who would willingly, and who could reasonably admit these consequences for a moment? If none, then all must allow that the certainty of events and the free agency of men in producing them, are perfectly compatible with each other.

We have thus endeavored to exhaust the methods in which the divine decrees may be supposed to destroy the free agency of men. We have seen, that in neither of the four ways contemplated, (and we know of no others supposable,) can they be shown to accomplish this bad work. We cannot then believe that they do it. We see no conceivable way in which they can do it. Mankind then must be regarded as free and treated as free, notwithstanding their conduct is all included in the purposes

of God. His purposes in no supposable way contravene their freedom. The grand difficulty in regard to this whole matter is, that mankind too generally confound the meaning of the words "certainty" and "necessity." They will not distinguish between an event which is only certain and one which is necessary; in other words, between an event which will be or which it is known will be, and one which must be. The confusion which prevails in many minds on this one point is the ground of nearly all their mistakes and difficulties respecting human freedom. God's purposes imply only the certainty not the necessity of future events. There is a plain difference between what is necessary and what is only certain, and this difference ought to be seen and remembered. That is necessary which must be; that is certain which will be or rather which some being knows will be. Now there is a difference, as every one can easily see, between my saying that "I must do a thing," and saying that "I will do it" or that "it is known that I will do it." "I must do it," implies that there may be some force compelling my action. I might say, "I must go," if I were dragged along by superior force. "I will do it," may imply great freedom, a consciousness of that freedom, and a use of that freedom, perhaps even in overcoming resistances which lie in the way of doing the thing purposed. I might say, "I will go, whatever may be said to the contrary." There is a difference between saying of an event, "it must be," and saying merely "it will be," or "it is known that it will be." "It must be," implies that there are causes at work which will necessarily and resistlessly bring the event to pass. "It will be" or "it is known that it will be," implies no such compulsion. It leaves the manner in which the future event is to be brought about wholly undetermined. It asserts simply and solely, that the event is future, is known to be so, and will take place. It may take place by the action of a necessitating cause, or it may take place by the free agency of God or of some of his creatures. Let this distinction between necessity and certainty, this distinction between what has sometimes been called natural and moral necessity, be clearly apprehended and always kept in sight, and the difficulties with which this subject has been embarrassed, would nearly all be removed. And let the heart cheerfully submit to the great truth, that God reigns throughout the universe according to his own good pleasure, and the remaining darkness would soon flee away. The illuminated mind would then see men not as trees walking, but walking and acting as *men* in the full, free, and unfettered use of all their bodily, mental and moral powers.