God's Knowledge within the Decree

A Proposed Solution to the Quarrel between Divine Determinism and Libertarian Freedom

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October 2026

Written for my grandson Samuel, and Drs. Maddox and Thomas in partial completion of the requirements of the PhD program at North American School of Theology

A Letter to Samuel

Dear Samuel, I have attempted to explain this difficult subject in hopes that when you are old enough to read this it will help smooth your way. I looked in vain for modern treatments that explained this sufficiently according to the Bible's revealed explanations. There, in the Scripture, you will find no specific statement or explanation, so the whole corpus must be considered and the explanation drawn from all that is revealed about God and his purpose and his dealings with us. Quite frustratingly for most modern treatments that address this debate, the Biblical writers assume no such problem as we see in today's arguments over this subject, as they allow both divine determinism and creaturely freedom to exist side by side, sometimes in the same passage. In an attempt to answer this for you, I have engaged two writers I consider brilliant with deep and convincing arguments, one on either side. One is a friend, Dr. Tim Stratton, a man I hope you meet some day, and hope you will listen to as a mentor when I am gone. The other is Guillaume Bignon. My disagreement with both should show you that good men can disagree agreeably in love and passion for the truth. Dr. Stratton's position is furthest from mine, so the argument will be more clear. Bignon's is closer to mine, so I run the risk of having my position discounted without consideration. This would be a mistake because our arguments are completely different. The proposal I lay out here is a modal/systemic complexity model that captures 'epoch-dependent' modal rules, dynamic accessibility relations, and higher dogmatic precision, as I attempt to identify and stick with the Biblical portrait of how these issues work themselves out in our relationship with God. I have also learned from older Reformed teachers, Gomarus, Walaeus, Alsted, Crocius and Le Blanc, that God knows what a free creature would freely do, and that this knowledge serves his wisdom without ever moving his will; I explain that in Chapter 4. Bignon's model is a modal/systemic simplicity model with one set of rules

everywhere, is ontologically flat, and highly parsimonious, hence my claim that it is a version of fatalism or divine fatalism, therefore not personal or relational as the Bible presents these issues. There are big words there, but by the time you are reading this, I believe you will be able to profitably engage the argument, at least that is my prayer. I love you, and desperately desire your understanding of the truth.

Your grandfather, Milton Smith

Acknowledgements

A work of this kind is never the work of one man. I owe thanks to the writers, living and dead, whose names are in the notes and whose work I have read and used, and to those who read this argument in earlier forms and pressed it. Where I have adopted a correction I have said so in the text. Whatever errors remain in this book are my own.

Abstract

The long quarrel between exhaustive divine determinism and libertarian freedom of the will has been carried on over the decree of God. I argue that both sides are wrongheaded, and I do not claim that either is provably wrong. They argue over the wrong thing: neither asks what the decree consists of, or what God purposed in making a creation at all. I propose that the decree has three parts, idea, will, and knowledge, distinct in our thought and one in the simple God, and that the idea, governed by God's purposes in the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, guides the other two. God knows what mutable creatures would freely do in any circumstance by the conditioned knowledge that Gomarus, Walaeus, Alsted, Crocius and Le Blanc held. It is no third kind of knowledge, and it is neither cause nor motive of the decree. What a free creature would do is the occasion of God's decree; its cause is God's purpose in the covenant of redemption alone. What will be is known within the decree.

The freedom I defend is limited ultimate freedom (LUF): freedom, without coercion, to choose otherwise in the circumstances, limited because ultimate freedom of the kind God has belongs to him alone. I grant Tim Stratton his definition of libertarian freedom for Adam in the garden, and I argue for it. Adam could have refrained in the same circumstances in which he fell, and God's decree took his free choice as its occasion, not its cause. I grant the definition also for the sake of argument, and in view of God's power to conceive such a creation. Frankfurt-style cases show that alternate possibilities are not necessary for responsibility, yet Adam had them. Adam had regulative control and guidance control. His posterity, whom he represented as federal head according to Romans 5, has guidance control only for the spiritual good, its will bound to sin as a judicial consequence until God regenerates and glorifies it.

God's order and the creature's are ranked, and necessity and possibility do not carry over from one to the other. The necessity is that of the consequence, not of the consequent. Each piece of the account has antecedents in Calvin, the Reformed orthodox, including the minority among them who held a conditioned knowledge under the decree, Bavinck, Vos, and the confessions, and I name each debt as an implication or an inference, not as a claim that they said what I say. The account is open to refutation where it is wrong.

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How to Read This Book

The book is meant to be read in order. Chapter 1 states the quarrel and the foe that both parties share, and sets out the terms and the plan. Chapter 2 lets each party speak in its own words. Chapters 3 and 4 give the purposes of God in creation and the order of his knowledge, his will, and his idea within the decree, and the knowledge by which God sees the occasion of his decree. Chapters 5 and 6 treat the creature's freedom, its limits, and the joint at which the decree and the creature's choice meet. Chapters 7 and 8 treat Adam, the fall, Romans 5, and the fallen, the regenerate, and the redeemed will. Chapter 9 answers the objections, states the Asymmetric Dual-Frame account in eight points, tries it on three test cases, says what it is not and what it claims to have added, and concludes.

The appendices carry the apparatus so that the body can be read straight through. Appendix A sets out the modal logic and the Frankfurt-style cases. Appendix B gathers the Scripture and Greek notes. Appendix C gives the fourteen further reasons for limited ultimate freedom. Appendix D is a glossary. Appendix E is the bibliography. Appendix F is a study of the five Reformed writers whose conditioned knowledge I adopt.

Notes are footnotes, in the form of the Chicago Manual of Style: the first citation of a work is given in full, and later ones are shortened. The numbering of the notes begins again at 1 in each chapter and each appendix, and the pages are numbered continuously from the first page of Chapter 1. Scripture is quoted from the English Standard Version unless a note names another translation. Translations of Latin are mine unless a note says otherwise. Terms of art, such as LUF, guidance control, and the composite and divided senses, are defined in Appendix D, and each is also explained where it is first used.

Chapter 1. The Quarrel and the Shared Foe

1.1 The Dilemma

A very real dilemma exists. Scripture is plain that God is sovereign over everything that comes to pass. He declares that his counsel will stand and that he will accomplish all his purpose.[1] Scripture is just as plain that the people he made are free, that they are addressed and commanded, and that they answer for what they do. Paul told the Athenians that "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent."[2] A command to repent is not given to a puppet. Both of these are in the Bible, side by side, and neither is a footnote to the other.

Take one case where the Scripture does not blink. In Isaiah 45 God speaks of Cyrus, a king who did not know him, and says that he will use him.[3] In the same chapters he says of himself, "for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,"[4] and he warns, "Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'?"[5] Nothing in the text suggests that Cyrus was a puppet, or that he conquered without a will of his own, and yet God plainly declares that he is using him. The writers do not apologize for either side. I take it that they did not see the two as rivals. It is later theologians who have set them against each other, refusing to leave both strongly stated and strongly held, while allowing their reconciliation to remain in the secret counsel of God.

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1 Isa. 46:10 (ESV); Ps. 33:11 (ESV).

2 Acts 17:30 (ESV).

3 Isa. 45:1–5 (ESV).

4 Isa. 46:9 (ESV).

5 Isa. 45:9 (ESV).

The trouble begins when someone tries to say how they fit. Put it as plainly as I can. If God has decreed everything that comes to pass, then it seems the creature cannot be free in the sense that makes praise and blame his own, and God seems to be the one who answers for what the creature does. If instead the creature is free in the sense that makes praise and blame his own, then it seems that the decree has to wait on what the creature does, and God is no longer sovereign over it. The first answer is called divine determinism, and those who hold it in a form that keeps the creature answerable are called compatibilists. The second is called libertarian freedom of the will, and one of its able defenders in our day, Tim Stratton, joins it to the Molinist doctrine that God has a knowledge of what free creatures would do before he decrees anything.

A great deal has been written on both sides. Reformed writers have defended the one and Arminians, Molinists, and many others have defended the other. Yet the same arguments are being made now that were being made when Calvin was alive and when the Synod of Dort met. I do not say that nothing was learned. I say that, as I read the literature, the quarrel has not moved in nearly five centuries, and that when a quarrel does not move for that long, the likeliest reason is that the parties are arguing over the wrong thing.

That is my contention in this book. Both sides in the quarrel suffer from insufficient definitions, and both are fighting the same foe, which is fatalism. Those who argue for libertarian freedom are arguing for something that only God can have, which is absolute autonomy, and they argue against a picture of divine determination that is in essence baptized fatalism. Those who argue for divine determination, relying on their distinctions in modal logic, defend the same baptized fatalism, and that leaves their position open to being described as unjust and monstrous. Neither description of the other is quite fair, and neither side has looked at the one thing that

would show why. I will say what that thing is before the chapter ends, and the rest of the book is the argument for it.

A word about the temper of the quarrel before I go further. Each side has a name for the other's God. I have met the charge of a "moral monster" laid against the God of the Reformed doctrine, and I have met the charge of a "deity of deception" laid against him in the same way.[6] Such speech makes my skin crawl. I find myself wanting to crawl under the nearest table on my knees in worship, adoration, repentance, and prayer for mercy on those who use it so easily. Whatever we conclude, we are thinking about one who defies our categories, and we should begin where Paul begins: "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"[7] And we should remember what he told Corinth: "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."[8] God has a purpose and a way of carrying it out. Our greatest goal is to discover that purpose so that we may worship him in spirit and in truth. Our understanding will never fully grasp his, and I ask the reader to hold my own conclusions with the same humility I try to hold them.

I write this for my grandson Samuel. He will ponder this question when he is older, as everyone who reads the Bible with care eventually does, and I want him to have a better and clearer explanation than the age-old discussion has given. For that reason I will say what I mean by each of the important words before I use them, and I will keep to those meanings from the first page to the last. Much of this quarrel is carried on in words whose meanings shift from one paragraph to the next. The historian Richard Muller, who is no party to the quarrel, says of the

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6 Gerald Milton Smith Jr., "Libertarian Freedom, Rationality, and Divine Determination: An Analytical Assessment of Timothy Stratton's Public Free-Thinking and Deity-of-Deception Arguments" (unpublished manuscript, 2026).

7 Rom. 11:33 (ESV).

8 1 Cor. 1:25 (ESV).

same vocabulary, “I find the modern terminology of ‘isms’ to be imprecise and confused.”[9] I will try not to add to that.

1.2 The Foe Called Fatalism

What fatalism says

Fatalism is an old idea, and the oldest form of the question I am asking was asked by men who held it. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy gives the plain definition: “Fatalism is the thesis that all events (or in some versions, at least some events) are destined to occur no matter what we do.”[10] The last five words are the heart of it. What will be, will be, no matter what we do. Whatever we want, plan, choose, or resist, the outcome is the same, and so our wanting, planning, choosing, and resisting settle nothing.

I will use the word in that sense, with one addition that comes from the way the idea works in practice. Fatalism is blind. Nothing in it intended anything. A creature in it is a puppet, whatever name the system gives him, moved by causes that no one conceived. The picture is of a chain of causes that runs of itself, and the question the fatalist asks of the creature is only whether he can find some room to move inside the chain. I do not say that every ancient fatalist described his chain as mindless. I say that the picture, taken as a picture, leaves out the one thing that would make the creature’s part in it mean something, a purpose that someone had in mind.

It is easy to confuse this with determinism, and careful writers have kept the two apart. Carl Hoefer says that fatalism is “clearly separable from determinism.”[11] Stratton says the same

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9 Richard A. Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice: Freedom, Contingency, and Necessity in Early Modern Reformed Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 12.

10 Carl Hoefer, “Causal Determinism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, first published January 23, 2003, substantive revision September 21, 2023, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/determinism-causal/, §1.

11 Hoefer, “Causal Determinism,” §1.

thing about his own use of the words: "I explicitly distinguished fatalism from determinism."[12] He adds that fatalism "is often understood as the thesis that future events are somehow 'fixed' (whatever that means) or unavoidable."[13] I accept the distinction and will keep it. Determinism says that antecedent conditions are sufficient to necessitate an event. Fatalism says that the event will happen whatever the antecedent conditions and whatever the creature does about them. A world could be one without being the other.

The cylinder

The Greeks who held to fatalism knew they had a problem. They had to account for the plain fact that men deliberate, choose, and are held to account. Gordon Clark, in his history of ancient philosophy, reports the answer of the Stoic Chrysippus, and it is worth giving at length because the shape of our quarrel is in it.

> …he distinguishes between two kinds of causes—for he too holds that nothing happens without anterior causes. There are, he says, principal causes and proximate causes. Not all anterior causes are principal. Those who claim that all causes are principal destroy freedom, but the above distinction enables one to have all things caused, and yet to have man free. For example: Beliefs or volitions (*assensiones*) cannot arise without a sense stimulus, but this is a proximate cause and not a principal one. Since belief and sensation are connected, there must be extrinsic causes, but the case is like a cylinder which a man pushes. The force gives the cylinder some kind of motion, but that this is a rolling motion depends not on the man who gave the push, but on the nature of the cylinder. In a similar manner an object strikes our sense organ, but our belief or volition concerning it depends on our, not on its, nature.[14]

12 Tim Stratton, "Mere Molinism Remains," FreeThinking Ministries, June 9, 2026, https://www.freethinkingministries.com/post/mere-molinism-remains.

13 Stratton, "Mere Molinism Remains."

14 Gordon H. Clark, *Ancient Philosophy* (The Trinity Foundation, 1997), 214. The ellipsis at the opening marks that the quotation begins in the middle of the sentence.

The passage goes on to the point on which Chrysippus rests: "while Chrysippus defends the theory of fate, he denies that everything happens by necessity or compulsion."[15] It closes by saying of the whole matter, "The argument, therefore, turns out to be mainly verbal."[16]

I want to say two things about the cylinder. The first is what it gets right. It sees that a cause which starts a motion is not the same as a cause which fixes the character of the motion. The push starts the cylinder, and the nature of the cylinder decides that it rolls. That is the same insight that Christian writers later put into the language of first and second causes, and I will use it myself in this book.

The second is what it leaves out, at least as Clark reports it. In the illustration, nobody asks what the man who pushed the cylinder intended it to do. Nobody asks who made the cylinder with the nature it has, or why. Nobody asks what the whole business is for. The creature's nature does real work, but it is work done inside a chain whose purpose is not in view. If the question is whether a man can be free inside such a chain, then the cylinder is a clever answer, and, as the passage itself says of the argument, a mainly verbal one. But the question I want to ask is a different one. It is what the one who set the chain going had in mind when he made the thing that rolls.

Calvin's refusal

The charge that Christian doctrine is the old fatalism under a new name is as old as the doctrine. John Calvin met it, and he tells us that Augustine had met it before him. His answer is the plainest statement I know of what the Reformed doctrine does not teach:

> Those who would cast obloquy on this doctrine, calumniate it as the dogma of the Stoics concerning fate. The same charge was formerly brought against Augustine, (Lib. ad Bonifac. II., c. vi. et alibi.) We are unwilling to dispute about words; but

15 Clark, *Ancient Philosophy*, 214.

16 Clark, *Ancient Philosophy*, 214.

> we do not admit the term Fate, both because it is of the class which Paul teaches us to shun, as profane novelties, (1 Tim. vi. 20,) and also because it is attempted, by means of an odious term, to fix a stigma on the truth of God. But the dogma itself is falsely and maliciously imputed to us. For we do not with the Stoics imagine a necessity consisting of a perpetual chain of causes, and a kind of involved series contained in nature, but we hold that God is the disposer and ruler of all things,—that from the remotest eternity, according to his own wisdom, he decreed what he was to do, and now by his power executes what he decreed. Hence we maintain, that by his providence, not heaven and earth and inanimate creatures only, but also the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly in the course which he has destined.[17]

Notice what Calvin sets against the chain. He does not set against it a creature free of the decree. He sets against it a God who is "the disposer and ruler of all things," who decreed "from the remotest eternity, according to his own wisdom," what he was to do. A chain of causes is what he refuses. A wise decree is what he affirms. That is a reply in terms of the one who decreed and why, which is exactly the place where the Stoic illustration was silent.

Calvin's reply did not end the charge. It is still made, and it is still answered, and it is still made again. My claim in this book is that the charge keeps coming back because both the people who make it and the people who answer it keep talking about the decree as though it were only the will of God setting the chain going. That is the picture I mean by baptized fatalism.

Baptized fatalism

By baptized fatalism I mean this. It is the picture in which the decree is the will of God alone, the first link in a chain of causes that carries every event, including every choice of every creature, to the end set for it, and in which nothing is asked about what God conceived, what he intended the creature to be, or what the whole order is for. In that picture the creature is a puppet with a theological name. The chain has been given a Christian first link, and that is all that has changed about it, in the end.

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17 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 241–42 (bk. 1, chap. 16, §8). Spelling and punctuation as printed.

I want to be careful about how much I claim for this. I do not say that Calvin held it, because I have just quoted him refusing it. I do not say that Stratton equates the two in every place he writes, because he distinguishes the terms himself. I do not say that every compatibilist is a fatalist, because most of them would deny it, and because the confessions they defend deny it in so many words, as I show in section 1.4. My claim is narrower and, I think, harder to answer. When the two parties go to the decree to fight over it, the picture that governs the fight is the picture of a will that fixes outcomes. The one party defends that picture and tries to show that the creature can still be called free inside it. The other party attacks that picture and tries to show that the creature cannot be free inside it. Neither stops to ask what the decree is made of, and so neither of them asks about the part of the decree that Calvin pointed to when he wrote "according to his own wisdom."

In an earlier paper I put the same point from the other side. I said there of Stratton's book that I believe its argument decisively tells against fatalism, which is a needed answer to the atheist, but misses when it is aimed at Calvinism.[18] That is the same observation. The arguments are good arguments, and they are aimed at the wrong target.

1.3 The Definitions, Fixed Once

I have defined fatalism and baptized fatalism. The other terms that carry the argument are these. I will give each one here, once, and I will not change it.

First, a caution about labels. Most of the names I am about to define are modern. Richard Muller observes that Reformed thought "has been described, almost uniformly, by both opponents and advocates, as a kind of determinism, often compatibilism or soft determinism—with little or no concern for the possible anachronistic application of the terms."[19] He reports the

18 Smith, "Libertarian Freedom, Rationality, and Divine Determination."

19 Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice*, 22.

judgment of Van Asselt and his associates that the older Reformed approach is better described as a theory of "dependent freedom."[20] I take the caution seriously. When I call a view compatibilist or libertarian, I am using a present-day handle to say where a position sits in today's quarrel. I am not saying that Calvin or Turretin would have used the word of himself, and I will not use the handle as though it were a sixteenth-century self-description. The handle is a convenience. The history is another matter, and I will keep the two apart.

Determinism and divine determinism

Stratton's definition of determinism is the one I will start from: "A specific event is determined if antecedent conditions are sufficient to necessitate said event."[21] It is close to the usual definition. Hoefer gives it as "the idea that every event is necessitated by antecedent events and conditions together with the laws of nature."[22] Preciado, writing from the Reformed side, reports Robert Kane's definition, which names as antecedent conditions "the decrees of fate or the foreordaining acts of God or antecedent causes plus laws of nature," and he judges that it is "broad enough to cover various forms of determinism."[23]

There is a difficulty with the definition, and I raise it now because it shapes the rest of the book. If "antecedent conditions" includes the creator's act of creating and sustaining the world, then those conditions are antecedent to everything that ever happens, and they are sufficient to bring it about that anything happens at all. On that reading every creature is determined, Molinists included, and a definition that no creature can escape cannot mark off one view from

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20 Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice*, 28.

21 Timothy A. Stratton, *Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism: A Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Philosophical Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2026), 2.

22 Hoefer, "Causal Determinism," §1.

23 Michael Patrick Preciado, *A Reformed View of Freedom: The Compatibility of Guidance Control and Reformed Theology*, foreword by Paul Helm (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), chap. 1. The definition Preciado gives is one he names as Robert Kane's.

another. That is why I call his definition insufficient as it stands. I will take it with the clarification that the creator's act of creating and sustaining is not among the antecedent conditions it has in view, which is the sense I give next.

So I will say it this way. In one sense everything is determined, and I affirm it: everything that exists depends for its being on the God who made it and keeps it. That is a determination at the level of the creator's purpose and design, and nothing I say about creaturely freedom denies it. By divine determinism I will mean the further claim that the decree of God settles every event by being, in the manner of an antecedent condition, sufficient to necessitate it, so that the creature's own willing makes no difference to what comes about.[24] Whether the doctrine of the confessions says that is a question I take up in section 1.4. I will argue that it does not.

Compatibilism

Compatibilism is the view that determinism, in whatever form, is compatible with freedom and with moral responsibility. In the Reformed form I am concerned with, the freedom in question is the freedom to act on one's own wishes, desires, and reasons, without coercion, and the responsibility is the responsibility of an agent who does so. Preciado states his own position in these words: "We will see that reformed theology is theological determinism. We will see that reformed theology is compatibilism or semi-compatibilism."[25] I will use "compatibilism" in the sense of those two sentences. A semi-compatibilist is one who holds that moral responsibility is compatible with determinism whether or not freedom, in the sense of the power to do otherwise, is.

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24 Compare Stratton, "Mere Molinism Remains": "Determinism (what I often describe as exhaustive determination) is the thesis that antecedent conditions are sufficient to necessitate all future events."

25 Preciado, *A Reformed View of Freedom*, Introduction.

Libertarian freedom of the will (LFW)

I take the case for libertarian freedom at its best, in the definitions of Tim Stratton, a Molinist whose definition I do not balk at. He writes: "If a person's choice, action, evaluation, or judgment is neither random nor determined by something or someone else, then this person possesses libertarian freedom." He goes on: "It can also be expressed this way: Libertarian freedom is the ability to choose or act such that antecedent conditions are insufficient to causally determine or necessitate one's choice or action." And again: "However, if one does possess opportunities to choose among alternative possibilities in the actual world, then it follows that one is not causally determined by something or someone else. With biblical data in mind, we can also understand libertarian freedom in this manner: the opportunity to exercise an ability to choose between at least two options, where the prior conditions are insufficient to causally determine or necessitate the agent's choice." His summary is, "That's a fancy way of saying the ability to do otherwise."[26]

That is what I will mean by LFW, with one clarification of my own. The phrases "antecedent conditions" and "something or someone else" do not refer to the creator's activity in creating and sustaining his creation, created for his purposes. They refer to causes inside the creation that would settle a choice without the agent's own willing. For Adam's act I need nothing more than this exclusion. God's decree concerning that act was a permission, with a concurrence that Adam's own will directed, and so nothing outside Adam settled his choice.

Aseity and ultimate sourcehood

Two more words are needed for what follows. Aseity is the attribute by which God alone exists from himself and of himself, depending on nothing; the creature is from another. By

26 Stratton, *Human Freedom*, 6, for all four quotations in this passage.

ultimate sourcehood I mean the condition that an agent be the final and unconditioned origin of his choice, so that nothing outside him has any part in settling it. Preciado reports that guidance control, and the Reformed doctrine he argues is compatible with it, both deny this condition, and he calls it the sourcehood condition.[27] I will argue in section 1.5 that the condition, taken at full strength, asks of a creature what only the uncreated can have. Where a writer says "ultimate" and means only "the agent's own," I have no quarrel with the word.

Secondary causes and concurrence

By a second cause or secondary cause I mean what the Westminster Confession means: the creature as a real cause that acts according to its own nature, under God, the First Cause.[28] Chapter 7 sets out how I think of four levels of causation, laid over two perspectives, the atemporal and the temporal. For this chapter it is enough to say that the creature is a real cause of what he does, and that his being a cause is something God intended and established.

The old writers add a word for how the two causes work together, which is concurrence. The Confession says that in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the First Cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, and that by the same providence he orders them to fall out according to the nature of second causes. Turretin states the matter in one clause: the concurrence of the first cause does not exclude the concurrence of the second causes, but draws it after itself.[29] Concurrence is not a replacement of the second cause. It is the First Cause working with it, so that it acts according to its nature.

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27 See Preciado, *A Reformed View of Freedom*, Introduction.

28 *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms … with Proof Texts* (PCA/OPC reprint; © 2005, 2007 OPC), chap. 5, §2, p. 21.

29 Franciscus Turrettinus, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae, Pars Prima* (Edinburgh: John D. Lowe, 1847), 442 (Loc. VI, q. 1, §9): "nec concursus causae primae excludit concursum secundarum, imo eum post se trahit." The translation is mine. Translations of Latin in this chapter are mine. Latin quoted in these notes keeps its accents and ligatures as printed, with the long s written s; abbreviations are expanded in square brackets, and any other oddity is kept as printed with [sic].

The two necessities, and the composite and divided senses

The older Reformed writers drew a distinction on which much of my argument rests. Turretin puts it in the course of his discussion of God's foreknowledge: if there is foreknowledge of future contingent things, then all things will come to pass by a necessity of the consequence, in a qualified sense, that of infallibility, and not by a necessity of the consequent taken absolutely.[30] Necessity of the consequence is the necessity of the link. If God has decreed that a thing be done, then it is done, and the connection does not fail. Necessity of the consequent would be the necessity of the thing itself, as though it could not in its own nature have been otherwise. Turretin's point is that the first does not give the second. It is also called hypothetical necessity, because it holds on the supposition of the decree. The same writer says that the certainty of the event does not arise from the nature of the second causes, which are free and contingent, but from outside them, from the immutability of the decree, which so determines the futurition of the event that it does not change the nature of things, but lets necessary things act necessarily and free things act freely.[31] I will say that certainty arises *extrinsece*, from outside, when I want to say what Turretin says there.

Two further terms come from the same schools. A question about what a creature can do may be asked in the composite sense (*sensu composito*), which holds fixed everything said to be so, including the decree, or in the divided sense (*sensu diviso*), which considers the creature's will and nature taken apart from that. Turretin applies the pair to choice: the principle of choice, by its own nature, can be indifferent and undetermined in the divided sense, but not in the

30 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 191 (Loc. III, q. 12, §23): "Si datur praescientia futurorum contingentium, omnia fient necessario necessitate consequentiae, secundum quid, infallibilitatis; non consequentis et absoluta." The translation is mine.

31 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 287–88 (Loc. IV, q. 4, §6): "sed extrinsece ex decreti immutabilitate, quod ita determinat futuritionem eventus, ut rerum naturam non mutet, sed res necessarias necessario, liberas libere agere sinat." The translation is mine.

composite sense.[32] How the two senses bear on Adam is a matter I take up in Chapters 6 and 7 and in Appendix A. Here I only define them.

One more distinction belongs here. When I say that a creature could have chosen otherwise, I do not mean only that he did not know what he would choose. A freedom that is open only because the agent is ignorant of the outcome is epistemic freedom, and I do not accept it as the meaning of freedom. The contingency I mean is metaphysical: it belongs to the creature's own power and nature, and it is not a report of what he failed to know of the decree.

Limited ultimate freedom (LUF)

Limited Ultimate Freedom, which I will write as LUF, is what I intend, as compared with LFW. I define it as freedom of ambition, desire, thought, action, and choice without coercion, specifically to pursue, want, think, act, or choose otherwise in the circumstances. It is the freedom each creature has over his own choices, decisions, and actions within the created order. It is freedom without coercion, and it is freedom to do otherwise. God has not mandated that I sin or do anything inconsistent with my nature, desire, impulse, will, or ambition, and the creation that came from his decree did not require me to sin, or to choose wrong, or to act in error.

Why "limited"? Because ultimate freedom of the sort God has belongs to God alone. A creature did not make himself, was not consulted over whether he would be made, and was not consulted over whether he would be kept in being. The circumstances in which he chooses are given to him. His freedom is the freedom of a finite creature bound to time, and it is real freedom of that kind and no more. I have argued elsewhere that the demand for a larger freedom, one that requires that nothing outside the agent ever have any part in the conditions of his choice, is a demand that could be met only by a being who had overseen his own existence. That is more

32 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 604–5 (Loc. X, q. 3, §12): "Principium electionis sua natura potest esse indifferens et indeterminatum in sensu diviso, et quoad actum primum, et simultatem potentiae; Sed non in sensu composito, et quoad actum secundum, seu potentiam simultatis." The translation is mine.

than any creature can have.[33] LUF is the freedom that is left, and it is the freedom that matters. It is the original created freedom of Adam, and it continues as the freedom of the creature after the fall. In Adam it was limited by grounding, by the fact that he was a creature and did not make himself. After the fall it is limited further by a will bound to sin.

LUF is not compatibilist freedom, and it is not LFW. It differs from compatibilist freedom in that it keeps the "otherwise." The creature can pursue, want, think, act, or choose otherwise in the circumstances, and not merely act on whatever he in fact wanted. It differs from LFW in the limit just described. It is also tied to a way of speaking about necessity that I hold to throughout: the necessity is of the consequence and not of the consequent, and the creature's act is contingent in both a diachronic and a synchronic sense. What I mean by those terms is this. If God has decreed that I will do a thing, it follows, as a consequence of the decree, that I will do it. The thing I do is not thereby necessary in itself. At the moment of choosing, I could have chosen otherwise, and over the course of time what is the case could have been otherwise. The exact sense of "could have chosen otherwise" is the hardest thing I have to state, and I give it its own chapter, Chapter 6.

Readers of the earlier paper this book rebuilds will remember that I wrote of two kinds of "libertarian" freedom and marked them (L1) and (L2). The first was the demand that the creature be the unconditioned source of his act and of the conditions of his answerability, which I refused. The second was second-cause contingency under the decree, which I affirmed. I have dropped the numerals. The first is now named in section 1.5 as the demand for ultimate sourcehood, and the second is what I mean by LUF. The distinction the numerals carried remains.

33 Gerald Milton Smith Jr., "They Ask Too Much: Libertarian Desert Responsibility and the Demand for Control of Existence" (unpublished manuscript, 2026).

Alternate possibilities and Frankfurt-style cases

The principle of alternate possibilities, which I will call PAP, was put by Harry Frankfurt in these words: "This principle states that a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have done otherwise."[34] Frankfurt then argued that it is false: "But the principle of alternate possibilities is false. A person may well be morally responsible for what he has done even though he could not have done otherwise."[35]

His argument is a kind of example, and the examples are now called Frankfurt-style cases. In his version, a man, Jones, decides for reasons of his own to perform an action. A second man, Black, wants Jones to perform it and stands ready to make sure he does, by whatever means would be needed, if he sees that Jones is about to decide otherwise. Black never has to do anything, because Jones decides on his own to do what Black wanted. Jones could not have done otherwise, and yet he is as responsible for what he did as he would have been if Black had not been there. Frankfurt says of the fact that he could not have done otherwise that "This fact played no role at all in leading him to act as he did."[36]

I will use these cases for one purpose. They show that PAP is not necessary for moral responsibility. A creature may be responsible for an act without the power to do otherwise. That is an important result for the Reformed side, and Preciado has built on it, as section 1.4 will say.[37] But the result must be stated with its limit. That PAP is not necessary does not mean that no creature ever had it. I will argue in later chapters that Adam in the garden did have it, and that the rest of his race does not.

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34 Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (December 4, 1969): 829.

35 Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities," 829–30.

36 Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities," 835–36; the quotation is at 836.

37 Preciado, *A Reformed View of Freedom*, chap. 1, "Frankfurt Examples and Moderate Reasons-Responsiveness."

Regulative control and guidance control

John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza give the terms I need for saying this. They distinguish two kinds of control. In their words: "Regulative control involves alternative possibilities: it is a kind of dual power of free action. In contrast, guidance control does not, by its nature, involve alternative possibilities."[38] They hold that moral responsibility "simply requires guidance control."[39] On their account, guidance control has two parts: the mechanism that issues in the action must be the agent's own, and it must be suitably responsive to reasons.[40]

I use "regulative control" and "guidance control" in these senses. My claim, which I argue in Chapters 5 through 8, is that Adam before the fall had both. He had the power to do otherwise, which is regulative control, and he acted from his own reasons-responsive will, which is guidance control. The rest of humanity, since Adam, has guidance control only for the spiritual good. LUF's mode is the same in every state, uncoerced and not premoved. Its range differs by state, and Chapter 8 sets out the states. I take Fischer and Ravizza's two terms because they say clearly what I need said, and I do not claim that they would draw my conclusion from them.

The decree: idea, will, and knowledge

The decree is the center of the quarrel, and I have said that both parties argue over it without asking what it consists of. The Westminster Confession gives the classic statement: "God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of

38 John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, "Précis of *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61, no. 2 (2000): 441. The book summarized is *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

39 Fischer and Ravizza, "Précis," 441.

40 Fischer and Ravizza, "Précis," 441–43.

sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."[41]

I take that sentence as the statement of the doctrine I hold. What I add is a statement about the decree's parts. I hold that the decree has three that we must distinguish: the idea, the will, and the knowledge. The idea is God's conception of the created order, the creatures in it, and the purpose it serves. The will is his choice to bring that order into being. The knowledge is his knowledge of what he has conceived and chosen. These are distinct in our thought. In God they are one. God is simple, and the three are not parts of God. They are distinctions that we are compelled to make in order to think about him at all, and the writers before me supplied the vocabulary for them. Aquinas, in the first part of the *Summa theologiae*, says that ideas must be posited in the divine mind, that the idea in God is nothing other than the divine essence, and that the word *idea* names that essence not as essence but as the likeness or reason of this or that thing.[42] I take that to be a distinction of reason in a simple God, and it is the kind of distinction I am making. The idea does not break divine simplicity.

The covenant of redemption

By the covenant of redemption I mean the eternal agreement between the Father and the Son, made before creation, in which the Father gives the Son a people and the Son undertakes to redeem them. The purpose of the covenant, the Son's having a people to the glory of God, would have been served had Adam stood; that the Son undertakes to redeem them is the form the covenant takes in the order that God's wisdom judged fullest. The older writers called it the *pactum salutis*. It is not the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace is how the purpose of the

41 Westminster Confession of Faith 3.1, in *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms … with Proof Texts* (PCA/OPC reprint; © 2005, 2007 OPC), 12.

42 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 15, aa. 1–2. Text of the Leonine edition, Corpus Thomisticum, www.corpusthomisticum.org. The rendering is mine.

covenant of redemption is carried out among men in time. Herman Witsius describes the covenant of redemption as "the will of the Father, giving the Son to be the head and Redeemer of the elect; and the will of the Son, presenting himself as a sponsor or surety for them."[43] The Savoy Declaration puts it in the language of the Father's eternal purpose: "to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus his only begotten Son, according to a covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and man."[44] I give the historical witnesses in Chapter 3. Here I only say that it is the covenant of redemption that I take to be the purpose in view when God conceived the creation.

Desert

Finally, a word that will appear often. By desert, or desert responsibility, I mean responsibility in the ordinary sense in which a person is held answerable for what he has done: praise and blame, reward and punishment, condemnation and acquittal, that the agent truly deserves. Where I speak of punishable guilt, I mean guilt that deserves punishment in this sense. The Canons of Dort say of the whole human race that "God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin."[45] God owes no one salvation, and every man is guilty before him.

In the earlier paper I named two conditions that I take to be necessary for desert. The first is that the creature have the knowledge of the relevant facts that fits him to be held answerable. The second is that he act freely, in the sense that he is not coerced and not manipulated. A creature who acts from his own will, with prior judgment of reason, is not coerced, and the

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43 Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*, trans. William Crookshank (Edinburgh: Thomas Turnbull, 1803), vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 2, §2, pp. 169–70.

44 *Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order* (1658), chap. 8, §1, text at grace.org.uk/faith/savoy1.html.

45 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Head I, art. 1. English text at ccel.org (Christian Classics Ethereal Library). All quotations of the Canons in this chapter are from that text.

primary causation of the decree is not manipulation in the sense that an alien controller is, or else every ordained act would be manipulation by definition and the objection would have assumed what it must prove. I keep both conditions. The second I will state more exactly with the help of the terms of control given above.

I claim for God an independence in five things: independence of being and of knowing, so that he learns nothing from creatures and his understanding is caused by nothing outside him; independence of motive, so that nothing in the creature moves him; independence of end, so that his purpose in the Son cannot be frustrated or narrowed; and independence of grace, so that the gifts of salvation are efficacious of themselves.

1.4 The Parties to the Quarrel

The compatibilists

I take the Reformed compatibilists first. Michael Preciado's book *A Reformed View of Freedom* asks whether guidance control, in the sense of Fischer and Ravizza, is compatible with Reformed theology, and answers that it is.[46] He argues that Reformed theology denies the alternative possibilities condition, and that its doctrine of rational spontaneity is a primitive form of the reasons-responsiveness that guidance control requires. The theory he builds on, that of Fischer and Ravizza, rests on Frankfurt-type cases. In the opening chapter he treats determinism as a family, and he names its members: the doctrines of determinism may be "fatalistic, theological, logical, physical, psychological or social."[47] That is a fair way to classify the topic, and I accept it as a classification. It puts the decrees of fate and the foreordaining acts of God under one definition of determination, and then asks what freedom survives. My question comes before that one. I ask what the decree is made of.

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46 See Preciado, *A Reformed View of Freedom*, Introduction.

47 Preciado, *A Reformed View of Freedom*, chap. 1.

Guillaume Bignon's book *Excusing Sinners and Blaming God* is, by its title, a Calvinist assessment of determinism, moral responsibility, and divine involvement in evil.[48] The last phrase matters. The charge that a deterministic doctrine makes God the author of sin is old enough that the Westminster Confession answers it in its chapter on God's eternal decree, and it is the charge that makes the doctrine look unjust and monstrous to its critics. I take that charge up in Chapter 7.

The libertarians

On the other side, Tim Stratton's *Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism* defends libertarian freedom together with Molinism, which holds that God has a middle knowledge of what free creatures would do in any circumstance, logically before his decree. I hold a qualified conditioned knowledge myself, and I say in 4.3a where it differs from his.[49] In his shorter writings Stratton argues that if God determines all human beliefs, then God determines Christians to hold at least some false theological beliefs, and that conclusions about God's deceiving us follow. In an earlier paper I examined those arguments. I concluded that they raise real questions for any comprehensive deterministic system, that they do not establish his strongest conclusions, and that they proceed from a picture of Calvinism that equates it with fatalism.[50] I give the main lines of Stratton's argument in Chapter 2, and I answer it by name in Chapters 5, 6, and 9.

The Reformed witnesses

The third group is not a party in the present quarrel, but it is where the doctrine was first stated. These are the Reformed confessions and the divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth

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48 See Guillaume Bignon, *Excusing Sinners and Blaming God: A Calvinist Assessment of Determinism, Moral Responsibility, and Divine Involvement in Evil*, foreword by Paul Helm (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018).

49 Stratton, *Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism*.

50 Smith, "Libertarian Freedom, Rationality, and Divine Determination," abstract.

centuries. Calvin refused the charge of fatalism by name. The confessions and the divines who followed him refused what the charge implies, which is a will that is forced and a God who is the author of sin.

The Westminster Confession, in the sentence I have already quoted, says that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass so that "neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."[51] In chapter 5 it adds: "Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the First Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently."[52] The Canons of Dort say of the cause of sin that it "is no wise in God, but in man himself," and of regeneration that it "does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks" and that it "sweetly and powerfully bends" the will, so that, in their words, "where carnal rebellion and resistance formerly prevailed, a ready and sincere spiritual obedience begins to reign."[53]

Francis Turretin, writing in the same century, makes the point in the language of the schools. He says that the hypothetical necessity of the decree "inflicts no coaction on the will, but permits it to exercise its motions most freely, though inevitably."[54] Chandieu, in the century before, grants that the will is free according to its natural faculty of willing, and then says that

51 Westminster Confession of Faith 3.1 (PCA/OPC reprint), 12.

52 Westminster Confession of Faith 5.2 (PCA/OPC reprint), 21.

53 Canons of Dort, Head I, art. 5; Head I, art. 15; Heads III/IV, art. 16.

54 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 442 (Loc. VI, q. 1, §9): "Nec libertatem voluntatis evertit, quia necessitas hypothetica decreti, nullam infert coactionem voluntati, sed eam liberrime, licet inevitabiliter, sinit motus suos exercere." The translation is mine.

man, considered in his own nature, delights in evil and craves it so much, not by compulsion, which is impossible, but most willingly, that his whole will serves sin and is enslaved to it.[55]

The thought is older than the Reformation. Charles Trinkaus, writing on the problem of free will in the Renaissance and the Reformation, quotes Aquinas to this effect: "Nor is divine providence in any way a limitation of human freedom, because freedom of the will is in itself a participation in the providential government of the universe."[56] I do not claim that Aquinas and Turretin say the same thing in the same terms. I claim that the Reformed doctrine did not invent the thought that providence and the creature's freedom stand together.

Each of these writers denies that the will is forced, and the Confession and the Canons deny in so many words that God is the author of sin. Calvin, as I showed, refuses both the name and the thing. They may be right or wrong about how well their doctrine answers the charge. The point I draw is only that they did not mean to teach fatalism and would have refused the name. The libertarian side wants nothing to do with fatalism either, because fatalism is exactly what it believes takes freedom away, and Stratton takes pains to keep his own view clear of the charge when he writes that the existence of a truth about a future free action "does not entail determinism or fatalism (they are not the same thing)."[57] So neither side wants fatalism. That is the first reason I speak of a shared foe.

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55 Antoine de Chandieu [Antonio Sadeele], *Opera theologica* ([Geneva]: Jean Le Preux, 1592), 489–90 (*Responsio ad Fidei [quam vocant] Professionem, a Monachis Burdegalensibus editam*, art. 45): "homo tamen, in natura sua consideratus, delectatur malo, & hoc appetit tantopere (non coactè quidem, hac [sic] enim impossibile, sed libentissimè) ut eius voluntas tota serviat & mancipetur peccato." The translation is mine.

56 Charles Trinkaus, "The Problem of Free Will in the Renaissance and the Reformation," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10, no. 1 (January 1949): 51–62, at 53 (quoting Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, cap. 113, English Dominican Fathers trans.).

57 Stratton, "Mere Molinism Remains."

What follows

The consequence is that the quarrel is not over whether fatalism is true. Nobody in it thinks so. The quarrel is over whether the Reformed doctrine of the decree, as the Reformed describe it, is fatalism in different dress. The libertarian says it is, or comes to it, and the Reformed say it is not. That is a quarrel about a picture, about what the decree is like. It is carried on as if the picture were settled, and the picture it is carried on over is the picture of a will that fixes outcomes. The libertarian looks at that picture and sees a puppet. The compatibilist looks at the same picture and tries to show that the puppet is free enough. I think both of them are looking at an incomplete picture. I come to what is missing from it in section 1.6, and I set out the evidence for the claim, party by party, in Chapter 2.

1.5 The Price of Ultimate Freedom

Before I say what I think the quarrel is really over, I must say something about what one side of it asks for. I think it asks for more than a creature can have, and I think that is the reason the dilemma of section 1.1 looks harder than it is.

The libertarian is right to insist that responsibility is more than being pushed along. His definition says that the choice must not be determined by antecedent conditions that are sufficient to bring it about, and he holds that desert, as I have defined it, requires that kind of freedom. Press that requirement honestly and ask how far back it reaches. If the agent must be the decisive source of what makes him blameworthy, then he must also be the source of the fact that there is an agent to blame. Otherwise the chain of conditions that make blame possible begins outside him.

Most debates about free will start midstream, with a formed agent already standing at a fork, already able to speak, already inside a moral world. But before anyone deliberates, chooses,

sins, or stands under judgment, someone other than the agent has brought him into being. He did not choose to exist. He did not choose his nature, or the time and place of his birth, or the world into which he was born, or whether there would be a moral order at all. If the standard is that nothing outside the agent may determine the conditions under which he becomes answerable, then creation itself already breaks the standard. I call this the existence problem for libertarian desert. Creation is not a minor preface. It is the first and most decisive condition, because without it there is no choice, no fall, no guilt, and no condemnation.

The same holds for sustaining. We do not start the world, and we do not keep it running. We do not hold atoms together or preserve the regularity of nature, and we do not maintain the continuity of our own lives from one moment to the next by a power of our own. The powers by which a man deliberates and chooses are finite powers, held in being by God at this moment. An absolute self-determination that did not depend on God's concurrence would need a self-sustaining existence, and that is aseity again, now under the heading of preservation instead of origin. Reformed orthodoxy, speaking of providence and not of desert theory, already refuses to say that this dependence empties the second cause, as I have shown from Turretin and the Confession. The creature depends on the First Cause and is a real cause nonetheless.

There is an older way of marking the same point. To be the ultimate source of his choice in the sense the standard requires, the creature would have to be the source of himself. Turretin, in proving a first unproduced Being, observes that nothing can be the cause of itself.[58] That is a remark about the first cause, not a treatise on the will, and I use it narrowly. It marks self-causation as absurd on the same page where the first cause is demonstrated, and a creature who

58 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 154 (Loc. III, q. 1, §6): "nihil potest esse causa sui." The translation is mine.

must be the cause of himself in order to deserve blame is asking for what that demonstration already rules out.

Here the charge of the moral monster turns. It is brought against the God of the Reformed doctrine: he determines, therefore he is the author of evil and unjust to judge. But if desert requires control of the conditions of one's own answerability, the charge lands on the act of creating, whatever one thinks of the will. Grant the libertarian his freedom of choice, and God still placed the creature in a position of responsibility he did not author, and still keeps him there without his vote. The Molinist does not escape. On his account God chose to actualize this world out of the worlds he knew free creatures would produce, and the creature was not consulted. It is said that God chose the world in which the most would be saved. That offers no comfort to the one who is not among them, and who is not among them by his own choice. Had he been consulted beforehand, with the same knowledge of how things would go, he would very likely have vetoed his own part. Deny the creature the freedom he demands, and God is the monster for holding him responsible. Give him the freedom, and God is the monster for putting him where he must use it. The charge does not go away when the libertarian's freedom is affirmed in theory. It relocates to the act of creation.

I do not say this to deny that God owes no one salvation, or that punishable guilt is real where the creature sins. Both stand. The point is narrower. The criterion for desert, taken at full force, cannot stop at the moment of choice. It reaches back into the conditions that make choice and condemnation possible, and when it reaches that far, it indicts the Creator for having made any answerable creature at all. That is not a defense of human dignity. It is the abolition of the moral world in the name of fairness.

Nor do I make light of the pastoral weight of condemnation, or of the terror of eternal punishment, or of the ache in the question whether it would have been better never to have been born. Mercy without softness can still hear that ache. What it cannot do is rewrite the terms of creaturehood to soothe it.

Nor does the freedom that is demanded deliver the value that is claimed for it. Suppose every choice were undetermined in the favorite sense. The chooser would still wake inside a creation he did not author and under a providence that keeps him in being without his vote. He would remain subject to circumstances, events and responsibilities he neither chose nor was consulted about. The value the freedom was supposed to buy, an authorship deep enough to silence every complaint, never arrives, because the creature never ceases to be a creature. The same shape appears in the complaint about unequal revelation. Christ says, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."[59] And of Capernaum he says that if the works done in her had been done in Sodom, "it would have remained until this day." One may imagine the complaint in the mouth of Sodom: if I had seen what Chorazin saw I would have repented, but I was not given that information. That complaint is a misplaced claim of fairness. It treats unequal revelation and unequal circumstance as if justice required a consultation table that no creature was ever owed. I do not say that the complaint is empty of the ache I named above. I say that no account of freedom can rewrite creaturehood to soothe it.

I want to be fair about the limits of this argument, which are two. The first is that the libertarian has a reply open to him, and it is not an absurd one. He may say that desert needs control of the choice and not control of existence. That reply works only if control of the choice

59 Matt. 11:21, 23 (ESV); see also Matt. 11:22, 24 (ESV).

can be sealed off from the conditions that make there be a chooser, a nature, a history of desire, and a sustained power to act, and on the grammar of ultimate sourcehood it cannot be. If ultimate sourcehood is watered down to the agent's own uncoacted choice, then I have no quarrel with the word, and my target has moved. The second limit is that compatibilists who already deny self-creation are not refuted by the existence problem. They are pressed to show how sourcehood of the choice survives the unchosen foundation they also admit. This is part of why I say in section 1.6 that the positions are wrongheaded and not provably wrong, and it is why the second of my concessions to Stratton in section 1.7 begins from the creature's inability to ground himself.

We are not puppets in the crude sense that libertarian polemics often invent, mindless toys jerked by invisible strings. Nor are we self-existent wills who floated into being already armed with ultimate autonomy. We are creatures: real agents, real choosers, real sinners with punishable guilt, and never the ground of our own being. I hear in the demand for ultimate freedom an echo of the oldest question in Scripture. "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"[60] asks whether God may hold a creature to account on his own terms, and "You will not surely die"[61] denies that he will. I do not say that everyone who presses libertarian freedom has the serpent's purpose. Most press it out of a sincere concern for the justice of God. I say that the question of how he can hold me accountable has an old shape, and that it was first asked by one who wanted the creature to sit where only the Creator sits.

So the price of the freedom that would make the dilemma of section 1.1 sharp, a freedom in which the creature owes nothing to anything outside himself, is a freedom no creature can have. That leaves a question that matters more. What freedom can a creature have, and what

60 Gen. 3:1 (ESV).

61 Gen. 3:4 (ESV).

must the decree contain for him to have it? LUF is my answer to the first, and the idea, will, and knowledge of the decree are my answer to the second.

1.6 Wrongheaded, Not Provably Wrong

I do not say that the compatibilists have been proven wrong, and I do not say that the libertarians have been proven wrong. I think each of the main positions on offer today is not provably wrong, in the sense that I do not think either could be refuted on its own ground by an argument its holders would be bound to accept. What I say is that they are wrongheaded. By that I mean that they focus on the wrong thing, and argue over it.

What do I think they are arguing over? Each side defends or attacks a divine form of fatalism. The compatibilist defends a picture of the decree in which the creature's will is determined, and shows that the creature can be responsible inside it. The libertarian attacks the same picture and shows that the creature cannot be responsible inside it. Both pictures leave out God's ability to conceive a creation in which he accomplishes his purposes through creatures who cannot carry the weight of freedom.

That sentence is the center of this chapter, so let me be plainer. God is able to conceive a creation in which his creatures are free in a real sense, and in which he accomplishes his purposes through creatures who, being finite and mutable, cannot carry the weight of that freedom. His focus is on himself and on the covenant of redemption within the Godhead. The creature is not the center. The creature is tangential to that focus, but necessary to it, because the covenant requires worshipers, and worshipers must be willing. The quarrel as I read it treats the creature as the center and asks what must be true of the creature for him to be responsible. If God's own purpose is the center, the question changes. It becomes: what must the creature be, and what must the decree contain, for God to have the willing worshipers he purposed?

The purposes of God are the first thing that must be laid down, before any other consideration. They are set down in Scripture, and they are common ground for everyone in this debate: the glory of God shown to an audience who can truly appreciate it. “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”[62] “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.”[63] And Paul says that the purpose of God’s dealing with the church is “so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”[64] The wisdom there called manifold is multi-faceted wisdom. It is not the wisdom that would be required to bring about, by a single act of will, the results one alone wants. It is the wisdom required to bring about one’s ends through, and around, and sometimes against, creatures who are really free.

I think a debate that began there would be a different debate. I do not think it would be a quieter one, but I think it would be about the right thing.

Why not provably wrong? Because the compatibilist is right that everything the creature is and does depends on the God who made him and keeps him, and he is right that the creature is responsible nonetheless. The arguments he brings for that are sound, and they are sufficient on their own ground. And the libertarian is right that a creature who is made to love and to worship, and who cannot be said to have chosen it, is not the worshiper the covenant seeks. The arguments he brings for that, too, are good arguments. Each side has seen something true. I do not deny what either has seen. What I deny is that either has looked at the whole of what the decree is, and so both have argued over a part.

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62 Rom. 11:36 (KJV).

63 John 4:23 (ESV).

64 Eph. 3:10 (ESV).

This is the hard edge, and I want to say why I stand on it. Most treatments pick a side and redefine the other. One presses divine determination until creaturely freedom becomes a polite name for ignorance of the decree. The other presses libertarian freedom until the decree becomes a forecast that does not determine, or a permission that does not ordain. In its common form the first redefines freedom as doing what you want, and quietly drops alternate possibility and sourcehood, until the libertarian hears only a verbal consolation. The second redefines providence as God knowing without determining, or as God determining circumstances and not wills, until the Reformed ear hears a God who does not ordain whatsoever comes to pass. Each move buys peace by changing the subject, and I refuse that bargain. I want determination and contingency to remain load-bearing words, each said of the right order and neither flattened into one list of antecedents. What I claim is narrower and harder: that one and the same act may be necessary with respect to the decree's securing of its coming to pass and free with respect to the creature's own grounds, without freedom turning into "I did not know I was going to do it." A reader who hopes for a slogan that keeps unqualified libertarianism and unqualified determinism together, about one act under one total set of antecedents, will not find it here. That conjunction is blocked. What he will find is the older hinge, necessary and free in different respects, with the two senses of "necessary" kept apart.

1.7 What This Treatise Argues, and What Is Its Own

The thesis

My position is this. Because of God's purposes to express and exhibit his greatness through the covenant of redemption, he conceived the idea of a creation with Adam as a creature with libertarian freedom of the will. By that I mean the freedom Stratton defines, taken with the clarification I gave above. Adam, as Romans 5 teaches, represented all of humanity in that

mutable test, and failed, plunging his posterity into spiritual death and darkness. Adam was the federal head of his posterity, who were in him seminally and covenantally, and so his posterity lost their freedom in the sense that their wills are enslaved to sin and bound to rebellion. By an act of free and sovereign grace, God regenerates undeserving sinners through the gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation,"[65] gives them faith and repentance, and restores them to a relationship with himself by imputing to them the righteousness provided by Christ for those who come to him in faith.

All of that rests on one claim about the decree. The decree is not a bare act of will. It has parts, and the part that gives guidance to the rest is the idea: God's conception of a created order in which finite creatures freely worship and love a God whose wisdom, justice, mercy, and power are displayed in his dealings with them. God knows what free creatures would freely do, and he knows it as Gomarus, Walaeus, Alsted, Crocius and Le Blanc held: as part of his simple intelligence, with his own will supposed in the condition, and never as a cause or motive of his decree. What a free creature would do is the occasion of the decree. Its cause is God's purpose in the covenant of redemption. What will be, God knows within the decree. The purpose passages require a created field, a petri dish if the image helps, in which freedom is real, fallible, and weight-bearing, so that God's multi-faceted wisdom is displayed with Christ at the center, and creatures come to know grace in a deliverance that does not buy mercy at the cost of justice. Bavinck says plainly that "Not the world but the decrees are the medium from which God knows all things."[66] I say the same, and I add that the idea is in the decree with the will and the knowledge.

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65 Rom. 1:16 (KJV).

66 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 200, in the section "The Problem of Middle Knowledge."

The concession to Stratton

The way I treat Stratton needs to be stated here, because it will otherwise be misunderstood. I concede his position, and I concede it in three ways that I intend.

First, I grant it if it is confined to Adam in the garden. For Adam, as the first man in a mutable test, I grant that he was free in the libertarian sense Stratton describes, and that he had alternative possibilities. I will argue for that, not just grant it. Adam could have refrained in the same circumstances in which he fell. Had he been one who would refrain, God's knowledge and his decree would have been other than they are, though Adam had no power over God and did not move him. What I do not grant is that the rest of humanity stands where Adam stood.

Second, I grant Stratton his definitions for the sake of argument, in order to show that they do not get him where he wants to go. They do not, because humanity cannot ground itself. We did not create ourselves, we were not consulted on our creation, and we were not consulted on God's keeping us in being. A definition of freedom that requires that nothing outside the agent have any part in his conditions is a definition that no creature can meet.

Third, I grant all of this in the light of God's power and prerogative. God has the power to conceive, that is, to have the idea of, a creation in which humanity is free in the libertarian sense, with alternative possibilities. To say that he could not is to limit his power and his prerogative. I say that he could, and I will argue that in Adam he did.

I will argue next that PAP is not necessary, and I will argue it from Frankfurt-style cases. But I will also argue that Adam had it. The result is that Adam had both regulative control and guidance control, and the rest of humanity has guidance control only for the spiritual good. That is a long argument, and it is carried by Chapters 5 through 8.

What is my own

I want to be careful about what I claim as mine. I have not found, in the literature I have engaged, the argument of this book put forward in this form. I do not say it as a boast. The claim is limited to what I have read. What I can say is that no one I have read uses the following distinctive parameters together to form the paradigm within which I think this question should be viewed. Each piece has antecedents, and I will name them as I go. What is mine, if anything is, is the combination of them.

The pieces are these. The first is that the decree has three distinguishable parts, idea, will, and knowledge, distinct in our thought and one in God's being. The idea has a long history. Augustine taught that the ideas are the principal forms or reasons of things, contained in the divine intelligence.[67] Aquinas takes the point up in the passage I have cited. Stephen Charnock says that God "sees the nature of things in the Ideas of his own mind, and the events of things in the Decrees of his own Will,"[68] and Bavinck calls election "the divine 'idea,' the blueprint of the temple that God builds in the course of the ages."[69] I do not say that any of these men held the distinction I propose between the idea and the will in the decree. I say that what they say about the idea implies a distinction of this kind, and that my concept is a legitimate inference from their statements. Reading them prompted my thought. The use I make of the idea, as the part of the decree that gives guidance to the rest, is mine.

The second is that God's knowledge of what free creatures would freely do serves his wisdom and never moves his will. In this I stand with a minority of the Reformed orthodox,

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67 Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* 46, as quoted in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 15, a. 2, sed contra: "ideae sunt principales quaedam formae vel rationes rerum stabiles atque incommutabiles, quia ipsae formatae non sunt, ac per hoc aeternae ac semper eodem modo se habentes, quae divina intelligentia continentur." The translation is mine.

68 Stephen Charnock, *Several Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (London: D. Newman, T. Cockerill, Benj. Griffin, T. Simmons, and Benj. Alsop, 1682), 305.

69 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:341.

Gomarus, Walaeus, Alsted, Crocius and Le Blanc. Heidegger, who condemned the Jesuit doctrine, still counted the first three among the orthodox. I part from Voetius, whose Utrecht disputation places the second moment of God's knowledge after an act of the will.[70] I keep with him, and with Bavinck and Vos, the conviction that God's knowledge of what will be follows what he has decreed.[71]

The third is that God's purposes govern the idea of creation, and that those purposes center on the covenant of redemption. The covenant has a long witness in the Reformed tradition, and I make no claim to have found it. What I do is make it the purpose to which the idea of creation is subject, which is a use of it I have not found in what I have read.

The fourth is that the creature's freedom is a sovereignly created necessity. The covenant between God and man requires real parties and real worshipers, and real worshipers must be free, in the same way that God must be sovereign.

The fifth is the use of Frankfurt-style cases, which comes from Frankfurt himself and from Fischer and Ravizza, and which Preciado has applied to Reformed theology, to show that PAP is unnecessary, together with the claim that Adam had both kinds of control and the rest of humanity has one.

The sixth is Romans 5 as the governing summary of God's dealing with man in history, with the federal headship of Adam as the means by which the loss of freedom passed from him to his posterity.

The seventh is a causal map. I lay four levels of causation over two perspectives of reality, the atemporal and the temporal, so that the formal and final causes belong to God and the

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70 Gisbertus Voetius, *Selectae disputationes theologicae*, vol. 1 (Utrecht: Johannes à Waesberge, 1648), 1:293–95. The passage is in the voice of the respondent, Matthias Nethenus, under Voetius's presidency.

71 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:198–200; Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Theology Proper*, trans. and ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012–2014), 1:18–20 (questions 55–59).

material and efficient causes to the creature. I claim this mapping as my own application, and I do not claim it for Bavinck, for Vos, or for anyone I cite.

An eighth is the diagnosis itself, that both sides in the quarrel defend or attack a divine form of fatalism and leave the idea out of the decree.

A ninth is a way of stating necessity and contingency that I worked out in the earlier paper this book rebuilds. I there indexed necessity to the order of grounds in which it is asserted. The act is necessary relative to the divine order, in the sense of the necessity of the consequence, and it is not necessitated relative to the creature's own antecedents, and I forbade carrying the one status over into the other as though they were the same kind of thing. I meant that as a way of stating what Turretin's distinction already holds, and not as a rival to it, and I carry it into Chapter 6 and Appendix A.

I do not say that any one of these pieces is new. I say that the combination is what I offer, and that I have not found it in the writers I have read. If a reader can show me that it is already in print, I will be glad to learn it and to cite it. What I will not do is claim that the pieces have not been used before when I know they have.

It may help to say where the combination sits among the positions already held. Classical eternal-now accounts, in the Boethian and Anselmian line, secure God's knowledge of temporal acts without treating an exhaustive decree as determining in the way I affirm. The Dominican traditions of physical premotion secure an exhaustive decree and typically refuse real second-cause contingency of the libertarian kind. Molinist schemes keep a strong libertarian reading inside time while denying that the decree itself settles the choice from above. Contemporary defenses of an atemporal God with libertarian agency in time come nearest on the pairing of eternity and freedom, though they ordinarily stop short of joining an exhaustive decree with real

second-cause contingency. On Adam's act alone my structure is close to Molina's. We part in the kind of knowledge, its scope, its part in grace and in election, and its use (4.3a). These are neighbors and not twins. I do not claim that no one has touched any piece of the problem. I do not claim that every old dispute about free choice has been settled, or that full-strength libertarianism and full-strength determinism have been reconciled. And I think it right to say that the hinge on which I lean is already in Aquinas, for whom divine causality and providence are what enable human freedom and real contingency, and in the distinction between necessity of the consequence and of the consequent that I defined earlier in this chapter.

What this is not

I should say what I am doing. I am not proposing Molina's middle knowledge, a third knowledge that stands between God's necessary and free knowledge and serves as the ground on which he chooses a world.[72] I am adopting the conditioned knowledge that a minority of the Reformed held: part of God's simple intelligence, with God's own will in its condition, the occasion and not the cause of his decree. The title of this book stays true in this sense. What will be, God knows within his decree. What would be, he knows under a decree supposed and not yet made. I am not proposing that the idea is the will renamed. The idea is distinct from the will in our thought. I am not proposing a new logic. In the earlier paper I tried other instruments, physics metaphors and the tolerance of a true contradiction among them, and set them aside as the wrong tools. I do not have a contradiction to tolerate. I have a distinction to draw. And I am not offering a rescue of the libertarian desert program by way of indexing, as though one could have ultimate sourcehood after all. Nothing that follows gives the creature control of his own existence. Finally, I am not proposing a compromise between the two parties that gives each half

72 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:198–200; Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:257 and 1:293–95.

of what it wants. I think each party has seen something true, and I think neither has seen all that the decree contains.

1.8 The Road Ahead

The treatise has nine chapters, of which this is the first, and six appendices.

Chapter 2, “The Debate Stated,” lets each party speak in its own words. It presents Preciado and Bignon for the compatibilists, Stratton for the libertarians, and the Reformed orthodox witnesses on the decree and God’s knowledge, so that the reader can see what is already on the table, including what the older writers say about the idea and what they leave unsaid about it.

Chapter 3, “Purposes, Priority, and the Covenant of Redemption,” lays down the foundation I think both sides would grant: God’s purposes, God’s priority over the creature, and the covenant of redemption as the means by which he would accomplish his purposes. It gives the historical witnesses to the covenant, and it argues that creation is ordered to it.

Chapter 4, “Divine Knowledge, the Decree, and the Idea,” makes the central claim of the book. The decree has three parts, idea, will and knowledge, and the idea is governed by God’s purpose in the covenant of redemption. God knows what mutable creatures would freely do by a conditioned knowledge that belongs to his simple intelligence and moves nothing in him. It shows his wisdom the occasion and the opportunity to carry out the covenant in its fullest form.

Chapter 5, “Creaturely Freedom,” sets out LUF and the reasons why creatures must be free. It carries the argument of section 1.5 at full length, and it is also where the first part of my answer to Stratton is given.

Chapter 6, “The Joint,” is the chapter on which the whole thing turns. It asks what the idea contains, how a free choice stands within it, and in what exact sense the creature could have

chosen otherwise. The distinctions defined in section 1.3, the two necessities and the composite and divided senses, do their work there.

Chapter 7, “Adam, the Fall, and Romans 5,” takes up Adam’s freedom before the fall, the fall itself, the federal headship, and the four levels of causation. It deals with the authorship of sin and with concurrence.

Chapter 8, “The Fallen Will, the Regenerate Will, and the Redeemed Will,” takes the will of Adam’s posterity in its bondage to sin, in its renewal by God, and in glory.

Chapter 9, “Objections, the Asymmetric Dual-Frame, and Conclusion,” answers the objections I think are strongest, summarizes the earlier Asymmetric Dual-Frame paper which this work rebuilds and enlarges,[73] and states the position as a whole.

The appendices carry the technical apparatus so that the body can be read straight through. Appendix A is the modal logic, including a formal treatment in system S5, the indexing of necessity to orders of grounds, the composite and divided senses worked through, the Frankfurt-style cases, and the logical tools I use, limit and avoid. Appendix B gives the Scripture and Greek notes. Appendix C sets out the fourteen further reasons for limited ultimate freedom in one fixed order. Appendix D is a glossary. Appendix E is the bibliography. Appendix F is a study of the five Reformed writers whose conditioned knowledge I adopt. I have written for scholars, and I have tried to write so that a careful student could follow the argument; the technical matters are in the appendices for the reader who wants the apparatus tested, and the reader who does not may leave them for another time.

There are those who say, and I respect it, that the reconciliation belongs to the secret counsel of God and should be left there. I have no quarrel with a man who leaves it there. But

73 Gerald Milton Smith Jr., “Asymmetric Dual-Frame Compatibilism: Asymmetric Antecedence and the Refusal of an Impossible Demand” (unpublished manuscript, 2026).

some will need more than that, and for them I have set down what I think can be said. I ask the reader, whether scholar or grandson, to hold the two things the Bible holds, God's sovereignty and the creature's freedom and responsibility, each with its full force. I do not ask him to accept my way of joining them before he has seen it. I ask only that he not decide, before he has read the next chapter, that the quarrel has already been settled by one of the parties. Neither of them has looked, as I think they must, at what the decree is made of.

Chapter 2. The Debate Stated

2.1 Compatibilism

I let each party speak in its own words, and I begin with the party I am nearest to. The compatibilists I take are two Reformed writers who have given the position its most careful recent statements: Michael Preciado, who builds on the work of John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, and Guillaume Bignon, who argues from a different road. Both are in the party I called, in Chapter 1, the Reformed compatibilists. What they say about the decree and about freedom I take from their books and papers, and the notes give the place of each quotation.

The principle and the cases

The starting point of both is the principle that Harry Frankfurt named in 1969. He writes: "A dominant role in nearly all recent inquiries into the free-will problem has been played by a principle which I shall call 'the principle of alternate possibilities.' This principle states that a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have done otherwise."[1] He thought the principle false, and he said so at once: "A person may well be morally responsible for what he has done even though he could not have done otherwise."[2] His argument is a case. Black wants Jones to perform a certain action, and Black "waits until Jones is about to make up his mind what to do, and he does nothing unless it is clear to him … that Jones is going to decide to do something other than what he wants him to do." If Jones is about to decide otherwise, Black takes steps to see to it that Jones decides as Black wants. Then Frankfurt supposes that Black never has to act, because Jones decides on his own to do what Black wants. In that case, he says, "Jones will bear precisely the same moral responsibility for what he does as he would have

1 Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): 829. Frankfurt's title and text have "alternate." Later writers, including Preciado, print "alternative."

2 Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities," 829–30.

borne if Black had not been ready to take steps to ensure that he do it." The fact that Jones could not have done otherwise "played no role at all in leading him to act as he did."[3]

From this Frankfurt draws a diagnosis: "The fact that a person could not have avoided doing something is a sufficient condition of his having done it. But, as some of my examples show, this fact may play no role whatever in the explanation of why he did it."[4] He replaces the principle with another: "a person is not morally responsible for what he has done if he did it only because he could not have done otherwise."[5] I made use of that revised principle in Chapters 5 and 6, and I come back to it below.

Guidance control

John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza built a theory of responsibility on the cases. They distinguish two kinds of control. Regulative control is the dual power to do or to refrain. Guidance control is the control a person has when the mechanism that actually issues in his action is his own, and is responsive to reasons. They state it first in this form: "an agent exhibits guidance control of an action insofar as the mechanism that actually issues in the action is his own, reasons-responsive mechanism."[6] They draw the consequence for the Frankfurt cases: "in a Frankfurt-type case the agent has guidance control of his action, even though he lacks regulative control."[7] And they draw from it the main claim of the book: "it is guidance control (and not regulative control) that is the basis of moral responsibility for actions."[8] They call the resulting

3 Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities," 835–36. The subscript numeral that follows "Jones" in the printed text is omitted from the quotations.

4 Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities," 836.

5 Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities," 838.

6 John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 39. The authors say that they will later revise this condition and that it is a useful starting point.

7 Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control*, 37.

8 Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control*, 54.

position semicompatibilism. It says that the account of guidance control "helps us to reconcile causal determinism with moral responsibility for actions, even if causal determinism is inconsistent with freedom to do otherwise."[9] The theory is built to be neutral about whether determinism rules out the freedom to do otherwise. It says that, whether or not it does, moral responsibility still survives the loss.

Preciado

Michael Preciado's book *A Reformed View of Freedom* asks whether this account of control is compatible with Reformed theology, and answers that it is. In the Introduction he says that the compatibility holds on four points, which I may call the four dials. "First, guidance control denies the sourcehood condition. It denies that an agent must be the ultimate source of his actions in order to be free and morally responsible. Second, guidance control denies the alternative possibilities condition. It is not necessary that an agent have access to alternative possibilities in the actual sequence for him to be free and morally responsible."[10] He says that Reformed theology denies the same two. The third dial is that both are types of reasons-responsive theories, and the fourth is that both hold a subjectivist condition on the agent's view of himself.[11] On the second dial, he writes: "It is not the case that an agent has the ability to do otherwise than what God has decreed, foreknew and controls by his providence. God's decree, foreknowledge and providence cannot be thwarted."[12]

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9 Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control*, 51.

10 Michael Patrick Preciado, *A Reformed View of Freedom: The Compatibility of Guidance Control and Reformed Theology*, foreword by Paul Helm (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), Introduction. The quotation is from the Introduction's statement of the first two points of compatibility.

11 Preciado, *A Reformed View of Freedom*, Introduction. The same four points are given in the abstract of his Aberdeen doctoral thesis, "The Compatibility of Guidance Control and Reformed Theology" (2017): both deny the sourcehood condition, both deny the alternative possibilities condition, both are types of reasons-responsive theories, and both have a similar subjectivist condition.

12 Preciado, *A Reformed View of Freedom*, Introduction.

I take two things from this. The first is that Preciado puts the decree to work in the argument as the reason the Reformed deny the alternative possibilities condition. The second is that he does not hang the position on the Frankfurt cases. The book's Appendix, as it is quoted by Colton Carlson, a Reformed critic of Stratton, says that if the cases do not succeed, this "would not dampen the adequacy" of the Fischer and Ravizza account, since the cases are not the only way to show that the principle of alternate possibilities is not necessary.[13] That is a modest and reasonable claim, and I do not need more from him than that.

Bignon

Guillaume Bignon's book, *Excusing Sinners and Blaming God*, has a different design. His book is a defence and not a construction: it argues that determinism does not exclude responsibility and that God is not thereby to be blamed, and it does not offer a list of conditions that together suffice for responsibility, which he says was "not part of my project."[14] He distinguishes two readings of the principle. The first, which he calls PAPAll, says that a person is morally responsible only if, "all things inside and outside the person being just as they are at the moment of choice, he could have done otherwise." The second, PAPIf, says that a person is morally responsible only if he could have done otherwise "had his inner desires inclined him to do so at the moment of choice."[15] He holds that the first is false and the second true. He affirms

13 Preciado, *A Reformed View of Freedom*, 221, quoted in Colton Carlson, *A Brief Philosophical & Dialectical Inquiry on Mere Molinism: A Compatibilist Reply*, vol. 2, 55 n. 106.

14 Guillaume Bignon, "A Response to Kevin Timpe's Objections" (Association Axiome, March 2019), 10, for "it's not part of my project in *Excusing Sinners and Blaming God*," said of "a fully specified list of criteria which together constitute a sufficient condition for moral responsibility." At 20 he agrees that the book is defensive: "That's right. That was the aim of my book." He writes there that he does not "try to prove determinism in the book."

15 Guillaume Bignon, *Excusing Sinners and Blaming God: A Calvinist Assessment of Determinism, Moral Responsibility, and Divine Involvement in Evil*, foreword by Paul Helm (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 72, as displayed in Kevin Timpe, review of *Excusing Sinners and Blaming God*, *Faith and Philosophy* 35, no. 3 (2018): 373–79, at 375.

the second, he writes, "based on the compatibilist-friendly version of the PAP, which features a conditional ability to do otherwise."[16]

His reasons against the first are two, and he gives them in a single sentence: "They're my versions of Jonathan Edwards' claim that God is praiseworthy for acting righteously even though he is unable to act unrighteously, and of Martin Luther's claim that fallen men afflicted by original sin are blameworthy for failing to live a sinless life, even though they're unable to live a sinless life."[17] One of these arguments is from the impeccability of God, and the other from the bondage of the fallen will.

In his review of Stratton's book he describes a quiz that asks whether Satan, Adam and Eve, unregenerate sinners, or Christians ever had, have, or will have "a categorical ability to make some choice or other," and writes: "Since they all refer to the categorical ability to do otherwise than one does, Calvinists should say 'no' to all of these, and nothing bad follows from that."[18] By the categorical ability he means the ability to do otherwise "while holding everything in place,"[19] which is the ability that PAPAll requires. The power I affirm for Adam is a different power, the power of the faculty in the divided sense, and I come to it in Chapter 6.

Bignon does not rest compatibilism on Frankfurt cases. In a reply to a critic he writes that the "flickers of freedom" response to Frankf[u]rt-style cases "is actually successful (and hence why I don't think Frankfurt-style cases work to establish compatibilism)."[20] I note this because it corrects a common assumption about the party. The Frankfurt cases are the foundation of the

16 Bignon, "A Response to Kevin Timpe's Objections," 15 n. 34.

17 Bignon, "A Response to Kevin Timpe's Objections," 11.

18 Guillaume Bignon, "A Critical Review and Fairly Comprehensive Refutation of *Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism* by Timothy A. Stratton" (Association Axiome, December 2020), 42. The review is of the first edition of Stratton's book (Wipf & Stock, 2020); elsewhere in this chapter I cite the second edition.

19 Bignon, "A Response to Kevin Timpe's Objections," 10: "the categorical ability to do otherwise while holding everything in place."

20 Bignon, "A Response to Kevin Timpe's Objections," 15 n. 33. The printed text has "Frankfturt."

Fischer and Ravizza theory on which one Reformed compatibilist builds, and another does not rest his position on them at all.

God's knowledge and the cases

Two further writers have applied the Frankfurt argument to the question of God's knowledge, and they bear on the order of decree and knowledge that I treat in Chapter 4. David Hunt suggests that the debate over the cases "can be avoided: divine foreknowledge is itself a paradigmatic counterexample to PAP, requiring no support from suspect Frankfurt counterexamples."[21] His reason is that God's belief about the future is infallible and so rules out alternatives, and yet it plays no part in bringing the future about: "God's infallible beliefs about the future rule out alternate possibilities without their making any difference to, or playing any role in, or helping in any way to explain the future."[22] Michael Bergmann builds a case of the Frankfurt kind in which the intervener knows what the agent would cause by his own agency, and he says that this knowledge is not middle knowledge but something very much like it. He concludes that "given one controversial assumption," which is something very much like the Molinist position that middle knowledge is possible, "there is a Frankfurt-style counterexample to PAP that doesn't assume the falsity of incompatibilism."[23]

I take two lessons from them. The first is that the question of God's knowledge and the question of alternate possibilities are tied, and that a view of God's knowledge cannot be settled by considering the cases alone. The second is a limit. Hunt's point holds of mere foreknowledge, a belief that does not explain what it is a belief about. On the Reformed order, which I defend in

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21 David P. Hunt, "Frankfurt Counterexamples: Some Comments on the Widerker-Fischer Debate," *Faith and Philosophy* 13, no. 3 (1996): 395.

22 Hunt, "Frankfurt Counterexamples," 399.

23 Michael Bergmann, "Molinist Frankfurt-Style Counterexamples and the Free Will Defense," *Faith and Philosophy* 19, no. 4 (2002): 463, 466–67.

Chapter 4, God's knowledge of what creatures do is not mere foreknowledge, because it follows the decree and rests on it. What explains the creature's act, as to its futurition, is the decree, and not the belief. I therefore accept Hunt's observation for the knowledge and I do not rest anything on it for the decree. Bergmann's case I take to be as strong as the assumption it relies on, and I have said what I think of that assumption.

What I accept, and where I part

I accept a great deal of this, and I say what.

I accept that PAP, in the form Frankfurt first stated it, is not necessary for responsibility. I argued it in Chapter 5 from the cases, and I argued that Frankfurt's own revised principle is true. I accept guidance control as a true description of the control that responsibility requires, and I accept that the fallen creature has guidance control in the spiritual realm and not regulative control. I accept Bignon's conditional ability, in the form that a man could have done otherwise had he wanted to, and I accept that the fallen are blameworthy though unable to live sinlessly, which is the doctrine of Chapters 7 and 8.

I part from Preciado at one place, and it is not a place he would call central. He treats the decree as the reason why the creature could not have done otherwise, and so as the reason for denying that the alternative possibilities condition holds. I do not think the alternative possibilities condition is denied for Adam, or that the decree takes it away. I say in Chapter 6 that the faculty of the creature has a real power to the contrary in the divided sense, and that what the decree secures is the futurition of the act and not the absence of the power. With Bignon I deny the first of his two principles, since I deny that the creature has the power to do otherwise with everything, the decree included, held fixed. I hold something stronger than his second, since for

Adam I say that the faculty itself has the power, and not only that the act would have been otherwise if the desire had been otherwise.

This is a disagreement among friends. It is also a place where a picture of the decree shared by both sides of the older quarrel does its work. The compatibilist says that the decree removes the alternative, and the libertarian says that it must not. I say that the decree contains the creature's act as the act of a free second cause, and I take the question to be wrongly posed by both sides alike.

2.2 Libertarian Freedom and Molinism

The definitions

The libertarian side I take in the person of Timothy Stratton, whose book *Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism* is the fullest recent defence of libertarian freedom by a Christian philosopher that I have read. I take his definitions as I took them in Chapter 5. "If a person's choice, action, evaluation, or judgment is neither random nor determined by something or someone else, then this person possesses libertarian freedom."[24] And again: "Libertarian freedom is the ability to choose or act such that antecedent conditions are insufficient to causally determine or necessitate one's choice or action." He sums it up: "That's a fancy way of saying the ability to do otherwise."[25] The two marks are leeway, the ability to do otherwise, and sourcehood, that the act is not determined by something outside the agent. His definition of determinism is the counterpart: "A specific event is determined if antecedent conditions are sufficient to necessitate said event."[26]

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24 Timothy A. Stratton, *Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism: A Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Philosophical Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2026), 6.

25 Stratton, *Human Freedom*, 6.

26 Stratton, *Human Freedom*, 2.

I do not quarrel with these as definitions, as I said, with one clarification, which concerns the phrases "antecedent conditions" and "something or someone else." They cannot be read to include the Creator's creating and sustaining the creation in which the agent chooses. If they were, no creature could meet them, and the definition would not mark off one view from another.

The argument about thinking

Stratton's argument on the Frankfurt cases is a distinctive one, and I give it in his own words. He does not deny that there may be circumstances in which a person cannot act otherwise. He writes: "I concede that, on a material level, there could be circumstances where P cannot 'do' otherwise (referring to a physical action); however, I believe for there to be moral and rational responsibility/accountability, the ability to 'think' or 'will' otherwise, is necessary."[27] He calls this "the principle of alternative possible thinking," or PAP-T, and states the division: "I contend that the former might not need the PAP, but the latter does."[28]

He applies this to the Fischer and Ravizza account by way of a story. A droid, K-2, is stolen and reprogrammed, so that he now acts in accordance with the aims of the Rebellion. Suppose that K-2 has also transcended his programming and thinks freely, and that Yoda manipulates his physical actions to ensure that he acts as the Rebellion would have him act. "K-2 can think otherwise, but cannot act otherwise." And suppose that K-2 freely chooses to act in the same way Yoda is making him act. Stratton calls this "an example of what semi-compatibilists call 'guidance control,'" and he says of it: "In this sense I concede that K-2 should be held responsible and is worthy of praise for 'his' good actions."[29] But the case has a free thinker in it.

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27 Tim Stratton, "Freethinking Needs the PAP," Freethinking Ministries, March 19, 2018, freethinkingministries.com/post/freethinking-needs-the-pap.

28 Stratton, "Freethinking Needs the PAP."

29 Tim Stratton, "Yoda & K-2: Semi-Compatibilism & Responsibility," Freethinking Ministries, March 29, 2017, freethinkingministries.com/post/yoda-k-2-semi-compatibilism-responsibility.

Where the thinking too is determined, as on exhaustive divine determinism, he thinks that responsibility "melts away." His charge against the compatibilist is therefore that he is "so focused on the ability to DO otherwise" that he forgets "the ability to THINK otherwise."[30]

This is a serious argument, and I do not take it as a trick. It sets the question where I think it belongs, which is on what happens in the agent's deliberating and willing, and not only on what his body can do. I grant its premise for Adam. In Chapter 5 I said that Adam had regulative control, and that the command and the temptation were real. In 6.7 I took up a page in which Stratton makes the connected point about deliberation, in his reply to Derk Pereboom, and I said what I grant there. Stratton's second edition says on p. 234 that real deliberation requires that the options "actually be ontological possibilities."[31]

The Molinist structure

Stratton calls his own position Mere Molinism. The essential Molinist claim is that God has, logically prior to his decree, a knowledge of what each possible free creature would do in each circumstance in which he might be placed, and that God uses this knowledge in deciding which world to create. I described this position in 4.2 and 4.3, in the terms in which the older Reformed writers described and rejected it, and I do not repeat the description. The libertarian takes the knowledge to be the means by which God can have a providence over a world of free creatures without determining their acts. Without it, he thinks, the choice is between a God who determines all and a God who does not know the future of free acts.

The objection most often pressed against this position is called the grounding objection, and I answer it for my own position in 4.2. It asks what makes statements of what a creature would freely do true, before there is any creature and before God wills any. It does not separate

30 Stratton, "Yoda & K-2."

31 Stratton, *Human Freedom*, 234.

me from Stratton, because I hold such truths too, and I do not press the bare question against him. What I press against Molina is narrower: that he lets such truths bound God's will to save. That I call wrongheaded and not provably wrong, which is the same thing I say of the opposed picture of the decree as a will that fixes outcomes with no account of what it fixes them by.

What I accept, and where I part

I accept from Stratton the definition of libertarian freedom, with the clarification, as the description of what Adam had. I accept his insistence that responsibility concerns the agent's deliberating and willing as well as his bodily action. I accept the importance of genuine alternatives in deliberation, and I have said that the fallen creature has them within the range of his natural ability.

I concede Stratton's position in three ways, and I name them here so that the reader has them before the argument for them begins in Chapter 5. I grant that Adam in the garden was free in the libertarian sense Stratton describes. I grant his definitions for the sake of argument, and they do not take him where he wants to go, because no creature can ground himself (5.2). And I grant that God has the power and prerogative to conceive a creation of libertarian freedom.

I part from him on four things, which I named in Chapter 5. I do not hold that libertarian freedom is the condition of every human being now, since the fall has bound the will to sin in the spiritual realm. I do not hold that the justice of God requires it. I do not hold that a God who decrees whatever comes to pass cannot create free creatures. And I do not hold that God's providence over a free creature requires Molina's kind of middle knowledge. For Adam it is served by the conditioned knowledge the Reformed minority held, which has no part in election or grace. On each I have given my reasons, in Chapters 4 to 8.

2.3 What Each Side Asks of the Other

The two parties make demands on one another, and the quarrel is hardest to settle at the places where the demands are not stated. I set down what each asks.

What the libertarian asks of the compatibilist

The libertarian asks, first, for leeway. A creature held answerable must have been able to do otherwise, and the ability must be real, not a hypothetical about what he would have done if he had wanted otherwise. Stratton's formula is that libertarian freedom is "the ability to do otherwise."[32] He asks, second, for sourcehood. The act must not be determined by something or someone else outside him.

He presses the point against the compatibilist with an argument that I find the sharpest he makes. If exhaustive divine determinism were true, he says, then our deliberation over whether it is true would be determined. His words, in a reply to a friend who asked whether he would rather be a Calvinist or an open theist, are these: "The ironic thing is that if Calvinism is equal to divine determinism (which is supported via the consequence argument), and it happens to be true, then no one would have the ability to genuinely choose between Calvinism or Open Theism. God would make those choices for us."[33] That is a claim about what the doctrine does to the creature's own reasoning. It is the objection I took up in 6.6, under the heading that the decree is manipulation, and in 8.7, where I said that grace restores the faculties and does not go around them, as I said there.

What the compatibilist asks of the libertarian

The compatibilist asks the libertarian to say what the sourcehood he demands could be. If an act is to have its source wholly in the agent, so that nothing outside him settles it, the agent

32 Stratton, *Human Freedom*, 6.

33 Stratton, "Yoda & K-2."

must be the source of the conditions in which he acts, and of himself. Bignon argues against the categorical principle of alternate possibilities with two arguments. The first is from the impeccability of God, who is praiseworthy though unable to act unrighteously. The second Timpe reports as an argument from Pelagianism and universalism.[34] The abstract of Bignon's doctoral thesis says that the principle is "refuted in detail by two independent arguments."[35]

I add what I developed in Chapters 1 and 5. The demand for sourcehood, pressed to its end, becomes a demand for control of one's own existence. The creature did not choose to be made, or the world he was made in, or the nature he was given, or the history that formed his desires, and he did not choose to be kept in being. A requirement that the agent be the final and unconditioned source of what makes him blameworthy cannot stop at his choices. This is the argument I called, in the earlier paper, the claim that those who demand it ask too much. I do not say that Stratton's definitions are wrong. I say that, without the clarification, they ask what no creature has. With the clarification, they are what I have called Adam's freedom, and the quarrel moves to what the clarification leaves open.

Where the demands meet

The two demands are not the same demand, and neither can be refused by the other without cost. The libertarian is right that a creature that was a puppet would not be responsible, and that the ability to do otherwise matters. The compatibilist is right that no creature is the unconditioned source of his acts, and that the decree is not a trivial condition. The positions I call wrongheaded are not the demands themselves. They are the picture, shared by the two sides, in which the demands collide: that the decree is a will that fixes outcomes, and that freedom must

34 Timpe, review of *Excusing Sinners and Blaming God*, 376.

35 Middlesex University repository record for Bignon's doctoral thesis (2015, with the London School of Theology), repository.mdx.ac.uk/item/86qxv, abstract.

be either what survives the fixing or what prevents it. I ask in the chapters that follow whether the demands can be met together by asking what the decree is.

2.4 The Reformed Witnesses on Knowledge and the Decree

The older Reformed writers did not write about this quarrel in the terms in which it is now carried on, and I do not want to make them speak to it. They spoke to the questions of their own time, which included the doctrine of Molina and the disputes with the Remonstrants. What they said about God's knowledge and his decree bears on mine, and I gather it.

Calvin

Calvin wrote before Molina. He does not use the vocabulary of conditional knowledge, and I do not claim that he does. He has three things that matter here.

The first is that he refuses to set foreknowledge before the decree. In the chapter on election he writes: "We, indeed, ascribe both prescience and predestination to God; but we say, that it is absurd to make the latter subordinate to the former."[36] The Latin of the sentence says "praeposterè," which means that to subject the one to the other in that way is to put the order back to front. Two chapters on, as I quoted in 4.2, he says that God foresees the things that are to happen "simply because he has decreed that they are so to happen."[37]

The second is that he will not let providence be a looking-on. He tells the reader to remember "that the providence we mean is not one by which the Deity, sitting idly in heaven, looks on at what is taking place in the world, but one by which he, as it were, holds the helms

36 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.xxi.5, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), English text at ccel.org. The Latin of 1559 is at p. 337 of the Geneva edition. Quotations of the *Institutes* in this chapter are in Beveridge's English, and the section numbers are Calvin's. The one Latin word quoted in the text, "praeposterè," keeps its accent as printed, and the gloss on it is mine.

37 Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiii.6, trans. Beveridge.

and overrules all events." He draws the conclusion for foreknowledge: "providence consists in action. What many talk of bare prescience is the merest trifling."[38]

The third is the one that bears most on the question of necessity. In the same chapter, speaking of future contingencies, he says: "At the same time, that which God has determined, though it must come to pass, is not, however, precisely, or in its own nature, necessary." And he gives an example: "We have a familiar example in the case of our Saviour's bones. As he assumed a body similar to ours, no sane man will deny that his bones were capable of being broken, and yet it was impossible that they should be broken."[39] In the next sentence he approves the distinction that the Schoolmen made between the necessity of the consequence and the necessity of the consequent. I say that the example has that shape: what God has determined must come to pass, and the thing determined remains, in its own nature, capable of being otherwise. The Saviour's bones could be broken, and they could not be.

Bavinck

Bavinck comes nearest to the thing I am asking about, and I give his words before I say where I go beyond them. Writing on reprobation, he says that the decree "is neither a blind fate impelling humans against their will, nor a sword of Damocles hanging threateningly over their head. It is nothing other than God's idea of reality itself."[40] He calls it "entirely mistaken" to conceive the counsel of God as "a single naked decision of the divine will," and he goes on: "The decree is as inconceivably rich as reality itself. It is, in fact, the fountainhead of all reality. It encompasses in a single conception the end as well as the ways leading to it, the goal along

38 Calvin, *Institutes*, I.xvi.4, trans. Beveridge. The Latin of 1559 is at p. 62.

39 Calvin, *Institutes*, I.xvi.9, trans. Beveridge. The Latin of 1559 is at p. 65.

40 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 397–98, in the section on reprobation. Bavinck's note numbers are omitted from all quotations from this work.

with the means of reaching it. It is not a transcendent power randomly intervening now and then from above and impelling things toward their appointed end."[41]

In the section on the scope of the decree he says that the counsel of God, in relation to the world, is both its "efficient" and its "exemplary" cause, and he gives the order: "With God, however, the idea of a thing is first; then it comes into being as he has conceived it."[42] He adds that the counsel "must be considered a single and simple decree."

I take this to be the nearest statement I have found to the thing I ask about, and I do not read it as the answer. Bavinck identifies the decree with God's idea of reality, and he says that in God the idea of a thing is first. In the passages I have quoted he does not distinguish within the decree an idea, a will and a knowledge, and he does not say that the idea guides the will and the knowledge. That distinction is the one I draw in 4.5, and I draw it as an inference from what he says. I do not say that he states it, and the claim of 2.5 stands as I made it there.

Turretin

Turretin wrote against the Remonstrants, and he states a reason for the permission of sin that he attributes to them. I give it as he reports it and not as any Remonstrant wrote it. He says that they hold the cause of the permission to be, either the only one or the chief, "that God does not wish to do violence to the free will of creatures granted by himself."[43] His reply is that this does not hold. It falsely supposes that providence cannot efficaciously concur with a sinning will

41 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:398.

42 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:373–74, in the section "The Scope of God's Decree."

43 Franciscus Turrettinus, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae, Pars Prima* (Edinburgh: John D. Lowe, 1847), 464 (Loc. VI, q. 7, §9): "Arminiani causam, vel unam, vel praecipuam esse putant, quod nolit Deus vim inferre libero arbitrio creaturis a se concesso. Verum haec causa non valet, quia, praeterquam quod falso supponitur Providentiam non posse efficaciter concurrere cum voluntate peccante, quin vis inferatur libero arbitrio, quod antea refutavimus; si hoc foret, Deus peccatum nunquam impediret, ne liberum arbitrium cogeretur, quod saepe tamen eum facere constat." Translations of Latin in this chapter are mine. Latin quoted in these notes keeps its accents as printed, with the long s written s and the ligature æ written ae; abbreviations are expanded in square brackets, and any other oddity is kept as printed with [sic].

without violence being done to free will, and if it were so God would never hinder sin, lest free will be compelled, "which, however, it is established that he often does." The causes of the permission, he says, are to be sought elsewhere.

Of the way in which the decree and the creature's act stand together, he says that predetermination "does not take away the liberty of the will, but preserves it," because "they are so determined by God that they also determine themselves."[44] I do not read Turretin as a libertarian. He is a witness that the older writers were not content to set the decree against the creature's act, and that they held the decree to include the way in which the act is done. Chandieu, whom I cited in 1.4, says of the fallen will that it is free according to its natural faculty of willing, and that man in his own nature craves evil, not by compulsion but most willingly, so that his whole will serves sin (Chapter 1, n. 55).

The others

For the rest I refer to what I set out in Chapter 4, where I read each writer on his own page. Turretin and Charnock distinguish a natural knowledge, which precedes the decree, from a free knowledge, which follows it, because things are not future except by the decree (4.3). John Prideaux, in his lecture at Oxford in 1617, argued that a knowledge of free determinations that rested on no higher cause would be an effect without a cause and a creature without a creator, and he said that the name of middle knowledge can be admitted in two senses, as a mode of simple intelligence or as a mode of the knowledge of vision (4.2, 4.3). Voetius, in the disputation at Utrecht, set the knowledge of how creatures would act in any circumstance in a moment after an act of the will, within the decree (4.3). Bavinck holds that the decree, and not the world, is the medium from which God knows all things, and Vos that the decree, and not foreknowledge as

44 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 456 (Loc. VI, q. 5, §11): "non tollit libertatem voluntatis, sed conservat"; and "nimirum ita determinantur a Deo, ut seipsas etiam determinent." Translations of Latin in this chapter are mine.

such, makes free actions certain (4.2). And behind these stand Augustine and Aquinas on the ideas in the divine mind (4.4).

What these writers have in common is the order: the decree first, and the knowledge of what creatures will do after it. Voetius and Turretin, and Twisse at Westminster, put the knowledge of what creatures would do after it as well.[45] They are the majority. A minority did not, and to them I turn in 2.4a. What they leave open is the rest. They tell us where the knowledge stands. They do not tell us what in the decree the knowledge is the knowledge of.

2.4a The Reformed Minority

A minority of the Reformed orthodox held that God knows what a free creature would do under a condition, before his actual decree, and they did not think this made them Jesuits. Franciscus Gomarus, who sat at Dort for Groningen, placed such knowledge in God and said that God regarded the foreseen series of things "not as a cause but as an occasion," and "by a free and wise decree distinctly predefined it."[46] Antonius Walaeus, writing to Polyander, held that the treasure of things known to the divine mind is "not to be established as the cause of any decree," but is an object from which God's will, "directed through his wisdom, freely chose."[47] Johann Heinrich Alsted, who took part in the Synod of Dort, defined the knowledge in one line: it is that by which God knows, "if this should be, that will be future."[48] He denied that God's will is

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45 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:199 n. 91, lists among the Reformed who rejected middle knowledge Voetius (*Selectae disputationes*, 1:254–58), William Twisse (*Dissertatio de scientia media tribus libris absoluta* [Arnhem, 1639], bk. 3), and Turretin (Turrettinus, *Institutio*, loc. III, q. 13). Charles Hodge calls Twisse "the Prolocutor" of the Westminster Assembly: Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons; New York: Charles Scribner, 1872), 317.

46 Franciscus Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, "De divina hominum praedestinatione," th. XXXV, in *Opera theologica omnia*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Joannes Janssonius, 1664), Pars II, 28. On Gomarus at Dort for Groningen, see J. C. van Slee, "Gomarus, Franciscus," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 9 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1879), 363–65.

47 Antonius Walaeus, *Consilia et epistolae*, letter to Johannes Polyander, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Franciscus Hackius, 1643), 406.

48 Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica, exhibens locos communes theologicos methodo scholastica* (Hanau: Conrad Eifrid, 1618), sect. I, cap. XXIV, praec. III, 97. On Alsted at Dort, see Otto Weber,

"moved and ordered by the will of the creature."[49] Ludwig Crocius, the Bremen delegate, accepted "the thing itself" but counted it part of God's simple intelligence, so that there is "no need of a knowledge distinct" from simple intelligence and vision.[50] Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu, professor of theology at the Academy of Sedan, wrote a generation later. He reported that such knowledge was held "among the Reformed who subscribe to the Synod of Dort."[51] He held that the condition need include only God's supposed decree of a concurrence "of itself indifferent," which the creature's will directs.[52] And he held that the knowledge "in no way fights with grace efficacious of itself" and is not needed to reconcile that grace with human liberty.[53]

The strict did not condemn them. Heidegger condemned the Jesuit doctrine as poison but called Gomarus, Walaeus and Crocius orthodox, faulting them only for not referring the knowledge to God's natural knowledge.[54] Spanheim said the Remonstrant doctrine was "falsely imputed" to Gomarus and Walaeus, who "always suppose an intervening Decree."[55] Marck, quoted by De Moor, judged that Gomarus and Walaeus differed from the other orthodox "more in phrasing than in substance," though his *Compendium* also says some of ours agreed "in part

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"Alsted, Johann Heinrich," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1953), 206.

49 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. IV, 86.

50 Ludovicus Crocius, *Syntagma sacrae theologiae quatuor libris adornatum* (Bremen: Bertholdus Villerianus, 1636), lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 575. On Crocius at Dort for Bremen, see Walter Hollweg, "Crocius, Ludwig," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1957), 418.

51 Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu, "Theses theologicae de concordia libertatis humanae cum decretis divinis," pars I, th. XXV, in *Theses theologicae, variis temporibus in Academia Sedanensi editae et ad disputandum propositae* (London: Moses Pitt, 1675), 449. On Le Blanc at Sedan, see John McClintock and James Strong, "Beaulieu, Louis le Blanc de," in *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1867–1887).

52 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. LIII, 454.

53 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. LXV, 455.

54 Johann Heinrich Heidegger, *Corpus theologiae christianae*, vol. 1 (Zürich, 1700), locus III, §LXII, 85. Heidegger names Gomarus, Walaeus, and Crocius, and then "others."

55 Friedrich Spanheim the Younger, *Elenchus controversiarum* with the Remonstrants, VII, "De scientia Dei media," §II, in *Opera*, vol. 3 (Leiden, 1703), col. 859.

imprudently."[56] I follow this minority, and I set out their position and mine in 4.3a and Appendix F.

2.5 What Remains Unsaid

I have said that neither side, in the quarrel as it now stands, asks what the decree consists of. I want to say exactly how far that claim goes, because it is easily made too wide.

I do not say that no author has had an account of the decree. The Reformed writers I have read had an account, and in several of them it is a careful one. I do not say that any author denies that the decree involves an idea. The older writers were agreed that God has ideas, and that the world is made according to them. I do not say that Preciado, Bignon or Stratton is ignorant of any of these things.

My claim is narrower. In the writers I have read, the idea of the created order is treated as a feature of God's knowledge or as a pattern in the divine mind, and the decree is treated as an act of the will. Where the two are brought together, as they are in the Reformed account of the order of decree and knowledge, I have not found the idea given a part in the decree distinct from the will and the knowledge. In particular, I have not found any of them saying that the idea guides the rest of the decree: that it tells the will what to will and the knowledge what there is to know, so that, in my words, the creature's freedom is conceived before it is willed. What they say about the idea implies that distinction, and I draw it out as an inference. I do not say that any of them states it.

For the compatibilist, the question of the creature's freedom comes after the decree, and the decree is the reason why the creature could not have done otherwise. For the libertarian, the

56 Bernhard de Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus in Johannis Marckii Compendium theologiae christianae didactico-elencticum*, pars 1 (Leiden, 1761), cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660, quoting Johannes Marck, *Exercitationes textuales* XIV, pars IV, §10, and Marck's *Compendium*. On this page De Moor and Marck name only Gomarus and Walaeus among the Reformed.

question comes before it, and the decree is limited by what the creature would freely do. Each places the creature's freedom with reference to the will of God. Neither asks where in the decree it is conceived.

I do not say that this question is the only one worth asking, or that it dissolves the old ones. I say that it is a question the debate has not asked, and that when it is asked, some of what looked like a conflict between God's sovereignty and the creature's freedom turns out to depend on an unexamined picture of what the sovereignty consists of.

2.6 What This Chapter Has Laid Down

I have let the compatibilist and the libertarian speak in their own words. From Frankfurt, Fischer and Ravizza, and Preciado I have the case against the principle of alternate possibilities, the doctrine of guidance control, and the claim that the Reformed doctrine of the decree matches it on the denial of sourcehood and of alternative possibilities. From Bignon I have the distinction between the categorical and the conditional ability, the two arguments against the first, and the fact that he sets the Frankfurt cases aside. From Stratton I have the definitions of libertarian freedom, the demand for leeway and sourcehood, the argument from the ability to think otherwise, and the Molinist structure of divine knowledge.

I have said what each asks of the other, and that the two demands meet in a picture of the decree that neither examines. I have set out what Calvin and the Reformed orthodox say of the order of knowledge and decree, and I have said that they tell us where the knowledge stands and not what the decree is.

The next chapter begins on that question. It starts from what both sides would grant: that God has purposes in creating, that he has them first, and that he has the means to accomplish them. It asks what follows for the decree if we begin from the purposes and not from the will.

Chapter 3. Purposes, Priority, and the Covenant of Redemption

3.1 Why Begin with Purposes

Chapter 1 described the quarrel and named the foe that both sides are fighting. Chapter 2 lets each party speak in its own words. Before I argue anything of my own about the decree, I want to lay down three things that I think both sides can grant, because each of them can be read straight off the page of Scripture. They are that God has purposes in creating, that his purposes have priority over everything he creates, and that he accomplishes them through an agreement among the persons of the Godhead, which the older writers called the covenant of redemption. I do not say that Arminians, Molinists, and the Reformed have always stated these three things as I will state them. I say that none of them, as far as I can tell, would deny them when they are put in the words of the text, and that most of the quarrel has been carried on as though none of them had been said.

Why should a book about divine knowledge and creaturely freedom begin here? The reason is that a question about responsibility asked in the abstract has no answer. Whether the creature could have done otherwise, whether God knows what the creature will choose, whether the decree reaches the creature's will: these are questions about a part of a plan, and no part can be understood without the whole it serves. The quarrel as it is usually conducted takes the creature as its starting point. It asks what must be true of the creature for him to be answerable, and then asks what God must be like for that to be so. I think the order should be the other way. If God has a purpose in making, then the first thing to ask is what that purpose is, and the creature's part is whatever the purpose requires of him. A man who asks what a stage actor is free to do, without asking what the play is, will reach conclusions about the actor that the play does not support.

There is a second reason, which comes from the foe. Chapter 1 described fatalism as blind. Nothing in it intended anything. The remedy for a blind account is not first of all an account of freedom. It is the plain assertion that the world has a maker who meant it. Geerhardus Vos puts the point in the language of the old dogmatics: "There is no blind, purposeless existence in which no thought would be present. A transparent plan of the entire world of real things is present in the counsel of God."[1] If that is so, then the first fact about the decree is not its scope or its certainty. It is that someone with a mind and an end in view made it, and he made it for reasons. Vos says in the same chapter that "a decree is always guided by motivations."[2] The motive comes before the mechanism. I propose to begin where the Scripture begins, with what God says he is doing.

I take the method of this chapter from the method of the whole book. I read the text first and take the witnesses second. In sections 3.2 through 3.5 I set out what the Scripture says about the purposes of God, about the priority of those purposes over the creature, about the place of Christ in them, and about what Paul calls the wisdom of God, which the angels are shown through the church. In sections 3.6 through 3.9 I turn to the covenant of redemption. I set out the scriptural ground on which the older writers rested it, I give the witnesses in the order the best historians have been able to establish, I say what the covenant is, and I argue that creation is ordered to it. Section 3.10 explains the four causes, which I use in a way of my own, and section 3.11 gathers the results and points to Chapter 4.

I should say what this chapter does not do. It does not argue for any account of divine knowledge. That is the work of Chapter 4. It does not argue for the freedom of the creature,

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1 Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Theology Proper*, trans. and ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012–2014), ch. 4, "Of God's Decrees in General" (pp. 77–96), in the answer to the question on the reasons for the decree.

2 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, ch. 4, in the discussion of the wisdom of the decree.

which belongs to Chapter 5, and it does not say how a free choice stands within the decree, which is the subject of Chapter 6. Where the foundation laid here touches those questions, I say so and send the reader on. What it does is set the frame in which those questions are asked. A reader who grants the three things of this chapter has already granted more than he may realize, and I want him to see what he has granted before the arguments begin.

3.2 What God Purposes

The glory of God

The Scripture does not leave us to guess why God made what he made. It says so, and it says so in more than one place and in more than one voice. Through Isaiah he speaks of his sons and daughters as those "whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."[3] The Hebrew puts the three verbs in a line, one after the other, as though to pile up the ways in which the thing was his doing, and sets the purpose before them: for my glory.[4] Through the same prophet he says, "For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another."[5] The psalmist prays, "Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!"[6] In Revelation the elders cast down their crowns and say, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."[7] The apostle gives the same thing as a rule for ordinary life: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."[8]

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3 Isa. 43:5–7 (ESV).

4 Isa. 43:7, Hebrew text of the Westminster Leningrad Codex as given in the OpenScriptures Hebrew Bible (morphhb): וְלִכְבוֹדִי בְּרָאתִיו יְצַרְתִּיו אַף עֲשִׂיתִיו (*welikhvodi bera'tiv yetsartiv af asitiv*). I rely on the ESV rendering of the three verbs, "created," "formed," and "made," and make no further claim about their meanings.

5 Isa. 48:9–11 (ESV).

6 Ps. 115:1 (ESV).

7 Rev. 4:10–11 (ESV).

8 1 Cor. 10:31 (ESV).

Paul closes his long argument about God's dealing with Jew and Gentile with the sentence that I take to be the shortest statement of the purpose of the whole creation. I give it in the King James Version, whose wording is the one most readers have by heart: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."[9] The three prepositions run in a line. All things are from God, as their source. They are through him, as the one who carries them out. They are to him, as their end. Nothing is left over for another purpose. The Greek has the same three, *ex*, *dia*, and *eis*, and the doxology that follows is addressed to him, not to the creature.[10]

I call this the first and chief purpose. Vos says of the decrees that "they all may be reduced to a final ground, namely the glorification of God Himself."[11] Bavinck says nearly the same thing when he writes that the world is "a suitable theatre for the display, on a creaturely level, of all God's attributes," and that the world plan is "a mirror in which God displays his image."[12] I do not draw more from these sentences than they say. They say that the end of creation is the glory of the one who created. They do not say anything yet about how the creature's will stands in relation to that end.

The display of what God is

The glory in question is not an empty word. The Scripture fills it with content. When Moses stands before Pharaoh, God tells him why Pharaoh has been raised up: "But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all

9 Rom. 11:36 (KJV).

10 Rom. 11:36 (SBLGNT): "ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα· αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν." Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010). The three prepositions are *ex* (ἐξ), *dia* (διά), and *eis* (εἰς).

11 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, ch. 4, in the answer on the reasons for the decree.

12 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 373–74, in the section "The Scope of God's Decree."

the earth."[13] Paul quotes the verse in Romans 9 and then asks what it means that God, "desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power," endured vessels of wrath, "in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory."[14] In the cross Paul finds the display of another attribute: God put Christ forward "to show God's righteousness," so that God might be "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."[15] In the ages to come, he says, God will "show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."[16] And in the passage that will occupy section 3.5, the church is the means by which "the manifold wisdom of God" is made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.[17]

Put together, these passages name power, righteousness, grace, and wisdom, and the Scripture elsewhere adds mercy and holiness in the same way. When I say, then, that God's purposes are to declare, in a way that his creatures can perceive, how impressive he is in power, wisdom, justice, and mercy, I am summarizing a list the text itself gives. I do not say that this list is complete. I say that it is the list of what the text names, and that every item on it is something that can be shown only to someone, which means to creatures who can see it.

That last point bears on the whole book. A display needs an audience that can take it in. A glory that no one beholds is a glory that has been withheld. The Son himself prays on this ground: "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the

13 Exod. 9:16 (ESV).
14 Rom. 9:22–23 (ESV).
15 Rom. 3:25–26 (ESV).
16 Eph. 2:7 (ESV).
17 Eph. 3:10 (ESV).

world."[18] Seeing is a thing creatures do. They must have eyes to see, and they must see truly, and they must respond. I will come in section 3.9 to the kind of response that is required.

Is this self-centered?

An objection comes at once, and I have heard it put with some heat. A God whose purpose in making is his own glory sounds like a vain man who builds a monument to himself. I answer that the objection takes for granted what Scripture denies. A vain man seeks a glory he has not earned. He asks the world to admire a thing that is not admirable. When God seeks his glory, he seeks the acknowledgment of what is true. He is the chief and best of beings. To make a creation whose end was something lower than himself would be to direct it to a lesser good, and a wise maker does not do that. Vos gives the reason in the language of the old doctrine when he says that the decree "is one and is oriented to one highest goal: the glorification of His name, of Himself," and that "the proof for this lies in the simplicity and self-existence of God."[19] God could not set a higher end than himself without ceasing to be the highest.

There is a further answer, which the New Testament gives. The glory of God is not set over against the good of the creature as a rival. The Son's prayer in John 17 joins them: eternal life is "that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent,"[20] and the same prayer asks that the people given to him should see his glory. To know him and to see his glory is the life of the creature. In Ephesians 1 the redeemed are those who were predestined "to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved,"[21] and the repeated refrain through that chapter is that the whole of it is "to the praise of his glory."[22] The glory is

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18 John 17:24 (ESV).

19 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, ch. 4, in the answer on the further properties of the decree.

20 John 17:3 (ESV).

21 Eph. 1:5–6 (ESV).

22 Eph. 1:12, 14 (ESV).

God's, and the blessing is ours, and the two are the same event described from two sides. I do not make more of this than the text does, but I do not make less of it either.

What the purposes require of the creature

Here I come to a point that Chapter 5 will carry through at length. If the purpose of creation is that God's impressiveness be shown and answered, then the answer cannot be coerced. A response wrung out of someone against his will is not praise. It is the sound of a thing being pressed. The Father, Jesus says, is looking for worshipers: "the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him."[23] The Greek verb for "seeking" means to seek, to search for, to desire, and the Greek noun for "worshiper" means one who worships.[24] God is described as wanting a certain kind of person, and what makes them the kind he wants is that they worship from the heart. I leave the full argument for Chapter 5. For the present I say only that I take this to be one of the things the purposes of God require of the creature, and that it is a requirement of the purpose itself, which is prior to any theory of freedom.

The decree is not the subject of the debate

I should say plainly what I am not asking. I am not asking whether there is a decree. Scripture says there is: "my counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose."[25] The Reformed hold it with a full account, the Arminians hold it in the form of a decree to save those who believe, the Molinists hold it as the decree that follows God's middle knowledge of what creatures would freely do, and even the open theist holds that God has purposes he will bring

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23 John 4:23 (ESV).

24 John 4:23 (SBLGNT). The lexicon, John Jeffrey Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon* (2010; public domain), Open Scriptures XML edition, glosses ζητέω "I seek, search for, desire, require, demand," and the noun προσκυνητής "a worshipper."

25 Isa. 46:10 (ESV).

about. The quarrel is not over whether God decreed. It is over what the decree consists of, and in particular whether it includes the free choices of creatures in a way that leaves them free. I say this now so that no reader takes the argument of this chapter as the argument for the Reformed doctrine of the decree against its rivals. It is not. It is the argument that whatever the decree consists of, it has a point, and the point is the glory of God shown in the Son and answered by creatures who know and love him.

3.3 God's Priority

Before, and not in time

When Scripture speaks of the purposes of God, it speaks of them as coming before. The language is plain, and it is repeated. God "chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him."[26] Grace was what God "gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began."[27] The hope of eternal life is the hope of what "God, who never lies, promised before the ages began."[28] Christ "was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you."[29] The book of life is the book of "the Lamb who was slain," and the names in it were "written from the foundation of the world."[30] The inheritance of the blessed is a kingdom "prepared for you from the foundation of the world."[31] The Son speaks of the glory he had with the Father "before the world existed," and of being loved by the Father "before the foundation of the world."[32]

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26 Eph. 1:4 (ESV).
27 2 Tim. 1:9 (ESV).
28 Titus 1:2 (ESV).
29 1 Pet. 1:20 (ESV).
30 Rev. 13:8 (ESV).
31 Matt. 25:34 (ESV).
32 John 17:5, 24 (ESV).

What kind of "before" is this? It cannot be a before in time, because time is a thing that was made. The Reformed teachers were careful about this. Bavinck writes that "God's counsel is no more an act in the past than the generation of the Son."[33] That is a striking comparison. The Son is begotten eternally. There was no moment at which the Father had not yet begotten him, and no moment after which he had. The counsel of God stands in the same relation to time. It is not an earlier event in a series that includes the creation. It is the eternal act of God in which the creation has its ground. Vos says the same thing from the dogmatic side. He grants that "there is certainly an order in the decree of God and its different parts are not in isolation alongside each other," and then adds, "this can never be a temporal order."[34]

I follow the old teachers in this and I add only what the limits of our speech require. We are creatures bound to time, and we cannot speak of the order of God's purposes without using words that sound like time: before, after, then, first. When I use these words of the decree, as I must, I mean an order of dependence and of reason, which I will call an order of moments for want of a better word, and not an order of duration. Where I say that God's purpose comes before his idea of the creation, I do not say that there was a time when he had the purpose and not yet the idea. I say that the idea is the idea of a creation fitted to the purpose, and so the purpose is what it depends on, and not the reverse.

The priority over the creature's will

The priority of God's purposes is not only a priority over time. It is a priority over the will of the creature. Isaiah 46 says it in the clearest terms: "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My

33 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:373–74.

34 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, ch. 4, in the answer on the eternity of the decree.

counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'"[35] The psalmist sets the counsel of the LORD against the counsels of the nations: "The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations."[36] In the Hebrew of the second verse the word for counsel is *'ētsāh*, and the phrase "the plans of his heart" is the Hebrew *maḥshĕvôt libbô*, so that the passage sets the counsel of God and the counsels of men side by side in a single comparison, and the result is not in doubt.[37] Proverbs puts it shorter: "The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble."[38]

The New Testament makes the same claim about the cross. Peter tells the crowd at Pentecost that Jesus was "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God," and in the same sentence says that they "crucified and killed" him "by the hands of lawless men."[39] The believers at Jerusalem pray that "both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel," did "whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place."[40] In the one verse is the plan of God and the guilt of the men, both set down without a word about how they fit. I take it that no account of the freedom of the creature is a Christian account if it removes either half of that verse, and I will keep both halves in view to the end of this book.

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35 Isa. 46:9–10 (ESV).

36 Ps. 33:10–11 (ESV).

37 Ps. 33:10–11, Westminster Leningrad Codex as given in the OpenScriptures Hebrew Bible: "יְהוָה הֵפִיר עֲצַת גּוֹיִם הֵנִיא מַחְשְׁבוֹת עַמִּים" (v. 10) and "עֲצַת יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תַּעֲמֹד מַחְשְׁבוֹת לִבּוֹ לְדֹר וָדֹר" (v. 11). The ESV renders *'atsat* as "counsel" in both verses and *machshevot* as "plans." Vos gives עֵצָה as "counsel" and cites Ps. 33:11; see Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, ch. 4, answer to the question on the words used for the decree.

38 Prov. 16:4 (ESV).

39 Acts 2:23 (ESV).

40 Acts 4:27–28 (ESV).

I take the same view of the passages about Pharaoh and Cyrus that Chapter 1 mentioned. God says of Cyrus, who did not know him, that he will use him, and the historian of Ezra says that the LORD "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom."[41] God says of Pharaoh that he raised him up to show his power, and the same narrative says more than once that Pharaoh "hardened his heart," so that the hardening is attributed to Pharaoh himself in the same chapters in which it is attributed to God.[42] I will not argue here what Paul draws from this in Romans 9, which belongs to the later chapters on the fall and the fallen will. What I say is that these passages show a priority of God's purpose over the creature's intent, and that they do not show the creature's intent removed. The text does not say that the purpose of God was served by men who only seemed to choose. It describes men who chose, and it says that God's purpose was served by what they chose. The priority is a priority of God's purpose over the choices, and it is not the priority of a script over actors.

I turn to Calvin for a statement of the priority in its strongest form. On Ephesians 1:11, where Paul says that God "works all things according to the counsel of his will," Calvin writes that God "looks at nothing out of himself to move him to elect them," because "the counsel of his own will is the only and actual cause of their election."[43] Calvin's concern there is election, and I do not claim that this sentence settles any question about divine knowledge. I give it because it is the plainest statement I know of the direction in which the dependence runs. The creature does not move God to his purpose. God's purpose moves toward the creature.

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41 Ezra 1:1 (ESV).

42 Exod. 8:15, 8:32, and 9:34 (ESV) say that Pharaoh hardened his heart; Exod. 9:12 (ESV) says that "the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh."

43 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1854), 206, on Eph. 1:11.

The creature is not consulted

It follows from the priority that the creature is not consulted. Paul asks in the passage on which the doxology of Romans 11 rests: "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"[44] No one advised God in the making of the world, and no one is owed anything for being made. This is the first and fixed limit of any creature's freedom, and it is what I mean by saying in Chapter 1 that LUF is limited. I will not repeat the definition here. It is enough to recall that the creature did not make himself, was not consulted over whether he would be made, and was not consulted over whether he would be kept in being. The Scripture places this limit before it says anything else about us. That is why I count it a feature of the foundation and not a feature of one side's theory.

I add a caution that I think necessary. The priority of God's purposes is not a license to say that whatever happens is what God wanted in the sense that he approves of it. The Scripture is as clear about God's holiness as it is about his priority. Habakkuk says to him, "You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong."[45] The plan includes the cross, and the cross is the supreme display of his righteousness as well as his love. I raise the point here, and not later, because the argument of this chapter uses the priority of the purpose in a way that does not imply any divine approval of sin. Chapter 7 will deal with the authorship of sin. For now I say only that to affirm that God's purposes come first is not to say that God is the author of every act that falls within them.

Two ways of seeing the same event

One more thing belongs to the priority. We see events from within time, and God sees them from outside it. The two views are not the same, and Scripture does not ask us to pretend

44 Rom. 11:34–35 (ESV).

45 Hab. 1:13 (ESV).

they are. When Isaiah has God say that he calls Cyrus by name, he speaks from the standpoint of the one who is "declaring the end from the beginning." When the historian of Ezra says that the LORD "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia," he speaks of the thing as it was seen on earth in the first year of Cyrus. They are not two different events. They are the same event described from two places. I am wary of the habit of treating one of the descriptions as the true one and the other as a figure of speech. Both are true, and they are true at once. I will return to this in Chapter 6, where I give it the name I think it deserves. Here it is enough that the priority I have described is the priority as God sees it. The creature, who sees from inside the order of time, sees a choice, makes it, and answers for it.

I now have two things in hand. God has purposes, which are for his glory and the display of what he is. And those purposes come first, in an order that is not an order of time and that does not remove the creature's part. The third thing is the centre of the whole.

3.4 Christ at the Center: Colossians 1:15–20 and the Final Cause

The text

The third thing is the center of the whole, and the Scripture names it. I give the passage entire, in the English Standard Version, because I will want the reader to have every clause in front of him:

> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.[46]

46 Col. 1:15–20 (ESV).

The paragraph has two halves, and the Greek makes the joint between them plain. In the first half Christ is the image of God and the agent and goal of creation. In the second half he is the head of the church and the firstborn from the dead. Verse 18 states the purpose of both halves together: *hina genētai en pasin autos prōteuōn*, "that in everything he might be preeminent." The verb for being preeminent, *prōteuō*, is glossed in the lexicon "I have preeminence, am chief, am first," and the clause opens with *hina*, "in order that, so that," which marks it as a clause of purpose.[47] The preeminence of Christ in all things is the stated reason for what comes before it, and it is the reason for what follows.

In him, through him, for him

Three prepositions govern verse 16. Everything was created in him, through him, and for him: *en*, *dia*, and *eis*. The ESV renders the first as "by him" and notes that the Greek can be read "by means of" or "in."[48] I will not build on the first. It is the second and third that matter for my argument, because they are the same two prepositions that Paul used of God in the doxology of Romans 11:36, "through him, and to him." The lexicon glosses *dia* with a genitive as "through, throughout, by the instrumentality of," and *eis* as "into, in, unto, to, upon, towards, for, among."[49] In the Romans text God is the source, the means, and the end of all things. In Colossians the means and the end are Christ.

I do not take Paul to mean that the persons of the Trinity are interchangeable, nor that the Father has handed over the place he occupies. In 1 Corinthians 8:6 he keeps the persons distinct and gives each his own preposition: "for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all

47 Col. 1:18 (SBLGNT): "ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων." The lexicon glosses πρωτεύω "I have preeminence, am chief, am first," and ἵνα "in order that, so that."

48 Col. 1:16 (ESV), with the ESV note on "by": "That is, by means of; or in."

49 Col. 1:16 (SBLGNT). The lexicon glosses διά with the genitive "through, throughout, by the instrumentality of," and εἰς "into, in, unto, to, upon, towards, for, among."

things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist."[50] The Father is the source and the end. The Son is the agent. What Colossians adds is that the Son is also the one *for* whom the creation stands, in the sense that he is the one in whom the Father's purpose finds its fullness. The two passages agree that creation is a work of the Father through the Son. Colossians says that it is also for the Son.

The verbs of verse 16 change form as the verse goes on. The first, "were created," is an aorist passive, and the verb in the last clause, "all things were created through him and for him," is a perfect passive.[51] I note the change and do not build on it. Verse 17 adds that "in him all things hold together," and the verb there is the one the lexicon glosses "I am composed of, cohere."[52] The Christ for whom all things were made is also the one in whom they cohere.

The final cause

I use the word *final* as Aristotle used it and the older theology after him: the final cause of a thing is the end for the sake of which it is. The final cause of a house is shelter. The final cause of this creation, on Paul's showing, is Christ. The Colossians passage says it with the preposition *eis*, and it says it again in verse 18 with the purpose clause. The glory of Christ is the end for which the creation was made.

I mean something specific by this, and I want to say what it is. Christ is not only the Second Person, who reigns in the glory he had with the Father before the world was. He is also, as man, the second Adam. Paul says so in Romans 5:14, where he writes that Adam "was a type of the one who was to come," and in 1 Corinthians 15:45, "the last Adam became a life-giving

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50 1 Cor. 8:6 (ESV).

51 Col. 1:16 (SBLGNT); parsing from J. K. Tauber, ed., *MorphGNT: SBLGNT Edition*, version 6.12 (2017): ἐκτίσθη, aorist passive indicative, third person singular; ἔκτισται, perfect passive indicative, third person singular.

52 Col. 1:17 (ESV). The verb is συνέστηκεν (SBLGNT), parsed in MorphGNT as perfect active indicative, third person singular, of συνίστημι, which the lexicon glosses "I am composed of, cohere" among its senses.

spirit."[53] Bavinck says that "Christ is the second and last Adam who restores what the first Adam had corrupted and takes over what he had neglected."[54] The glory I have in view in the final cause is the glory of Christ in that office. It is the glory of the Son of God made man, who undertakes what Adam did not accomplish and does not fail. I call that glory indefectible, by which I mean that it cannot be lost, because the work it crowns is carried by one who cannot fail. In the first Adam there was a mutable test, and he did not stand. In the last Adam the work does stand. The contrast between the two is the contrast Paul draws in Romans 5, and I take it up in Chapters 7 and 8.[55]

The prayer of John 17 gives the same shape. The Son prays: "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him."[56] He says that he has glorified the Father on earth, "having accomplished the work that you gave me to do," and he asks to be glorified "in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed."[57] There is a work given, a work finished, and a glory sought and given that precedes the world. I will say more in section 3.6 about what this language implies about an agreement. Here I say only that the Son's own account of his mission places his glory at the end of it.

Christocentric teleology

I use the phrase *Christocentric teleology* for the claim that the end of creation is centered on Christ. It is a long phrase for a plain thing: creation is for Christ. I did not invent the thought. The author of Hebrews opens his letter with it: God "has spoken to us by his Son, whom he

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53 Rom. 5:14 (ESV); 1 Cor. 15:45 (ESV).

54 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 227, in the section on the covenant of grace.

55 Rom. 5:12–21 and 1 Cor. 15:22, 45–49 (ESV).

56 John 17:1–2 (ESV).

57 John 17:4–5 (ESV).

appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."[58] The Son is the heir, and the world was made through him, and the order of the two clauses puts the inheritance first. Paul says elsewhere that God's plan was "to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him."[59] The verb, in the Greek, is the one the lexicon glosses "I sum up, summarize, recapitulate, gather up in one."[60] God means to sum up everything in Christ.

The end is not only glory in the abstract. It is a kingdom. Paul says that Christ "must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet," and that when all things are subjected to him, "then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all."[61] The Father gives the kingdom to the Son, and the Son delivers it to the Father, and the end is God all in all. The Apocalypse sets the same thing in worship: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"[62] The song is addressed to the Lamb, and in the next verse the whole of creation joins it. The centre of the worship that is the creature's end is Christ.

A new kingdom and a new creation come alongside the original creation, and Christ is the head of both. Colossians 1:18 calls him "the beginning, the firstborn from the dead," and verse 20 says that in him God reconciles "all things, whether on earth or in heaven." I do not develop the metaphysics of that new creation in this book. I record the point so that the reader will not think the final cause is confined to the first creation, as though the new were an afterthought. The new is within the purpose from the outset.

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58 Heb. 1:1–2 (ESV).

59 Eph. 1:10 (ESV).

60 Eph. 1:10 (SBLGNT): "ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ." The lexicon glosses ἀνακεφαλαιόω "I sum up, summarize, recapitulate, gather up in one."

61 1 Cor. 15:25, 28 (ESV).

62 Rev. 5:12 (ESV).

The decree does not replace Christ

Here I come to a point of method that I think matters more than any other in this chapter. In the debate as it is usually carried on, the decree takes up so much room that the purpose the decree serves goes missing. One side defends the decree and the other defends the creature's freedom against it, and in the exchange it is easy to forget that the decree is itself in the service of Christ. I do not say that either side denies the centrality of Christ. I say that the arguments are framed as though the decree were the center, and that it is not. God's decree is his work. It is a means, and it is a means in the service of the glory of the Son. If a doctrine of the decree takes the place that belongs to Christ in our thinking, so that the thing we most want to know about the world is how it was determined and not why it was made, then the doctrine has begun to work in the wrong direction.

I mean this as a test I put to my own account as much as anyone's. At every stage in the chapters that follow I will ask what the thing I am saying does to the place of Christ. If it makes him an incident in a system, I have said it wrongly. If it keeps him at the center, as Paul does, I have a measure by which to know that I am on the right road. This is not a rhetorical flourish. It is the use I make of the final cause.

What I do not claim

It would be natural to argue from this that the purpose, the glory of Christ, can be served only if the decree is exhaustive and determinate. I do not make that argument here and I do not rely on it elsewhere. A case can be made for it, and a case can be made against it. I also grant, as I did in Chapter 1, that God had the power to conceive a creation in which his creatures are free in the libertarian sense. What I say is smaller and, I think, sturdier. The Scripture states the purpose. Any account of the decree that leaves Christ out of the purpose has changed the subject.

And any account that keeps him in it is, to that extent, doing what the text asks, whichever way it goes on the questions that divide us.

3.5 Ephesians 3:10 and the Multi-faceted Wisdom of God

The passage

Paul's letter to the Ephesians holds the other passage on which the purposes of God turn. In Ephesians 3:8–11 the apostle describes his calling, and then he says why God has done what he has done:

> To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.[63]

The phrase "multi-faceted wisdom," which I use throughout this book, is how the Christian Standard Bible renders the verse: "This is so that God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens."[64] The ESV has "manifold." The two renderings aim at the same Greek, and I will explain the word before I make use of it.

The Greek

The Greek of verse 10 is a single sentence beginning with a purpose clause: *hina gnōristhē nyn tais archais kai tais exousiais en tois epouraniois dia tēs ekklēsias hē polypoikilos sophia tou theou*.[65] The verb *gnōristhē* is a passive, and a lexicon gives its sense as "I make

63 Eph. 3:8–11 (ESV).

64 Eph. 3:10 (CSB). The ESV reads "manifold."

65 Eph. 3:10–11 (SBLGNT): "ἵνα γνωρισθῇ νῦν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ, κατὰ πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων ἣν ἐποίησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν." The verb γνωρισθῇ is parsed in MorphGNT as aorist passive subjunctive, third person singular.

known, declare."[66] The wisdom is made known, and the one who makes it known is not named in the clause. The audience is "the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places," and the means is the church. The adverb *nyn*, "now," places the disclosure in the present age, where it had not been disclosed before.

The word that I will lean on is *polypoikilos*. It stands between the article and the noun, as an adjective modifying "wisdom," and it is built from two parts that the Dodson lexicon lists separately: *polys*, "much, many," and *poikilos*, "various, of different colors." Dodson's own gloss for the whole word is "much varied, manifold."[67] The older lexicon of Thayer distinguishes a proper sense of the word, "much-variegated; marked with a great variety of colors," said of a cloth or a painting, from a transferred sense, "much varied, manifold," and for the transferred sense he gives this same verse, glossing the wisdom of God as "manifesting itself in a great variety of forms."[68] The picture behind the word is of a pattern in many colors, and the verse applies it to wisdom. I do not rest more than this on it. What the word says is that the wisdom of God has more than one face, that it shows itself in a variety of forms, and that this variety is, in the end, the point.

Verse 11 gives the purpose a name. *Kata prothesin tōn aiōnōn hēn epoiēsen en tō Christō Iēsou*: "according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus." The Greek word for purpose is *prothesis*, and Dodson glosses it "predetermination, purpose."[69] Vos, in his chapter on the decrees, says that the word is "literally 'presentation,' 'what someone proposes,'" and that

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66 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. γνωρίζω: "I make known, declare, know, discover."

67 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. πολυποίκιλος: "much varied, manifold"; s.v. πολύς: "much, many"; s.v. ποικίλος: "various, of different colors."

68 Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. πολυποίκιλος, public-domain text as transcribed at Bible Hub (biblehub.com/thayers/4182.htm). The two senses given are "much-variegated; marked with a great variety of colors: of cloth or a painting" and "much varied, manifold: σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ, manifesting itself in a great variety of forms, Ephesians 3:10."

69 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. πρόθεσις (*prothesis*, the noun in Eph. 3:11): "a setting forth, the show-bread; predetermination, purpose."

"God places the decree, as it were, before Himself by His reason and then holds His will fixed on it." He concludes: "Both elements of the decreeing of God are thus present here: wisdom and sovereignty, thinking and willing."[70] The Greek phrase "of the ages" in the verse goes with the purpose, and the verb at the end is the one that says God made it, or carried it out, in Christ. The purpose and the wisdom stand together in the sentence. The wisdom is made known through the church, and what the wisdom discloses is the purpose that God has accomplished in Christ.

The audience

Who are the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places? The lexicon lists both nouns with a quasi-personal sense: for the first, in the plural, "almost: rulers, magistrates," and for the second, "of a spiritual power."[71] In Colossians 1:16, in the passage I have just discussed, the same two words appear in the list of created things: "thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities." They are created beings, and they are watching. Peter says the same of the angels in connection with the gospel: these are "things into which angels long to look."[72] The Greek verb for "to look" in that verse, *parakypsai*, is glossed in the lexicon as "I stoop, peer in, look down, look intently," and the verb for "long," *epithymousin*, as "I long for, covet, lust after, set the heart upon."[73] The picture is of beings who bend over a rail to see something they never tire of seeing.

Calvin read Ephesians 3:10 in this way. He writes that the church, "composed both of Jews and Gentiles, is a mirror, in which angels behold the astonishing wisdom of God displayed

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70 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, ch. 4, answer to the question on the words used for the decree (New Testament words), on πρόθεσις.

71 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. ἀρχή, plural sense: "(b) plur: in a quasi-personal sense, almost: rulers, magistrates"; s.v. ἐξουσία: "(b) in a quasi-personal sense, derived from later Judaism, of a spiritual power, and hence of an earthly power."

72 1 Pet. 1:12 (ESV).

73 1 Pet. 1:12 (SBLGNT): "εἰς ἃ ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἄγγελοι παρακύψαι." Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. παρακύπτω (the verb for "peer"): "I stoop, peer in, look down, look intently"; s.v. ἐπιθυμέω: "I long for, covet, lust after, set the heart upon."

in a manner unknown to them before."[74] I notice that in this sentence Calvin does not say the wisdom was unknown to the angels. He says it was displayed in a way that was unknown to them before. The wisdom is shown in a new manner, and the new manner is the church.

I have said that a display needs an audience. Here the audience is named, and it is not human. The creation, on this reading, is a stage on which the wisdom of God is exhibited to beings who are not in the story as we are. That is not the whole of its purpose, but it is part, and it is one that is not often mentioned in the quarrel I am writing about. The quarrel is conducted between human beings about human beings. The text addresses a larger company.

The cross as the center of the display

The center of the display is the cross. Paul says that the message of the cross is, to those who are called, "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."[75] Power and wisdom are both named. In the cross also the justice and mercy of God stand together, in the sentence I quoted from Romans 3: he is "just and the justifier." God did not set justice aside to show mercy, and he did not withhold mercy to show justice. He showed both at once, by putting forward his Son. That is a wisdom of a particular sort. A mind could show power by a command and justice by a sentence. To show mercy and justice in one act, in a way that neither cancels the other, takes more than either. The cross, as Acts 2:23 puts it, is the place where the "definite plan and foreknowledge of God" and the act of "lawless men" are both present in a single event. I take this as the model case of the multi-faceted wisdom, the one on which I rest the others. It is the place where the two truths of Chapter 1 are seen together, and it is the place where the wisdom has its widest range.

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74 Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. Pringle, 256, on Eph. 3:10.
75 1 Cor. 1:24 (ESV).

The argument from fit, and how far I take it

I now state an argument, and I state it as an argument from fit, which is a weaker thing than a proof. Paul says that what is made known is the *manifold* wisdom of God, the wisdom with many facets, and that it is made known through the church, which is to say through a people, redeemed, called out, and taught. If a wise mind sets out to bring about a certain result, there are two kinds of work it can do. It can arrange the situation so that the result follows from conditions it has itself fixed throughout. Or it can accomplish the result through agents who have their own wills, who may resist, who have their own purposes, and whose choices cannot be treated as the movements of a mechanism. The second kind of work requires greater wisdom than the first, because it must reckon with what it does not fix in the same manner. When Paul speaks of *polypoikilos* wisdom, I think the second kind comes more naturally to mind. A wisdom with many facets is shown more fully in working through, and around, and against the wills of creatures who are free in the sense I describe than in bringing about their decisions by a chain of causes that leaves no room for anything but the designed result.[76]

Let me say how far I take this. I do not claim it as a proof. I do not say that the opposite view, in which the decree includes the free choices of creatures in a way that I have not yet described, makes the wisdom less. A compatibilist can reply, and the reply is a serious one, that the wisdom required to bring about a vast complex of free human acts, every one of them as free as a compatibilist says they are, and all of them converging on the redemption of a people, is a wisdom beyond any imagining, and that the multi-faceted character of the wisdom lies in the multiplicity of the means and ends, not in the independence of the creatures. I think that reply has force. I also think that the text sits more easily with my reading, and I say why in the

76 This argument is one of the fourteen reasons set out in Appendix C.

following way: the wisdom Paul speaks of is wisdom that has something to be wise *about*: a rebellion to be met, a mercy to be shown without compromising justice, and a people who will have to be won. I leave the matter there. It is a consideration of fit, and I will use it as such. It does not carry the weight of the later argument, which rests on grounds I have not yet reached.

Let me also say what the argument does not need. It does not need the claim that the opposite view is impossible. The view I am arguing against seems to me wrongheaded. I do not say it has been proved wrong, and I ask the same measure for mine. The argument from fit is the sort of thing that two reasonable readers will weigh differently, and I have no wish to claim for it more than I can show.

What the display has to do with the covenant

Ephesians 3:11 says that the wisdom disclosed in the church is "according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus." It is Christ again, and the purpose is eternal. Paul goes on in verses 12 and 13 to the confidence that believers have through him. The movement of the passage is from the eternal purpose, to its realization in Christ, to the display of the wisdom to the heavenly powers, to the confidence of the saints. The eternal purpose is realized in Christ. How it was realized in Christ is the question of the covenant of redemption, and it is to that question that I now turn.

3.6 The Covenant of Redemption in Scripture

A thing and its name

The covenant of redemption is a doctrine about the Godhead before creation, and any doctrine of that sort must be held with care. I hold it as the older writers held it, which is to say that I hold the thing and am modest about the name. The treatise attributed to Patrick Gillespie, *The Ark of the Covenant Opened* (1677), puts the point at its opening. It says that there is "a

Covenant betwixt God and Christ," and that although "the name of this mysterious transaction, which we call the Covenant of Redemption and Suretiship, be not found in the Scripture, in so many words," yet "the thing it self" is "so evidently held forth in the Scripture."[77] I think that is exactly right, and I follow it. The phrase "covenant of redemption" is not in the Bible. What the phrase names is, as I will show, in a great many places in the Bible.

I should say at the start what the older Reformed themselves said about the weakest text. The text that gave the doctrine one of its names is Zechariah 6:13, where the prophet says of the man whose name is the Branch that he "shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."[78] The old divines read "between them both" as the Lord and the Branch. Vos writes that the expression "was wrongly applied by Cocceius and others to the agreement between Jehovah and Christ," and that it should be understood of the union of the priestly and royal offices in the Messiah. He adds at once, "Even though the scriptural origin of the term itself vanishes, in no sense does the thing need to be denied."[79] Bavinck says that "the classic text (Zech. 6:13) cited in support of this doctrine does not prove anything."[80] Richard Muller, whose history of the doctrine I rely on in the next section, writes that the text "played no role in the initial formulation and was only drawn in as a significant locus by some later theologians."[81] I rest nothing on Zechariah 6:13. Witsius and Owen and Gillespie rest a good deal on it. I note that they do and I go another way.

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77 Attributed to Patrick Gillespie, *The Ark of the Covenant Opened, or, A Treatise of the Covenant of Redemption between God and Christ, as the Foundation of the Covenant of Grace* (London: Tho. Parkhurst, 1677), 1.

78 Zech. 6:12–13 (ESV).

79 Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012–2014), ch. 3, "The Covenant of Grace," 84.

80 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, 213 (section "The Pactum Salutis").

81 Richard A. Muller, "Toward the Pactum Salutis: Locating the Origins of a Concept," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 18 (2007): 11–65, at 64.

The Son sent, and the work given

The first line of evidence is the Son's own account of his mission. In the Gospel of John he speaks again and again of a work given to him and a will he came to do, and he speaks of it as something received from the Father: "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me."[82] "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."[83] The word "charge" renders a Greek noun that the lexicon glosses "an ordinance, injunction, command, law,"[84] and a few chapters on Jesus says, "I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment."[85] He says in the prayer of John 17 that he has "accomplished the work that you gave me to do."[86] Bavinck lists these passages together when he says that the Son, as Mediator, "has been assigned a task (Isa. 53:10; John 6:38–40; 10:18; 12:49; 14:31; 17:4) and who receives a reward (Ps. 2:8; Isa. 53:10; John 17:4, 11, 17, 24; Eph. 1:20f.; Phil. 2:9f.)."[87]

These two lines speak together. The Son lays down his life "of my own accord" and also under a charge received from the Father. The two are not set side by side as rivals. The first is what a person says who has undertaken a task freely, the second is what the same person says of the task he undertook. That is the shape of an agreement. Vos reads it so. Among his grounds for the doctrine he names the passages in which Christ "speaks of the promises of the Father made to

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82 John 6:38 (ESV).

83 John 10:17–18 (ESV).

84 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. ἐντολή: "an ordinance, injunction, command, law." The word in John 10:18 (SBLGNT) is ἐντολήν.

85 John 12:49 (ESV).

86 John 17:4 (ESV).

87 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:215.

Him before His incarnation, and how He received a mission from the Father in consequence of which He came into the world."[88]

The Son's coming, as written

The second line is the Old Testament speech of the Messiah that the New Testament quotes. In Psalm 40 the speaker says, "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.'"[89] The author of Hebrews takes the speech as Christ's at his entry into the world: "Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me.'"[90] The next verses give the answer: "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'"[91] John Owen found a consultation here, as we will see; I note for the present only that the words are the words of a speaker who has been told what is wanted and who answers, "Behold, I have come."

The people given

The third line is the gift of a people. In John 6 the Son says, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out." He goes on, "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day."[92] In John 17 the same thought is found in the prayer: "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word."[93] And at verse 24, "Father, I desire that they also, whom you

88 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:85.

89 Ps. 40:7–8 (ESV).

90 Heb. 10:5 (ESV).

91 Heb. 10:7 (ESV).

92 John 6:37, 39 (ESV).

93 John 17:6 (ESV).

have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world."[94] The Father gives, the Son receives, and the whole is spoken of before the foundation of the world.

The Father's promise and the Son's reward

The fourth line is the promise to the Son. In Psalm 2 the Father says to the king, "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession."[95] In Isaiah 53, after the suffering, the Father speaks: "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors."[96] In Philippians 2, "God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name."[97] In Isaiah 53:10 the verse that precedes these says, "Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand."[98] Vos lists the Hebrew word behind "will" in this verse, *ḥēpheṣ*, among the Old Testament words for the decree of God. He glosses it "inclination," "liking," "volition," "good pleasure," and says that in this word, "in distinction from the words mentioned above, the emphasis falls more on the willing, the free element in God's decrees."[99]

94 John 17:24 (ESV).

95 Ps. 2:8 (ESV).

96 Isa. 53:12 (ESV).

97 Phil. 2:9 (ESV).

98 Isa. 53:10 (ESV).

99 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, ch. 4, answer to the question on the words used for the decree (Old Testament words), on חֵפֶץ (Isa. 53:10).

Before the ages

The fifth line is the reach of the agreement into eternity. Paul speaks of "hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began."[100] Before the ages began, there were no creatures to whom a promise could be made. The one to whom God promised must therefore have been one of the persons of the Godhead. I draw this conclusion myself, and I do not claim it is the only conclusion the verse permits. It is, however, the conclusion that the Son's speech in John 17 and the whole of this evidence invites. Paul says the same of grace in 2 Timothy 1:9: "his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began."[101] The grace was given to us in Christ before there was a "we" to be given it. Peter says of Christ that he "was foreknown before the foundation of the world,"[102] and Paul says that God "chose us in him before the foundation of the world."[103] Christ stands in these verses as the one in whom the people were chosen, and as the one who was set apart for the work.

Luke 22:29 and the verb of covenant

One verse deserves a longer look, because it contains a word that has been argued over. The Lord says to the apostles at the table, in the English Standard Version, "And I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom."[104] The verb the ESV translates "assign" is *diatithemai* in the first clause and *diethetō* in the second, two forms of one verb, the first a present middle and the second an aorist middle.[105] The lexicon lists it as "I appoint, make (of a covenant)," and gives as a second sense "I

100 Titus 1:2 (ESV).

101 2 Tim. 1:9 (ESV).

102 1 Pet. 1:20 (ESV).

103 Eph. 1:4 (ESV).

104 Luke 22:29–30 (ESV).

105 Luke 22:29 (SBLGNT): "κἀγὼ διατίθεμαι ὑμῖν καθὼς διέθετό μοι ὁ πατήρ μου βασιλείαν." MorphGNT parses διατίθεμαι as present middle indicative, first person singular, and διέθετο as aorist middle indicative, third person singular, both under the lemma διατίθεμαι.

make (a will)."[106] Vos puts a gloss in the parenthesis after the second form: "appointed by way of covenant."[107] Beza's Latin renders the sentence with the verb for making a pact: "Ego igitur paciscor vobis, prout pactus est mihi Pater meus, regnum," that is, "I therefore make a pact with you, as my Father made a pact with me, a kingdom."[108] Witsius takes the words to say that "by virtue of some covenant or disposition," the Lord "obtains a kingdom, as we also obtain it by virtue of the same."[109]

I put this plainly. The ESV translators did not choose "covenant." Muller speaks of the early Reformed exegesis of the verse in the same breath as "the covenantal dimensions added either by way of re-translation or of textual emendation in Luke 22:29 and Galatians 3:17."[110] A reader who prefers the English "assign" is not therefore wrong, and my argument does not depend on the point. The verse says that the Father has given the Lord a kingdom, and that the Lord gives one in turn to his people on the same footing. Whether the verb is best put "covenant" or "assign," the structure is that of a transfer in which the Son receives from the Father what he then passes to his own.

The surety

The sixth line is the word *surety*. The author of Hebrews says of Jesus, "This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant."[111] The Greek noun the ESV renders "guarantor" is *engyos*, and the lexicon gives it as "a surety, security."[112] Vos comments on the word, that "a surety, in

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106 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. διατίθεμαι (*diatithemai*): "I appoint, make (of a covenant)" and "I make (a will)."

107 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:85.

108 Theodore Beza, trans., *Iesu Christi D[omini] N[ostri] Nouu[m] testamentu[m], Gr[aece] & Lat[ine]* ([Geneva]: Henricus Stephanus, 1567), on Luke 22:29. The English rendering is mine.

109 Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*, trans. William Crookshank (Edinburgh: Thomas Turnbull, 1803), vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 2, §3, p. 170.

110 Muller, "Toward the Pactum Salutis," 64.

111 Heb. 7:22 (ESV).

112 Heb. 7:22 (SBLGNT). Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. ἔγγυος: "a surety, security."

any case, is one who makes himself personally responsible for fulfilling the obligations of another," and that this is "the only place where the word occurs for the Mediator."[113] Bavinck is cautious about how much weight the verse can bear. He says that in Hebrews 7:22 "we are told only that Christ, because he lives forever, is the guarantee that the new covenant will continue forever," and that the further inference, that in the pact of salvation Christ had become from all eternity the guarantor of us before God, was one that Cocceius, Witsius, and others "tried to argue."[114] I take Vos and Bavinck together. The word is firmly attached to Christ's office in the covenant of grace, and the step from there to an eternal suretyship is an inference. Vos draws it by saying that Christ became surety "by taking upon Himself in eternity the obligations of His own," and that "this suretyship thus binds the counsel of peace and the covenant of grace to each other."[115] I hold the inference as an inference, and I rest on the other lines of evidence more than on this one.

The Trinity

Vos's first and best ground for the doctrine, as I read him, is not a text at all. It is the nature of God. "If from eternity the plan of redemption has been established in God's decree and in it the task of the Son to execute that plan, then it follows from the concept of the Trinity that an eternal communication of this idea of redemption between Father and Son and of their reciprocal good pleasure in it must be assumed." And then: "The Trinity is not after all a set of abstractions, but a living unity of living persons, and after removing all that is human that may adhere to such a conception of the counsel of peace, this still remains as the essence of the matter: There is such an eternal exchange of thought between the divine persons."[116]

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113 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:87.

114 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:214.

115 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:87.

116 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:85.

Bavinck states the same view in his own words. The pact of salvation, he says, "makes known to us the relationships and life of the three persons in the Divine Being as a covenantal life, a life of consummate self-consciousness and freedom."[117] The covenant between God and humankind "always more or less has the character of a sovereign grant," whereas "here, among the three persons, it is a pact … in the full sense of the word. The greatest freedom and the most perfect agreement coincide."[118] And he says that "it is the triune God alone, Father, Son, and Spirit, who together conceive, determine, carry out, and complete the entire work of salvation."[119] He adds a remark that explains why the doctrine was worth stating: "In the decrees, also in those of predestination, the one will of God occupied the foreground, and their trinitarian character was still blurred."[120] Bavinck's paragraph arrives at what he calls "a multifaceted and glorious picture of the work of redemption," which comes close to Paul's thought about the wisdom of God.

That is the reason I count the covenant of redemption among the things I think both sides can grant. It is not an optional extra to the decree. It is the decree seen as the work of the Trinity, which is how the New Testament shows it. The Father plans, the Son undertakes, and the Spirit applies. To grant that God has a decree, and to grant that the God who decrees is the triune God of Scripture, is to grant the substance of the covenant of redemption, whatever one may think of the name given to it.

117 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:215.

118 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:215.

119 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:215.

120 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:215.

3.7 The Witnesses

How I use the history

I should say how I use the history of the doctrine, because it is easy to use badly. I do not claim that I have found the origin of the covenant of redemption. I do not claim that any writer was first, and I do not claim that any writer held it in the form I give it. The best historian of the question, Richard Muller, titled his article "Toward the Pactum Salutis: Locating the Origins of a Concept," and he begins it with a sentence that shows how much has been argued: the term and the name of Cocceius "are forever profoundly associated," so profoundly that "at least one modern writer, Wilhelm Gass, believed that Cocceius had invented the concept."[121] Muller records that "in the wake of Gass' overstatement of the case, a fair amount of scholarship has been devoted to finding the first instance of the doctrine," and that Heppe and Schrenk argued that the doctrine was fully present in Olevianus in 1585.[122] Muller himself finds in Olevianus "the fairly clear antecedent formulation of an eternal pactum of Christ with the Father," and finds earlier hints in Luther and in Oecolampadius.[123] He observes that "the seemingly sudden appearance of the doctrine as a virtual truism within the space of four years itself raises questions," because "worlds may arise ex nihilo, doctrinal formulae probably do not."[124]

I take two things from this. The first is that the doctrine has a history before the 1640s, and the second is that the history is a matter of scholarly dispute that I am not in a position to settle. What follows is not a genealogy. It is a list of persons who wrote of a covenant or agreement between the Father and the Son, with the passages I quote and the words they used.

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121 Muller, "Toward the Pactum Salutis," 11.

122 Muller, "Toward the Pactum Salutis," 11.

123 Muller, "Toward the Pactum Salutis," 12–13.

124 Muller, "Toward the Pactum Salutis," 14.

Where the words are not the words of the later doctrine, I say so. Where I rely on a historian for a writer I have not read for myself, I say that too.

Before Cocceius

The earliest passage I quote is from Johannes Oecolampadius, in his commentary on Isaiah of 1525. Commenting on Isaiah 55:3, he says that as God "entered into a pact with his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he here, as in many places, calls David, and raised him from the dead, so also with the utmost faithfulness he will be merciful to you."[125] The pact is tied to the Son's resurrection, and the passage does not say that the pact was made before time. It does say that the Father made a pact with the Son. Muller reports that Andrew Woolsey identified the language in Oecolampadius, and Witsius, as Muller observes, does not seem to have known it.[126]

Beza's Latin New Testament of 1567 renders Luke 22:29 with the verb *paciscor*, as I have already noted. Muller thinks it entirely possible, as I read him, that the theologian "who has been read so reductionistically as a predestinarian ought actually to be read as a major exegetical mover of covenant theology."[127]

James Arminius, in his doctoral oration of 1603 on the priesthood of Christ, gives words that are full and plain. He says: "The covenant into which God entered with our High Priest, Jesus Christ, consisted, on the part of God, of the demand of an action to be performed, and of the promise of an immense remuneration. On the part of Christ, our High Priest, it consisted of an accepting of the PROMISE, and a voluntary engagement to PERFORM the ACTION."[128] And

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125 Johannes Oecolampadius, *In Iesaiam prophetam Hypomnematon, hoc est, Commentariorum Ioannis Oecolampadii Libri VI* (Basel: Andreas Cratander, 1525), fol. 268r, on Isa. 55:3: "inijt pactum cum filio suo domino nostro Ihesu Christo, quem hic, sicut in multis locis, Dauid uocat, & resuscitauit eum à mortuis, ita & summa fide misericors tibi erit." The translation is mine.

126 Muller, "Toward the Pactum Salutis," 12–13.

127 Muller, "Toward the Pactum Salutis," 64.

128 James Arminius, "Oration IV," in *The Works of James Arminius*, trans. James Nichols, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825), 352.

he adds: “Great indeed was the condescension of the All-powerful God in being willing to treat with our High Priest rather in the way of covenant, than by a display of his authority.”[129] He says that this way of appointing a priest is one “according to covenant, which on God’s part received an oath for its confirmation.”[130] In his first oration, on the object of theology, he says that faith in Christ is necessary not only by God’s decree but “on account of the promise made unto Christ by the Father, and according to the covenant which was ratified between both of them.”[131] I count Arminius here for a reason beyond history. The Arminian tradition has been, in the quarrel I am describing, the one most opposed to the Reformed decree. Arminius himself wrote of the Father and the Son in the language of covenant. A reader who thinks the covenant of redemption is a Calvinist peculiarity should reckon with that.

A point of caution is required by the pages themselves. Arminius’s passage speaks of a covenant “into which God entered with our High Priest,” and the passage is about the priesthood. It does not itself say that the covenant was made before time. I cite it as a statement of a covenant between God and Christ, and I do not claim more.

Scotland and England

In 1638 David Dickson spoke before the General Assembly at Glasgow against the Arminians of his day. The speech is printed in the *Records of the Kirk of Scotland* (1838), and the report has him say: “Thair maine errour is this, (let me speake it with reverence towards your learning)—not knowing the Scriptures, and the power of God in the matter of the Covenant of redemption betwixt God and Christ.” A little later: “for the Covenant of Salvation betwixt God

129 Arminius, “Oration IV,” in *Works*, 1:352.

130 Arminius, “Oration IV,” in *Works*, 1:351. The Latin is in *Iacobi Arminii … Opera theologica* (Lugduni Batavorum: apud Godefridum Basson, 1629), Oratio de sacerdotio Christi, 16–17.

131 Arminius, “Oration I, On the Object of Theology,” in *Works*, 1:279. The Latin is in *Opera theologica*, Oratio de obiecto theologiae, 38: “ex promissione Christo à Patre facta, imò & ex pacto inter utrumque inito.”

and man is ane thing, and the Covenant of Redemption betwixt God and Christ is ane uther thing. The Covenant betwixt God and Christ was done and endit before ever there was a word of it in the world."[132] The spelling is as printed. Muller calls this speech "perhaps, the earliest overt definition of the 'covenant of redemption' formally so-called."[133] That is Muller's judgment and not mine, and I note that it concerns the formal term. The speech is aimed against Arminian positions on election and the death of Christ, and its speaker uses the covenant between God and Christ against them.

Dickson went on to present theses. The first is this: "There is a Covenant of redemption betwixt God and the Mediatour Christ, preceiding the Covenant of Grace and Salvation made betwixt God and the faithfull Man through Christ."[134] And the Mediator, he says in a later thesis, was "made sure of succes before he pat hand to the making of the world."[135] In *Therapeutica Sacra*, printed in Latin in 1656 and in his own English in 1664, he wrote that "This covenant of redemption, is in effect one with the eternall decree of redemption," and that "the decree of redemption is in effect a covenant," because, with "the Son willingly submitting Himself, the decree becometh a reall covenant indeed."[136]

Peter Bulkeley, in the second edition of *The Gospel-Covenant* in 1651, writes: "That there is a covenant passed betwixt the Father and the Son, concerning our salvation, I willingly grant, and shall open and confirme by Scripture."[137] The context is an objection that the covenant by which we are saved is made only with Christ, and Bulkeley grants a covenant between the

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132 Alexander Peterkin, ed., *Records of the Kirk of Scotland*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: John Sutherland, 1838), 158. The speaker is printed "Mr David [Dick]" at 156, and the speech runs 156–59.

133 Muller, "Toward the Pactum Salutis," 17.

134 Peterkin, ed., *Records of the Kirk of Scotland*, 1:159.

135 Peterkin, ed., *Records of the Kirk of Scotland*, 1:159. Spelling as printed.

136 David Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra* (Edinburgh: Evan Tyler, 1664), bk. 1, chap. 4, 25.

137 Peter Bulkeley, *The Gospel-Covenant; or, The Covenant of Grace Opened*, 2nd ed. (London: Matthew Simmons for Thomas and Andrew Kembe, 1651), 31.

Father and the Son and goes on to argue that there is also a covenant with us. The *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, a document attributed to Dickson and James Durham, speaks of "the covenant of redemption, made and agreed upon between God the Father and God the Son, in the council of the Trinity, before the world began."[138] Gillespie, in 1677, says that "the Covenant made with us, did spring out of the Covenant made with Christ."[139]

The Savoy Declaration of 1658 has the sentence that I used in Chapter 1. It says it pleased God "in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus his only begotten Son, according to a covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and man." The Westminster Confession, which the Savoy Declaration follows closely at this point, has the same sentence without the clause "according to a covenant made between them both."[140]

Owen and Witsius

John Owen's treatment, in the twenty-eighth Exercitation on the Epistle to the Hebrews, is the fullest I have read in English. He says that "the Father was the prescriber, the promiser, and lawgiver; and the Son was the undertaker upon his prescription, law, and promises."[141] He says that the transactions he has described were "by the way of 'counsel,' for the accomplishment of the end designed in a covenant," and he cites Zechariah 6:13.[142] He says that "the will of the Father and Son concurred in this matter; which was necessary, that the covenant might be voluntary and of choice."[143] And in his comment on Hebrews 10:5–7, on the words "Lo,

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138 John Macpherson, ed., *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, head 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886), 57. The document is attributed to David Dickson and James Durham.

139 Gillespie, *Ark of the Covenant Opened*, 1.

140 *Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order* (1658), chap. 8, §1, text at grace.org.uk/faith/savoy1.html; *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647), chap. 8, §1, text from the Christian Classics Ethereal Library.

141 John Owen, Exercitation XXVIII, §9, in *The Works of John Owen, D.D.*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 19 (London and Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854), 84–85.

142 Owen, Exercitation XXVIII, §10, in *Works*, 19:85.

143 Owen, Exercitation XXVIII, §11, in *Works*, 19:86.

I come," he writes that "the coming of Christ, the Son of God, into the world," was "the effect of the mutual counsel of the Father and the Son," and that "there is herein represented unto us as it were a consultation between the Father and the Son with respect unto the way and means of the expiation of sin, and the salvation of the church."[144]

Herman Witsius, in 1677, states the covenant as "the will of the Father, giving the Son to be the head and Redeemer of the elect; and the will of the Son, presenting himself as a sponsor or surety for them; in all which the nature of a compact and agreement consists."[145] He defends the doctrine against the charge that it is new. "As the doctrine of the covenant between the Father and the Son is so expressly delivered in Scripture, it is unjustly traduced as a new and a late invention," he writes, "though I find few among the more ancient who have professedly handled this subject, yet some of the greatest divines have sometimes made mention of this covenant."[146] He goes on to name, among others, Arminius, Ames, Gomarus, Cloppenburg, Voetius, Essenius, and Owen. I read that list as Witsius's list, and I do not use it as an argument for who was first.

Cocceius and Cloppenburg

Johannes Cocceius's name is the one most closely tied to the doctrine. In the sixth edition of his *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei* (1691), the doctrine is at chapter five, with a margin note reading *Pactum Dei Patris & Filii*, "The Pact of God the Father and the Son." In §88 he says that there is in the divine testament "a Pact, on which its firmness rests. A pact, namely, not with fallen man but with the Mediator," and he describes the will of the Father giving the Son and the will of the Son presenting himself as having "the nature of an agreement." The Father is there "stipulating the obedience of the Son unto death" and promising a kingdom

144 John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, on Heb. 10:5–7, in *Works*, ed. Goold, vol. 23 (London and Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1855), 460–61; on Heb. 10:7, 23:468.

145 Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 2, §2, pp. 169–70.

146 Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 2, §16, p. 180.

and spiritual seed; the Son is "stipulating back" the salvation of the people given him out of the world.[147] I note that this edition says *pactum*, and not *pactum salutis*. I make no claim about who first used that phrase.

Cocceius adds a remark at §93 which will matter in section 3.9. He writes, in my translation, "However free it may have been for the Son to undertake this suretyship or not … yet, this eternal decree of the Father and the Son being posited," and a parenthesis explains that by this decree the one became surety, the other cast our sin upon him, promised him a seed out of the mass of the perishing as his lot and inheritance, and gave it to be redeemed.[148] He thus calls the agreement a "decree of the Father and the Son," and he raises, in the same sentence, the question whether it was free for the Son. I will return to that.

Bavinck, looking back, says that the Reformed "sought and found for these covenants in time a stable, eternal foundation in the counsel of God, and again regarded this counsel—conceived as aiming at the salvation of the human race—as a covenant between the three persons in the divine being itself (pactum salutis, counsel of peace, the covenant of redemption)."[149] He says that the covenant of redemption "occurs, briefly and materially, already in Olevianus, Junius, Gomarus, and others," and that it "was then further developed at length by Cloppenburg and Cocceius."[150] From Cloppenburg's disputations I quote one line, in a Latin edition of 1684. In the third disputation, on the covenant of God, he writes of the Son that he "à Patre adjuratus,

147 Johannes Cocceius, *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei*, 6th ed. (Amsterdam: widow of Joannes and Abraham à Someren, 1691), chap. 5, §88 (p. 85). The margin reads "Pactum Dei Patris & Filii," and the text reads "Inest tamen in hoc Testamento divino Pactum, quo nititur ejus firmitas. Pactum scil. non cum homine lapso, sed cum Mediatore. … habet rationem conventionis. … Pater stipulans obedientiam Filii usque ad mortem … Filius autem se sistens … restipulans." The English renderings are mine.

148 Cocceius, *Summa*, 6th ed., chap. 5, §93 (p. 91): "Utut autem Filio liberum fuerit sponsionem hanc suscipere vel non … tamen, posito aeterno hoc decreto Patris & Filii (quo hic sponsor factus est, ille peccatum nostrum in hunc conjecit eique semen ex massa pereuntium tanquam sortem & hereditatem promisit atque illud redimendum dedit)." The English rendering is mine.

149 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:213.

150 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:213.

iterato spopondérat … inde ab æterno," that is, that the Son of God, sworn to by the Father, pledged again, from eternity. The surrounding sentence is a difficult one, in an argument against the Remonstrants about whether Christ could abandon the office once undertaken.[151] I give the clause for the words it uses: oath, pledge, and *inde ab æterno*.

Leiden

The Leiden divines of the 1620s used other words. The Leiden *Synopsis purioris theologiae*, first printed in 1625 and cited here in Bavinck's edition of 1881, in a disputation under Johannes Polyander on the office of Christ, says that the mediatorial office is that by which, "ex decreto sacrosanctae Trinitatis," from the decree of the most holy Trinity, Christ offered himself to the Father as sponsor and propitiator.[152] In a disputation under Antonius Walaeus, the Synopsis has Christ show "ex propria voluntate, secundum mandatum Patris," of his own will, according to the Father's command, that he had laid down his life. The same sentence is in Walaeus's own *Opera omnia*.[153] These are not Father-Son pacts. They have three elements that I need here: a decree of the Trinity, a command of the Father, and a Son who acts of his own will.

What these pages do not show is that Gomarus, Walaeus, and Arminius were in the same conversation about a covenant between the Father and the Son, though Arminius's oration of 1603 ends with thanks to Gomarus, and Gomarus's works use the word *mandatum Patris* more than once. The inference from those facts to a line of influence is a plausible inference, and an unproven one. I do not draw it.

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151 Johannes Cloppenburg, *Theologica opera omnia*, tomus prior (Amsterdam: Gerardus Borstius, 1684), 506 (disp. 3, *De Foedere Novo Gratiae, ejusque Sponsore*, thesis 17). The translation is mine.

152 *Synopsis purioris theologiae*, ed. H. Bavinck (Leiden: Didericum Donner, 1881), 250 (disp. 26, praeses Johannes Polyander, thesis 3). The English renderings of the *Synopsis* Latin are mine.

153 *Synopsis purioris theologiae*, 274 (disp. 28, praeses Antonius Walaeus, §7); Antonius Walaeus, *Opera omnia* (Leiden: Franciscus Hackius, 1643), 2:338.

What the witnesses give

I draw four things from the witnesses. The first is that the language of covenant, pact, agreement, or counsel between the Father and the Son is found in writers of different parties. Arminius, Dickson, Bulkeley, Owen, Cocceius, and Witsius do not agree on much else. The second is that those who stated the doctrine most fully did not state it as a second thing laid beside the decree. Dickson says that the covenant "is in effect one with the eternall decree," and Cocceius calls it a decree. The third is that those who stated it spoke of the Son's undertaking as willing. Arminius calls it a "voluntary engagement," Owen "voluntary and of choice," Dickson a Son "willingly submitting Himself." The fourth is that none of them says that the covenant exists to answer the question my book asks. They state it for the sake of the doctrine of salvation. What I do with it is my own.

Muller sums up where this leaves the history: the doctrine had a "rather abbreviated pedigree," and yet the circumstances "rendered the actual formulation of the pactum salutis by Cocceius and several others of his generation quite acceptable to a large number of later theologians."[154] I accept that summary. I do not rest the weight of any argument in this book on the age of the doctrine. I rest it on the texts of Scripture set out in the last section, and I use the witnesses to show that when I speak of the covenant of redemption I am not speaking of an invention of mine.

3.8 What the Covenant Is

The decree in personal and voluntary form

If I put the witnesses together, they give me a description of the covenant of redemption that I can use. The covenant is not a second thing laid beside the decree. It is the decree as the

154 Muller, "Toward the Pactum Salutis," 65.

Father and the Son hold it: the Father willing the Son to be head and Redeemer of those given to him, and the Son willing to present himself as their surety. Dickson says so in a sentence I have quoted, that the covenant of redemption "is in effect one with the eternall decree of redemption," and in the other direction that "the decree of redemption is in effect a covenant." Cocceius speaks of "this eternal decree of the Father and the Son." Owen draws the contrast in the other direction, and he does so carefully. The covenant, he says, "differeth from a pure decree; for from these distinct actings of the will of God in the Father and the Son there doth arise a new habitude or relation, which is not natural or necessary unto them, but freely taken on them."[155]

I take the two together. The covenant of redemption is the decree in its personal and voluntary form, the Father and the Son each willing what the other wills, and each receiving a relation to the other. A pure decree, in Owen's sense, is the one will of God. The covenant is that same will as it is held by the persons in a relation that they take on. That is how I can say that it is the decree and also that it is a covenant, and it is why it can be the purpose of the decree and not something outside it. I do not say that Owen or Dickson held what I say. I say that the two statements, set side by side, imply it.

Witsius on counsel

Witsius has a sentence on the word "counsel" that bears on everything I have said about the wisdom of God in section 3.5. Commenting on the "counsel of peace" in Zechariah 6:13, he writes that it is "the mutual will of the Father and the Son," and that it is called a counsel "both on account of the free and liberal good pleasure of both, and of the display of the greatest wisdom manifested therein."[156] There in a single sentence is the covenant described as the free good pleasure of the two persons and as the display of wisdom. He joins what I joined in section

155 Owen, Exercitation XXVIII, §13, in *Works*, 19:88.

156 Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 2, §§7–8, p. 173.

3.5. I do not rest on his reading of Zechariah, which I have said I leave aside. I notice that the old theologian described the covenant in terms of wisdom and good pleasure, which is the language in which Paul describes the purpose in Ephesians 3.

The order of the purposes

What the covenant does for my argument is give the order of the purposes. Owen says the transactions between the Father and the Son were "by the way of 'counsel,' for the accomplishment of the end designed in a covenant." A counsel about the way and the means has an end that the means serve. The end is the final cause I described in section 3.4: that God declare and share with free creatures his impressiveness in power, wisdom, justice, and mercy, with Christ at the center. Dickson's theses imply, as I read them, that the end stood ahead of the work of creation: the Mediator was "made sure of succes before he pat hand to the making of the world." Vos, who is not concerned with my question, supplies the corresponding item in his own list of what the Father pledged, the last item in the pledge of the Father to the Son: "That by this entire marvelous arrangement, in Him and through Him the highest revelation of the most glorious virtues of the triune God would take place."[157] The end of the arrangement, on his account as on mine, is the showing of God's virtues in the Son.

So I take the order to be the end, then the idea of the created order that serves it, then the means by which the end is reached, in the language of moments that I am forced to use, and all of it within the decree. The end is the glory of God shown in Christ. The idea is God's idea of a creation fitted to that end. The means include creation itself, redemption, and the gathering of the people given to the Son. I put "the idea" in the middle because Chapter 4 argues that it is a part of the decree distinct from his will and his knowledge. I do not argue it here. I say only where it

157 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:86–87.

stands in the order. No writer I cite places the covenant before the decree to create; that placement is my own inference from the end they give it. Scripture and the confessions do not settle the order of the decrees, and my argument does not depend on it.

Set out more finely, in moments that are of reason and not of time, the order is this. First, God's end and motive: his glory in the Son, and a people given to the Son. That end would have been served had Adam stood. Then his knowledge of all he could make, which includes what each free creature would freely do in each circumstance he might set, with his own will to create, uphold, concur and permit supposed in the condition. Then the judgment of his wisdom, which route would most fully express those purposes. Because Adam would freely fall, wisdom judged that the fullest route was the one in which the Son undertakes to redeem a people from a fall; that is the form the eternal covenant takes in the order God chose. Then the one decree, to create, to uphold, to permit, and to carry out that covenant by that route. Then his knowledge of what will be, because he has decreed it. Paul Ferry, the minister at Metz, put the middle of this in one sentence, as Le Blanc quotes him:[158] "First God foresaw that man would fall, if he were created fallible and tempted. Next (because He saw that it was expedient that it be so), it pleased Him that this should come to pass, not by bringing force upon man, but by so creating man and permitting [him] to temptation and to himself." The Particular Baptists put the same order in their own words. Nehemiah Coxe says that God, "who from Eternity foresaw the Fall of Man, had also from Eternity a gracious Purpose … to redeem"[159] a remnant, and that those counsels were transacted in a covenant of redemption. Benjamin Keach says God "foresaw from Eternity,

158 Paul Ferry, *Vindiciae pro scholastico orthodoxo*, 203, 209, and 210, as quoted by Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu, "Theses theologicae de concordia libertatis humanae cum decretis divinis," pars I, th. XXXI, in *Theses theologicae, variis temporibus in Academia Sedanensi editae et ad disputandum propositae* (London: Moses Pitt, 1675), 450. Ferry's own text is cited here only as Le Blanc gives it.

159 Nehemiah Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants That God Made with Men before the Law* (London: J. D. for Nathaniel Ponder and Benjamin Alsop, 1681), 36–37.

that Man would fall," and that without a war foreseen there could be "no occasion of a Covenant of Peace"; the "grand Motive that moved God" was his love and mercy, and there was nothing in man that could move God to it.[160] The covenant's redemptive form does not wait on Adam as its cause. It takes the foreseen fall as its occasion, and God is moved by his love and by his end alone. The end is first, and the knowledge shows God the opportunity to carry it out in its fullest form.

I say that the order God chose is the fullest display of his purposes in the Covenant of Redemption. I do not say it was the only one. Had Adam stood, God's end would still have been served. His justice would have been shown in rewarding obedience, and his condescending goodness in the covenant itself, the "voluntary condescension" of which the Confession speaks.[161] Because Adam would fall, a fuller display lay open: grace to the guilty, justice and mercy meeting at the cross, grace abounding where sin increased, and the immeasurable riches of his grace in the coming ages. The end does not depend on Adam. Only the route does, and wisdom chose the route for the end. Nor is "fullest" a claim that God had to make the best of possible worlds. It is the judgment of his free wisdom, the things he "according to His infinite wisdom judges are to be done."[162]

I take the means to be Christ, and I take the people to be given to him in the same eternal purpose. The Savoy Declaration puts it in an order I can use: it pleased God, "in his eternal purpose," to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus "according to a covenant made between them both," and "unto whom he did from all eternity give a people to be his seed." Witsius has the two

160 Benjamin Keach, *The Display of Glorious Grace; or, The Covenant of Peace Opened* (London: S. Bridge, 1698), 8–10, 173; see also Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant, a Sweet Cordial for a Drooping Soul* (London, 1693), 4.

161 Westminster Confession of Faith 7.1, text at opc.org/wcf.html.

162 Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica, exhibens locos communes theologicos methodo scholastica* (Hanau: Conrad Eifrid, 1618), sect. I, cap. XXII, reg. V, 87.

wills, of the Father who gives and the Son who presents himself, in one description. Christ is the chosen means, and the people are concomitant with him, given to him in the same purpose.

Not election, and not the covenant of grace

Two distinctions keep the covenant of redemption from being mistaken for something else. The first is that it is not the covenant of grace. Witsius says the second "pre-supposes the first, and is founded upon it."[163] Dickson's first thesis puts the covenant of redemption ahead of the covenant of grace "made betwixt God and the faithfull Man through Christ." Gillespie says the covenant made with us "did spring out of the Covenant made with Christ." Bavinck marks the same line: "In the former, Christ is the guarantor and head; in the latter, he is the mediator. The first remains restricted to Christ and demands from him that he bear the punishment and fulfill the law in the place of the elect; the second is extended to and through Christ to humans and demands from them the faith and repentance that Christ has not, and could not, accomplish in their place."[164] The covenant of grace is how the gift is brought home to the people in time. The covenant of redemption has no creature as a party. It is the Father's gift to the Son. That is why it can stand among God's purposes before creation and before the fall, as the end for which the idea of the created order is conceived. The covenant of grace is made in time, with sinners, through Christ, and it carries the first into effect.

The second distinction is that the covenant is not the same as election. Vos says that some have identified the two, "but wrongly so." "Election has reference to the persons for whom grace and glory are intended. The counsel of peace, on the other hand, has in view the way along which, and the Mediator through whom, this grace and glory will be accomplished and effected." He adds that election "precedes the counsel of peace—that is, in order, naturally not in time,

163 Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 2, §1, p. 169.

164 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:227–28.

because in eternity there is no time."[165] I accept the distinction. I accept also the qualification that the order is an order of reason and not of time. I will say more in Chapter 4 about how I think of the order within the decree, but I have no quarrel with Vos here.

I now have what I need from the covenant for the purposes of this book. It is the decree as held by the Father and the Son. Its end is the glory of God in the Son. Its means is the Son as surety. Its people are those given to him. And it is voluntary. In section 3.9 I ask what follows from that for the creature.

3.9 Creation Ordered to the Covenant

The people given

If the covenant of redemption is the end that the decree serves, then creation is ordered to it. I mean this in a plain sense. The Son is given a people. The people must be made before they can be given, and the Son must take their nature to redeem them. The world is the field in which both things happen. Bavinck says that the covenant of grace "was ready-made from all eternity in the pact of salvation of the three persons and was realized by Christ from the moment the fall occurred," and that "the Son appeared immediately after the fall, as Mediator, as the second and final Adam who occupies the place of the first, restores what the latter corrupted, and accomplishes what he failed to do."[166] The redemption was not an afterthought brought in when the first plan went wrong. It stood in the eternal counsel. I do not say more here about how the fall stood in relation to that counsel, which is a question for Chapters 4 and 7. I say that the covenant of redemption stands before creation as the purpose for which the idea of the created order is conceived.

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165 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:87.

166 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:216.

Chapter 1 said that the creature is tangential to this focus but necessary to it. I can now say what I meant. The creature is tangential because the purpose is not the creature. It is the glory of God shown in the Son, the second Adam, and the creature's part is what that purpose requires of him. The creature is necessary because the covenant is a covenant for a people. A Son who is given nothing, who has no people, has no covenant to fulfill. A creation without creatures would not be a creation that served the covenant. I think the quarrel has too often been conducted as though the creature were the whole of the story. The opposite mistake is also possible, that the creature is nothing in the story, and Scripture does not allow that either. The creature is a party in the covenant of grace, which flows out of the covenant of redemption, and he is a worshiper in the end it serves.

Worshipers

What the Father gives the Son is a people of worshipers. I have already quoted John 4:23, in which the Father is seeking such people to worship him in spirit and truth. The Son says in John 6:37 that "all that the Father gives me will come to me." In John 17:6 he says of the people given him that they "have kept your word." In Revelation 5 the song of the redeemed is to the Lamb: "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."[167] The picture is of persons who worship, not of objects that are arranged.

The Reformed confessions say the same thing in their own way. The Westminster Confession says that in the covenant of grace God promises "to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe."[168] They do not say that the elect are made to believe against their wills. They say that they are made willing. Vos

167 Rev. 5:9 (ESV).

168 *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647), chap. 7, §3, text from the Christian Classics Ethereal Library.

has the same thing in his list of what the Father pledged to the Son, that "by the working of that Spirit all those whom the Father had given Him would also actually come to Him and would be kept by His power."[169] They come. The end of the covenant is a people who come to the Son and stay with him because they love him. It is not a people held in place by a mechanism.

I take it, then, that the covenant requires of those who are given to the Son that they be willing. Whether they could have been other than willing is a different question, and I take care to keep the two apart, because the covenant itself, I now argue, does not answer the second.

What the covenant requires, and what it does not prove

Owen says that the will of the Father and the Son concurred in the covenant, "which was necessary, that the covenant might be voluntary and of choice."[170] A covenant that was not voluntary would not be a covenant. I draw from this an inference of my own, and I say it is mine and not Owen's. If the covenant between the Father and the Son is real because it is voluntary, then a people given to the Son in it must be a people who worship voluntarily, or the gift does not match the covenant that makes it. A people who are compelled to love are not lovers.

That is a claim about willingness. It is not a claim about the power to do otherwise, and I want to be careful here, because the two are easily run together. Owen's word "voluntary" does not mean that either the Father or the Son could have chosen otherwise than they did. The writers who built the doctrine say the opposite. Owen himself, in the passage where he says that the covenant differs from a pure decree, says that it was in the Son's power "to assume human nature, which becoming thereby peculiarly his own, he might dispose of it unto what end he

169 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:86.

170 Owen, Exercitation XXVIII, §11, in *Works*, 19:86.

pleased, saving the union which ensued on its assumption, for this was indissoluble."[171] The Son's coming was free. Once he had come, the union was indissoluble.

Vos asks the question directly. He puts it as the ninth question in his treatment of the counsel of peace: after the Father had presented the Son with the task of surety, could the Son withdraw from it, or, after having accepted it, lay it down again? His answer: "To posit this would be entirely unworthy of God. In the Trinity, complete freedom and perfect agreement go together. And the Surety was a divine and therefore immutable person. Thus Scripture also alludes to the immutability of God's counsel (Heb 6:18). The Remonstrants teach the opposite."[172] Bavinck's sentence is a close neighbor of Vos's: "The greatest freedom and the most perfect agreement coincide."[173] The Son's undertaking was voluntary in the fullest sense, and the Son could not have withdrawn from it.

The older writers had a way of saying how both can be so. Cocceius, who raises the question of the Son's freedom in the same sentence where he calls the covenant an eternal decree, writes: "however free it may have been for the Son to undertake this suretyship or not … yet, this eternal decree of the Father and the Son being posited."[174] The structure is of a freedom that is real, followed by a "yet" that begins with the decree. The Leiden *Synopsis* is plainer. In a disputation under Andrew Rivet on the state of Christ's humiliation, the will of Christ in accepting the passion is traced to "obedience toward the Father's command, by which he voluntarily undertook death, which otherwise, if considered absolutely, he could have escaped, though not on the hypothesis of the Father's command being presupposed."[175] Gillespie, for his

171 Owen, Exercitation XXVIII, §13, in *Works*, 19:88.

172 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:90.

173 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:215.

174 Cocceius, *Summa*, 6th ed., chap. 5, §93 (p. 91). The translation is mine.

175 *Synopsis purioris theologiae*, 267 (disp. 27, praeses Andreas Rivet, §19): "refertur voluntas ipsius Christi, passionem acceptantis et patienter sustinentis, ex obedientia erga mandatum Patris, qua voluntarie mortem suscepit,

part, says that Christ's suretyship "was a most free voluntary act on his part: for he was not under any obligation of law, nor under any necessity of nature."[176]

I do not draw out here what this implies for the creature. That is for Chapter 6, where the distinctions defined in Chapter 1, the composite and divided senses, do their work. The use I make of the passages in this chapter is narrower. They show that those who held the covenant of redemption most firmly called the Son's undertaking free and voluntary, and also held that, the decree being posited, he did not withdraw. The covenant therefore proves willing worshipers. By itself it does not prove alternate possibilities. A reader who sees that has seen the limit of what this chapter can claim, and I accept that limit.

Where the argument goes next

I have said in Chapter 1 what I hold about the freedom of the creature and called it LUF, limited ultimate freedom. In Adam it is the freedom with which the creature was first created, limited by the fact that he was grounded in God and did not ground himself. After the fall, I take it to be the continuing freedom of the creature, with the added limit of a will bound to sin. Chapter 5 argues that creatures must have it, and the covenant is one of the reasons. The covenant requires willing worshipers, the willingness must be the creature's own, and a creature whose willingness is only the working out of causes beyond him is not a worshiper in the sense the text intends. That is as far as I carry the point here, because the weight of the argument for the freedom to do otherwise rests on grounds I have not yet set out, and I would rather the reader meet them in their place. For Adam the covenant's chosen route did involve a fall that was free in the full sense. God foreknew it by his conditioned knowledge and permitted it, not barely. For

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quam alias, si absolute consideretur, effugere potuisset, quamvis non ex hypothesi praesupposito mandato Patris." The translation is mine.

176 Gillespie, *Ark of the Covenant Opened*, 373.

the posterity the limit I state here stands. The covenant requires willing worshipers, not alternate possibilities toward God.

Chapter 1 said that a finite and mutable creature cannot carry the weight of a freedom that asks him to be the unconditioned source of his own act, and section 1.5 gave the reason. The covenant of redemption adds a reason why deliverance stands at the center of the design. If the end is a people who worship the Son, and a creature of that kind cannot carry the whole weight of freedom without being delivered by God, then the Savior and his work are not a repair made after the design went wrong. They are in the design from the beginning. That is the force of Bavinck's sentence, quoted above, that the covenant of grace "was ready-made from all eternity." Chapter 5 and Chapter 7 say what more is needed, and I make no larger claim here.

God owes no one salvation

One thing must be said before leaving this ground, lest the covenant be misread. That the Father has given a people to the Son is a gift. It is not a debt. God owes no one salvation. Those who fall in Adam, who is their federal head, and are in him seminally and covenantally, fall with punishable guilt, and the covenant of grace that flows from the covenant of redemption is mercy to people who had no claim. The covenant that is voluntary in the Father and the Son is mercy in the Father's giving of a people and the Son's undertaking to redeem them, and the gospel through which it comes is, in Paul's words, "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."[177] I do not say how this fits with the freedom of the creature, which is the subject of the chapters that follow. I say that anyone who tries to fit it must not begin by treating the gift as though it were owed.

177 Rom. 1:16 (KJV).

3.10 The Four Causes

The words and the use I make of them

I use a four-causal system, and I use the words Aristotle used, but I use them in a different way, and I owe the reader a plain account of both. Aristotle, in the *Physics*, sets out four senses of "cause." In the English of Hardie and Gaye, the first is "that out of which a thing comes to be and which persists," for example "the bronze of the statue." The second is "the form or the archetype, i. e. the statement of the essence." The third is "the primary source of the change or coming to rest." The fourth is the sense of "end or 'that for the sake of which' a thing is done," for example "health is the cause of walking about."[178] The English of Hardie and Gaye does not use the scholastic tags, material, formal, efficient, and final, which are the names I use. Bavinck's own use is a neighbor to mine in two places, and I set the neighbors beside my mapping without saying that he maps as I do. He observes in *Christian Worldview* that ideas can serve as model causes, but that being alone cannot be an efficient cause. He also observes that final causes everywhere use efficient causes to realize themselves, as one who has set a goal uses the means and goes down the paths necessary to reach it.[179] In the *Reformed Dogmatics*, summarizing the doctrine of the counsel, he says that "God's counsel is both the 'efficient' and 'exemplary' cause of all that is."[180]

The use I make of the four words is mine. I do not take them to name four kinds of event in a single order. I take them to name four levels of causation, and I take the levels to be distributed differently depending on how they are viewed.

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178 Aristotle, *Physica*, II.3, 194b, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, in *The Works of Aristotle Translated into English*, ed. W. D. Ross, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930).

179 See Herman Bavinck, *Christian Worldview*, trans. and ed. N. Gray Sutanto, James Eglinton, and Cory C. Brock (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 78 and 90.

180 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:339, in chapter 7, "The Divine Counsel."

Each side alone, and both orders together

The causes can be taken from either side of the line between Creator and creature, and the two views must not be confused. If I view the levels of causation from the atemporal side alone, from God's position alone, then the Creator is all four causes. His purpose is the final cause. His potential and power are the material cause. His idea is the formal cause. His decree, or exertion of will, is the efficient cause. What governs all of this ultimately is his final cause, the purpose for which he created. If I view the levels from the creature's side alone, the creature too has all four. These are the limits of the Aristotelian definitions.

When the causes are mapped over both orders at once, the atemporal and the temporal, we are limited to two for each. God is the formal cause: the pattern or blueprint that defines what creation is. God is the final cause: the ultimate end for which all things exist, which is to say his purposes. The creature is the material cause: the raw material out of which he is made and which persists in the finished thing, specifically his nature as created in the image of God. And the creature is the efficient cause: his own primary agency, the impulse initiating change and action and decisions, and bringing into being the temporal effects that are under his control.

So my four causes differ from Aristotle's. I take the formal and the final to be ultimate and primary, the causal arena of God. I take the material and the efficient to be secondary, belonging to the creature. In this arrangement the formal is subject to the final, in the sense that God's idea of creation is subject to his purposes. His purposes give rise to the idea by which he accomplishes them. That is why the book takes the purposes first and the idea second: this chapter is about the final cause, and the next is about the formal cause, which is the idea, set within the decree.

Two levels in creation

There is one further point that the mapping depends on. The scheme of Creator and creature has the atemporal on one side and the temporal on the other, with creation and with God outside creation. Within creation there are also two levels. There is the three-dimensional reality with time that we exist in, or are able to perceive as human beings. And there is, outside of that or along with it, a multidimensional higher reality that we cannot perceive except mathematically, in which the angels exist. God, atemporally, is outside both, and he is able to enter into the temporal creation. I mean here only a distinction within the created order and not a second creator. When Paul speaks of the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places who are shown the wisdom of God, I am inclined to take him to speak of beings at the second level of the created order, to whom the wisdom of God is displayed through the church at the first.

What the mapping does, and what it does not do

The mapping keeps in view three points that the rest of the book will need. The first is that the purposes govern the idea. The covenant of redemption stands on God's side, in his purposes. It is the final cause. The second is that the creature's causation is the creature's own. The covenant of redemption does not make God a cause on the creature's side, and it does not take from the creature his own efficient causation. When God acts in salvation, I will argue, he takes over the creature's efficient causation in order to change the material cause, the soul that was bent, and the creature is free again. That is for Chapters 7 and 8. I note it here only to say that the principle stated here, that the decree does not empty the creature's causes, is what those chapters apply. The third point is that the word "cause" does not mean the same thing at every level. A cause that gives a pattern is not a cause that pushes. A cause that gives an end is not a cause that supplies the matter. When one side of the quarrel says that God is the cause of the

creature's act, and the other says that the creature is, the first thing to ask is which cause is meant. They may both be right.

I add a caution about what the mapping cannot do. The mapping is a way of speaking, and it comes from the temporal set of classifications for causes. Aristotle meant his four causes to be general; I have confined them to a use, and the limits of definition are real. I offer the mapping as a tool for keeping apart things that the debate has tended to run together, and I do not offer it as a proof of anything. If a reader finds a better tool, I will be glad to learn from it.

3.11 What Has Been Laid Down

This chapter has set out three things and one tool.

The first is that God has purposes in creating, and the purposes are for his glory. They are to declare, in a way that creatures can perceive, his impressiveness in power, wisdom, justice, and mercy, and to share it with creatures who can respond. The purposes are not self-centered in the sense that offends, because he is the chief and best of beings, and the glory and the creature's good are joined in the Scripture. A coerced response would not be a response to this glory.

The second is that these purposes come first. They come first in an order that is not an order of time, and they come before the creature's will. The creature is not consulted. His freedom is limited by this priority, and the priority leaves his part in the story a real part. The centre of the purposes is Christ. Colossians 1:16–18 says that all things were created for him, and the glory of Christ as the second Adam is the supreme final cause of creation. The decree does not replace him, and a doctrine of the decree that does has turned the matter around. Ephesians 3:10 says that the purpose is that the multi-faceted wisdom of God be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places, and the cross is the place where that wisdom shows its range.

The third is the covenant of redemption, the agreement of the Father and the Son by which the Son undertakes to redeem a people. The Scripture grounds it in the Son's mission, the people given to him, the Father's promise, and the eternal purpose. The history of the doctrine is disputed, and I make no claim about who first stated it. The witnesses I have read, from Arminius and Dickson to Owen and Witsius, describe it in terms that agree where I need them to: it is voluntary, it is the decree in a personal form, and it precedes the covenant of grace. Creation is ordered to it. The covenant requires willing worshipers. It does not by itself show that the creature could have chosen otherwise, and I do not claim that it does.

The tool is the four causes, as I use them. The final cause is God's purposes. The formal cause is God's idea of the created order. The material and efficient causes belong to the creature. The formal is subject to the final.

The next chapter takes up the formal cause. It asks what the decree consists of, and in particular what place God's knowledge has within it, and what place the idea of creation has beside his knowledge and his will. I have tried to show in this chapter that the idea is not a free-standing blueprint to be understood in isolation. It is the idea of a creation fitted to a purpose that is already given. Chapter 4 asks what that idea is.

Chapter 4. Divine Knowledge, the Decree, and the Idea

4.1 The Divinely Conditioned Condition

Chapter 3 laid down what God purposes, that his purposes come first, and that he accomplishes them through an agreement between the Father and the Son. It ended on the formal cause, which I take to be God's idea of the created order, and it promised that this chapter would ask what that idea is. The question can be asked in a short form. What does the decree consist of, and what place does God's knowledge have in it?

I begin with something that I cannot deny and that I do not think anyone on either side of the quarrel can deny. I call it the divinely conditioned condition. God deals with creatures in a way that takes account of what they are and where they stand. Scripture shows him giving commands to creatures who can disobey them, warning them of consequences they can bring on themselves, and calling them to turn. It shows him addressing them by statements that are true or false, to which they respond or do not respond. When Paul stands on the Areopagus he says, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent."[1] The sentence sets two times side by side. In the first, God overlooked. In the second, he commands. Between them lies a change in how God deals with men, and the change is stated as the act of God himself.

The Greek behind "overlooked" is the participle *hyperidōn* (ὑπεριδών), and it comes from the verb that Dodson glosses "I overlook, take no notice of, disregard."[2] God is the subject. It is God who overlooked, and it is God who now commands. The verse does not say that men's ignorance forced his hand, or that the end of the ignorance forced it. It says that God, in a way

1 Acts 17:30 (ESV). The Greek, from the SBL Greek New Testament, is τοὺς μὲν οὖν χρόνους τῆς ἀγνοίας ὑπεριδὼν ὁ θεὸς τὰ νῦν παραγγέλλει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντας πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν.

2 John Jeffrey Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon* (2010; public domain), s.v. ὑπερεῖδον (*hypereidon*), Strong's G5237: "I overlook, take no notice of, disregard." The participle in Acts 17:30 comes from that verb.

that he chose, passed over one period and now speaks to all men everywhere. The condition under which men are held to account has been set by God. That is what I mean when I say that it is divinely conditioned by him.

Three things follow from the verse, and I want them in view before I go on. The first is that the creature is spoken to. A command to repent is a statement put to someone who can understand it and answer it. It is not a cause that moves a thing. A debate that treats the decree only as a chain of causes, asking whether the chain is strong enough to hold the creature or loose enough to let him go, has no place for a command of this kind. The second is that the condition varies. The ignorance was overlooked, and now the command is given to all. Different things are asked of men at different times, and the difference is God's. The third is that all of this sits in a world in which evil and sin are present. A creature who is addressed with a command to repent is a creature who has done what needs repenting of. The divinely conditioned condition cannot be explained away as if sin were not in the picture.

What I grant

I grant more than the verse requires, and I do it on purpose. I said in Chapter 1 that I make three concessions to Stratton, and the third of them is the one that belongs here. It is within the power and prerogative of God to conceive a creation in which the creature remains the self-determining source of his choice in the sense Stratton defines, and for God to know and order the history that contains that choice. And I say more than that God could. In Adam he did. I do not say that such a creation is impossible. I do not say that the true statements about what such a creature would do, taken by themselves, cannot be thought. The statement that a certain man, placed in certain circumstances, would freely choose a certain thing is not a contradiction. It is a

thing God can think, if he is able to think of creatures who are the sources of their own choices at all.

I do not say this to concede the dispute. I say it because the opposite claim would be an argument that God's power and prerogative are limited, and it is no part of Reformed doctrine that they are. The Canons say that God "would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish."[3] A God who may do that may also conceive a world in which creatures answer for themselves. Whether he has, and what such a conception would require, are separate questions. What I deny is a narrower thing, and I come to it in the next section.

What I do not grant

I do not grant that the futurity of a creaturely act can be a fact that stands apart from God's willing. That a thing is not only possible but will in fact be is what I mean by its futurity, or *futuritio*, to use the term the older writers used. The word names the passage of a thing from being merely possible to being something that will be. My claim in this chapter is that this passage, in every case, depends on God's will, and that God's knowledge of what will be follows his willing and does not precede it. The next section gives the reason, and the sections after it give the witnesses. By futurity I mean that a thing will in fact be. That a thing would be, under a condition, is another matter. Le Blanc put the difference exactly. For a thing to be absolutely future, some decree of God is required on which its futurition depends. For a thing to be future only under a condition, "there is not required a decree which is in God in act, but a decree suffices which, according to the hypothesis, would have to be posited in God."[4]

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3 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Head I, art. 1. English text at ccel.org (Christian Classics Ethereal Library). All quotations of the Canons in this chapter are from that text.

4 Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu, "Theses theologicae de concordia libertatis humanae cum decretis divinis," pars I, th. XLVIII, in *Theses theologicae, variis temporibus in Academia Sedanensi editae et ad disputandum propositae* (London: Moses Pitt, 1675), 453.

This is why I used the phrase “the divinely conditioned condition” and not “the creature’s condition.” Everything that conditions a creature’s choice, including the fact that he is a creature, that he lives under a command, that he is told what is true, and that the circumstances in which he chooses are the ones he is in, is set by God. The conditioning is real. It does not make the creature a puppet, and it does not make God a spectator.

4.2 Why Futurity Cannot Be a Creaturely Fact Apart from Divine Willing

The reason is one that I have already given in Chapter 1 and again in Chapter 3. God is creator and sustainer, and the creature is created and sustained without being consulted. A creature did not choose to be made, and he did not choose to be kept in being. He is therefore not the ground of the conditions in which he chooses. If the truth about what he would do in a given circumstance were a fact that he had settled for himself apart from any will of God, even a supposed one, then there would be a fact about the world that God had neither made nor sustained. No creature settles his would-choice for himself, since he neither made nor sustains himself. I do not say that such a fact is contradictory. I say that it is not a fact about a creature, because a creature is by definition one whose existence and conditions are God’s gift.

Calvin makes the point from the other side. In the *Institutes*, in the course of his treatment of election, he takes up the objection that God’s foreknowledge, being only knowledge, lays no necessity on what it knows. He grants that mere prescience lays no necessity on the creature. Then, in Beveridge’s English, he writes: “If God merely foresaw human events, and did not also arrange and dispose of them at his pleasure, there might be room for agitating the question, how far his foreknowledge amounts to necessity; but since he foresees the things which are to happen, simply because he has decreed that they are so to happen, it is vain to debate about prescience,

while it is clear that all events take place by his sovereign appointment."[5] A little later, in the next section, he adds: "The decree, I admit, is dreadful; and yet it is impossible to deny that God foreknew what the end of man was to be before he made him, and foreknew, because he had so ordained by his decree."[6]

I take the force of Calvin's sentence to be an order. God foresees because he has decreed. Foreknowledge does not stand ahead of the decree and prompt it. I note what Calvin does not say. In these passages he says nothing about the knowledge of what free creatures would do in circumstances that never come about, which is what later writers meant by conditional knowledge. He speaks of events that are to happen. What I take from him is the order, and I do not claim more.

The Oxford divine John Prideaux gives the order as an argument, in his lecture on middle knowledge delivered in 1617. He argues from the dependence of effects on a first cause, which is the dependence of creatures on their Creator, and he judges that a knowledge of free determinations that rested on no higher cause would posit "an effect without a cause, a creature without a creator."[7] The conclusion he draws, that such knowledge is to be thrown out altogether, is stronger than I need, since I have granted that God could conceive a world of self-determining creatures. The step I want is the first. For a creature, to be future is to depend on a cause above him. A future that depended on no cause above the creature would be a future that the Creator had no part in, and no creature can be that.

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5 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.xxiii.6, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), English text at ccel.org. The Latin of 1559 is at p. 348 of the Geneva edition. Quotations of the *Institutes* in this chapter are in Beveridge's English, and the section numbers are Calvin's.

6 Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiii.7, trans. Beveridge.

7 John Prideaux, *Opera theologica quae Latinè extant omnia* (Tiguri: Davidis Gessneri, 1672), Lectio II, "De scientia media" (delivered at Oxford on 12 July 1617), 24: "Ergo ponitur effectus sine causa, creatura sine creatore, & per consequens talis scientia est penitus explodenda." Translations of Latin in this chapter are mine. Latin quoted in these notes keeps its accents and ligatures as printed, with the long s written s; abbreviations are expanded in square brackets, and any other oddity is kept as printed with [sic].

Prideaux states what he calls the connection of the Orthodox. If God elected Jacob and rejected Esau not on account of foreseen faith or works or good use of free choice, but so that his purpose might remain fixed, then the decree precedes knowledge, and God foreknows things of whatever kind because he decreed them to be future. He did not decree anything because he foresaw that man's free choice would determine itself in one direction or the other.[8] The Reformed writers, in other words, tied the order of decree and knowledge to the logic of election. I mention it because it shows how deep the order went for them, and not because my case rests on the election of Jacob.

Bavinck states the same thing in the language of the medium of knowledge. Of middle knowledge he says that it makes contingent events free and contingent also in relation to God, and he sets against it the principle: "Not the world but the decrees are the medium from which God knows all things."[9] Vos grounds the certainty of free actions not in foreknowledge but in the decree on which it rests, and he says so in these words: "Not foreknowledge as such but the decree on which it rests makes free actions certain."[10]

I do not, however, draw from these witnesses the conclusion that the creature's act is not free. Calvin, a few lines before the first sentence I quoted, grants that mere prescience lays no necessity on creatures, and the Confession, which holds the same order, says that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass "yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence

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8 Prideaux, *Opera theologica*, Lectio II, 15: "Connexio Orthodoxorum sic se habet: Si Deus non propter praevisam fidem aut opera, vel bonum usum liberi arbitrii, sed ut *propositum ejus fixum maneret*, hoc est, quia illi tantum sic placuerit, Jacobum ab aeterno elegerit, Esavum verò rejecerit; tum decretum praecedit scientiam, & ideò praescit Deus cujuscunque generis fututra [sic], quia decrevit talia futura, non ideò decrevit aliquid, quia in hanc vel illam partem, liberum hominis arbitrium se ipsum determinaturum praeviderit." The translation is mine. The italic words are as printed.

9 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 198–200, in the section "The Problem of Middle Knowledge"; the quotation is at 200. Bavinck's note numbers are omitted from all quotations from this work.

10 Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Theology Proper*, trans. and ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012–2014), 1:18–20, questions 55–59; the quotation is at 1:20, question 59.

offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."[11] What the order secures is that the truth about what a creature will do is not a creaturely fact independent of God. What it leaves for Chapters 5 and 6 is the question how a creature's choice is free within it. I owe that answer, and I will give it. I have to say first what the decree contains, because without that the answer cannot be stated.

The sense in which I need the order

I use the order for one purpose. It rules out a particular picture of how God knows what free creatures would do. On the picture I reject, there is a stock of truths about what every possible creature would do, used as the reason for God's choice of a world, and made to mark out whom he will save. God does not take the reason or motive of his decree from these truths, and he does not let them mark out whom he will save; his end is the Covenant of Redemption, and his grace is efficacious of itself. The condition under which God knows what a creature would do includes his own will to create, to uphold and to concur. The knowledge moves nothing in him. And it has no place in election or in the grace that converts. God does not find the reason for his decree among truths about creatures. He finds there the occasion, and the reason is his own.

What is called the grounding objection is commonly pressed against the Molinist. I hold a conditioned knowledge myself, with Gomarus, Walaeus, Alsted, Crocius and Le Blanc, and I owe the reader an account of where the objection lands on me and where it lands on Molina alone. It has two parts, and I take them in turn.

The first part is a bare question. What makes it true that a free creature would act thus in circumstances that never obtain? This question reaches my view as much as Molina's, and I

11 Westminster Confession of Faith 3.1, in *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms … with Proof Texts* (PCA/OPC reprint; © 2005, 2007 OPC), 12.

answer it in three steps. First, the objection assumes that every truth must have something that makes it true. That premise has not been proved. Le Blanc answered from a plain rule of logic: of two contradictories one is true.[12] "If Peter is placed in such an occasion, and God does not deny him his accustomed concurrence, he will sin, or he will not sin" is a true disjunction, so one side of it is true. Second, God's infinite and self-existent understanding comprehends every truth, these included. He understands "independently," his understanding caused by no external cause, "not even by the object."[13] His knowing does not make these truths true; if it did, his knowledge would settle Adam's choice. It comprehends them. Third, whoever grants God any knowledge of what would be under a condition faces the same question. The later Thomists faced it, and so did Walaeus, whom the tradition called orthodox. On how God knows such things, I stop where Crocius stopped. It rests on "the infinite perfection and perspicacity of the divine intellect," and it "is not within our power here to explain more clearly."[14] I claim a standoff on this part, not a victory, and I do not press it against Molina.

I add one guard that belongs to this first part. The condition under which God knows what a creature would do always includes God's own will, supposed and not yet decreed: his will to create, to uphold, to concur and to permit. Nothing is known of a creature apart from God. I do not claim this guard as my own. Le Blanc says it is "granted by all,"[15] and Molina himself states the condition as God's willing to create the creature "in this or that order of things, with these or

12 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XLVI–XLVII, 453. In th. XLVI he adds that the later Thomists cannot deny that such propositions are determinately true or false.

13 Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica, exhibens locos communes theologicos methodo scholastica* (Hanau: Conrad Eifrid, 1618), sect. I, cap. XXI, reg. X, 82.

14 Ludovicus Crocius, *Syntagma sacrae theologiae quatuor libris adornatum* (Bremen: Bertholdus Villerianus, 1636), lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 13, 570–71.

15 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XLV, 453; see also th. XLVIII, 453.

those circumstances, or aids."[16] It answers the charge that such truths stand apart from God. It does not by itself divide me from Molina.

The second part is sharper, and it reaches Molina and not me. Molina holds that God knows, before any free act of his will, what every free creature would do in every order and with every aid. He holds that it was "not in God's power" to know otherwise, and that the knowledge depends on what the creature would do "and not the reverse."[17] Then he makes God's absolute will to give glory to any adult wait on this knowledge: God willed beatitude to none of the adults "except on the supposition of the foreknowledge" of how they would use the aids of grace.[18] Molina denies that the foreknowledge is the cause of predestination, and I will not charge him with what he denies.[19] But at this point the gap in grounding becomes a gap in God's independence. Truths that God did not will, and cannot alter, mark out which persons he can bring to glory and by what order. God's saving purpose and his grace are hemmed in by what creatures would do with that grace.

My view does not carry this charge, and I want to say exactly why. It is not because my condition contains God's will and Molina's does not, since both contain it. Nor is it because nothing in what God knows depends on the creature. I have granted that, had Adam been one who would refrain, God's knowledge and the decree that took Adam's choice as its occasion would have been other. The reason is scope and use. The conditioned knowledge I hold reaches only choices that can go either way: Adam's act in the garden. It never reaches the response to

16 Luis de Molina, *Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1876), on q. 14, a. 13, disp. 49, 290. Translations from Molina are mine.

17 Molina, *Concordia*, on q. 14, a. 13, disp. 52, 318; for the three knowledges, see disp. 52, 317.

18 Molina, *Concordia*, on q. 22, a. 4, 421.

19 See Molina, *Concordia*, on q. 23, a. 4–5, disp. 1, memb. 11, where he says that the foreknowledge of the predestined's free cooperation was not the cause, reason, or condition of their predestination, which is to be referred to God's good pleasure alone.

grace, because grace is efficacious of itself and subjects free choice to itself. It has no part in the choice of persons, because election rests on God's good pleasure alone. And it is occasion only, never cause or motive. What Adam would freely do limited the routes that lay open to God's wisdom. It did not limit God's end, his grace, or his choice of persons. God's end is his purpose in the Covenant of Redemption, the Son's having a people to the glory of God, and it would have been served had Adam stood. Adam's would-choice made room for a fuller route; it did not set the goal. This is the independence I claim for God: independence of being and knowing, of motive, of end, and of grace. Molina's account cannot claim the last two, and mine can.

Whether this picture is possible for God I have said I do not deny, in the sense described in the last section. The point of this section is that, as a picture of the way things actually are, it conflicts with what Scripture says of God as creator and sustainer, and with what Calvin, Prideaux, Bavinck and Vos say in their different ways about the order of decree and knowledge.

4.3 Natural Knowledge and Free Knowledge

The older Reformed writers had a vocabulary for the kinds of knowledge that God has, and I need it. They distinguished the knowledge of simple intelligence, also called natural knowledge, from the knowledge of vision, also called free knowledge. The first is the knowledge God has of himself and of what his power can do. It is natural to him in the sense that it does not wait upon any choice that he makes. The second is the knowledge he has of what he has willed to be. It is free in the sense that it follows a free act of his will. Turretin puts the difference as one of order: "the natural precedes the decree, but the free follows it because it beholds things future; now they are not future except by the decree."[20] Charnock puts it in the same way and with the same consequence: "The Knowledg of Vision follows the Act of Gods Will, and supposeth an

20 Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger, vol. 1 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992), 213 (topic 3, question 13).

Act of Gods Will before, Decreeing things to be."[21] He adds the rule that I take as mine: "Nothing can pass out of the rank of things meerly possible into the order of things future, before some Act of Gods Will hath passed for its futurition."[22]

The name "middle knowledge" was given to a third thing, placed between these two. Bavinck, who was no friend of it, reports its purpose. The Jesuits, following the semi-Pelagian line, introduced between God's necessary and free knowledge a knowledge of contingent events that was logically antecedent to his decrees, in order to reconcile his omniscience with human freedom.[23] Against it he says of what is merely possible and will never be realized that it is present in God "only as an idea," and he draws the conclusion: "There is no middle ground between the two, no 'middle' knowledge."[24] The phrase "logically antecedent to his decrees" carries the whole dispute. The disputed knowledge is a knowledge of what free creatures would do that God has before he decrees anything.

The Reformed writers did not all treat the matter in the same words, and it is worth noticing how much was allowed. Prideaux, in the list of points on which, he says, the disputants agree, reports that no strife is moved about the name of middle knowledge, since it can be admitted either as a mode of the knowledge of simple intelligence, insofar as the things in question are conditioned things and that knowledge regards only possibles, or so as to be reduced to the knowledge of vision, insofar as it beholds future things, albeit under a condition. The passage then goes on that the underlying thing displeases, insofar as it fashions free acts of the

21 Stephen Charnock, *Several Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (London: D. Newman, T. Cockerill, Benj. Griffin, T. Simmons, and Benj. Alsop, 1682), 276.

22 Charnock, *Several Discourses*, 292.

23 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:198–200.

24 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:202. The phrase "only as an idea" is from the sentence that begins "Between that which is merely possible and will never be realized."

created will that would not presuppose the divine decree but would at least precede it in order.[25] I do not press the question whose voice the last sentence is. The point for me is the shape of the allowance. A knowledge of conditionals could stand in the scheme as natural knowledge, a knowledge of possibles under a condition, or as free knowledge, a knowledge of what is future under a condition. What could not stand was a knowledge of free acts that was neither of these and that preceded the decree. The place that the name "middle knowledge" was invented to hold is the place that was denied.

That was the position of most of the Reformed orthodox, and I do not hide that I now part from it on one point. They did not deny that God knows what a free creature would do in circumstances that never come about. Most denied that he knows it before his decree. A minority held that he knows it before his actual decree, with a decree supposed in the condition, and that the knowledge serves his wisdom and never moves his will. I take my stand with them, and I set them out after the majority. What I add to them, the idea, I come to in section 4.5. First I want the best of the Reformed statements before me, because the most careful of them goes further toward my position than is generally noticed.

Voetius: the second moment lies within the decree

Gisbertus Voetius, who taught at Utrecht, had his school's answer to middle knowledge printed in the first volume of his *Selectae disputationes theologicae* in 1648, in a treatise headed *De conditionata seu media in Deo scientia*. The treatise has four sections. The first three are dated in December 1643, and each of the three carries the name of Matthias Nethenus of Rees as

25 Prideaux, *Opera theologica*, Lectio II, 22: "… nec de nomine scientiae mediae lis movetur; admitti siquidem potest, … vel ut modus scientiae simplicis intelligentiae, quatenus conditionata sunt, quae respicit tantum possibilia, vel ut reducatur ad scientiam visionis, quatenus futura, licet sub conditione, intuetur. Verùm res substrata displicet, quatenus actus liberos voluntatis creatae effingit, qui decretum Divinum non praesupponerent, sed ordine saltem praecederent." The omitted words name an authority; the sentence stands in a run of points on which, Prideaux says, the disputants agree. The translation is mine.

author and respondent, with Voetius presiding. At 1:264 he tells the reader that he had himself given his students only a taste of the controversy, that one of his students afterward handled it thoroughly and learnedly in a public disputation under his presidency, and that it seemed good to him to insert the work in the volume.[26] The Latin is given in the notes, and the English renderings are mine.

I cite the main passage as the Utrecht position, published by Voetius as his school's answer. The voice in the passage is the respondent's ("I consider," "I hold"), and Voetius speaks in his own name elsewhere in the same volume, so I begin there.[27] In his treatise on the knowledge of God he says that he has refuted middle knowledge at length in his dissertation on the term of life, that he showed there that it is nothing but a purely indefinite knowledge, that is, the knowledge of simple intelligence,[28] and he gives two brief reasons. The second is the one that matters here: all things are absolutely foreordained by God and depend on his will; therefore God decreed them independently of a knowledge of conditionals.[29]

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26 Gisbertus Voetius, *Selectae disputationes theologicae*, vol. 1 (Utrecht: Johannes à Waesberge, 1648), 1:264. Voetius's Latin is given in modern spelling, with the long s written s, ligatures written out, and abbreviation and accent marks dropped. "Controversiam de scientia media, cujus nos solummodo gustum studiosis nostris tunc dederamus, annis aliquot post unus ex discipulis ex professo & docte pertractavit, & publica disputatione sub nostro praesidio ventilandam proposuit, Diatriben illam visum est hic inserere …." The translation is mine: The controversy about middle knowledge, of which we had then given our students only a taste, one of our disciples some years later treated thoroughly and learnedly, and proposed to be debated in public disputation under our presidency; it seemed good to insert that treatise here ….

27 The passage quoted below, 1:293–95, is the voice of the respondent, Matthias Nethenus, under Voetius's presidency; the disputation heading on p. 285 is dated 29 December 1643. The phrases "I consider" and "I hold" in that passage are the respondent's. Voetius speaks in his own name in the first passage cited (1:264) and in his treatise on the knowledge of God (1:257).

28 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:257, paragraph 8. Voetius cites his *Dissertatio de termino vitae*, arg. 15, p. 275 (quarto edition); nothing is quoted from that work beyond what he says of it here. "Scientiam mediam ex professo refutavimus Dissertat. de Termino Vitae arg. 15. pag. 275. edit. in 4. ubi ostendimus eam nullam esse nisi pure indefinitam seu simplicis intelligentiae …." We refuted middle knowledge thoroughly in the Dissertation on the Term of Life, arg. 15, p. 275, quarto edition, where we showed that there is none except a purely indefinite one, that is, that of simple intelligence ….

29 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:257, paragraph 8. "omnia sunt a Deo absolute praeordinata, & dependent ab ejus voluntate. Ergo independenter a scientia conditionalium ea decrevit Deus …." All things are absolutely foreordained by God and depend on his will. Therefore God decreed them independently of a knowledge of conditionals ….

Voetius does not deny that God knows what free creatures would do in any circumstance. What he denies is that this knowledge is a third kind standing between the knowledge of the merely possible and the knowledge of what will be, and he denies that God has it before the decree. The treatise grants the knowledge and asks only about its order. It grants that it is necessary that God from eternity beheld all possible modes of second causes in their actions, whether alone or joined, and therefore that he knew with certainty what would or would not be future if this or that occasion were posited.[30] "For the question is," it says, whether God foreknew those conditioned things with certainty before every act of his will.[31]

The respondent answers by distinguishing two states in the object of God's knowledge, possibility and futurition, and three moments in it. In the first moment God, looking upon his own omnipotence, saw what could be done by him without contradiction. In the second he predefined with himself, by an absolute decree, the modes, connections and concatenations of all things possible to be done, that is, what would or would not be cause, effect, means, end, prior, simultaneous, later, but with the proviso, if he should will them to be future.[32] In the third he

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30 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:272. The quotation is cut here; the printed sentence continues. "Fatemur quidem necessarium ut Deus ab aeterno conspexerit omnes possibiles modos causarum secundarum in actionibus vel solitariis vel sociis, ac proinde ut certo norit quid hac illave occasione posita futurum esset aut non futurum: sed quaeritur, num ante conspectionem decreti sui …" We grant indeed that it is necessary that God from eternity beheld all possible modes of second causes in their actions, whether alone or joined, and therefore that he knew with certainty what would or would not be future if this or that occasion were posited; but the question is whether before the sight of his decree …

31 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:272. "Quaestio enim est: Num ante omnem suae voluntatis actum ista conditionata certo praenorit Deus?" For the question is: did God foreknow those conditioned things with certainty before every act of his will?

32 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:293. The voice here is the respondent's. "Considero in objecto scientiae divinae duos status possibilitatis & futuritionis, sed tria momenta. Primum quando Deus intuendo suam omnipotentiam vidit quid absque contradictione a se fieri possit. Alterum, quando omnium fieri possibilium modos, connexiones & concatenationes apud se decreto absoluto praefinivit, id est, quid causa, quid effectum, quid medium, quid finis, quid prius, quid simul, quid posterius foret aut non foret; sed cum hac cautione, si vellet eas futuras." I consider in the object of divine knowledge two states, of possibility and of futurition, but three moments. The first, when God, looking upon his own omnipotence, saw what could be done by him without contradiction. The second, when he predefined with himself, by an absolute decree, the modes, connections and concatenations of all things possible to be done, that is, what would or would not be cause, effect, means, end, prior, simultaneous, later; but with this proviso, if he should will them to be future.

made a distinction among those things, predefined under such a condition: from some he left the condition in place, with the added decree "I do not will them to be future," and from others he took it away and put in its place the decree "I will them to be future." In that third moment the thing is at last drawn out of the state of possibility into the state of futurition.[33]

The clause on which I rest this reading is in the same sentence. In the first two moments, he says, the thing remains in the state of possibility, with this difference, that God knows it in the first by nature and before every act of the will, and in the second after an act of the will.[34] So the first moment is God's natural knowledge of what his power can do, and it comes before every act of his will. The second moment, by the text's own statement, comes after an act of the will, and that act is a decree, "an absolute decree," made "with himself." What the second moment knows is still a possibility and not a future thing. It is a knowledge of the possible and of the conditioned, but it is had within the decree and not ahead of it. The third moment is the decree that some of these possibilities are to be future and some are not. There is no place in the scheme for a knowledge of what free creatures would do that is had before God wills anything. That place is exactly the place middle knowledge claims, and in this scheme it is empty.

The respondent sees that his second moment looks like a conditioned decree, which is the thing he has been attacking, and he meets the objection directly. It may seem strange, he says,

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33 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:293. "Tertium, quando inter illas res, sub conditione tali praefinitas, discrimen statuit, relicta quibusdam conditione illa & super addito tali decreto: nolo futuras: ab aliis sublata conditione ejusque in locum substituto tali decreto: volo futuras: In tertio momento statuo rem demum extrahi ex statu possibilitatis in statum futuritionis …" The third, when among those things, predefined under such a condition, he established a distinction, that condition being left to some with the added decree "I do not will them to be future," and taken away from others and replaced by the decree "I will them to be future." In the third moment I hold that the thing is at last drawn out of the state of possibility into the state of futurition …

34 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:293. "in prioribus duobus manere in statu possibilitatis, hoc tamen discrimine, quod eas in primo per naturam & ante omnem voluntatis actum cognoscat, in secundo post actum voluntatis." In the first two [the thing] remains in the state of possibility, with this difference, that he knows them in the first by nature and before every act of the will, in the second after an act of the will.

that he appears in that moment to establish in God some conditioned decree.[35] His answer is that the condition is placed by God himself: "For, first, this condition is freely posited by God, is in God, and can freely be removed by him, so that his will here is suspended by no uncertain condition outside himself."[36] To me this is the heart of it. The condition lies in God. It is not a circumstance outside him that his will waits upon. He also says why the connections between the conditioned things and their outcomes are firm, and he names what they do not rest on: they are fixed "not by chance and fortuitously, nor from the nature of the parts, nor from the fitness of certain circumstances, nor from any Stoic fate, but from the free decree of God."[37]

Then he says plainly how God knows the conditioned future things that the disputed Scripture texts refer to. He does not say by a middle knowledge. He says that God saw them from eternity, and still sees them, "not by any middle [knowledge] but by the knowledge of vision, in his decree predetermining the connection and concatenation, not only of all beings that are future at the appointed time, in the third moment, but also of things that could come to be at any time, in that second moment."[38] The second moment is called a moment of the decree in so many words. The things that could come to be at any time belong to the decree that

35 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:293. "Neque secundo mirum videri debet, quod videar in secundo illo momento statuere in Deo decretum aliquod conditionatum." Nor should it seem strange in the second place that I seem in that second moment to establish in God some conditioned decree.

36 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:294. "Nam Primo haec conditio libere est a Deo posita, est in Deo & ab eodem libere removeri potest, ita ut ejus hic voluntas a nulla alia extra ipsum incerta conditione suspendatur." For, first, this condition is freely posited by God, is in God, and can freely be removed by him, so that his will here is suspended by no uncertain condition outside himself.

37 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:294. "non casu & fortuito, neque ex natura partium neque ex circumstantiarum quarundam congruitate, neque a stoico quodam fato, sed a libero Dei decreto." not by chance and fortuitously, nor from the nature of the parts, nor from the fitness of certain circumstances, nor from any Stoic fate, but from the free decree of God.

38 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:294–95 (the sentence runs across the page). "Dico quod Deus futura illa conditionata ab aeterno viderit & nunc adhuc videat, non per mediam aliquam sed per visionis scientiam, in decreto suo praedeterminante connexionem & concatenationem, non tantum omnium entium, praestituto tempore futurorum, in tertio; sed etiam ullo tempore fieri possibilium, in secundo illo momento." I say that God saw from eternity those conditioned future things, and still sees them, not by any middle [knowledge] but by the knowledge of vision, in his decree predetermining the connection and concatenation, not only of all beings that are future at the appointed time, in the third moment, but also of things that could come to be at any time, in that second moment.

predetermines their connections, and God knows them there. In this moment, the respondent adds, God can know from his decree what another world would have held if he had willed to create it, "how many angels and men would be in it."[39]

He closes by turning the question back on his opponents. The question is whether any certain knowledge of such future contingents is given in God before every act of the will.[40] The texts the opponents bring, he says, "prove only this, that those things are known with certainty by God, but only after the decree of God; which we gladly grant, and which overturns that middle knowledge from its foundation."[41] Anyone who wants this treatise on the side of middle knowledge must find in it a knowledge of conditionals that it places before the will, and in it there is none.

What Voetius reports of his own school

Two more points, and I claim no more than the text gives. The first is a remark Voetius makes about his own school. Of middle knowledge he says that his doctors cast it out as soon as it became known, as a deceitful covering of Pelagianism, except that one or another of them went against the stream, and that of these at least two, he knows, differed from the orthodox in the look of their words and in their manner of explaining, and not in fact.[42] He does not name them.

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39 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:295. "Ita ut Deus in hoc momento ex decreto suo etiam scire possit, si alium mundum creare vellet quot in eo angeli hominesque forent …." So that God in this moment, from his decree, can also know, if he willed to create another world, how many angels and men would be in it ….

40 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:295. "Anne certam aliquam ejusmodi futurorum contingentium in Deo notitiam dari ante omnem voluntatis actum?" Is any certain knowledge of such future contingents given in God before every act of the will?

41 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:295. "hoc tantum probant cognosci illa certo a Deo, sed nonnisi post decretum Dei: quod & nos libenter damus & mediam istam scientiam funditus evertit." they prove only this, that those things are known with certainty by God, but only after the decree of God; which we gladly grant, and which overturns that middle knowledge from its foundation.

42 Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, 1:266. The page does not name the two. "nisi quod contra torrentem DD. ivit unus atque alter; quos tamen, saltem duos ex iis, scimus verborum specie & explicandi modo potius, quam reipsa ab orthodoxis dissensisse …." except that one or another of the doctors went against the stream; of whom, however, at least two, we know, differed from the orthodox rather in appearance of words and manner of explaining than in fact ….

Bavinck says that Gomarus and Walaeus used the conditional connection in an innocent way, and I give his words in section 4.4. I do not say that Voetius had them in mind. I say only that a contemporary judged that at least two of the doctors who went against the stream differed in words and manner of explanation, and that the same contemporary built a scheme in which no knowledge of conditionals comes before the decree.

The second point is that the second moment is knowledge in a state of possibility. The respondent is not saying that God decides what a free creature will do and then finds out what he decided. He is saying that knowledge of what would happen on any supposition is fixed in God's own decree about the modes and connections of things, and that the third moment is the decree that some of these things are to be future and some are not. That is why I find the text useful and not merely interesting. It gives the knowledge of conditionals a place, and it ties that knowledge to an act of God's own will.

I do not say that Voetius's scheme is mine. His moments are the moments of knowledge toward will, and his scheme says nothing of an idea that guides the decree. What I take from it is this: God's knowledge of how creatures would act in any circumstance is real and certain, and the condition under which it is had lies in God and not outside him. On the location I go with the minority, who placed this knowledge before the actual decree, with God's own will supposed in its condition, and I come to them now. My other departure from the Reformed treatment, the idea, is an addition, and I give it in 4.4 and 4.5.

4.3a The Minority, and the Version I Hold

God knows what every free creature he could make would freely do in every circumstance in which he might place it. I hold this knowledge in the qualified form in which Franciscus Gomarus, Antonius Walaeus, Johann Heinrich Alsted, Ludwig Crocius and Louis Le

Blanc de Beaulieu held it. Johann Heinrich Heidegger condemned the Jesuit doctrine as poison, yet he counted Gomarus, Walaeus and Crocius among the orthodox, and Johannes Marck judged that Gomarus and Walaeus differed from the other orthodox "more in phrasing than in substance."[43] I do not posit a third kind of knowledge in God. With Crocius I count this knowledge a part of God's knowledge of simple intelligence. With Alsted I say that all God's knowing is necessary, though much of what he knows is contingent.[44] The condition under which God knows what a creature would do always includes God's own will, supposed and not yet decreed: his will to create, to uphold, to concur and to permit. This knowledge is not a cause of the decree, and it is not a motive in God. God's will, Alsted says, is "not moved and ordered by the will of the creature," and is moved by no external cause, "not even by the object."[45] What God foresees a creature would freely do may be the occasion of a divine volition. Gomarus says God regarded the foreseen series "not as a cause but as an occasion."[46] God's cause and motive is his own purpose in the Covenant of Redemption, and he is moved by that alone.

The minority did not form a school. They were five men across three generations, and they did not say the same thing in every respect. I take from each the element he states most clearly. From Gomarus I take the rule that what God foresees a creature would do is an occasion and not a cause. From Alsted I take the definition and the rules for God's will. From Crocius I take the judgment that this is no third knowledge but part of God's simple intelligence. From Le Blanc I take the kind of divine will that stands in the condition: a concurrence of itself

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43 Johann Heinrich Heidegger, *Corpus theologiae christianae*, vol. 1 (Zürich, 1700), locus III, §LXII, 85; Bernhard de Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus in Johannis Marckii Compendium theologiae christianae didactico-elencticum*, pars 1 (Leiden, 1761), cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660, quoting Johannes Marck, *Exercitationes textuales* XIV, pars IV, §10.

44 See Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 575; Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXIV, reg. III, 98.

45 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. IV, 86, and cap. XXI, reg. X, 82.

46 Franciscus Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, "De divina hominum praedestinatione," th. XXXV, in *Opera theologica omnia*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Joannes Janssonius, 1664), Pars II, 28.

indifferent, which the creature's will directs. Walaeus stands with them, and I have already named him in 2.4a.

Heidegger condemns the knowledge by which God, "before the Decree and the determination of [His] will," would have known the free acts of angels or men "from the connection of the condition, state or circumstances to be posited by God with the liberty of the rational creature."[47] Le Blanc's form, which I adopt for Adam, comes close to that, and I say so. I answer in three ways. Heidegger himself counted Gomarus, Walaeus and Crocius orthodox and faulted only their terms. The condition I hold includes God's own supposed decree of concurrence and permission, which was Spanheim's defense of them.[48] And I apply the knowledge to the case Heidegger names, actions "to which Divine Providence concurs not effectively but permissively," and never to grace.[49]

On Adam's act alone the structure is close to Molina's, and I say so. We agree on the condition: Molina's condition, like mine, includes God's supposed will to create and to give aids, and the difference is not there. We part in five things. The first is the kind of knowledge. Molina made middle knowledge a third kind; I, with Crocius, count conditioned knowledge part of simple intelligence. The second is scope. Molina's knowledge reaches every free act, the adult's cooperation with the aids of grace included; mine reaches only a will that can go either way, which for the spiritual good means Adam's act alone. The third is grace. In Molina, God's absolute will to give glory to adults waits on what they would do with the aids of grace; with me grace is efficacious of itself and subjects free choice to itself. The fourth is election. Molina refers predestination to God's good pleasure, and I will not charge him with what he denies, but

47 Heidegger, *Corpus theologiae christianae*, vol. 1, locus III, §LXII, 85.

48 See Friedrich Spanheim the Younger, *Elenchus controversiarum* with the Remonstrants, VII, "De scientia Dei media," §II, in *Opera*, vol. 3 (Leiden, 1703), col. 859.

49 Heidegger, *Corpus theologiae christianae*, vol. 1, locus III, §LXII, 85.

the order in which God predestines is chosen on the supposition of this knowledge; with me the knowledge has no part in the choice of persons. The fifth is use. Molina's knowledge is the means by which providence and predestination are reconciled with freedom as a whole; mine is occasion only, and it shows wisdom the opportunity to carry out the Covenant of Redemption in its fullest form through a free Adam.

Why Le Blanc must govern the concurrence for Adam's act is plain. Only an indifferent concurrence leaves the "would" settled by Adam. Alsted's list of objects includes motion, and so does not exclude premotion; Le Blanc does.[50] With him I hold that God's concurrence with Adam's act was of itself indifferent and was given its direction by Adam's will, and that God did not premove him to it.[51]

I name the stricter voices honestly. Voetius places conditioned knowledge after an act of the will. Turretin holds premotion, and concurrence with the entity of the sinful act.[52] Twisse, the Assembly's prolocutor, wrote against Molina's middle knowledge.[53] Heidegger's allowed knowledge is narrower than Le Blanc's: its object is "a conditional proposition necessary from the Decree of God."[54] I do not hide these differences. I follow the minority within the limits they kept: two-way wills only, grace efficacious of itself, election by good pleasure, and the knowledge as occasion, never cause or motive.

4.4 The Idea in the Older Writers, and Where Each Stops

I do not say that the writers I now cite hold the distinction I propose. Reading Bavinck prompted my thought, and what their pages show is that the idea has long been treated as an

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50 See Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXI, reg. IV, 79.

51 See Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. LIII–LIV, 454, and th. LXIII, 455.

52 See Franciscus Turrettinus, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae, Pars Prima* (Edinburgh: John D. Lowe, 1847), 456–57 (Loc. VI, q. 5, §§11–14), and 462 (Loc. VI, q. 7, §3).

53 See Chapter 2, n. 45. Twisse's own *Dissertatio* is cited there as Bavinck lists it.

54 Heidegger, *Corpus theologiae christianae*, vol. 1, locus III, §LXII, 85.

identifiable part of what God knows, and that most of them join it, in one way or another, to his will. The use I make of it, as the part of the decree that gives guidance to the rest, is mine. Where I say that a writer implies something, I mean that I infer it. I never mean that he said it.

Augustine and Aquinas

Augustine taught that the ideas are the principal forms or reasons of things, stable and unchangeable, themselves not formed and therefore eternal, and contained in the divine intelligence.[55] Aquinas takes the point over in the first part of the *Summa theologiae*. He says that it is necessary to posit ideas in the divine mind, because the world was not made by chance but by God acting through his intellect, so that there must be in the divine mind a form after whose likeness the world was made.[56] He says also that the idea in God is nothing other than the divine essence, and then he draws the distinction I need: the word *idea* names the essence not as essence but as the likeness or reason of this or that thing.[57] It is a distinction of reason in a simple God, and it is the kind of distinction I am making.

Aquinas does not leave the idea alone. God's knowledge is the cause of things insofar as it has will joined to it, because an intelligible form is a principle of action only when an inclination to the effect, which is the work of the will, is added to it. So it does not follow that whatever God knows is, or was, or will be, but only what he wills.[58] In the *Disputed Questions on Truth* he allows an idea even of what neither is, nor was, nor will be, because God has a virtually practical knowledge of what he is able to make, and he adds that such ideas are in a

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55 Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* 46, as quoted in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 15, a. 2, sed contra: "ideae sunt principales quaedam formae vel rationes rerum stabiles atque incommutabiles, quia ipsae formatae non sunt, ac per hoc aeternae ac semper eodem modo se habentes, quae divina intelligentia continentur." Latin text of the Leonine edition, Corpus Thomisticum, www.corpusthomisticum.org.

56 See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 15, a. 1.

57 See Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 15, a. 1, ad 3, and a. 2, ad 1.

58 See Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 14, a. 8.

manner undetermined, because God is determined by the purpose of his will to produce only the things that are, will be, or have been.[59] That is the order I am after: the idea, the power that can actualize it, and the will that determines what is actualized. As I read him, Aquinas stops short of what I propose. He does not set the idea beside will and knowledge as one of three parts of a decree. His concern is the sense in which God's knowledge is practical.

Charnock and Turretin

Stephen Charnock has the idea in the same frame as the order of decree and knowledge. God, he says, "sees the nature of things in the Ideas of his own mind, and the events of things in the Decrees of his own Will,"[60] and he is "not only the efficient, but the exemplary cause," so that he knows what his power has wrought as a carpenter knows a house he has built, "by consulting the Model in his own mind, whereby he built it."[61] The sentence is clear that the idea is in the divine mind and that it is a model. It is also clear that the model is distinct from the decrees of the will, in which the events of things are seen. Charnock does not say that the model guides the will. He does not say what the model contains.

Turretin says in the locus on the decrees that they take on the notion of a double cause, efficient and exemplar: "Exemplar because the decree of God is (as it were) the idea of all things out of himself, after which as the archetype (*archetypon*) they, as the ectypes (*ektypa*), are expressed in time."[62] For Turretin the decree is, as it were, the idea. I do not set it aside, because it comes close to my sentence that the decree contains the idea. Turretin stops where he identifies the two. He does not distinguish the idea from the will within the decree, and he has no occasion in that place to do so.

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59 See Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 3, a. 6.

60 Charnock, *Several Discourses*, 305.

61 Charnock, *Several Discourses*, 283.

62 Turretin, *Institutes*, 1:312 (topic 4, question 1, §7).

Norton, Holtzfus, Vos and Bavinck

John Norton, in *The Orthodox Evangelist*, says that "the Divine Essence as willing the futurition of things, is that increated *Idea* of all things."[63] The idea is here the divine essence considered as willing. Norton joins idea and will so closely that the distinction I want is not visible, though his phrase "as willing" shows that he had to think of the essence under an aspect. Barthold Holtzfus, in his Frankfurt (Oder) dissertation on creation of 1706, defines the exemplary cause, as I read him, as an internal form presented to the divine intellect, known by it as imitable by creatures, and not as intelligible things standing outside God to which God looked and by which he was helped in creating.[64] The point is the one I need against the picture of God surveying a stock of possibilities. For him the pattern is in God and is not found.

Vos, in his article on omniscience in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, separates God's knowledge of things from his creating of them, and says that in God, as in man, the intellect and the will are distinct faculties. For him the source of God's knowledge of the world is God's knowledge of himself: "All that is actual or possible in it therefore is a reflection in created form of what exists uncreated in God." And he says that "the knowledge of God and the purposing will of God are distinct, and that not the former but the latter determines the certainty of the outcome."[65] In the *Reformed Dogmatics* he grounds the certainty of free actions in the decree and not in foreknowledge as such.[66] He also says that God's necessary knowledge provides "the material" for his decree.[67] I read that as a statement about what God's will has to

63 John Norton, *The Orthodox Evangelist* (London: John Macock for Henry Cripps and Lodowick Lloyd, 1654), chap. 1, 16.

64 See Barthold Holtzfus, *Dissertatio theologica de creatione*, respondent Adolph Christoph Stosch (Frankfurt an der Oder: Johann Christoph Steppinus, 1706).

65 Geerhardus Vos, "Omniscience," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, ed. James Orr (Chicago: Howard-Severance, 1915), 4:2191–92.

66 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:20, question 59.

67 Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:81, question 5, in the chapter "Of God's Decrees in General."

choose from, and not as a statement about a cause in my scheme. Vos stops at the distinction of knowledge and will. He does not say what part of the decree gives the will its direction.

Bavinck's chapter on the divine counsel stands nearest of all. He says that God's counsel is "both the 'efficient' and 'exemplary' cause of all that is,"[68] and he calls election "the divine 'idea,' the blueprint of the temple that God builds in the course of the ages and of which he is the supreme builder and architect."[69] A few pages later he says that the ideas included in the decrees are derived from the fullness of knowledge eternally present in God, so that possibility and actuality do not coincide, and a logical distinction has to be made between the content of God's self-knowledge and that of his knowledge of the world.[70] In his *Christian Worldview* he sets ideas and laws apart. Ideas, he says in effect, express the manners of being of created things, and laws their manners of moving and functioning, and he warns that whoever loses sight of this runs the risk of letting the laws hover over things like demonic powers.[71] I take from that passage the distinction that the debate over the decree has not used. A debate that handles the decree as a system of causes moving things is dealing in laws. What it has not handled is the idea of the things, which is what they are, and of the order they are made for.

Bavinck also says of Gomarus and Walaeus what I wish to note here. After stating a conditional connection that is not in question, he says, "If this is all it meant, it could be accepted without any difficulty, just as Gomarus and Waldeus [*sic*] understood and recognized it in this sense." He goes on to say that the theory of middle knowledge is aimed at something different.[72]

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68 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:339, in chapter 7, "The Divine Counsel."

69 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:341.

70 See Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:342–43.

71 See Herman Bavinck, *Christian Worldview*, trans. and ed. N. Gray Sutanto, James Eglinton, and Cory C. Brock (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 77–91.

72 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:200. Bavinck's spelling "Waldeus" is as printed. The sentence refers to the conditional connection stated in the sentences before it.

That is Bavinck's report of how the two understood it; my own reading of them is in 4.3a and Appendix F. I find it neither helpful nor accurate to treat the knowledge of conditionals as a separate kind of knowledge, because that continues to distinguish knowledge in a way that portrays God as cogitating over the best possibility out of a number of possibilities, rather than seeing that knowledge as part of his simple intelligence, which serves the decree. God did not have to think through the possibilities or decide on the best idea for his purpose or on what his purpose should be. He conceived the perfect idea and purpose out of his perfection. Here Bavinck's distinction of the idea helps, though I do not say that he draws from it what I draw.

What the survey shows

Every one of these writers sets the idea in the divine mind and treats it as a pattern for what is made, and Aquinas, Charnock, Turretin, Norton and Bavinck join it in one way or another to the will. Each stops at a different place. Aquinas stops at the practical character of God's knowledge. Charnock stops at the model in the mind. Turretin stops at the identification of the decree with the idea. Norton stops at the idea as the essence willing. Vos stops at the distinction of knowledge from will, and Bavinck stops at the blueprint and at the difference between ideas and laws. In the passages cited, none of them asks what the idea does in the decree, and none of them says that the idea guides the will. That question is the one I ask next.

4.5 Idea, Will, and Knowledge: Distinct in Thought, One in God

The decree cannot be considered except through its parts. It is not a bare act of will. It consists of the idea God has of the created order, the will by which he decides, and the knowledge he has of what he has conceived and decided, together with the power and the authority by which he actualizes it. I say that the idea, the will and the knowledge are the three parts of the decree. They are distinct in thought and one in God.

Both camps in the quarrel say that the decree involves knowledge and will. They say little more. They take the decree to be, in effect, the will of God, and they argue over what the will determines. The compatibilist says that the will determines the creature's choice and that the choice is free anyway. The libertarian says that the will cannot determine it if the choice is to be free. Neither asks what the will was willing. A will is the will of someone for something, and what God wills is the order that he has conceived. The idea of that order is the part of the decree that neither side has given a place.

A sandwich

I explain the distinction with an ordinary case. When I have an idea that I am going to make myself a sandwich, I know that I can make the sandwich, because it is within my power. I know what kind of sandwich I want. And I go and make the type of sandwich that I want to eat. The idea of the sandwich that I desire is a different thing from the knowledge that I can make it, and a different thing from the choice to make it. A man who has an idea of a sandwich has not yet chosen to make it, and a man who knows that he could make it has not yet chosen to. These are three things, and I cannot give an account of what I do without all three. If you take away the idea, I do not know what I am choosing. If you take away the knowledge, I do not know whether I can. If you take away the will, nothing is made.

The sandwich is an analogy and does not carry more than that. A man's idea, will and knowledge come one after another in time, and he may have the idea without the knowledge and the knowledge without the will. God is not like that. I am not saying that God deliberates and then chooses. I say that what is one in God has to be considered by us in parts, and that the parts have a certain order of thought: the knowledge of what is conceived and willed follows the conceiving and the willing, and the willing is the willing of what is conceived.

Distinct in thought, one in God

This is not a division in God. God is simple, and the idea, the will and the knowledge are not parts of God in the way that boards are parts of a house. They are one in God, and they are one God. The distinction is one that our thought has to make. It is a distinction of reason in a simple God, and the scholastics made such distinctions as a matter of course. Aquinas's distinction of the idea from the essence is one of them. Vos distinguishes the knowledge of God from the purposing will of God and says that the latter determines the certainty of the outcome. Turretin distinguishes the natural from the free knowledge, and the decree from the foreknowledge, and he does not suppose that he is dividing God. I make my distinction on the same footing. The idea, the will and the knowledge are three ways in which we have to think of the one decree. I never say that the idea breaks God's simplicity, and I do not say that the idea is something that God has apart from himself.

I also do not say that the idea belongs to the free knowledge, or that it is a species of any knowledge. The knowledge of vision is the knowledge God has of what he has willed to be. The idea is the pattern he conceives, and willing it is a further thing. The idea is not in the knowledge of vision, because it is what the will takes up and the knowledge of vision follows. I take the three parts of the decree as parts of one decree and I do not fold the first into the third.

A hypothetical blueprint and a storehouse

The idea is a hypothetical blueprint. It is the plan of an order, conceived whole, including the creatures in it and the relations between them, and it is held before God as something that he may choose to actualize or not. The knowledge, as I use the word, is not a storehouse of facts to be consulted. A blueprint is not a catalogue of true statements about what men would do in various rooms. It is a design, and what is true about the creatures in it is true because of what the

design is. This is the point at which my account differs from a picture in which God consults a stock of truths. The idea is God's design of the order. Its matter includes what his simple intelligence comprehends: what each free creature in that order would freely do. Gomarus calls the foreseen series "the subject and matter from which" the decree defines.[73] The design takes Adam as he would freely act, and it does not make him so act. God's conceiving is free and is moved by his end alone.

I put the point this way because it answers the charge that I have renamed Molina's middle knowledge. The knowledge of what creatures would do is no third kind standing between God's natural and free knowledge; it is part of his simple intelligence. It is not the ground of the decree but its occasion. The knowledge that is a part of the decree, the third of its parts, is God's knowledge of what he has conceived and willed, and that knowledge follows the idea and the will.

Where the idea stands

I come to the order of the three. If one is limited to the language of moments, the idea of this creation comes before the design of the created order is carried out, and before the knowledge of that design. The idea gives guidance to the rest. It tells the will what to will, and it tells the knowledge what there is to know. This is not a claim that God was once without an idea and then had one. It is a statement about what depends on what in our thinking of a decree that is one. The will does not make the idea, since God did not deliberate, as we must, and he was under no necessity to choose a best world. In one simple act he comprehends all that could be and wills what his wisdom judges fullest for his end. The purpose and the idea are his out of his perfection. The will chooses to actualize the idea, and the knowledge is the knowledge of what has been

73 Gomarus, *Conciliatio doctrinae orthodoxae de providentia Dei*, cap. VI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 129.

conceived and willed. If the will is taken away, the idea stays as an idea. If the idea is taken away, the will has nothing to will.

I rest this on what has gone before. Chapter 3 laid down that God's purposes govern the idea of creation. The idea is the idea of an order that serves a purpose, and the purpose is the Father's gift of a people to the Son in the covenant of redemption. The idea therefore serves the final cause, which guides the idea. Chapter 3 also said that I take the formal cause to be the idea. What it adds up to is that the purposes govern the idea, the idea is the pattern of the order, and the will and the knowledge are the will and the knowledge of that pattern for that purpose.

4.6 The Idea of a World in Which the Covenant Could Be Fulfilled

The idea is not an idea of any order whatever. It is the idea of an order in which the purposes of Chapter 3 can be accomplished, and so it is the idea of a world in which the covenant of redemption can be fulfilled. That is a world in which a people can be given to the Son, who can receive and respond to the revelation of God's justice, grace, love and wisdom in genuine love and worship, and in which the Son can redeem them. The idea is an idea of what would make the most of God's impressiveness in displaying grace, justice, love, mercy and wisdom, while also actualizing creatures who could meaningfully receive and respond to this revelation of his impressiveness in genuine love and worship and fascination, such that the creatures could peacefully revel in the joyous rapture of contemplating and worshiping him as he is.

I state this as what I take the idea to contain, and I hold it as an inference from what Scripture and the confessions say of God's purposes. Scripture says that all things are of him, and through him, and to him, and that to him be glory for ever,[74] that the Father gave a people to the Son,[75] and that the manifold wisdom of God is made known through the church to the rulers

74 Rom. 11:36 (KJV).

75 See John 17:6 (ESV).

and authorities in the heavenly places.[76] A world that serves those purposes is a world with creatures who can know God and answer him. I do not say what else God might have conceived, and my argument has no need to.

What the idea requires of the creature

If the order is to contain real worshipers, the creatures in it must be able to receive and respond. A response that is not the creature's own is not a response. A love that is only the working of a mechanism is not love, and worship that is only the discharge of a cause is not worship. So the idea contains creatures who are free, and their freedom is part of the design. It is not a concession that God makes to something outside the design. It is what the design needs. I call it a necessary derivative of the idea, and I mean that it follows from the purpose: if the purpose requires worshipers, the idea contains free creatures, and the freedom is created along with the creatures. Chapter 5 argues that this freedom is a sovereignly created necessity.

The freedom the idea gives the creature is a limited one. The creature is a creature. It did not make itself, and it does not sustain itself, and it chooses always in circumstances it did not choose. I call it limited ultimate freedom, and Chapter 5 defines it. The idea includes also the plain fact that the creature is finite and mutable. A finite creature given freedom is given a weight that it must carry, and the weight is the weight of choosing within a world in which the creature is not God. The Confession says that Adam, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do what was good and well pleasing to God, "but yet, mutably, so that he might fall from it."[77] I leave the details to Chapter 7. For this chapter the point is the one that matters for the idea. The knowledge of how mutable creatures would handle the weight of

76 Eph. 3:10 (ESV).

77 Westminster Confession of Faith 9.2 (text at opc.org/wcf.html). Chapter 4, section 2, has our first parents created "under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change."

freedom is contained in the idea God had of the creation he would create. It is not a datum that moves God. It is comprehended by his own intellect, caused by nothing outside him, and it shows his wisdom the occasion. It is part of the order he conceived.

What I do not say here

I have been careful not to say more about this knowledge than the argument needs, and I put down two limits so that no one reads more into the chapter than is in it. First, I do not say in this chapter in what order God conceived the creature's fall and the redemption from it. Scripture says that Christ "was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you,"[78] and the Confession says that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass without being the author of sin.[79] I put down no order beyond what these say. Second, I do not say that the idea requires the fall in any way that would make the fall the thing God wills in the sense in which he wills the end. What the idea requires is a real covenant with real parties. How the fall belongs to the wisdom of God is for Scripture and the confessions to state, and I come to what they state in Chapter 7.

What this chapter has laid down

I have argued the following. The creature stands under a command that God has framed (4.1). The futurity of a creature's act is not a fact independent of God's willing, and God's free knowledge follows his decree (4.2). Most of the Reformed orthodox allowed a knowledge of conditionals only as natural or as free knowledge (4.3). A minority held it before the actual decree, under a supposed one, as occasion and not cause, and I follow them (4.3a). The idea has been treated by the older writers as a pattern in the divine mind, most of them tie it to the will, and in the passages cited each of them stops before asking what it does in the decree (4.4). I have

78 1 Pet. 1:20 (ESV).

79 Westminster Confession of Faith 3.1 (PCA/OPC reprint), 12.

proposed that the decree has three parts, the idea, the will and the knowledge, which are distinct in thought and one in God, and that the idea gives guidance to the rest (4.5). And the idea is the idea of a world in which the covenant of redemption can be fulfilled, which is a world whose creatures are free as God is sovereign, which is the point of section 4.6.

What remains is to say what that freedom is and how it stands to God's sovereignty. That is the work of the next chapter. I begin it with the definition of limited ultimate freedom, set beside Tim Stratton's definition of libertarian freedom, and I argue that the creature must be free in the same way that God must be sovereign.

Chapter 5. Creaturely Freedom

5.1 What I Mean by Limited Ultimate Freedom

Chapter 4 ended with a promise. The idea of the created order is the idea of a world with creatures who are free as God is sovereign, and I said that the next task is to say what that freedom is and how it stands to God's sovereignty. This chapter does the first part of that, and Chapter 6 does the second.

I use one name for the freedom I defend, and I use it throughout: limited ultimate freedom, which I write LUF. I define it as freedom of ambition, desire, thought, action, and choice without coercion, specifically to pursue, want, think, act, or choose otherwise in the circumstances. It is the freedom each creature has over his own choices, decisions, and actions within the created order. It is the original created freedom of Adam, and it continues after the fall as the freedom of the *viator*, the creature on the road; I infer that 8.8 shows this freedom confirmed in good.

Three features of the definition need to be fixed before I go on, because the rest of the chapter depends on them.

The first is that LUF keeps the "otherwise." It is not compatibilist freedom, which is content to say that the creature acted as he wanted. I mean that the creature can want, think, act and choose otherwise in the circumstances in which he is placed. The second is that LUF is limited. Ultimate freedom of the type God has belongs to God alone, and a creature did not make himself, was not consulted over his creation, and was not consulted over his being kept in being. The circumstances in which he chooses are given to him. In Adam the limit is the limit of grounding, which is to say of being a creature. After the fall a further limit is added, which is a will bound to sin. The third is that the necessity that attends a creature's act is the necessity of the

consequence and not the necessity of the consequent, and that his act is contingent in both a diachronic and a synchronic sense. I explain those terms in Chapter 6. Here it is enough to say that if God has decreed that I will do a thing, it follows as a consequence of the decree that I will do it, and the thing I do is not thereby necessary in itself.

LUF beside Stratton's definitions

I take the case for libertarian freedom at its best, in the definitions of Tim Stratton, and I have no quarrel with the words he uses. He writes: "If a person's choice, action, evaluation, or judgment is neither random nor determined by something or someone else, then this person possesses libertarian freedom."[1] He goes on: "It can also be expressed this way: Libertarian freedom is the ability to choose or act such that antecedent conditions are insufficient to causally determine or necessitate one's choice or action."[2] His summary is: "That's a fancy way of saying the ability to do otherwise."[3] I grant the definition with one clarification, the same one I gave in Chapter 1. The phrases "antecedent conditions" and "something or someone else" do not refer to the creator's activity in creating and sustaining the creation he made for his purposes. They refer to causes inside the creation that would settle a choice without the agent's own willing.

With that clarification, what is the difference between LUF and what Stratton defines? There are two. The first is the limit I have just described. The second is a matter of what is claimed about the sourcehood of the act. Stratton's definition of determinism is, "A specific event is determined if antecedent conditions are sufficient to necessitate said event."[4] I said in Chapter 1 that this is insufficient as it stands, because the conditions of creating and sustaining

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1 Timothy A. Stratton, *Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism: A Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Philosophical Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2026), 6.

2 Stratton, *Human Freedom*, 6.

3 Stratton, *Human Freedom*, 6.

4 Stratton, *Human Freedom*, 2.

are antecedent conditions sufficient to necessitate every event that ever takes place. Taken without the clarification, it would condemn every creature, the Molinist as much as the compatibilist, and a definition that no creature can escape cannot mark off one view from another. I do not make a case from this against Stratton. I make a case for the clarification, and I show in 5.2 that he has reason to accept it.

What LUF is not

LUF is not the freedom of a creature who owes nothing to anything outside himself. That would be a freedom that could be had only by one who had overseen his own existence. It is also not the freedom of a creature that acts however he happens to be moved, as a stone rolls downhill. The Westminster Confession states the middle position in its chapter on free will: "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor, by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good, or evil."[5] That sentence is the one I take as the ground of LUF. The will has a natural liberty. It is not forced, and it is not determined by a necessity of its nature to one thing or the other.

I add one word about the labels. LFW is the freedom Stratton defends, and LUF is my own, and I keep the two names apart. When I say that the creature is free in the sense that matters, I mean LUF. When I discuss Stratton, I say LFW or libertarian freedom, and I mean his definition with the clarification. When I say that Adam was free in the libertarian sense, I mean that he satisfied that definition in the garden, as I argue in the next section, and I intend nothing beyond what that definition says.

5 Westminster Confession of Faith 9.1, text at opc.org/wcf.html. All quotations of the Confession in this chapter are from that text.

5.2 The Concession to Stratton, Argued

I said in Chapter 1 that I concede Stratton's position in three ways that I intend. I come now to argue each of them. The argument is not that I give up something I would like to keep. It is that each concession is true, and that what I do not concede is the larger conclusion that he wishes to draw from them.

First: Adam in the garden

I grant that Adam, the first man in a mutable test, was free in the libertarian sense that Stratton describes, and that he had alternative possibilities. I do not merely grant it. I argue for it, from Scripture and from the Confession. I mean it in the full sense. Adam could have refrained in the same circumstances in which he fell, and God's decree took his free choice as its occasion and was not its cause (6.5).

God made man upright. "See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes."[6] God placed the man in the garden and gave him a command with a penalty: "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."[7] A command with a penalty is addressed to someone who can obey it and who can disobey it. The serpent's question to the woman presupposes the same thing, and so does the narrative that follows, in which the woman sees that the tree is good for food and a delight to the eyes and desirable to make one wise, and takes of its fruit and eats, and gives some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.[8] No reader takes this scene to be a script in which the actors could not have said anything else.

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6 Eccles. 7:29 (ESV).

7 Gen. 2:17 (ESV).

8 See Gen. 3:6 (ESV).

The Westminster Confession states the doctrine in two places. In the chapter on creation it says that our first parents were created "under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change."[9] And in the chapter on free will: "Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom, and power to will and to do that which was good and well pleasing to God; but yet, mutably, so that he might fall from it."[10] I read both as saying that Adam had the power to do the good and the power to fall from it, and that the second was a real power. That is the dual power that I mean by the "otherwise," and it is the same dual power that Stratton's definition names.

What I do not grant is the next step, that the rest of humanity stands where Adam stood. I take that up in 5.6. For now I say only that the concession is limited to a man who was created upright, who had not yet fallen, and who, according to the Confession, had freedom to will and to do the good and also a mutability by which he might lose it.

Second: the definitions, for the sake of argument

I grant Stratton his definitions for the sake of argument, so as to show that they do not take him where he wants to go. The reason they do not is that a creature cannot ground himself. We did not create ourselves, we were not consulted about our creation, and we were not consulted about God's keeping us in being. A definition of freedom that requires that nothing outside the agent have any part in settling the conditions of his choice is a definition that no creature can meet.

I put this as an observation about creatures and not as an argument that Stratton is wrong. In Chapter 1 I gave the other side its reply. The libertarian may say that desert needs control of the choice and not control of existence, and I said that this reply works only if control of the

9 Westminster Confession of Faith 4.2.

10 Westminster Confession of Faith 9.2.

choice can be sealed off from the conditions that make there be a chooser, a nature, a history of desire, and a sustained power to act. If ultimate sourcehood is watered down to the agent's own uncoacted choice, I have no quarrel with the word, and my target has moved. That is why I make the clarification on the phrases "antecedent conditions" and "something or someone else." If they are read to include the Creator's creating and sustaining, they cannot be satisfied by any creature. If they are read as I read them, to refer to causes inside the creation that would settle a choice without the agent's own willing, they can be satisfied by a creature, and they are satisfied by Adam in the garden.

Third: God's power and prerogative

I grant all of this in the light of God's power and prerogative. God has the power to conceive, that is, to have the idea of, a creation in which humanity is free in the libertarian sense, with alternative possibilities. To say that he could not is to limit his power and his prerogative. I say that he could, and I argue that in Adam he did.

I take this concession to be the most important of the three, because it is the one that shows what kind of disagreement remains. It would be one thing to say that a creation with libertarian freedom is impossible. It is another to say that God did not make the creation that way for the rest of us. I do not say the first. I said in Chapter 4 that a true statement of what a self-determining creature would do is not a contradiction, and that it is something God can think, and does: he comprehends it by his conditioned knowledge (4.3a). If he can think it, he can will it, and if he can will it, he can make a world in which it is so. So I do not hold that a world of libertarian creatures is impossible or that it is unworthy of God. I hold that God purposed a certain world, that in it Adam was free in the sense Stratton defines, and that what follows from

Adam's fall is a different condition for the rest of us. I give the reasons in 5.6 and in Chapters 7 and 8.

What is not conceded

I have said what I grant. It is only fair to say what I do not. I do not grant that libertarian freedom as Stratton defines it, with the clarification, is the freedom of every human being now. I do not grant that it is required by the justice of God in the sense that nothing else could meet his justice. I do not grant that a God who has decreed whatever comes to pass cannot create free creatures. And I do not grant that God's providence over a free creature requires Molina's kind of middle knowledge. For Adam it is served by the conditioned knowledge the Reformed minority held, which has no part in election or grace. These are four distinct claims, and each is argued in its place. The point of the concessions is to put what is agreed on the table so that the real difference can be seen. The difference is not that one side believes in a free creature and the other does not. Both do, and both are right to. The difference is about the ground of that freedom and its condition after the fall.

5.3 Liberty in God, and Not Liberty from God

There is a distinction within the liberty of freedom, and by it I mean a liberty in God and not a liberty from God. A liberty from God would be a freedom that set the creature outside the reach of his Creator, so that the creature's act belonged to the creature alone and God stood as a spectator to it or an auditor of it. A liberty in God is a freedom that the creature has because God gave it, exercises under God's sustaining, and answers for to God. The first is what ultimate sourcehood demands. The second is what LUF is.

This distinction fits clearly only if the causation is mapped properly, according to the parameters of what is revealed in Scripture. I set out the mapping in Chapter 3 and apply it in

Chapter 7. For this chapter the parameters are enough. They are five. We need (1) to identify who God reveals himself to be as creator and sustainer and sovereign; (2) to show humans being appealed to as decisive; (3) to show humans being described as responsible and morally obligated; (4) to show God's purposes working through creation and creatures; and (5) to note the absence of any perceived conflict with this in the lives of God's prophets and spokesmen, outside the questions that Paul anticipates from his readers in Romans 9.

Two anchors

I use two verses as anchors, and I use them only as anchors of what other passages say. The first is Romans 11:36. In the King James Version: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."[11] That is the sovereignty of God as creator, sustainer, and ultimate purpose of creation, set down in a single sentence. The second is Isaiah 63:17, the prophet's prayer for his people, in the English Standard Version: "O LORD, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage."[12]

The prophet in Isaiah 63:17 says two things in one breath. He says that the LORD makes his people wander and hardens their heart. That is an admission of God's absolute control, which he has in creating and sustaining the creation, and it is sovereignty without fatalism, because the prophet addresses the one who has done it and asks him to return. And he asks. He asks "why," and he asks God to return. A man who thought that the hardening was a mechanism would not pray. A man who thought that his own wandering was no part of what God did would not call it God's doing. The prophet holds both in a single thought, and he does so without any sense that

11 Rom. 11:36 (KJV).

12 Isa. 63:17 (ESV).

the two collide. I do not say that this is a solution to the problem. I say that it is a datum that any solution must respect.

Both lines of texts at full force

The reality of God's determining, and of sovereignty expressed in determining, is amply displayed in many other passages. Among them are Isaiah 6:10; Ezekiel 14:7–9; Joshua 11:20; Deuteronomy 2:30; John 12:40; 2 Thessalonians 2:11–12; Romans 9:18–20; Psalm 119:36; Acts 2:23; Acts 4:28; Isaiah 46:10; Genesis 50:20; Matthew 26:24; Isaiah 53:10; Hebrews 6:17; and Ephesians 1:11.[13] Yet the biblical writers represent it along with desert, responsibility, blame, and judgment, without any sense of the contradiction that so many feel when the subject is considered. The closest thing to a difficulty is Paul's dialogue in Romans 9, where he anticipates the question of his readers: "You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?' But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?"[14] Even there Paul does not open God's secret counsel to them, and he does not soften his explanation. Both lines of texts are to be taken at full force.

Equally clear in Scripture is the necessity of human freedom to the point of responsibility. The appeals to repent that run through the whole Bible would be little more than theater without it. When Paul says in Athens that God "commands all people everywhere to repent,"[15] he speaks to creatures who can hear and answer. By that freedom I mean LUF, as I have defined it: the freedom of a creature, without coercion, within the created order. I deny the accusation that this definition means that creatures can operate independently of divine control.

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13 All of these are in the ESV: Isa. 6:10; Ezek. 14:7–9; Josh. 11:20; Deut. 2:30; John 12:40; 2 Thess. 2:11–12; Rom. 9:18–20; Ps. 119:36; Acts 2:23; 4:28; Isa. 46:10; Gen. 50:20; Matt. 26:24; Isa. 53:10; Heb. 6:17; Eph. 1:11.

14 Rom. 9:19–20 (ESV).

15 Acts 17:30 (ESV).

5.4 The Chief Reason: Freedom as a Sovereignly Created Necessity

Freedom without coercion is not an end in itself, and I should say what it is for, because this is where I part from both sides of the quarrel. The compatibilist argues for the creature's freedom as a concession, something God allows and the system makes room for. The libertarian argues for it as a necessity for desert and responsibility, and I agree that it is one. I argue that it is a necessity because it is necessary for the covenants between God and man to be real covenants, and above all for the covenant of redemption to be fulfilled.

The argument

Chapter 3 set out that the covenant of redemption is the purpose to which the idea of creation is subject, and that it is a real covenant between persons. John Owen says that the concurrence of the will of the Father and the will of the Son in this matter "was necessary, that the covenant might be voluntary and of choice."[16] If the covenant between the Father and the Son is real because it is voluntary, then the people given to the Son in it are given in a covenant that is real, and a people given to the Son must be a real people.

What the Father gives the Son is a people of worshipers. The Savior says that the hour is coming, and is now here, when "the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him."[17] He says: "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."[18] And he says to the Father: "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me."[19] Worship in spirit and truth is not worship that has been extracted. A

16 John Owen, Exercitation XXVIII, §11, in *The Works of John Owen, D.D.*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 19 (London and Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854), 86.

17 John 4:23 (ESV).

18 John 6:37 (ESV).

19 John 17:6 (ESV).

people compelled to love, or whose love is only the working out of causes outside them, are not lovers. The church the Father gives the Son is a bride, and the redeemed given to Christ must be real worshipers and real lovers of God if the covenant's promise is to be fulfilled. To be real they must be free.

The same is true of the covenants between God and man. The covenant of grace springs out of the covenant made with Christ, and a covenant with a creature who is not free is not a covenant with him. If the creature is not free, then the covenant of grace is not a real covenant with him, and the original covenant with Adam and his fall in it are not real either. Adam, as federal head, either could have done otherwise or was an actor in a script.

What the argument shows, and what it does not

I owe the reader an exact statement of what this argument proves, because it can be overstated. The covenant of redemption shows that the people given to the Son are willing worshipers, who come to him and are not dragged. It shows that their worship is their own. What it does not show by itself is that a willing worshiper must have had the power to choose otherwise at every point. A compatibilist could say that the Son's undertaking was voluntary and that the people's love is voluntary, in the sense that each does what he wants, and that the covenants require nothing more. That is a serious reply. I do not say that it is absurd.

My answer is in two parts. The first part is the answer of the earlier chapters. The creature's freedom is not a mere permission. It is part of the idea, which God conceives for the sake of his purposes, and the purposes are to display wisdom, justice, mercy, grace and love to creatures who can receive and answer them. The display of mercy to those who could not have done otherwise, and of justice on those who could not have done otherwise, has a different character from the display of mercy to those who were able to refuse and of justice on those who

were able to obey. The first is a display of power over a thing. The second is a display of wisdom and grace toward persons. I do not say that this proves the second display is the only one that would serve God's glory. I say that the Scriptures give us the second as the one he chose.

The second part is that the covenant of works with Adam is, by its own terms, a covenant with a party who could have kept it and who could have broken it. The Confession says that Adam received a command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God."[20] A covenant that promises life on condition of obedience, and threatens death on disobedience, is a covenant whose condition can be met and whose condition can be failed. It is on that covenant that Romans 5 rests the whole case of Adam and Christ. For the people in Adam, and for the people in Christ, the covenants rest on a head who stood or fell. So I put the weight of the chief reason on Adam, and I keep to the claim I made in the second part: Adam had the power to do otherwise, and the covenants with man begin with him.

Freedom as a created necessity

So freedom is a sovereignly created necessity and not a concession. It is an integral part of the idea God has, and knows, and wills in the decree, and the creature has to be free in the same way that God has to be sovereign. God has to be sovereign because he is God. The creature has to be free because God has purposed what only a free creature can be: a real worshiper, a real bride, a real party to a real covenant. The necessity is created, by the same decree that created the creature, and it binds the Creator only through what he has himself purposed. That is why it is no limit set on God from outside, and why it is no concession.

20 Westminster Confession of Faith 4.2.

The compatibilist grounds the creature's freedom in what God allows. The libertarian grounds it in what desert requires. I ground it in what the covenants require, and the covenants in what God purposed. The further reasons in the next section are additional to this one, and each of them reads better for it.

The consequence for the debate is plain. If freedom is a concession, a better system might make it smaller or take it away, and the compatibilist is free to argue that the concession costs nothing. If freedom is only the ground of desert, then God's sovereignty and the creature's freedom are rivals, and the libertarian is right to be afraid. If freedom is a created necessity, set in the idea God conceived for the sake of his covenants, then it neither limits God from outside nor stands in his way. It is as much a part of what God has purposed as his sovereignty is a part of what he is.

I do not offer this as a demonstration that no other order of things was possible to God. I hold, as I said in 5.2, that God could have made other creatures, and I hold the opposing positions to be wrongheaded, not provably wrong. I offer it as the reason why, in the creation God made, the creature's freedom is not an afterthought. It is the thing the idea required.

5.5 The Further Reasons, Strongest First

The chief reason stands on the covenants. Beside it there are further reasons for holding that the creature has LUF, and I give here the six that I think strongest. The full fourteen are in Appendix C. I say at once what kind of reasons these are. Each is an argument from what a text, or a feature of the biblical story, would mean on one view and what it would mean on the other. Each could be answered by a compatibilist, and I say what the answer would be and why I find it thin. I do not claim that any of them, or all of them together, prove the point. I claim that they are

cumulative, and that they all point the same way. The position opposed to them is wrongheaded, and I have not shown it to be provably wrong.

Adam's answer

When God asks the man whether he has eaten of the tree, Adam answers: "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."[21] Adam blames the woman, and in the same breath he blames God, who gave her to him. It is the classic move of our sin, and every human being has made some version of it. Now consider what Adam could have said if there were no freedom of the kind I describe. He could have said, "You ordained this, so how is it my fault?" That would have been the better accusation and the more obvious. It is the accusation that a view leaving the creature no real power in the matter would invite. Adam does not make it. The narrative does not give him the thought. Instead the sentence ends, "and I ate," which is a confession of the act even while it is an excuse for it.

The compatibilist can say that Adam did not make the accusation because it would not have been a good one, since the creature's act is his own though God has decreed it. I agree that this is what the compatibilist would say. My reply is that Adam's silence is easier to understand if the narrative takes for granted that the act was his to do or not to do. I put it as a reason and not as a proof.

Temptation

For temptation to be a reality, and to involve an enemy of our souls as a tempter, the one tempted must be able to take the alternative. If he cannot, the tempter's work is theater, and so is the whole story of a trial. The classic example is the original one, the temptation of the first pair in Genesis 3, and no one reading it takes Eve, then Adam, to have been unable to refuse. The

21 Gen. 3:12 (ESV).

later narrative gives too much weight to the result of that failure for the temptation to be a sham. The same is true of the other classic example, the temptation of Christ in Matthew 4, Mark 1 and Luke 4. There Christ corrects the original failure as the second Adam, and by his obedience he secures, for those who come to him in faith, a righteousness in which we may stand clothed in the sight of God.

The compatibilist says that a temptation is real if the tempted man is enticed toward something he in fact wants, and that nothing more is needed. That is a fair account of a good deal of ordinary temptation. It is not a good account of the temptation of Christ, because the writers of the Gospels present his resistance as something that could have gone otherwise, and as a victory. I find the compatibilist account thin there, and I find the same thinness in Genesis 3.

Nehemiah's confession

A third consideration is the juxtaposition at Nehemiah 9:33: "Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly."[22] God's complete faithfulness is set beside our complete wickedness, and the verse draws its force from the contrast. The repentance expressed there is the repentance of people who own what they have done. Without LUF I find the verse, and the surrounding prayer, to make less sense. I do not say that a compatibilist could not read the verse. I say that the more natural reading takes the people to be confessing something they might not have done.

God's manifold wisdom

Denying LUF would also seem to require a rewrite of purpose passages like Ephesians 3:10. Paul writes that the purpose is "so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."[23] Paul describes

22 Neh. 9:33 (ESV).

23 Eph. 3:10 (ESV).

God as deliberately showcasing his manifold wisdom. If divine determining, which I fully embrace, settled human decisions without LUF, then it seems to me the passage should have said that God was showcasing his great power and not his wisdom, because the wisdom required to work through and around creatures with LUF is far greater than the wisdom required to bring about, by direct determination, the decisions he alone wants. That would be much easier, and it would show his power more than his wisdom. I believe LUF expresses God's wisdom and power more fully in the reality he has made, and I believe the wisdom required is so far beyond fascinating that the angels are curious about it, as Peter says of what the gospel announces: "things into which angels long to look."[24]

Genesis 50:20 and Romans 8:28

The example of dual causation in Genesis 50:20 belongs here. Joseph says to his brothers: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."[25] The causation of the brothers and the simultaneous causation of God are both displayed. This is unlike the example of Pharaoh, in my opinion, which I place in Appendix C, and more like Paul's promise in Romans 8:28: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."[26] In both, God is working behind the scenes of free choices, and sometimes against them, to bring about the best for his people in the pursuit of his purposes. How does the decree work around anything, if it is a decree that negates LUF? These verses seem to say that God is not only working through creaturely actions but also around them. I take that to be how he has chosen to showcase and fulfill his purposes.

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24 1 Pet. 1:12 (ESV).

25 Gen. 50:20 (ESV).

26 Rom. 8:28 (ESV).

Prayer

The last of the six is prayer. Isaiah 63:17, quoted in 5.3, is the model. The prophet acknowledges the sovereign hardening of God and, along with that, asks God to change things. He holds in one mind two things that we consider contradictory in this debate, and he does not consider them contradictory. They were not contradictory. They may have been contradictive, but not contradictory. My partial proof of that is that the biblical writers, like Isaiah, held these things together without considering themselves to be contradicting themselves when they prayed. So prayer, and prayer of exactly that kind, is a further reason for the necessity of LUF. It is something God designed creatures to have, through the idea he had of creating an order in which he would create creatures with LUF, creatures with liberty, whom he would not coerce or design to do wrong, except on occasion, as with Pharaoh and a few other occasions where God steps in and does something with those individuals. God had this idea of a created order wherein he would create creatures who could be free, and therefore freely choose to worship him in adoration and to love him genuinely without being constrained.

The rest

Eight more are in Appendix C: the permissive will, Ahab and the lying spirit, Keilah, the flood, Pharaoh, justice, mercy and grace, the decree that must not replace Christ, and the warning against the unpardonable sin. I put them there because they depend more on matters I treat in later chapters, or because they need more room to state fairly.

5.6 The Principle of Alternate Possibilities Is Not Necessary, and Yet Adam Had It

I have said that I grant libertarian freedom in Adam and argue for it, and I have said that I do not grant it to the rest of humanity. The argument now needs a tool, and the tool is the principle of alternate possibilities, which I call PAP.

What PAP says, and the cases against it

Harry Frankfurt stated the principle in 1969: "This principle states that a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have done otherwise."[27] Then he argued that it is false. He asks us to suppose that a man, Jones, is deliberating about doing a thing, and that someone, Black, who wants him to do it, is prepared to ensure that he does. Black will intervene only if Jones shows signs of deciding otherwise. Frankfurt writes: "Now suppose that Black never has to show his hand because Jones$_4$, for reasons of his own, decides to perform and does perform the action Black wants him to perform. In that case, it seems clear, Jones$_4$ will bear precisely the same moral responsibility for what he does as he would have borne if Black had not been ready to take steps to ensure that he do it."[28] His diagnosis follows: "The fact that a person could not have avoided doing something is a sufficient condition of his having done it. But, as some of my examples show, this fact may play no role whatever in the explanation of why he did it."[29] He concludes: "This, then, is why the principle of alternate possibilities is mistaken."[30] And he replaces it with another principle: "a person is not morally responsible for what he has done if he did it only because he could not have done otherwise."[31]

John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza built a theory on this foundation. They distinguish two kinds of control. They write: "Regulative control involves alternative possibilities: it is a kind of dual power of free action. In contrast, guidance control does not, by its nature, involve

27 Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): 829–39, at 829.

28 Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities," 836.

29 Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities," 836.

30 Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities," 837.

31 Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities," 838.

alternative possibilities."[32] Moral responsibility, they claim, "simply requires guidance control."[33] And guidance control consists in two elements: the agent's ownership of the mechanism that actually issues in the behavior, and the reasons-responsiveness of that mechanism.[34] Michael Preciado has argued that guidance control is compatible with Reformed theology, and I draw on that idea, though I make my own case from it.[35]

What I take from these

I take three things. The first is that PAP, as a general principle about responsibility, is not necessary. A man can be responsible for an act that issues from his own will and his own reasons even where, unknown to him, something stood ready to prevent him from doing otherwise and never came into play. I accept Frankfurt's point. The second is that control comes in two kinds. A man may have regulative control, the dual power to do or refrain, and he may have guidance control, which is the control of an act that issues from his own reasons-responsive will. The third is that these can be separated, so that I can say, without inconsistency, that some creatures have both and some have only the second.

I do not say that Frankfurt-style cases are beyond reply. Critics have pressed the point that the cases leave some alternative in place, a small flicker in the agent's deliberation, and have argued that the flicker is enough to ground responsibility. I do not rest the argument on the cases being decisive. I use them to show that the demand for regulative control at every point is not self-evident, and that those who hold the demand have to argue for it.

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32 John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, "Précis of *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61, no. 2 (2000): 441. The book is *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

33 Fischer and Ravizza, "Précis," 441.

34 Fischer and Ravizza, "Précis," 441.

35 See Michael Patrick Preciado, *A Reformed View of Freedom: The Compatibility of Guidance Control and Reformed Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019), which adapts his doctoral thesis, "The Compatibility of Guidance Control and Reformed Theology" (University of Aberdeen, 2017).

Adam had regulative control

Here I come to the main claim, and I make it in the plainest terms. Adam had regulative control and guidance control. He had the dual power. He could keep the command and he could break it. The Confession says that he had "freedom, and power to will and to do that which was good and well pleasing to God," and that he had it "mutably, so that he might fall from it."[36] The command and its penalty were real. The temptation was real. His fall was his, and its guilt was his. If PAP is not necessary for responsibility, it was still the case that Adam met it.

I do not claim that Adam's responsibility depended on his meeting it. The Frankfurt cases suggest that it did not. My claim is a different one: the account of the beginning that Scripture gives is the account of a man who could have done otherwise, and I take it at its word.

The rest of humanity has guidance control

The rest of humanity, in Adam, fell. Paul says that sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin.[37] The wills of Adam's posterity are bound to sin. The Confession says: "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."[38] Paul says that "the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."[39] The sinner is "dead in the trespasses and sins" in which he once walked.[40]

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36 Westminster Confession of Faith 9.2.

37 See Rom. 5:12 (ESV).

38 Westminster Confession of Faith 9.3.

39 Rom. 8:7–8 (ESV).

40 Eph. 2:1–2 (ESV).

What is left to the fallen creature, and what is lost? I answer with the distinction between natural ability and moral ability, which the Reformed writers made familiar. By natural ability I mean the faculties a man needs to act: understanding, will, and the power of the body to carry out what he wills. By moral ability I mean the power to will and love what is spiritually good. The fallen creature keeps the first and has lost the second. He can will, he can choose between the options his nature presents, he can refrain from one wrong and commit another, he can keep a promise and break one, he can tell the truth or lie. In that sense there is an "otherwise" for the fallen creature, and it lies within his natural ability. What he cannot do is will, by his own strength, the spiritual good that accompanies salvation.[41] That is the sense in which only Adam had regulative control for the spiritual good, and the fallen creature has guidance control. His acts issue from his own will and his own reasons, and that is the ownership and the reasons-responsiveness that Fischer and Ravizza describe. The "otherwise" within natural ability is the divided-sense power of the faculties that Chapter 6 sets out. It is not the regulative control that Adam had for the spiritual good, and the fallen creature does not have that control.

Is the fallen man excused by his inability? The Frankfurt principle, in its revised form, says that a person is not morally responsible for what he has done if he did it only because he could not have done otherwise. The fallen man does not sin only because he could not do otherwise. He sins because he wants to, and the inability to will the good is the bondage of that same wanting, not an outside obstruction that stands between him and a good he desires. The inability is in the will itself. It is a condition that he is in, and in which, Paul says, the many were

41 Turretin takes up the inability of sinful man in Franciscus Turrettinus, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae, Pars Prima* (Edinburgh: John D. Lowe, 1847), 616–17 (Loc. X, q. 4, §39), where he says that the inability of sinful man is neither simply moral, as distinguished from natural, nor simply natural, and that it is rightly called each in a different respect. He adds that it does not exclude, but always presupposes, the natural power of understanding and willing in man. I use the two terms in the senses I give them in the text and do not attribute those definitions to him.

made sinners by the one man's disobedience.[42] The guilt that came to us is punishable guilt. So the principle does not excuse him. The inability that Scripture describes is not the kind of circumstance that Frankfurt's cases show to be irrelevant to responsibility; it is the state of the will that is responsible.

A note on what has and has not been said

I have not said that the fallen creature is not free. I said, in Chapter 1, that the creature's freedom after the fall is LUF, limited further by a will bound to sin. I have said that the "otherwise" for the fallen creature is within natural ability and not moral ability. I have said that he has guidance control and not the dual power for spiritual good. Chapter 6 states the exact sense of "could have chosen otherwise." Chapter 7 treats Adam, the fall and Romans 5. Chapter 8 treats the bound will, the regenerate will, and the redeemed will. The reader who wants to know whether this account is consistent should hold it against the three things it must do. It must say that Adam was able to do otherwise. It must say that the fallen creature is responsible. And it must say that salvation is a gift. It does all three.

The line between Adam and his posterity is drawn by range, not by kind. Every human will, before and after the fall, is a real will acting without coercion and not premoved to its act. What differs is the range of what it can do. This is Augustine's account of the states of man, as Turretin gives it.[43] Adam before the fall could sin and could not sin. The fallen cannot but sin toward God, while in natural matters a two-way range remains. Conversion is by efficacious grace. The regenerate, on the account I give in Chapter 8, have guidance control for the spiritual good, and their perseverance is by preserving grace. In glory the will is free to good alone.

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42 Rom. 5:19 (ESV).

43 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 514–15 (Loc. VIII, q. 1, §9), citing Augustine, *De correptione et gratia*. I give the passage in Chapter 7, n. 11.

5.7 What Is Left of the Word "Libertarian"

After 5.2 and 1.5 the word cannot mean what the demand in 1.5 asked for, a freedom whose possessor is the unconditioned origin of his choice. A creature cannot have that, and I have said why. So I should say what is left of the word, and what is not.

By LUF I mean at least this. The creature is free from coercion, and his act proceeds from his will with the prior judgment of his reason, and I call that rational spontaneity. His nature has a real power in the divided sense, taken apart from the decree, to take the course he does not take, and for the fallen the "otherwise" lies within natural ability (5.6). In Adam the power was more than a power in the divided sense. In the same circumstances in which he stood, he could have refrained (6.5). LUF does not mean the principle of alternate possibilities held in the composite sense, with every actual antecedent, the decree included, held fixed. The Confession says of the decree of God that it is so ordered that "neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."[44] A will is overturned by coercion and by physical necessity, and it is not overturned by a necessity that is of the consequence only. The same act can be free and necessary in different respects, as I argue in Chapter 6.

I add something about danger. Scripture shows what Adam did with his freedom, and it shows that angels sinned and were not spared.[45] I do not know how to say, from Scripture alone, how the angels' freedom was constituted, and I do not argue from it. But what we are told of Adam and of the fallen angels suggests to me that a freedom of the full libertarian shape is an extremely dangerous thing for any creature, and that it ends badly. It seems to me to be a thing that can be held safely only by an infinite, perfect and self-existent Being. The only creaturely

44 Westminster Confession of Faith 3.1.

45 2 Pet. 2:4 (ESV); Jude 6 (ESV).

state in which anything of the libertarian shape can be imagined without immediate self-contradiction is, I think, innocence joined to mutability under a covenant of probation, which is the posture of the garden and not the present one. Those who ask for the return of that posture for every chooser today, and who build their account of desert on it, bring into the discussion a probation that has been misplaced, and they inherit the errors that the misplacement brings. This is why I grant Adam what I grant him in 5.2, and why I do not grant it to his posterity.

For Adam I accept the word in Stratton's own sense. Nothing determined his choice, and in his circumstances he could have done otherwise. The decree does not stand among the antecedents that causally determine an act, because it took his free choice as its occasion. What I do not grant any creature is ultimate sourcehood of the kind God has. The creature did not make himself and was not consulted, and that is the limit LUF names. For the posterity I use LUF, and not "libertarian," for the will's range toward God.

5.8 What This Chapter Has Laid Down

I defined LUF as freedom of ambition, desire, thought, action and choice without coercion, to pursue, want, think, act or choose otherwise in the circumstances, limited by the creature's being a creature and, after the fall, by a will bound to sin (5.1). I argued the three concessions to Stratton: that Adam in the garden was free in the libertarian sense he defines, that his definitions may be granted for the sake of argument and still do not take him where he wants to go, because no creature can ground himself, and that God has the power and prerogative to conceive a creation of libertarian freedom (5.2). I set out the distinction between liberty in God and liberty from God, with Romans 11:36 and Isaiah 63:17 as anchors and both lines of texts at full force (5.3). I argued that freedom is a sovereignly created necessity, because the covenants require real parties and real worshipers, and I stated what that argument does and does not show

(5.4). I gave six of the further reasons as cumulative and not conclusive (5.5). And I argued from Frankfurt-style cases that PAP is not necessary, while holding that Adam had regulative and guidance control and the rest of humanity guidance control only, with the "otherwise" of the fallen creature lying within natural ability (5.6). And I said what is left of the word "libertarian," and why I use it sparingly (5.7).

What is left for Chapter 6 is the problem in its sharpest form. If the creature has this freedom, and God has decreed whatever comes to pass, in what exact sense could the creature have chosen otherwise? That is the joint of the whole argument, and I give it its own chapter.

Chapter 6. The Joint

6.1 The Problem at Its Sharpest

Five chapters have brought me to the place where the quarrel is hardest. The decree is exhaustive. The creature is free. I have said both, and I have said that the second is limited ultimate freedom, which I call LUF, and that LUF keeps the "otherwise." The reader who has followed me has a right to ask how both can be true of one act. This chapter is my answer. I call it the joint because it is the place where the two parts meet and where, if the work is badly done, the whole structure comes apart.

I begin by stating the objection as strongly as I can, and I state it in my own words so that no one can say I have softened it. It has two horns.

The first horn says: if God decreed that Adam eat the fruit, then, given the decree, Adam will eat. A man who, given everything that is the case, will eat cannot refrain. What he cannot refrain from he does not do freely. So the decree and the freedom, the objector concludes, cannot both be had.

The second horn says: if you answer that Adam could have refrained, then either the decree does not settle that he eats, in which case it is not exhaustive, or the decree settles that he eats and he refrains, in which case the decree is false. So, again, the freedom and the decree cannot both be had.

The objector who presses these two horns together has what he takes to be a pincer, and the best form of his position is found in the definition of Tim Stratton that I have quoted before. Libertarian freedom, he says, is "the ability to choose or act such that antecedent conditions are insufficient to causally determine or necessitate one's choice or action," and it is, in his

summary, “a fancy way of saying the ability to do otherwise.”[1] I grant the definition in the sense I explained in Chapter 5. For Adam I grant it without qualification, and 6.5 shows how. My question now is whether the “ability to do otherwise” can be held, with its full force, by one who says that God decreed the thing the creature did.

I think it can, and I think the pincer can be taken apart. But I cannot take it apart with one stroke. It requires three things. It requires me to say what God’s idea of the created order contains, because the creature’s act has to stand somewhere in that idea. It requires me to say how the idea, the will and the choice stand to one another, because a decree that is not a push has to be something else. And it requires me to say exactly what I mean by “could have chosen otherwise,” because the whole dispute turns on that sense. I take these in order in 6.2, 6.3 and 6.5. In 6.4 I say what the older writers meant by the necessity that attends an act that is decreed. In 6.6 and 6.7 I answer the objections that I think remain, and in 6.8 I show how the decree is carried out through the creature’s power.

A warning about method. I do not claim to have settled by argument alone a question that the Church has debated for centuries. My claim is smaller. I claim that the position I set out is coherent, that it is the position the Reformed confessions state and the older Reformed theologians defended, that it keeps what Scripture says on both sides, and that the objections to it, when they are examined, ask of the creature what only God can have. I hold the opposing positions wrongheaded, and I do not claim that any of them is provably wrong.

6.2 What the Idea Contains

In Chapter 4 I said that God’s decree has three parts, the idea, the will and the knowledge. They are distinct in thought and one in God. The idea is God’s conception of the created order,

1 Timothy A. Stratton, *Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism: A Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Philosophical Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2026), 6.

and it is not placed within the knowledge of vision, which is the knowledge he has of what he has willed to be. The question I must now answer is what the idea contains. In particular, does it contain the creature's acts, and if it does, in what form?

I see three possible readings, and I will state each and say which I take.

Reading (a): the idea of a kind of creature

On the first reading, the idea contains the idea of a kind of creature in general. It is the idea of a rational being with a will, free in the sense that LUF describes, placed in circumstances of a certain sort. It does not contain what any such creature does. What he does is settled later, by the will, which picks out the individuals and the acts.

This reading has the advantage of leaving the idea at a high level of generality. It has a fatal disadvantage. If the idea is silent on the creature's acts, then the acts are given their particular form by the will alone, and the creature's cause is eclipsed. The will would be the only thing in the picture that determines what Adam does, and the objector who says that the decree, not the creature, decided the matter would be right. The reading also cannot account for the way the older writers speak. When Turretin says that the decree "so determines the futurition of the event that it does not change the nature of things, but lets necessary things act necessarily and free things act freely,"[2] he presupposes that the decree takes in the particular event and the nature of the thing that brings it about. On reading (a) there would be nothing in the decree about the nature or the mode of the particular act for the decree to leave unchanged. I therefore reject reading (a), and I set it aside.

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2 Franciscus Turrettinus, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae, Pars Prima* (Edinburgh: John D. Lowe, 1847), 287–88 (Loc. IV, q. 4, §6): "sed extrinsece ex decreti immutabilitate, quod ita determinat futuritionem eventus, ut rerum naturam non mutet, sed res necessarias necessario, liberas libere agere sinat." Translations of Latin in this chapter are mine. Latin quoted in these notes keeps its accents as printed, with the long s written s and the ligature æ written ae; abbreviations are expanded in square brackets, and any other oddity is kept as printed with [sic].

Reading (c): a family of worlds from which the will selects

I take reading (c) next because it is the opposite error. On this reading the idea contains a number of complete worlds, and in each of them the creature acts in some way, so that there is a world in which Adam eats and a world in which he refrains, and the will selects one of these. This is the picture many readers have when they hear that God had other possibilities before him when he made the world.

The reading can be taken in two ways. In the first way, the worlds in the family are known by God before he decrees, and what Adam would do in each of them is there to be known before the decree is made. Taken as Molina takes it, as a third knowledge of truths that God did not will and cannot alter, which then serve as the reason God chooses a world, I do not accept it. Taken as the Reformed minority took it, I do. God knows what Adam would do in each circumstance he might set, with his own will to create, uphold, concur and permit supposed in the condition. That knowledge belongs to his simple intelligence, and it supplies the matter of the idea, not the reason for the decree. (On what makes such truths true, see 4.2.) So I hold reading (c) in that qualified form for Adam's act, within reading (b), which I take for the created order as a whole. In the second way, the worlds in the family are worlds that God conceives, each as a whole, in his own idea. Then the family is not a separate reading. It is reading (b), stated in the plural. I reject reading (c) in the first form, and in the second form I find it already contained in what I am about to say.

Reading (b): the idea of the whole world

On the third reading, which I take, the idea is of the whole created order, and the creature's acts are in it. They are in it as what they are, namely the acts of free second causes. The idea does not contain "Adam eats" as an item that is simply posited. It contains Adam, with

his nature, his circumstances and his powers, and his act of will as the act of that will, so that the eating is in the idea as the issue of a creature who is a real cause in his own order. This is what I mean when I say that the idea contains the creature's acts as the acts of free second causes.

Two things should be said about this reading, so that it is not misunderstood. The first is that the idea does not cause the act. An idea is a pattern. In Chapter 3 I said that God's idea of creation is the formal cause, which is to say, the pattern or blueprint, and a pattern is not a push. What brings the act about, in its own order, is the creature's agency, which in the language of Chapter 3 is the efficient cause on the creature's side. The creature is the proximate cause of what he does. The idea is the pattern in which the proximate cause stands, and in which his act is the act it is. The second thing is that I do not say that the idea, so taken, forces a particular answer to the question whether Adam could have refrained. It is the answer of this chapter, which I give in 6.5, that he could. The idea contains Adam as a creature who is able to refrain, and who does not.

Reading (b) is supported by what the older Reformed writers said in a different connection. The treatise that Voetius published against Molina's middle knowledge granted that God from eternity beheld all the possible modes of second causes in their actions, and that he knew with certainty what would or would not be future if this or that occasion were posited. It asked about the order of that knowledge, and placed it after the act of the will (4.3). The Westminster Confession states the limit that Voetius and the minority alike kept: "Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions."[3] I take two things from this. The first is that God knows what might come to pass on

3 Westminster Confession of Faith 3.2, text at opc.org/wcf.html. All quotations of the Confession in this chapter are from that text.

all supposed conditions, and that this is not a knowledge of a part of the world that the will then follows. The second is that the decree is not made on the ground of what is foreseen. It comes first, and what is foreseen is what the decree contains. That is just what reading (b) says. The minority went one step further than Voetius and placed the knowledge of what would be before the actual decree, under a supposed one (4.3a). With them I hold that what will be is what the decree contains, and that what would be is known under a decree supposed.

What this reading means for the possibilities

I should say plainly what becomes of the other possibilities. God, who knows all that his power can do, knows a world in which Adam refrains, in the way he knows any possible thing. That knowledge belongs to the knowledge of simple intelligence, which I described in Chapter 4, and it is not a rival to the idea. What I deny is that such a truth is a reason God finds and then obeys. It is an occasion his wisdom uses for his own end. And the world in which Adam refrains was a real alternative. Had Adam been one who would refrain, God would have known that instead, and his decree would have been other.

I add that this is the place where my position and Molinism part ways most plainly, and I do not wish to hide it. The Molinist lets what creatures would do with grace set the terms on which God chooses a world. I let it show only the occasion within the idea that the decree takes up. We part in five things: the kind of knowledge, its scope, its part in grace, its part in election, and its use (4.3a). On Adam's act alone the structures are close, and I say so. I have said that I regard his use of the knowledge as wrongheaded and not provably wrong, and I say it here again, because the reader will meet in 6.6 the strongest form of the complaint that Molinists bring against me.

6.3 The Idea, the Will, and the Creature's Choice

The three parts of the decree are not three steps in time. They are three aspects of one eternal act, and the order among them is an order of grounds and not of days. I describe the order in this way. The idea guides. It is the pattern in which the will chooses. The will chooses, and in choosing it settles that this order, and not another, shall exist. The knowledge follows, in the sense that God knows what he has conceived and willed. In this chapter I am concerned with how a creature's choice stands in that order, and I put the point in four statements.

The first statement is that the choice is the creature's. When Adam takes the fruit, it is Adam who takes it. He deliberates, he is moved by what he sees, he wills, and the act is the act of his will. God does not take the fruit for him.

The second is that the act is willed by God, in the sense that it is within what God has decreed. Peter says to the crowd in Jerusalem of the death of Jesus that he was "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God," and that they "crucified and killed" him "by the hands of lawless men."[4] The disciples pray in the same way: Herod and Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered "to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place."[5] The same event is the plan of God and the work of lawless men, and Scripture does not hesitate to say both. I do not take it to say that the men were pushed.

The third is that the two do not stand side by side as rival causes. If I think of the divine will as a cause on the same plane as the creature's will, I will have to divide the act between them, giving so much to God and so much to the creature. That is the picture that produces the objection, because on that picture whatever God supplies is subtracted from the creature, and a decree that settles the whole leaves the creature nothing. The older writers rejected that picture.

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4 Acts 2:23 (ESV).

5 Acts 4:27–28 (ESV).

The Confession says that God, "by the same providence," orders all things "to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently."[6] The concurrence of God does not displace the second cause. Turretin puts it in a short Latin sentence: "nec concursus causae primae excludit concursum secundarum, imo eum post se trahit."[7] The concurrence of the first cause does not exclude the concurrence of the second causes; indeed, it draws it after itself. The first cause, in other words, is the reason why the second cause is there to act. It does not stand in the second cause's way.

The fourth statement is that the act has two descriptions, each true, and that they are true in different respects. Proverbs puts it economically: "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps."[8] Isaiah gives the matter an edge. The Lord calls Assyria "the rod of my anger" and says that he sends him against a godless nation, "But he does not so intend, and his heart does not so think; but it is in his heart to destroy."[9] The Lord uses the rod, and the rod does what it does from its own heart. If the first description were the whole truth, the second would be an illusion, and if the second were the whole truth, the first would be an illusion. The text keeps both.

I draw the four statements together. God's decree and the creature's choice are not two things competing for the same ground. The decree is the ground of the order within which the creature's choice is a choice, and the choice is the creature's within that order. The Confession

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6 Westminster Confession of Faith 5.2.

7 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 442 (Loc. VI, q. 1, §9): "nec concursus causae primae excludit concursum secundarum, imo eum post se trahit." The same section says that the providence of God neither takes away the contingency of things, "quia remanet semper indifferens respectu causae secundae, quod necessarium fit per Providentiam, respectu causae primae," nor overturns the liberty of the will, "quia necessitas hypothetica decreti, nullam infert coactionem voluntati, sed eam liberrime, licet inevitabiliter, sinit motus suos exercere." That is, the thing remains always indifferent in respect of the second cause, though it is made necessary by providence in respect of the first; and the hypothetical necessity of the decree brings no coaction on the will, but lets it exercise its motions most freely, though inevitably. The translation is mine.

8 Prov. 16:9 (ESV).

9 Isa. 10:5–7 (ESV).

says that God has ordained whatsoever comes to pass, "yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."[10] The last words are the ones I most want the reader to notice. The liberty and contingency of second causes are not left standing in spite of the decree. They are, the Confession says, established by it.

An author and his character, as a limited analogy, may help. Suppose an author decrees that a character in his story write a letter. Within the story, the letter exists because the character chose to write it and wrote it. If the character had refused, there would be no letter. The author's decree does not make the character's pen-stroke powerless. It is the ground of the pen-stroke's reality. The analogy limps, as every analogy of this kind does, and I name where. A character has no will of his own, and Adam has. The author composes the story from outside, and God is not outside as an author is, for he sustains every moment of the story's being. I use the analogy to illustrate a single point, which is that the thing decreed and the thing done are one thing, seen from the author's side and from the story's side, and that the first does not make the second false.

6.4 Necessity of the Consequence, and the Freedom Beyond Spontaneity

What the compatibilist says

Compatibilists have a ready answer to the objection of 6.1. They say that the freedom the creature needs is freedom from coercion and freedom to act as he wills. A man is free when his act flows from his own will, with his own reasons and desires, and nothing outside forces it. Whether his will could have been other than it was, they say, is not a question that responsibility requires us to answer. This is the freedom that the compatibilist defends, and the strength of the position is that it is easily seen to belong to ordinary experience. A man who is held at gunpoint

10 Westminster Confession of Faith 3.1.

and signs a paper has not signed freely. A man who signs because he wants to has. Nothing needs to be said about alternative possibilities in order to tell the two apart.

I do not deny any of this. I accept it as far as it goes. The question is whether it goes far enough, and I say that it does not. LUF is not compatibilist freedom, because it keeps the "otherwise." The compatibilist is content to say that the creature acted as he wanted. I say further that the creature's wanting was not necessitated by the grounds that belong to the creature, and that he had, in his own order, a real power to want otherwise. The remainder of this section, and the next, say what that comes to and what it does not.

What the older writers say

I begin with Turretin, who is a principal witness because he states the distinctions with great care. In the third locus, where he treats the foreknowledge of future contingents, he writes: "If there is foreknowledge of future contingents, all things will come to pass of necessity, with the necessity of the consequence, in a certain respect, of infallibility, and not with the necessity of the consequent, and absolute. There remains, therefore, always a difference between the necessary and the contingent."[11] In the same locus he says that the freedom of the will is overturned by physical necessity and by coaction, which fight against the formal nature of freedom, but not by hypothetical necessity, and the infallibility of the event; the same thing can be free and necessary in different respects. The foreknowledge of God, he adds, "brings in the infallibility of the futurition and of the event, and the necessity of the consequence, but it does not bring in coaction or violence, nor does it take from the will its intrinsic freedom."[12]

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11 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 191 (Loc. III, q. 12, §23): "Si datur praescientia futurorum contingentium, omnia fient necessario necessitate consequentiae, secundum quid, infallibilitatis; non consequentis et absoluta. Manet ergo discrimen semper inter necessaria et contingentia …." The translation is mine.

12 Turrettinus, *Institutio*, 191 (Loc. III, q. 12, §24): "Libertas voluntatis evertitur quidem per necessitatem physicam et coactionis, quae pugnat cum formali ratione libertatis; sed non per necessitatem hypotheticam et infallibilitatis eventus, idem enim hoc respectu potest esse liberum et necessarium: Unde quamvis actiones hominum sint liberae, quia sponte fiunt et previo rationis judicio, non desinunt esse necessariae ratione decreti et praescientiae Dei.

In the fourth locus, he speaks of the decree itself. The place is long, and I give its sense. A determination to one thing by physical necessity, or by coaction, takes away liberty and contingency; but a determination by hypothetical necessity only does not, because the certainty does not arise from the nature of the second causes, which are free and contingent, but, he says, "extrinsece," from outside, "from the immutability of the decree." The decree so determines the futurition of the event "that it does not change the nature of things, but lets necessary things act necessarily and free things act freely." The decree takes away contingency in respect of the first cause, because all things come to pass necessarily with respect to it; it does not take it away in respect of the second causes, because the same decree that fixes the futurition also fixes the manner of the futurition, so that what has necessary causes comes about necessarily, and what has contingent causes, contingently. Accordingly the same effect is rightly called both necessary and contingent at once, but in different respects (κατ᾽ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο): the first "on the part of God and in relation to the decree," the second "on the part of the thing and in relation to the second and proximate causes, which could have been otherwise."[13]

He applies the doctrine to Adam in the next section. The necessity of the decree takes away the liberty of independence, he says, but not the liberty of spontaneity and of indifference, because the necessity is hypothetical only, and it fixes the certainty of the event without

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Praescientia autem Dei infert quidem futuritionis et eventus infallibilitatem, et necessitatem consequentiae, non tamen infert coactionem aut violentiam, nec aufert voluntati intrinsecam libertatem." The translation is mine.

13 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 287–88 (Loc. IV, q. 4, §6): "Quod statuit determinationem ad unum per necessitatem physicam, vel coactionis, tollit libertatem et contingentiam; sed non quod eam statuit tantum per necessitatem hypotheticam; quia certitudo non oritur ex causarum secundarum natura, quae liberae sunt et contingentes, sed extrinsece ex decreti immutabilitate, quod ita determinat futuritionem eventus, ut rerum naturam non mutet, sed res necessarias necessario, liberas libere agere sinat. Unde patet necessitatem et immutabilitatem decreti tollere quidem contingentiam respectu causae primae, quia cum omnia necessario eveniant, nihil potest contingenter fieri; sed non tollere eam respectu causarum secundarum, quia idem decretum quod praestituit futuritionem rerum, statuit etiam modum futuritionis, ut quae necessarias causas haberent necessario fierent, quae vero contingentes, contingenter: Atque ita effectus bene dicitur, et necessarius et contingens simul, sed κατ᾽ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο; Illud a parte Dei et relate ad decretum; Istud a parte rei et relate ad causas secundas et proximas, quae aliter se habere potuerunt." The translation is mine.

removing the nature and properties of the second causes. “Hence it is rightly said that Adam sinned necessarily, and freely: the former with respect to the decree and the futurition of the thing; the latter with respect to his will and the manner, because whatever the necessity of the decree, Adam sinned willingly, and consequently most freely.”[14]

The Westminster Confession makes the same point in the sentence from Confession 5.2 that I quoted in 6.3. “In relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.”[15] The Confession’s words “in relation to” answer to Turretin’s *relate ad* and *respectu*, and they mark the place where I want the reader to rest his attention. The necessity is a necessity in relation to the decree. The contingency is a contingency in relation to the second causes. They are not two attributes of the act as it is in itself, one cancelling the other. They are two relations, and the one act has them both.

I take two things from Turretin. The first is the distinction on which the whole matter hangs, between the necessity of the consequence and the necessity of the consequent. It is easy to state and easy to forget. The necessity of the consequence is the necessity of an “if... then.” If God has decreed that Adam will eat, then Adam will eat, and this conditional is necessary: it cannot be that God decrees that Adam eats and Adam does not. But from the necessity of the conditional it does not follow that the consequent, “Adam eats,” is necessary taken by itself. The consequent is necessary if the decree stands, and the decree stands, but the thing decreed is a free

14 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 288 (Loc. IV, q. 4, §8): “Necessitas decreti tollit quidem libertatem independentiae,… Sed non tollit libertatem spontaneitatis et indifferentiae, quia necessitas est tantum hypothetica, quae eventus certitudinem ponit, sed causarum secundarum naturam et proprietates non tollit. Hinc est quod recte dicatur, Adamum necessario, et libere peccasse: Illud quidem respectu decreti, et rei futuritionis; Istud respectu voluntatis ejus, et quoad modum, quia qualiscunque fuerit necessitas decreti, Adamus tamen volens peccavit, et per consequens liberrime.” The translation is mine.

15 Westminster Confession of Faith 5.2.

act of a free creature, whose nature is not changed by the decree. The error the objection of 6.1 makes is the move from the necessity of the conditional to the necessity of the consequent. It is an old error, and when it is made about the decree it makes the creature a stone.

The second thing I take is that Turretin does not say the creature's freedom amounts only to the freedom of spontaneity. The language of 288 includes both "spontaneity" and "indifference." He says that the necessity of the decree does not take away the "libertatem spontaneitatis et indifferentiae," the liberty of spontaneity and of indifference. Indifference, as I use the word, is the will's not being determined to one course, and it is what I mean when I say that LUF keeps the "otherwise." Turretin goes further in the tenth locus. The principle of choice, he says, "can by its own nature be indifferent and undetermined in the divided sense, and as to the first act and the simultaneity of the potency; but not in the composite sense, and as to the second act, or the potency of the simultaneity." And he adds that choice, to be free, "must be immune from coaction and physical necessity; but not from the extrinsic necessity of dependence on God, and the intrinsic necessity of determination by the intellect."[16] I will return to the divided sense and the composite sense in 6.5, where they do most of the work.

Diachronic and synchronic contingency

I used two words in Chapter 1 and again in Chapter 5, and I now give them their meaning. I call the creature's act contingent in a diachronic sense and in a synchronic sense, and I mean the following.

The act is contingent in the diachronic sense when, looking back over the course of time before the act, the situation did not fix that the act would be done. Adam, before the serpent

16 Turrettinus, *Institutio*, 604–5 (Loc. X, q. 3, §12): "Principium electionis sua natura potest esse indifferens et indeterminatum in sensu diviso, et quoad actum primum, et simultatem potentiae; Sed non in sensu composito, et quoad actum secundum, seu potentiam simultatis. Electio, ut sit libera, debet esse immunis a coactione et necessitate physica; sed non a necessitate extrinseca dependentiae a Deo, et intrinseca determinationis ab intellectu." The translation is mine.

spoke, had a nature, a history, a command and a promise. None of these, nor all of them taken together, was a sufficient cause of his taking the fruit. The way things were at an earlier time left the matter open in the order of second causes.

The act is contingent in the synchronic sense when, at the moment of the act, the will that wills it has the power not to will it. That is a claim about the one moment and not about the course of time. When Adam's will went out to the fruit, it was a will that could have gone elsewhere. The power to refrain was there when the power to take was exercised. It was there, I say, in the divided sense, which means that it belonged to the will as the faculty it is, and that it is not the power to bring about the contrary while everything else, including the decree, is held as it is. For Adam, with the circumstances held, there was the power to refrain itself. Had he refrained, the decree would have been other (6.5). I explain the difference in the next section.

I say both, and not one only, because each is open to a different objection. One who says only that the earlier situation left the matter open may be understood to mean that the matter was open until the moment of choice and then closed, so that at the moment of choice there was no alternative. That is a diachronic contingency without a synchronic one. One who says only that the will had the power at the moment may be understood to mean that the history made no difference to the outcome. The position I hold is the fuller one: the history did not fix the act, and the will at the moment of choosing could have chosen otherwise.

6.5 "Could Have Chosen Otherwise": The Exact Sense

I have used the phrase many times in this book, and the whole dispute turns on what it means. I now state its sense as exactly as I can, and I state it once. Every later use of the phrase in this book has this meaning, and no other.

What I claim

I begin with the creature's side of the matter, which I will call C. C is everything that belongs to the creature in the order of second causes at the time of the act, short of the act itself. It is the creature's nature as created, which in the language of Chapter 3 is the material cause. It is his history up to the moment, his deliberation, his motives, and the powers by which his will acts, which in the same language belong to the efficient cause. C does not include the decree. It does not include the act itself, the particular willing, which I will call e. I draw the line there so that the claim I make cannot slip. If I let the decree into C, I would say that the creature is free of what he is not free of. If I let e into C, I would say nothing, because the act would then be the ground of itself.

I make three claims about C and e, and I distinguish them from a fourth claim, which I expressly do not make.

First, C does not entail e. The creature's nature, history, deliberation, motives and powers, taken together, are not by themselves sufficient to necessitate that the creature will the act. The act is not a necessary consequence of the creature's own grounds. This is a claim of non-entailment, and I call it so.

Second, the creature's faculties have real potency to the contrary. The will of Adam, with the nature and powers he had at the moment, was able to will not-e. This is more than the first claim. The first says that something is not entailed. The second says that something is within the power of the faculty. I mean the second as a claim about the creature, and not as a claim about what he or anyone else knows. It is not that Adam did not know that he would take the fruit, and called his ignorance "freedom." It is that Adam was able to refrain.

Third, the creature's act depends counterfactually on his will. If Adam had not willed to take the fruit, the fruit would not have been taken. The consequence of his act, namely that the fruit was taken and that sin entered, depends on his willing. I put it as a counterfactual: if A had not willed the act, E would not have occurred. This remains true even though God decreed both the willing and the event, and decreed them together in one act in eternity. The counterfactual is a claim about how the order of second causes is built. It is a claim about what depends on what within that order, and God's decree does not alter its truth. God decrees the outcome through the creature's will, and so the outcome depends on the creature's will.

Someone may object that if the willing is decreed, then the antecedent of the counterfactual, "if A had not willed the act," cannot be true together with the decree, and that a conditional with an impossible antecedent says nothing. Logicians evaluate counterfactuals with antecedents of that kind regularly, and they give intelligible results. The dependence of E on A's willing can be stated and understood even where the antecedent could not be true together with the decree. The point of the conditional is to show how the order of second causes is built, and it does that well enough.

Those three claims are what I mean by "could have chosen otherwise." The first is a matter of what is entailed, the second a matter of power, and the third a matter of dependence. I want the reader to see that the second is the heart of it, and that the other two protect it from being mistaken for something weaker.

What I claim for Adam. Adam could have refrained. I mean this in the circumstances in which he stood, with nothing held fixed but those circumstances: the same garden, the same command, the same woman and the same offer, the same upholding hand of God. Nothing in the created order determined him to eat, and God did not premove his will to the act. God gave the

concurrence without which no creature can act, and Adam's will gave it its direction. God's decree about the act was a permission, though not a bare one. God willed not to hinder, and he bounded the sin and ordered it to his own holy ends. That is limited ultimate freedom as I have defined it. Adam was free, without coercion, to choose otherwise in the circumstances. His freedom was limited because he did not make himself, was not consulted over whether he would be made, and was kept in being by another.

What God's decree took from it. God knew from his own infinite understanding that Adam, so placed and so upheld, would freely eat. Had Adam been one who would refrain, God would have known that instead, and the decree that took Adam's free would-choice as its occasion would have been otherwise. This is a dependence of what God's knowledge and decree contain on what Adam would freely do. It is not a power of Adam's over God. Adam did not yet exist. He did not act on God's understanding, and he did not move God's will. Le Blanc states the limit: the conditioned knowledge "does not make such a decree of God to be in our power."[17] God was moved by one thing only, his purpose in the Covenant of Redemption. Adam's would-choice was the occasion of the decree and not its cause. The dependence is only in the sense that God is using the clearest and best occasion to maximally accomplish his plans to the fullest.

What I deny. I deny the composite sense. Adam could not both eat and refrain. He could not refrain while the decree that he would eat stood, because no creature can make the decree both what it is and other than it is. But that denial is not the whole of my answer, and by itself it does not answer Stratton's clause about antecedent conditions. The decree does not cause Adam's choice. It takes that choice, foreknown as free, for its occasion. The certainty of the fall is the necessity of the consequence, and the fall's only cause is Adam's will. The necessity that

17 Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu, "Theses theologicae de concordia libertatis humanae cum decretis divinis," pars III, th. XXXVI, in *Theses theologicae, variis temporibus in Academia Sedanensi editae et ad disputandum propositae* (London: Moses Pitt, 1675), 467.

attends the fall is that of the consequence from a permissive decree, the same certainty that a Molinist account also grants once God has chosen an order.

What I do not claim

I do not claim that, with the decree held fixed together with everything else, the creature retains the power to bring about the contrary. That is the composite sense, and I deny that the creature has it. If God has decreed that Adam will take the fruit, then it is not the case that Adam, God's decree held fixed, can both take the fruit and not take it. No creature can have that. To demand it of the creature is to demand that he be able to make the decree other than it is.

This is the point at which the objection of 6.1 hopes to find the creature trapped, and it is the point at which I think the objector is mistaken about what he is asking. He asks whether, given the decree, the creature could have done otherwise. The question can be heard in two senses, and the older writers drew the distinction with some care. In the composite sense, the question asks whether the creature could do otherwise while the decree, and everything else, remains as it is. The answer is no. In the divided sense, the question asks whether the creature's will, considered as the faculty it is, had the power of willing the contrary. The answer is yes. The two answers do not contradict one another, any more than it contradicts that a man standing is able to sit and is not able to sit while standing. A man who stands has the power to sit. He does not have the power to sit and stand at once. Turretin's Latin in the tenth locus says the same thing of the will: indifferent in the divided sense and not in the composite.

Because the divided sense is easily mistaken for something empty, I add what it is and is not. It is not a bare logical possibility, the kind of thing that is true of a stone, that it could have been somewhere else. It is a power of the creature. It belongs to the will that wills, and it is exercised when the will wills. A stone does not have it, and a man does. When I say that Adam

could have refrained, I am saying something about Adam's will, and I am saying it of a will that was upright and mutable, and that was set under a command with a penalty and a promise. I am saying that, had Adam been one who would refrain, God would have known it and his decree would have been other. That is not a power to change a decree that stands, and Adam did not act on God. God decreed that Adam, who could have refrained, would not, and the decree took Adam's free choice as its occasion. I do not say that God decreed that Adam would refrain and Adam took the fruit anyway. I say that God decreed that Adam, who could have refrained, would not.

Why necessity of the consequence does not remove it

It follows that the act is infallible, and I will say so in so many words: given the decree, Adam does not refrain. That is the necessity of the consequence. It is the necessity of a conditional, and it is the necessity that Turretin means when he says that all things come to pass necessarily with a necessity that is hypothetical. I decline to say without qualification that Adam sinned necessarily, because without the qualification the sentence is heard as the necessity of the consequent. The sentence I will say is the one that Turretin said: Adam sinned necessarily with respect to the decree and the futurition of the thing, and freely with respect to his will and the manner. I add, in my own words, that he sinned willingly, and that the will which willed it was able not to will it.

The sense in which this is enough

The objector will say that this is not enough. If, given the decree, he does not refrain, what good is a power to refrain that is never exercised? I answer with three observations.

The first is that a power is not shown to be vain by the fact that it is not exercised in a given case. A man who is walking has the power to stand, and his walking does not make the

power vain. What distinguishes a man from a stone is what the man is able to do, and not what he does at a given moment.

The second is that this power is what makes the act the creature's. The three claims together describe an act that arises from the creature's nature, that is not entailed by his grounds, that depends on his willing, and that he was able to refrain from. If the act were the necessary result of his grounds, it would be the result of them and not of him. This is what the older writers meant when they said that necessity of consequence does not destroy the nature of the second cause that God has made.

The third is that the sense I have given asks of the creature what a creature can have and no more. A demand for the composite power is a demand that the creature stand in the place of the decree, and I have said that this is the place of God alone. I grant Stratton what I granted him in Chapter 5, and I grant it in three ways. I grant that Adam in the garden was free in the libertarian sense Stratton describes, with the ability to do otherwise. I grant his definitions for the sake of argument, and they do not take him where he wants to go, because no creature can ground himself (5.2). And I grant that God has the power and prerogative to conceive a creation of libertarian freedom. I read his "antecedent conditions" as excluding only the creator's creating and sustaining (1.3). For Adam I need nothing more, since God's decree about the act permitted it and did not cause it, and, as I read the definition, it does not ask that the decree be absent. If it is read to ask that the creature's act be unconditioned by the decree, I think the demand wrongheaded, and I do not claim that the demand is provably wrong.

The same for the fallen creature, within its limit

I have said that Adam alone had regulative control for the spiritual good, and that the rest of humanity has guidance control. I need to say what this does to the sense just given. For the

fallen creature, the divided-sense potency is the potency of his natural faculties. He can will among the things his nature presents, to speak truth or to lie, to help or to withhold, to keep a promise or to break one. The faculties that do this are the same faculties that Adam had, and in the same divided sense they are able to the contrary. What the fallen creature lacks is moral ability, the power to will and love what is spiritually good. For that good, his will is bound. The inability is not the absence of the faculty. It is the state of the faculty. I do not say, therefore, that the fallen creature's will has the divided-sense power to will spiritual good; I say that his faculties are natural faculties, which can will otherwise within the range of his natural ability, and that his inability for the spiritual good is of another kind, which I treat in Chapter 8. The line between the two is the line I drew in Chapter 5, and I hold to it throughout.

Judas and Peter

An example will show how the senses work in a hard case. Judas betrays Jesus, and Jesus says of it: "For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!"[18] In Matthew the same saying runs: "The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."[19] The betrayal is determined, and it is Judas's, and the woe falls on him. If someone asks whether Judas, with the determined betrayal held fixed, could have done otherwise in the composite sense, the answer is no. If someone asks whether Judas was a puppet, a thing with no will of its own, the answer is also no. Judas went to the chief priests because he wanted what he wanted, and he was able to go or not. Flat language cannot hold both answers. Language that keeps the senses apart can. Peter, too, denies his Lord and is restored.[20] In both

18 Luke 22:22 (ESV).

19 Matt. 26:24 (ESV).

20 See Luke 22:54–62 and John 21:15–19 (ESV).

men the divine order secures what comes to pass without turning either of them into a pushed object with no will. The decree does not become a second Judas behind Judas, and it does not stand in the place of Peter's weeping.

The same is true of ordinary choices. When you choose a word in a conversation, or the way home, what you freely do does not fall outside what God has ordained, and you are neither a stone nor a puppet. You act because you want what you want, and within your powers you were able to want otherwise. Your act is necessary in relation to the decree and contingent in relation to your own grounds, and you do not have to trade one off against the other.

6.6 Four Objections Answered

"The creature was not consulted"

The first objection is the one the Molinist presses most readily against me. If God decrees an exhaustive world, then the creature did not choose the world he finds himself in, nor was he consulted on whether he would be made, and so his freedom is not ultimate. I have already agreed that it is not. LUF is limited freedom, and the first limit, in Adam, is the limit of grounding: a creature did not make himself, was not consulted over his creation, and was not consulted over his being kept in being.

What I add is that the objection does not distinguish between the two sides. On the Molinist view God chooses to create a world on the ground of what he knows each possible free creature would do in each circumstance. The creature in the world God chooses was not consulted either. He did not choose to be made, he did not choose the circumstances, and he did not choose that God would, among the worlds open to him, choose this one. The creature who is lost in the world God chose was not given a say in whether to be placed in it, and on the Molinist view it is God's choice among worlds that placed him there, knowing how it would go. If a

creature's not being consulted removes the ground of his desert, it removes it on both views. If it does not, it does not remove it on mine. The objection does not tell between the two accounts, and it is no reason to prefer the one to the other.

I do not say this to score a point. I say it to show what the real question is. The question is not whether the creature was consulted. No creature was. The question is whether the act is his, and whether he is answerable for it. That question is answered by the three claims of 6.5, and I turn from it to the others.

"The strongest motive always wins"

The second objection is an old one, and I state it as it is usually stated. A man always chooses what seems to him best, all things considered. What seems to him best is determined by his nature and by what he sees. So, given his nature and what he sees, his choice is fixed. And so C entails e, and the claim of 6.5 that it does not is false.

I give two answers. The first is that the objection depends on how "what seems best" is understood. If "what seems best" is defined by the choice itself, so that whatever a man chooses is by definition what seemed best to him, then the premise is true and it says nothing, because it is a statement of the outcome and not a cause of it. If "what seems best" is taken as a state of the man that exists before the choice and that fixes the choice, then the premise is a substantive claim about how the will works, and I deny it for Adam. Turretin, whom I have cited, says that choice need not be immune from "the intrinsic necessity of determination by the intellect," and I do not rest the denial on him. I rest it on the account of Adam. His upright and mutable will, under the command, was not so constructed that a judgment of the intellect fixed its choice. The fall is the evidence. A will that was bound to choose the strongest motive would, in the garden, have chosen the motive that was strongest, and nothing in the account of Genesis suggests that

the strongest motive was the serpent's. Eve saw that the tree "was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise."[21] The text says what she saw. It does not say that what she saw compelled her.

The second answer is that for the fallen creature the objection is nearer the truth, in one respect. A will that is bound to sin and averse to the good in spiritual things does indeed choose, in spiritual matters, as its nature inclines it, and the fallen man in these matters does not will the good. That is moral inability, and I do not deny it. I have said that it is the state of the faculty and not the absence of the faculty, and that it is a judicial consequence of the fall, and I treat it in Chapter 8. The objection is therefore partly right about the fallen creature, in the spiritual realm, and it does not follow that it is right about Adam, or that it is right about the fallen creature's will in the range of his natural ability.

"The decree is manipulation"

The third objection says that if God decreed my act, then God has manipulated me, as a scientist who stimulates the brain of a subject manipulates him, and a man who has been manipulated is not responsible for what he does. The objection is serious and it has been pressed by writers on both sides of the debate. I give the answer in two parts.

The first is a point about what manipulation is. A manipulator is an agent within the order of causes who substitutes his own intention for that of the one he manipulates. He bypasses the agent's own reasoning, or he installs the reasoning that he wants, and the agent ends up doing what the manipulator wants and not what he, by his own processes, would have done. What marks the case is the bypass. If the manipulator had not been there, the agent's own processes

21 Gen. 3:6 (ESV).

would have gone differently, and so the manipulator is an additional and rival cause, standing among the agent's causes and displacing some of them.

God's decree is not like that. God is not an additional cause in the order of second causes. He is the ground of that order, and the cause of its being an order. When the creature deliberates, reasons and chooses, he does so by the faculties God gave him, and God's concurrence is the reason the faculties are there to act. The act arises through the creature's deliberation, motives and nature, and not around them. I have said in 6.3 that the concurrence of the first cause does not exclude the concurrence of the second causes. The difference between the creature and a manipulated subject is that a manipulated subject has had his own processes displaced, and the creature has had his own processes sustained. Nor is the creature a puppet. A puppet has no deliberation and no desires of its own, and the creature has both.

The second part is that the objector who says that primary causation is manipulation has assumed the point he needs to prove. If every ordained act is manipulation by definition, then to say that God ordains whatever comes to pass is to say that God manipulates all things, and the argument is not an objection to my position in particular but an objection to the doctrine of the decree. Those who press it have to say so. They cannot take the doctrine of the decree for granted and use the objection against my account of freedom. There is no premotion in Adam's act, so the objection finds nothing to take hold of in the garden. My answers to it stand for regeneration, which Chapter 8 treats.

"This is freedom as an illusion"

The fourth objection says that I have kept the word "freedom" and thrown away the thing. The decree settles the matter, and the creature's sense of being able to do otherwise is a

feeling in him, given by his ignorance of the decree. His freedom is a useful fiction for creatures who cannot see what God has ordained.

I refuse this, and I have refused it in the three claims of 6.5. The creature's potency to the contrary is not his ignorance of the decree. Adam did not know whether he would take the fruit, and that is true, but it is not what I mean by saying he could have refrained. I mean that his will had a power. If "I could have done otherwise" only meant "I did not know that I would not," the libertarian would have been right to say that I had surrendered the word, and I would say so myself. I am not saying that. I do not sell determination as the only fact with freedom as an appearance for those who are not told, and I do not sell creaturely contingency as the only fact with the decree as a later theological overlay. Both are real, each in its own order, and one is not the shadow of the other.

I add a fence. Indexing necessity and contingency to an order does not make truth relative to the order. What God has ordained comes to pass, and it is true that it does. The creature's act is contingent in relation to the creature's grounds. These are not two perspectives on which the truth depends. They are two true things.

6.7 Stratton on Frankfurt-Style Cases

Stratton makes a charge about Frankfurt-style cases that bears on the argument of this chapter and of Chapter 5, and I answer it by name. I quote the page from p. 234 of the second edition of his book.

What the page says

The context on the page is a reply to Derk Pereboom. Pereboom proposes two conditions on rational deliberation, which are labelled (S) and (DE), and Stratton reports that Pereboom holds that satisfaction of these two conditions "is sufficient for epistemically responsible

deliberation even though determinism is the case."[22] Stratton asks whether Pereboom has made his case, and he says that for several reasons it seems not. He says that (S) "focuses on the wrong issue, one that is derivative and not fundamental." The passage on which I want to dwell follows:

> (S) erroneously makes the issue one of alternative possibilities rather than focusing on the sort of control required for real deliberation grounded on the nature of deliberation itself. Below, this nature will be unpacked, but presently it must be noted that this error shifts the focus away from ontology to epistemology. This shift simply changes the subject and muddies the waters. Real deliberation entails that A1...An must actually be ontological possibilities, especially when we note that deliberation is an internal mental process that does not have a bodily "action" among its constituents. Thus, Frankfurt-style counterexamples are both irrelevant and misleading since the person in those cases retains the active power to do something or to refrain from doing something, in which case the observer causes the relevant body movement. Thus, the person retains active power and alternative possibilities.[23]

He concludes that (S) "only gives us ersatz deliberation, not genuine deliberation, because (S) does not include active power or genuine, ontological alternatives."[24] He adds that the person in (S) "has a false belief, viz., that A1...An are actually real, genuine possibilities when they are not."[25]

I note two things about what the page does and does not say. The first is that the shift "from ontology to epistemology" is a charge laid against (S), the condition Pereboom proposes. It is the observation that a condition about what the deliberator must believe has taken the place of a condition about what he can do. The second is that the sentence about Frankfurt-style counterexamples makes two claims. It says that they are irrelevant to deliberation, because deliberation is an internal mental process with no bodily action among its constituents. And it says that in those cases the person "retains the active power to do something or to refrain from

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22 Stratton, *Human Freedom*, 234, citing Derk Pereboom, "A Compatibilist Account of the Epistemic Conditions on Rational Deliberation," *The Journal of Ethics* 12, no. 3–4 (2008): 287–306, at 305 (n. 56) and 287 (n. 57).

23 Stratton, *Human Freedom*, 234.

24 Stratton, *Human Freedom*, 234.

25 Stratton, *Human Freedom*, 234.

doing something," and adds that in this case "the observer causes the relevant body movement." I take these as the charge, and I answer them.

What I grant

I grant the point about deliberation and I hold to it. Deliberation, as I understand it, is a weighing of options, and a weighing of options in which the options are not real is not deliberation in the sense in which a rational agent deliberates. Adam deliberated in the garden among real options. He had regulative control, and his deliberation was genuine in Stratton's sense, with active power and genuine alternatives. That is the concession I made in Chapter 5 and I do not retract it.

The fallen creature also deliberates among real options. I said that there is an "otherwise" for the fallen creature, and that it lies within natural ability. The man who deliberates whether to tell the truth or lie, whether to help his neighbour or pass by, has before him options that are really possible in the ordinary sense of the word. His faculties can take either course. So the option set is ontological, and not an appearance. The deliberation is not "ersatz," and the belief that the options are real is not false. If I understand the page, what it requires of genuine deliberation is met by LUF. What the fallen creature lacks is a particular power, the power of will for spiritual good, and that is a loss within a deliberation whose other options remain.

I grant also that Frankfurt-style cases leave something in place. I said in Chapter 5 that critics have pressed the point that the cases leave some alternative in the agent's deliberation, a small flicker, and that I do not rest my argument on the cases being decisive. John Martin Fischer, in a survey of the debate over the cases, describes the flicker reply in these terms: "I have called such an alternative possibility a 'flicker of freedom.'"[26] He reports also a dilemma

26 John Martin Fischer, "Recent Work on Moral Responsibility," *Ethics* 110, no. 1 (1999): 93–139, at 110.

that was pressed against the cases, which is that "the proponent of the Frankfurt-type examples is presupposing the truth of either causal determinism or indeterminism."[27] It is the dilemma that arises from the prior sign. In Frankfurt's own example Black has a basis for prediction in a twitch of Jones's face: "Knowing this, and observing the twitch, Black would have a basis for prediction."[28] If the twitch guarantees the decision, determinism has been assumed from the beginning, and the incompatibilist will not be moved. If it does not guarantee the decision, Black cannot be sure how Jones will decide, and if he can intervene only after the choice has begun, Jones, Fischer says, "will still have the possibility of 'beginning to make the choice,' which is surely more robust than a mere flicker of freedom."[29] Fischer names Widerker, Kane, Ginet and Wyma as those who have pressed this line.[30] I do not take the dilemma from Stratton, who does not state it on that page. I take it from the literature, and I take it to be a fair point against the standard form of the cases. Where the cases are built with an external observer and a prior sign, I do not say that they establish what their defenders hope.

Where the charge does not reach

What I deny is that these points reach the use I make of the cases. There are three reasons, and I give them in turn.

The first is that in Chapter 5 I used the cases only to show that the demand for regulative control at every point is not self-evident, and I took from them Frankfurt's own principle, that a person is not morally responsible for what he has done if he did it only because he could not have done otherwise. I did not make any observer the account of the fallen will. When I come to

27 Fischer, "Recent Work," 111.

28 Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): 829–39, at 835 n. 3.

29 Fischer, "Recent Work," 112.

30 Fischer, "Recent Work," 111, naming David Widerker (1995), Robert Kane (1996, especially 142–45), Carl Ginet (1996) and Keith Wyma (1997).

the fallen creature, the thing that stands between him and the spiritual good is not an observer, nor a device that waits and intervenes if he starts to choose otherwise. It is a condition of his own will. I take the saying of Jesus as a general truth about nature and fruit, and I apply it here. A diseased tree, he says, cannot bear good fruit: "A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit."[31] The inability is a fact about the tree, and the fruit comes from the tree. Where the charge against the cases is that they turn a question about what the agent can do into a question about what an observer can predict, the charge has no purchase on a case in which the limit is not in any observer's mind at all. The fallen will's bondage is not a prediction. It is the state of the will, and in that sense it is ontological and not epistemological.

The second reason is that the loss is not an accident of the individual. It is a judicial consequence. Paul says that "one trespass led to condemnation for all men," and that "by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners."[32] I treat the text in Chapter 7, where I show how I take it. My claim here is the limited one that the fallen creature's loss of the power to will spiritual good is not an arbitrary limit placed on him from outside, nor a fact about what someone happens to know. It is the sentence of God on the race in its head, and it is carried out in each person through the bound condition of his will. That the loss is judicial and ontological together is what a Frankfurt-style case, with its observer, cannot represent, and it is why I say that the cases serve as illustrations and not as the ground.

The third reason is that the cases do the one thing I ask of them, and I ask no more. They show that an inability may play no part in the explanation of why a person acted as he did. Frankfurt puts it this way: "The fact that a person could not have avoided doing something is a sufficient condition of his having done it. But, as some of my examples show, this fact may play

31 Matt. 7:18 (ESV).

32 Rom. 5:18–19 (ESV).

no role whatever in the explanation of why he did it."[33] The fallen man sins because he wants to. His inability to will the spiritual good does not enter into his sin as an outside obstruction between him and a good he desires. It is his desire. In that way the cases illustrate what total depravity is, and I have never said that they prove it.

The ontological charge in return

On the account I reject, truths about what a free creature would do are the ground of God's choice and extend to grace. On mine they are the occasion, comprehended by God's own intellect, and his motive is his own (4.2).

What I do not say about Stratton

I do not say that Stratton has argued, on that page, that Frankfurt-style cases are a trick. I do not say that he states the dilemma of the prior sign. I do not say that he has addressed the use of the cases that I make. His page is a reply to Pereboom on deliberation, and I take from it what it says: that real deliberation needs real alternatives, and that Frankfurt-style cases do not remove the active power. To the first I agree for Adam and for the fallen creature within his natural ability. To the second I say that the cases I rely on are not cases in which the agent retains an active power over the thing at issue, and that what I take from them I have taken in Chapter 5.

6.8 The Decree Through the Creature's Power

I said in 6.5 that the third thing I mean by "could have chosen otherwise" is that the creature's act depends counterfactually on his willing. I want now to say more exactly what that claim is and what it is not, because it is the claim by which the decree and the creature's power are most plainly seen to stand together.

33 Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities," 836.

Two claims, kept apart

There are two claims here, and they must not be run together. The first is that a secondary event depends counterfactually on the creature's willing: if A had not willed the act, E would not have occurred. This is localized causal dependency. The effect depends on the creaturely will, and the creaturely will is the pivot on which the secondary event turns. The second claim is that A had the power not to will the act in the exact sense of 6.5, the power of his faculty to the contrary in the divided sense. The first claim can be true while the second is still disputed, and I argue the first here and take the second from 6.5. In particular, the first claim does not grant the composite power that I have refused. It does not say that A could bring about the contrary while the decree that he act stays fixed. It says that the link between his willing and the event is a real link, and that the decree does not bypass it.

Causal power and causal origin

The distinction I need is between causal power and causal origin. Counterfactual power over a secondary event does not require that the agent be the first and undecreed cause of his act. It requires only that his act be the pivot for the secondary event, so that had it been otherwise, the event would have been otherwise. A man who strikes a match has the power to light the room, though he did not make the match, the oxygen, or the room. The libertarian demand of 1.5, that the creature be the origin of his own willing, is a demand about origin. What I affirm is a claim about power, and power of that kind is the only kind a creature can have.

The decree, then, does not bypass the creature's will. It decrees the outcome through the creature's power. God does not merely decree what happens. He decrees how it happens, by giving secondary causes real and operative efficacy. This is the structure the Confession states: "Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause, all things come

to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently."[34] God sustains the whole reality of the agent, the act and the lawlike order in which the act is done. The creature is the secondary cause, operating as a genuine, rational cause with respect to other created things. I take that to be the only structure that comports with the reality we know.

An author and his character

I return to the author and his character of 6.3, because the illustration bears on this claim. Within the story, in the world of the character's own causes, the letter exists because the character chose to write it and wrote it. Had he refused, there would be no letter. The decree grounds the pen-stroke's reality and does not make it powerless. The limit I named in 6.3 holds here: a character in a story has no will of his own, and a creature does. The picture shows only that a decree can ground a power without displacing it. It does not show that the creature is a character in a story.

The stage and the puppet

The libertarian objects that on this account the creature is a puppet. I answer in two ways. The first is that the objection lays on the decree a demand that it lays on nothing else. The puppet has no influence on the stage on which it plays, and neither has the libertarian's agent. He too finds himself on a stage that he did not build, and I argued in 1.5 that no creature could build it. If the objection is that the creature did not choose the stage, it is an objection to creaturehood, and I have said what I think of that.

The second answer is that a creature is not a puppet, whatever the stage. A puppet has no intellect and no desires of its own, and it does not deliberate. A creature has an intellect and a

34 Westminster Confession of Faith 5.2.

will. When God carries out his decree by means of a man's deliberation, he makes the man's choice a real and uncoerced secondary cause, and the choice is the man's. This is what the older writers meant by concurrence. The first cause draws the concurrence of the second cause and does not exclude it.[35] I do not say that God apologizes for the state of affairs or for the stage on which the drama of reality is played. The Scriptures do not, and the Confessions do not. I say that in this reality the creature has the freedom that a finite being can have, and that it is real.

No need of a third knowledge

The same structure removes the need for a third knowledge. What creatures would do is comprehended in God's simple intelligence, under a decree supposed, and so no knowledge is needed that stands between God's knowledge of the possible and his knowledge of what he has decreed. The Molinist who places the reason for the decree in the foreseen choice of the creature leaves the creature exactly where he was with respect to the existence problem of 1.5: he was not consulted. I make no complaint of the Molinist on this ground. I note only that the objection that the decree makes the creature a puppet lies as heavily on the one account as on the other.

6.9 What This Chapter Has Laid Down

I list what has been fixed, so that the chapters that follow can lean on it.

The idea of the created order is the idea of the whole world, and the creature's acts are in it as the acts of free second causes. The idea does not cause the act. The creature is the proximate cause of what he does.

The idea guides, the will chooses, and the knowledge follows, and these are three aspects of one eternal act. The decree and the creature's choice do not compete for the same ground. The

35 Turrettinus, *Institutio*, 442 (Loc. VI, q. 1, §9): "nec concursus causae primae excludit concursum secundarum, imo eum post se trahit." The translation is mine.

decree is the ground of the order within which the choice is a choice, and the Confession says that the liberty and contingency of second causes are established by it.

The necessity that attends a decreed act is the necessity of the consequence and not of the consequent. It is infallible, and it is not coaction. The act is contingent in relation to the creature's grounds, diachronically and synchronically.

"Could have chosen otherwise" means three things. The creature's grounds do not entail the act. His faculties have real potency to the contrary, in the divided sense. And his act depends counterfactually on his willing. It does not mean that, with the decree held fixed, he has the power to bring about the contrary, which is the composite sense, and I deny it. For Adam it means one thing more: in his own circumstances he could have refrained, and had he been one who would refrain, God's knowledge and decree would have been other. That dependence gave him no power over God.

For Adam this was the full power of the upright and mutable will. For the fallen creature it is the power of natural faculties within the range of natural ability, and not a power of will for the spiritual good that accompanies salvation.

The four objections of 6.6 are answered, and Stratton's page on Frankfurt-style cases is answered in 6.7, where I take his page as it stands. How the decree is carried out through the creature's power, and does not bypass it, is set out in 6.8.

The next chapter takes the first and hardest case. Adam sinned, and the sin was in the decree. How can a holy God ordain what a free creature does by turning away from him, and not be its author? Chapter 7 gives my answer, in the light of Romans 5.

Chapter 7. Adam, the Fall, and Romans 5

7.1 Adam before the Fall

Chapter 6 ended with a question that cannot be put off. Adam sinned, and the sin was within the decree. How can a holy God ordain what a free creature does by turning away from him, and not be the author of the sin? I cannot answer that question without first saying who Adam was, what he was given, and what he was asked. This section does that. The sections that follow take up the fall itself, the text of Romans 5, the headship of Adam, and the causes involved in each.

What he was made

God made man upright. Moses says of the whole creation, when the work was done, that God saw everything that he had made, "and behold, it was very good."[1] The Preacher says it of man in particular: "God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes."[2] The Westminster Confession gives the doctrine its fullest compass. God created man "with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it: and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change."[3] The Canons of Dort say the same in their own words: "Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright, all his affections pure, and the whole man was holy."[4]

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1 Gen. 1:31 (ESV).

2 Eccles. 7:29 (ESV).

3 Westminster Confession of Faith 4.2, text at opc.org/wcf.html. All quotations of the Westminster Confession in this chapter are from that text.

4 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 1, text at ccel.org/ccel/anonymous/canonsofdort.iv.i.html (Christian Classics Ethereal Library). All quotations of the Canons

Two statements in these texts must be held together. The first is that Adam was upright. His will was not bent. He had a righteousness and a holiness that were his by creation, and the law of God was written in his heart, with power to keep it. The second is that he was mutable. The Confession's words are that he was "under a possibility of transgressing," and that the liberty of his will "was subject unto change." Uprightness is not confirmation. A will may be good and not yet fixed in the good. Chapter 9 of the Confession says the same thing in its own place: "Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom, and power to will and to do that which was good and well pleasing to God; but yet, mutably, so that he might fall from it."[5]

I take these as the description of the creature whom the idea of the world contained, and whom the decree made. In the language of Chapter 3, Adam's nature was the material cause on the creature's side, and it was upright and mutable. In the language of Chapter 6, his grounds, C, did not entail his act, and his will had real potency to the contrary.

What he was given and what he was asked

God put the man in the garden "to work it and keep it," and commanded him: "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."[6] The command was plain. The penalty was stated. The permission to eat of every other tree was generous. Nothing was hidden from Adam that bore on the act. He knew what he was asked, he knew what would follow if he failed, and he knew who had asked it.

The Confession places the command in a relation. "The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon

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in this chapter are from that text.

5 Westminster Confession of Faith 9.2.

6 Gen. 2:15–17 (ESV).

condition of perfect and personal obedience."[7] I treated the covenant of redemption in Chapter 3 and the covenant of works in Chapter 5, and I do not repeat the treatment. I note only three points that bear on the present chapter. The first is that the covenant was made with Adam, and in him with his posterity, which is the whole root of what Paul says in Romans 5. The second is that the covenant was a condescension, as the Confession's first section says: reasonable creatures owe obedience to their Creator, but they could never have had fruition of him as their blessedness and reward "but by some voluntary condescension on God's part."[8] The third is that the covenant required obedience, and obedience requires that the one who obeys be able to disobey. A covenant is not made with a stone.

What he had

In Chapter 5 I said that Adam had regulative control and guidance control. He had the dual power. He could keep the command and he could break it. In Chapter 6 I said what that comes to. His grounds did not entail that he would break it. His will had real potency to the contrary, in the divided sense. His act, when it came, depended on his willing. I do not repeat those statements here. I want only to say what they do for the question that this chapter is trying to answer. They place the first sin in Adam and not in the decree considered as a push. Adam's will, upright and mutable, was the proximate cause of what he did.

I must say also what Adam did not have. He did not have what I called in Chapter 6 composite power, the power to bring about the contrary while the decree was held fixed. No creature has it. His will was upright and was not yet fixed in the good. His state was the state of the innocent and mutable creature set under probation.

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7 Westminster Confession of Faith 7.2.

8 Westminster Confession of Faith 7.1.

What the older writers said of his liberty

Turretin treats Adam's liberty in the locus on the state of man before the fall, and I set down what he says because it bears on each of the points above.[9] He says that Adam was free of the bondage of sin, since he was created upright, but that he was not free of mutability. Whatever his holiness and righteousness were, "it was mutable, and he could therefore fall away from it." Adam was placed in such a state that "he could stand and fall, sin and not sin." Turretin does not count this a fault. It marks a lesser perfection than the state of grace, which is immutable, but he adds that "immutability is not a gift of nature, but of grace."

He asks next whether Adam's liberty lay in indifference, an equal leaning to good and to evil, and he answers that it did not.[10] The will necessarily follows the dictate of the intellect, and an equal leaning to good and to evil would be against the state in which the will was created, and against the law that commanded Adam to love God with all his mind and all his strength. If any indifference is to be allowed him, it is not to be understood in the second act, as if he could at one and the same time be carried to good and to evil, for then he would be both upright and fallen. It is to be understood in the first act: the faculty was so disposed by the mutable condition in which he was made that it could be determined to evil no less than to good, "successively and in the divided sense, not at once and in the composite sense."

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9 Franciscus Turrettinus, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae, Pars Prima* (Edinburgh: John D. Lowe, 1847), 514 (Loc. VIII, q. 1, §7): "qualiscunque fuerit ejus sanctitas et justitia, mutabilis fuit, a qua proinde deficere potuit. In eo quippe statu positus fuit Adamus, ut posset stare et cadere, peccare et non peccare." And: "immutabilitas non est donum naturae, sed gratiae." The translation is mine. Latin quoted in these notes keeps its accents as printed, with the long s written s and the ligature æ written ae; abbreviations are expanded in square brackets, and any other oddity is kept as printed with [sic].

10 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 514 (Loc. VIII, q. 1, §8): "non est intelligenda in actu secundo, et quoad potentiam simultatis, quasi potuerit simul et semel manens in illo statu actu ferri ad bonum et ad malum." And: "sed in actu primo, et quoad simultatem potentiae, quia potentia seu facultas Adami ita erat disposita per conditionem mutabilem in qua conditus erat, ut posset ad malum determinari, non minus ac ad bonum, sed successive et in sensu diviso, non simul et in sensu composito." The translation is mine.

In the same place he sets Adam's liberty beside the liberties of others, and he cites Augustine's *De correptione et gratia* for the liberty of Adam and the liberty of the blessed.[11] The liberty of sinners in the state of sin, he says, "is not to be able not to sin." The liberty of believers in grace "is to be able to sin, and not to sin." "But the liberty of Adam was to be able not to sin." He gives a liberty of the blessed as well, and I leave that aside here.

I do not take Turretin to be a libertarian, and I do not cite him as one. He denies indifference in the second act and in the composite sense, and the power that he allows Adam is a power in the first act and in the divided sense. In Chapter 6 I claim for Adam more than Turretin allows. With Le Blanc, I hold that God did not predetermine the act, and that Adam could have refrained in the circumstances in which he stood. What I take from him is that Adam's immutability was not given with his nature, and that the liberty of the upright and mutable creature is a different liberty from that of the fallen. His account of the believer, who is able to sin and not to sin, is stated more generously than I state the regenerate will in Chapter 8, and I do not take it as mine.

7.2 The Fall: Permission, Privation, and the Deficient Cause

What Genesis says

Genesis tells the story briefly and without apology. The serpent, "more crafty than any other beast of the field," asks the woman whether God actually said that they might not eat of any tree in the garden.[12] She answers with the command, and her answer includes a clause that Genesis 2:16–17 does not record: "neither shall you touch it."[13] The serpent denies the penalty

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11 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 514–15 (Loc. VIII, q. 1, §9): "Libertas peccatorum in statu peccati est non posse non peccare. Libertas fidelium in gratia est posse peccare, et non peccare. Sed libertas Adami fuit posse non peccare." The sentence before them gives the liberty of the blessed. Turretin cites Augustine, *De correptione et gratia*, for the liberty of Adam and of the blessed. The translation is mine.

12 Gen. 3:1 (ESV).

13 Gen. 3:3 (ESV).

and impugns the motive: “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”[14] Then the woman “saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”[15] When God asks Adam about it, Adam answers: “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”[16] Paul adds a detail that Genesis does not state, which is that “Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.”[17]

I draw three things from the account. The first is that the temptation came from outside Adam, and from a creature, and not from God. James says it in general terms: “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”[18] The second is that the act was the act of the man. Genesis says he ate. The Second London Confession says that he “did willfully transgress the law of their creation,” and that he did it “without any compulsion.”[19] The third is that the account does not tell us why a will that was upright turned. It tells us what was offered and what was taken. It does not give the reason for the turning. I do not give one either, and I come back to this at the end of the chapter.

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14 Gen. 3:4–5 (ESV).

15 Gen. 3:6 (ESV).

16 Gen. 3:12 (ESV).

17 1 Tim. 2:14 (ESV).

18 James 1:13–15 (ESV).

19 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689) 6.1, text at the1689confession.com/1689/chapter-6, with the numerals of the proof-texts omitted.

What the Confession says God did

The Confession says: "Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin, God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory."[20] In the chapter on providence it says that the providence of God "extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin."[21] The Second London Confession is close, and it says "determinate counsel" where Westminster says "providence": "His determinate counsel extends itself even to the first fall, and all other sinful actions both of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, which also He most wisely and powerfully binds, and otherwise orders and governs, in a manifold dispensation to His most holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness of their acts proceeds only from the creatures, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin."[22]

Alsted defines the divine permission as that by which God permits the rational creature to do what he has forbidden, and says that it "consists in the suspension of an efficacious impediment, not of a due and sufficient [impediment]."[23] So defined, it is not bare. God withheld from Adam no help that was due him, and he willed not to add the help that would have

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20 Westminster Confession of Faith 6.1.

21 Westminster Confession of Faith 5.4.

22 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith 5.4, text at the1689confession.com/1689/chapter-5.

23 Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica, exhibens locos communes theologicos methodo scholastica* (Hanau: Conrad Eifrid, 1618), sect. I, cap. XXII, reg. V, 87 (the fourth object of the divine will).

prevented the act. The concurrence God gave was the concurrence without which no creature acts, of itself indifferent, and Adam's will directed it, as Le Blanc holds.[24] The Second London Confession puts the same freedom on Adam's side: he "without any compulsion, did wilfully transgress the Law of their Creation,"[25] and God was pleased "according to his wise and holy Councel to permit" the act, "having purposed to order it, to his own glory."

These texts do three things, and I want to take them one at a time.

They say that the fall is within the providence of God. It is not an event outside his rule, an intrusion on a plan that was otherwise complete. The Confession says that it was permitted according to his wise and holy counsel, and that he had purposed to order it to his glory. In the language of Chapter 4, the fall is in the idea, in the will and in the knowledge. It is not a surprise.

They say that this is not "bare permission." The word "bare" matters. A bare permission would be a standing aside, as of one who allows what he could prevent and takes no part in what follows. The Confession denies that the case is of that kind. God bounds the sin, orders it, and governs it, and in a "manifold dispensation" turns it to his own holy ends. That is, he is not a spectator of the fall.

And they say that the sin is the creature's and not God's. The sinfulness of the act "proceedeth only from the creature." God "neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin." These words are the Confession's answer to the question I put at the beginning of this chapter. I do not think they are a solution that removes the difficulty, and I do not think the Confession

24 See Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu, "Theses theologicae de concordia libertatis humanae cum decretis divinis," pars I, th. LIII–LIV, in *Theses theologicae, variis temporibus in Academia Sedanensi editae et ad disputandum propositae* (London: Moses Pitt, 1675), 454.

25 *A Confession of Faith, Put Forth by the Elders and Brethren of Many Congregations of Christians (Baptized upon Profession of Their Faith) in London and the Country* (London, 1677), 6.1, 24, with the spelling of that edition; compare Westminster Confession of Faith 6.1 and 5.4 ("not by a bare permission").

thinks so. They are a statement of what must be held on each side, together with an indication of how it is to be held. I now try to say how.

Permission, and why the word is not a rest

The old word for the first line of the answer is permission. Augustine, in the Enchiridion, says: "Nothing, therefore, happens but by the will of the Omnipotent, He either permitting it to be done, or Himself doing it."[26] The sentence has the structure that I want. It does not say that some things happen apart from God's will. It says that everything happens by his will, and that the will works in two ways. In some things he does the thing. In others he permits it to be done. I treat the doctrine of permission more fully in Appendix C, where it is one of the reasons for the freedom of the creature. Here it is enough to say what it excludes. It excludes the view that God wills sin as he wills the good. And it excludes the view that sin happens without his will. The Confession's phrase, "not by a bare permission," keeps a middle between them, and the way along it is narrow.

Turretin names the two extremes between which the way runs.[27] On one side are those who reduce the providence of God over evil to a bare and idle permission, as if God looked on and allowed, and he names the Pelagians. On the other are those who make God the cause of sins, and he names the Manichees and others of old, and the Libertines of his own day. The orthodox hold the middle: God neither permits sin idly nor produces it efficiently, but "efficaciously orders and directs it." Permission, he adds, must be conceived "positively and affirmatively." It is not that God does not will to prevent sin, "which is an idle negation," but that

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26 Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love* 95, trans. J. F. Shaw, in *On the Holy Trinity; Doctrinal Treatises; Moral Treatises*, ed. Philip Schaff, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, ser. 1, vol. 3 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1887), 267.

27 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 462 (Loc. VI, q. 7, §§1–2): "ut nec otiose illud permittat, ut volunt Pelagiani, nec efficienter producat, quod statuunt Libertini, sed efficaciter ordinet et dirigat." The extremes he opposes are named in the first section. The translation is mine.

he wills not to prevent it, "which is an effective affirmation."[28] That is the sense of the Confession's "not by a bare permission."

I do not think permission is a rest, in the sense of a word that ends the inquiry. It does not tell me how God can permit what he has purposed to order to his glory. It tells me that he does, and that Scripture speaks of it so. In Chapter 6 I took Acts 2:23 and 4:27–28, where the same event is the plan of God and the work of lawless men. In Isaiah, the Lord calls Assyria "the rod of my anger" and sends him against a godless nation, and then says, "When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes."[29] The king's boast, "Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it?" is rebuked: the axe is God's tool, and it is not God's equal.[30] God uses the rod, and punishes the rod for the heart in which it acted. Both are said, and neither statement is withdrawn.

Privation, and the deficient cause

The second line of the answer concerns what sin is. Sin is not a thing that God made. God made man upright, and he made the faculties of man, and the world in which the faculties act, and he pronounced all of it very good. Sin is the creature's turning away from the good that he was made for. It is a lack of what ought to be there, a falling short of the law, and not an additional substance placed in the creature. I use the word *privation* in this sense, as a name for sin as a want of the good and not as a thing in its own right. I do not rest the argument on any one writer's statement of the doctrine, and I give the sense in my own words, as plainly as I can.

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28 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 463 (Loc. VI, q. 7, §7): "Sed concipienda est positive et affirmative, non simpliciter, ut Deus non velit impedire peccatum, quae est otiosa negatio, sed ut velit non impedire, quae efficax est affirmatio." The translation is mine.

29 Isa. 10:5–6 and 10:12 (ESV).

30 Isa. 10:15 (ESV).

If sin is a privation, then there is a distinction to be drawn about its cause. A thing that exists has a cause that makes it. A privation has no cause of that sort, since it is not a thing that is made. What it has is a cause that fails: a will that turns, and in turning does not do what it was made to do. I call the creature's will, in the fall, the *deficient cause* of the sin. It is the cause by failing. It is not the cause by supplying anything that God gave to be evil. Everything that Adam used in the act was good. He had a mind, a will, a body, and a world, and the fruit was good for food. What was lacking was the obedience that he owed. And the lack was not given to him by anyone. It was his own.

This is how I understand the Confession's statement that the sinfulness proceeds only from the creature. God is the cause of Adam, and of the faculties by which he acted, and of the sustaining of his being and his action in every moment. God is not the cause of the lack. The lack is in the will that turned. The Second London Confession's phrase "without any compulsion" is the same point from the side of the act: nothing forced the will to turn, and nothing pushed it.

Where the answer stops

I have said that I do not know why a will that was upright turned, and I do not. It is not that I have not looked. The one thing that the account allows me to say is that the turning was not caused by a defect in Adam's nature, since his nature was good, and that it was not caused by God, since God tempts no one. If I say it was caused by the serpent, I have not said why Adam yielded. If I say it was caused by Adam's desire, I have said what James says, that desire lures and enticing precedes sin, but I have not said how a desire in an upright will came to be lured. The question is a genuine one, and every position that holds both that Adam was good and that Adam fell has it. The libertarian has it as much as the Reformed. If the libertarian says that Adam's will had power to the contrary and used it wrongly, the question remains why he used it

so. If he says that there was no reason, I will not call that an answer. It is only a statement that the question has been given up.

Turretin stops at the same place, and says so more shortly. Of creatures who were whole, he writes, "Scripture says nothing expressly" about why God permitted an angel or a man to fall.[31] Since nothing is done without his knowledge or against his will, it cannot be doubted that it was done by a certain and deliberate counsel, "which it is safer to wonder at than to search out too curiously." He allows himself three negative statements. In permitting it God did nothing contrary to justice, because he was not bound to prevent sin. Nor did he do anything contrary to wisdom, because when he had willed the creature's condition to be mutable there was no reason that bound him to do for it what would exceed the measure of its nature. Nor did he do anything contrary to goodness, because the love with which he follows the creature, so long as it does not fall from its integrity, does not go so far at once that he must see to it that it does not fall. These say what God was not bound to do. They are not an explanation of the turning, and Turretin does not offer them as one.

What I say is what I can say. Adam was upright and mutable. He was tempted from outside. He turned willingly, without compulsion, using faculties that were good for an end that was not. God permitted it, having purposed to order it to his glory, and he did so in a way that was not bare permission. The sin is Adam's. I do not claim to have explained the turning. I claim to have said what the Confession says, in a way that fits the three claims of Chapter 6, and to

31 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 464 (Loc. VI, q. 7, §9): "Nam si de Creaturis integris agitur, Scriptura nihil expresse dicit, cur Angelum vel hominem labi permiserit: Quia tamen nihil eo fit vel inscio, vel invito, dubitari non debet, quin certo quodam et deliberato factum sit consilio, quod tutius est admirari, quam curiosius rimari." And, a little later: "nihil hoc pacto fecisse Deum, quod vel repugnaret justitiae, quia non tenebatur impedire peccatum; vel sapientiae, quia cum voluerit creaturae conditionem esse mutabilem, nulla ratio fuit, quae eum obligaret ad ea facienda erga eam, quae naturae modum excederent; vel bonitati, quia amor quo creaturam prosequitur, dum ab integritate non deficit, non statim eo usque progreditur, ut debeat praestare ne deficiat." The translation is mine.

have placed the difficulty where it belongs, which is in the mystery of a good creature's first sin and not in the doctrine of the decree.

7.3 Romans 5:12–19

Romans 5 is the passage on which everything in this chapter depends, and I give it first in full compass and then take up the one phrase on which readers divide. The apostle writes:

> Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.[32]

He then sets the two men side by side. "But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many."[33] The judgment following one trespass brought condemnation; the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.[34] And he sums it up: "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."[35]

The structure of the argument

The argument has a plain shape. Verse 12 states a pattern: sin entered through one man, death through sin, and death spread to all. Verses 13 and 14 meet an objection. Sin, Paul says, was in the world before the law was given, and sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned as Adam sinned, by transgressing a command that had been given. So the death of those people cannot be explained

32 Rom. 5:12–14 (ESV).

33 Rom. 5:15 (ESV).

34 See Rom. 5:16 (ESV).

35 Rom. 5:18–19 (ESV).

by a transgression of their own like Adam's. It has to be explained some other way, and Paul has already said how: it came through the one man. Then verses 15 to 19 draw the parallel. The one man's trespass, and the one man's obedience, are set against one another. In each case the many are affected by what the one did.

I make three observations on the argument. The first is that the pattern is one of representation. The many are said to have died "through one man's trespass," to have been condemned by "one trespass," and to have been "made sinners" by "the one man's disobedience." The words "through one man," in one form or another, recur through the passage, and what they mark is that the act of one is the ground of the standing of the many. The second is that the parallel is exact. The many are made sinners by one man's disobedience, and the many are made righteous by one man's obedience, and Paul does not weaken the parallel on either side. If I am told that being counted sinners by another's act is unjust, I must say that being counted righteous by another's act is no different in form, and that the gospel is the second. The third is that Adam is called "a type of the one who was to come." Adam's headship and Christ's are not two unconnected facts. The first prepares the form of the second.

The Greek of verse 12, and the one phrase

The Greek of the last clause of verse 12 is ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον.[36] The verb is the third person plural aorist active indicative of ἁμαρτάνω: "all sinned." The phrase that precedes it is a preposition and a relative pronoun, ἐφ' ᾧ, and the question is what they mean. The pronoun is in the dative singular, and it could refer back to "the one man," so that the sense would be "in whom all sinned." Or the whole phrase could be taken as a conjunction, so that the sense is

36 Rom. 5:12 (SBLGNT). Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010); parsing from J. K. Tauber, ed., *MorphGNT: SBLGNT Edition*, version 6.12 (2017). The English quotations of Romans in this chapter are from the ESV.

"because all sinned," which is how the English Standard Version renders it. Or it could carry some third sense, such as "on the ground of which." The grammar allows more than one.

I do not rest the doctrine on a choice among them, and I say why. Whichever of the readings is taken, the verse says that all sinned, and the verses that follow tell us in what sense. Verses 13 and 14 deny that the death of the many is explained by their own transgression of a command like Adam's. Verses 15 to 19 say that the many died and were condemned and were made sinners through the one man's trespass. A reader who takes "because all sinned" must therefore take it with those verses, and the sense then is that all sinned in the one, that is, in the representative whose act was reckoned theirs. A reader who takes "in whom" arrives at the same place by a shorter road. The conclusion that I draw does not wait on the choice. It rests on verses 18 and 19, where the text is plain, and I treat verse 12 as consistent with them on either reading.

"Made sinners"

The Greek of verse 19 is διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἁμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί, "through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners."[37] The verb is κατεστάθησαν, from καθίστημι. Dodson's gloss of the verb is "I set, establish, appoint, conduct," and "I set down, bring down to a place; I set in order, appoint, make, constitute."[38] It is the verb of setting someone in a place or a standing. The same verb occurs in the second half of the verse, in the future passive: κατασταθήσονται, the many "will be made" righteous. I do not build an argument on the verb alone, because it is a common one. I observe only that it fits what the passage as a whole says: the many are put in a standing, sinners in the one case and righteous in the other, by the act of the one.

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37 Rom. 5:19 (SBLGNT). The translation is mine.

38 John Jeffrey Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon* (2010; public domain), Open Scriptures XML edition, s.v. καθίστημι (*kathistēmi*): "I set, establish, appoint, conduct," and "I set down, bring down to a place; I set in order, appoint, make, constitute."

The words of the parallel

The words that Paul chooses in verses 14 to 19 show what sort of parallel he draws, and I set them out with the glosses of Dodson's lexicon. The first pair concerns the acts of the two men. The act of the one is called παράπτωμα, "trespass," in verses 15 to 18, and in verse 19 παρακοή, "disobedience." Dodson glosses the first as "a falling away, lapse, slip, false step, trespass, sin," and the second as "disobedience, imperfect hearing."[39] The act of the other is called ὑπακοή, "obedience," in verse 19, which Dodson glosses as "obedience, submissiveness, compliance," and in verse 18 δικαίωμα, which the English Standard Version renders "act of righteousness" and Dodson glosses as "a thing pronounced (by God) to be righteous (just, the right); or the restoration of a criminal, a fresh chance given him; a righteous deed, an instance of perfect righteousness."[40] One word is of a falling and a failure to hear. The other is of hearing and submission, and of a deed that is right. Both are acts of one man, and in each the many are affected by what the one did.

The words of the outcome are the words of a court. The result of the one man's trespass is κατάκριμα in verses 16 and 18, "condemnation" in the English Standard Version, which Dodson glosses as "punishment following condemnation, penal servitude, penalty." The result of the other's act is δικαίωσις in verse 18, "justification," glossed "acquittal, justifying, justification, a process of absolution."[41] A condemnation and an acquittal are words for a standing declared by a judge. This agrees with the verb of verse 19, κατεστάθησαν, which sets

39 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. παράπτωμα (*paraptōma*): "a falling away, lapse, slip, false step, trespass, sin." S.v. παρακοή (*parakoē*): "disobedience, imperfect hearing." The Greek words given here are those of Rom. 5:15–19 (SBLGNT).

40 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. ὑπακοή (*hypakoē*): "obedience, submissiveness, compliance." S.v. δικαίωμα (*dikaiōma*): "a thing pronounced (by God) to be righteous (just, the right); or the restoration of a criminal, a fresh chance given him; a righteous deed, an instance of perfect righteousness."

41 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. κατάκριμα (*katakrima*): "punishment following condemnation, penal servitude, penalty." S.v. δικαίωσις (*dikaiōsis*): "acquittal, justifying, justification, a process of absolution."

the many in a standing. It does not by itself prove representation. It shows that the standing is spoken of in terms of a verdict.

The words for death are the words of an intruder and then of a ruler. Sin "came into" the world through one man, in Greek εἰσῆλθεν, and death "spread" to all, in Greek διῆλθεν, and death "reigned," ἐβασίλευσεν, from Adam to Moses and again in verse 17. Dodson's glosses are "I go in, come in, enter" for εἰσέρχομαι, "I pass through, spread (as a report)" for διέρχομαι, and "(a) I rule, reign, (b) I reign over" for βασιλεύω.[42] The answer in verse 17 uses the same verb of the other side: "much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ."[43] The verb is the same and the persons are reversed. Those who were under the rule of death are said to reign in life through the one man. I note the symmetry, and I do not build on it.

The last word is the one that Adam is called, τύπος, "a type of the one who was to come." Dodson's gloss begins "(originally: the mark of a blow, then a stamp struck by a die)," and goes on "(a) a figure; a copy, image, (b) a pattern, model, (c) a type, prefiguring something or somebody."[44] A stamp struck by a die leaves its form in what it strikes. I do not press the origin of the word. The gloss gives the sense that I take, which is that Adam is the figure that answers to the one to come, and that what is said of the one is said in the form of the other. None of this depends on the phrase ἐφ' ᾧ, which I left open above.

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42 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. εἰσέρχομαι (*eiserchomai*): "I go in, come in, enter." S.v. διέρχομαι (*dierchomai*): "I pass through, spread (as a report)." S.v. βασιλεύω (*basileuō*): "(a) I rule, reign, (b) I reign over." The forms are those of Rom. 5:12, 14, 17 (SBLGNT).

43 Rom. 5:17 (ESV).

44 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. τύπος (*typos*): "(originally: the mark of a blow, then a stamp struck by a die), (a) a figure; a copy, image, (b) a pattern, model, (c) a type, prefiguring something or somebody." The word is in Rom. 5:14 (SBLGNT).

7.4 The Headship of Adam

Seminally and covenantally

I say that the race fell in Adam seminally and covenantally. By *seminally* I mean that the many were in Adam as offspring are in the one from whom they are descended. Scripture speaks so elsewhere. The writer to the Hebrews says of Levi that he "paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him."[45] The man was not yet born, and yet what Abraham did is said to be, in a sense, what he did. I draw no more from this than the form of the speech. It shows that Scripture can speak of a descendant as acting in an ancestor.

By *covenantally* I mean that Adam stood for his posterity in the covenant that God made with him. The Westminster Confession says that the covenant of works was made with Adam "and in him to his posterity."[46] It says of the sin that, "they being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation."[47] The Second London Confession words it with more fullness: "They being the root, and by God's appointment, standing in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of the sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation."[48] The two ideas, root and representative, are held together in both. The line of descent is the way the corruption is conveyed. The covenant is the ground on which the guilt is imputed.

The Canons of Dort add a clause that bears on the question of justice. After the fall, they say, "Man after the fall begat children in his own likeness. A corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring." And the corruption passes to Adam's posterity "by the propagation of a vicious

45 Heb. 7:9–10 (ESV).

46 Westminster Confession of Faith 7.2.

47 Westminster Confession of Faith 6.3.

48 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith 6.3.

nature, in consequence of the just judgment of God."[49] The consequence is a judgment, and it is called just by the Canons themselves.

The older writers call this covenantal headship federal, from the Latin *foedus*, covenant. Adam is the federal head of the race, because he stood for it in the covenant that God made with him. Bavinck sets the two headships side by side. "The covenant of works and the covenant of grace primarily differ in that Adam is exchanged for and replaced by Christ," he writes. He points to Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45–49, and says: "Sin and death accrue to humanity from Adam; righteousness and life from Christ."[50] I take the word from the tradition. What I draw from it, that the loss in Adam is a judicial consequence carried out in each person through the condition of his will, is an inference from Paul and the Confessions, and I do not say that Bavinck draws it.

Punishable guilt, and what God owes

The guilt that came to us is punishable guilt. I say it in so many words because the alternative is to speak of a guilt that is only a misfortune, an inherited weakness for which no one is answerable. The Confession does not speak so. It says that every sin, original and actual, "doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal."[51] Paul says the same of the race: "one trespass led to condemnation for all men."[52] The condition of the many is not simply a condition. It is a condemnation.

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49 Canons of Dort, Third and Fourth Heads, art. 2.

50 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 227, in the section on the covenant of grace.

51 Westminster Confession of Faith 6.6.

52 Rom. 5:18 (ESV).

It follows that God owes no one salvation. The Canons of Dort say it plainly in the passage on regeneration: "God is under no obligation to confer this grace upon any; for how can He be indebted to one who had no previous gifts to bestow as a foundation for such recompense? Nay, how can He be indebted to one who has nothing of his own but sin and falsehood?"[53] I take that at its full force. What God gives in salvation he gives as a gift, and what he withholds he withholds from those who stand condemned in the head they had. Nothing in the position I hold weakens that. Limited ultimate freedom (LUF) is not a claim that God owes the creature a second probation, or a fair chance, or a salvation. It is a claim about the kind of creature God made and the kind of act that the creature himself does.

The objection from fairness, and the answer

The most common objection to the headship of Adam is from fairness. I was not consulted, it says. Why should I be bound by what another man did? I give the answer in three parts, and I take them in turn.

The first part is that the pattern is Paul's, and it is the pattern of the gospel. If the objection is good against the headship of Adam, it is good against the headship of Christ, because the form is the same: the many are constituted by the act of one. Paul says in another place, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."[54] A reader who rejects the form on the ground that he did not consent to it is rejecting the form in which grace comes. I am not saying that the objection is silly. I am saying that those who press it must see what they are asking for, and that Scripture does not offer them a gospel on any other terms.

The second part is that the objector, when he asks for a trial of his own, asks for the trial that Adam had. Adam was made upright, with the law written in his heart and the power to fulfill

53 Canons of Dort, Third and Fourth Heads, art. 15.

54 1 Cor. 15:22 (ESV).

it, with a plain command and a stated penalty, in a world that God had pronounced very good. If a man so placed fell, the supposition that each of us, placed as well, would have done better is a supposition for which there is no ground in the record. The objector wants the return of a thing that was lost, and he thinks that he would have used it better. I do not say that he is bound to be wrong about what he would have done. I say that he cannot know, that the history of our race gives him no reason to think so, and that the judgment of God on the matter is the judgment that will stand at the last.

The third part concerns what I said in Chapter 6. The loss that came to us is not an arbitrary limit placed on us from outside. It is a judicial consequence, as the Canons say, "in consequence of the just judgment of God," and it is carried out in each person through the condition of his own will. I return to that condition in Chapter 8. I name it here in one phrase: after the fall the rest of humanity has guidance control, and has lost the regulative control that Adam had for the spiritual good. What was lost in Adam was lost to all who were in him.

Justice and grace

The two headships together hold two things that must not be allowed to cancel one another. Justice is not softened to make grace possible, and grace is not reduced to make justice look cheap. The condemnation that came through the one man is a just condemnation, and the free gift that comes through the other is a free gift. Paul's parallel does not weaken either. The one head who fell declares what is the matter with a mutable creature's stewardship of his own freedom, and the one head who obeyed is the answer to it. That is why the headship of Adam has to be understood before the doctrine of salvation can be.

7.5 Four Causes at Two Levels, Applied to the Fall

In Chapter 3 I set out a way of speaking about causes, and I said that I offered it as a tool for keeping apart things that the debate has tended to run together. I now use it on the hardest case. I restate the mapping briefly. There are two orders, the Creator's and the creature's. Taken together, God's side has the formal cause, which is his idea, and the final cause, which is his purposes. The creature's side has the material cause, which is his nature as created, and the efficient cause, which is his own agency, the impulse by which he initiates action and brings about the effects within his reach. I call this nomenclature four causes at two levels. In Chapter 1 I called the same four causes four levels of causation, laid over two perspectives of reality, the atemporal and the temporal. It is one mapping under two names: the formal and final causes belong to God, and the material and efficient causes to the creature. The mapping is mine. The confessions do not map as I do, though they use the vocabulary of two levels in other words, which I come to below.

In the garden

Adam's nature, the material cause on the creature's side, was upright and mutable. His agency, the efficient cause, was his own deliberating and willing. On God's side, the idea contained Adam as the creature he was, with this nature and this agency, and the purposes of God, the final cause, were the purposes I set out in Chapter 3. The creature's two causes were genuinely his. God's two causes did not supply them, and did not replace them. The idea is a pattern, and the final cause is an end, and neither pushes.

In the fall

When Adam turned, it was his agency that acted. The efficient cause on the creature's side was the cause of the sin, in the sense of Chapter 6: it was the proximate cause, and the act

depended on his willing. On the other side of the account, the Creator's causes were at work as they always are. The idea contained the fall, as part of the order God conceived. The purposes in which the idea was set, which are the purposes of the covenant of redemption, were not frustrated by it. The Confession says that God had "purposed to order it to his own glory."[55] The two levels do not compete. What the creature does, as the efficient cause on his side, is his act. What God does, as the formal and final causes on his, is to conceive and to purpose. And the Confession's word for the relation is "ordering."

The fall changed the creature's side. When the efficient cause acted, it acted on the material, and the material was changed. Before the fall the creature's nature was upright. After the fall, the Confession says, our first parents "fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body."[56] It is this change that I have called a bent soul, and I mean by the phrase the condition that the Confession names: the nature, the material cause, was no longer what it had been. In the language of the causes, the efficient cause acted, and the material cause was thereby bound to sin.

I say this because it carries the argument forward. In the account I give of salvation in Chapter 8, God works on the creature's material cause through the creature's efficient cause, and changes the one by acting in the other. It is the same two-level structure, run the other way. What the creature's agency did in the garden to the nature, God's agency in regeneration undoes. This is not a symmetry of equals. In the fall the creature acted and God ordered. In regeneration God acts and the creature, once changed, acts freely. But the mapping is the same, and that is its use.

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55 Westminster Confession of Faith 6.1.

56 Westminster Confession of Faith 6.2.

The confessions' words for the same thing

The confessions have their own vocabulary for the two levels, and it is a good one. Westminster speaks of "the first Cause" and of "second causes." God, it says, ordains whatsoever comes to pass, "yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."[57] And in providence: "in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently."[58] The Second London Confession has the same statements, in nearly the same words, and it adds in the chapter on free will, in the first paragraph, that God has given the will "that natural liberty and power of acting upon choice, that it is neither forced, nor by any necessity of nature determined to do good or evil."[59] Westminster says "that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor, by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good, or evil."[60] The Baptist text adds the words "and power of acting upon choice" and does not have the word "absolute." I do not build anything on the difference, and I note it because it shows the two confessions, working from the same source, arriving at the same doctrine in slightly different forms of words.

I take "first Cause" and "second causes" as the confessions' names for the two levels. My own mapping assigns the formal and final causes to the first level and the material and efficient to the second. The confessions do not say this, and I do not say that they do. What I say is that when they speak of the first cause ordering all things to fall out "according to the nature of

57 Westminster Confession of Faith 3.1.

58 Westminster Confession of Faith 5.2.

59 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith 9.1, text at the1689confession.com/1689/chapter-9.

60 Westminster Confession of Faith 9.1.

second causes," they speak of the same relation as my mapping speaks of: the Creator's idea and purpose, and the creature's nature and agency, in an order in which the second is not displaced or replaced by the first.

7.6 Authorship of Sin, and Concurrence

The question

The Confession denies that God is "the author of sin," and it denies that he is its "approver." The question is what the denial is made of. If God ordains whatsoever comes to pass, and sin comes to pass, then how is he not the author of it?

I begin by distinguishing three marks that the word *author* may carry. An author, in the first sense, is the one whose act it is, in whose will the act originates and from whose intention it proceeds. In the second sense, an author is the one who approves what is done, who counts it good and endorses it. In the third sense, an author is the one who causes the thing to be, in the way that a craftsman causes a vessel to be. I think the Confession denies the first and the second without hesitation. The third needs more care, and I come to it.

God is not the author of sin in the first sense. The sinner's act is the sinner's. In the fall it was Adam who took the fruit and ate. In Isaiah it is the king of Assyria whose heart is to destroy, and of whom the Lord says, "he does not so intend, and his heart does not so think; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few."[61] The intention of the sinful act belongs to the sinner. The Lord's intention in the same event is different, and the text says so. It is Joseph's word that gives the pattern: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."[62] The same event, and

61 Isa. 10:7 (ESV).

62 Gen. 50:20 (ESV).

two meanings. The brothers meant evil. God meant good. They are not the same intention, and the second does not turn the first into good.

God is not the author of sin in the second sense. He does not approve it. The act is against his law, and the sinner is answerable for it, as Isaiah's king is. "When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria."[63] A God who punishes the act does not approve it, and a God who gave the law against it does not call it good.

Concurrence

The third sense is the hard one, and it is the sense that concurrence addresses. God sustains the being of the creature and the creature's action at every moment. The Confession says that he upholds, directs, disposes and governs "all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least."[64] If the creature's action at every moment depends on God's sustaining, then the action of sinning depends on it, and God has some part in the action that is the sin itself.

I answer with what Turretin says of concurrence, which I quoted in Chapter 6: the concurrence of the first cause does not exclude the concurrence of the second causes; it draws it after itself.[65] The first cause gives the second cause its being and its power to act. It does not give the defect. The sin, as I said in 7.2, is a privation, a lack of the obedience that the creature owed, and a lack has no cause that supplies it. God is the cause of the faculties and of their exercise. He is not the cause of the failure to use them as they were made to be used. The failure is the deficient cause's own. So the third sense of *author*, the sense of causing a thing to be, applies to

63 Isa. 10:12 (ESV).

64 Westminster Confession of Faith 5.1.

65 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 442 (Loc. VI, q. 1, §9). The Latin is quoted in Chapter 6, n. 7.

the act as an act, a motion of a will in a world sustained by God, and it does not apply to the act as sin, which is the lack in the motion.

Turretin's fuller statement divides what is in a sin into three things. The first is the entity of the act, which is its material. The second is the malice joined to it, which is its formal. The third is the judgment that follows. Since "the act as such is always good as to its entity," God concurs with it "effectively and physically."[66] As to the second, God "cannot be called its physical cause, because he neither inspires it, nor infuses it, nor makes it; nor its ethical cause, because he neither commands it, nor approves it, nor persuades to it, but forbids and punishes it most severely."[67] That is the distinction I drew above between the act as an act and the act as sin, in the older terms, and I do not claim it as new. Of permission he says that it implies "no influx and causality" in the matter of the sin, toward the sinning creature, "but a mere suspension of the impediment," and that it takes away neither the creature's spontaneity nor its choice.[68]

I quote Turretin on the decree too, because the same care is in him. Predetermination, he says, "does not take away the liberty of the will, but preserves it," for by it God does not compel rational creatures but brings it about that they act agreeably to their nature: "they are so determined by God that they also determine themselves."[69] He is not a libertarian. He says that what is predetermined is no longer indifferent to acting or not acting "in the second act, and in

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66 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 462 (Loc. VI, q. 7, §3): "cum actus qua talis semper bonus sit quoad entitatem suam, Deus ad illum concurrit effective, et physice." The translation is mine.

67 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 462 (Loc. VI, q. 7, §4): "Deus nec causa physica potest ejus dici, quia nec illam inspirat, aut infundit, nec facit; nec ethica, quia nec imperat, aut approbat, et suadet, sed severissime prohibet et punit." The translation is mine.

68 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 464 (Loc. VI, q. 7, §10): "permissio ista nullum dicit influxum et causalitatem" and, later in the same sentence, "sed meram suspensionem impedimenti"; the sentence goes on to say that permission does not take away the spontaneity and choice of the creature. The translation is mine.

69 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 456 (Loc. VI, q. 5, §11): "non tollit libertatem voluntatis, sed conservat"; and "nimirum ita determinantur a Deo, ut seipsas etiam determinent. Licet vero id quod praedeterminatur, non sit amplius indifferens ad agendum vel non agendum in actu secundo, et in sensu composito, potest tamen semper esse indifferens in actu primo, et in sensu diviso." The translation is mine.

the composite sense," and that it can nevertheless always be indifferent "in the first act, and in the divided sense." He speaks, too, of a divine premotion of second causes, and he holds that it does not take from them their own way of working.[70] I do not claim his account of how God moves second causes as mine. For Adam's act I depart from it. With Le Blanc I hold that God's concurrence with that act was of itself indifferent and was given its direction by Adam's will, and that God did not premove him to it. Le Blanc's reason is mine: "we do not see how God would not be the author of sin if He predetermined free causes to acts in themselves vicious and intrinsically evil."[71] Turretin's view was the majority's, and I name it as such. Nothing in God settled that Adam ate rather than refrained; God permitted the eating, bounded it and ordered it. What I take from him is the point that the one who is determined by God is determined so as to determine himself, and the sense in which he keeps his indifference, which is the divided sense of Chapter 6.

I do not say that this removes the difficulty. A reader who thinks that the doctrine of the decree makes God the author of sin has a question that I have not answered if I have only said that the Confession answers it. What I have done is give the marks by which the Confession distinguishes the Creator's relation to the act from the creature's: the intention is the creature's, the approval is absent, the law forbids the act, the punishment follows it, and the lack in it is the lack of the creature. Each of these can be checked in the texts. What I cannot do is show the reader how all of this is one act in God, and I do not think that anyone can.

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70 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 456–57 (Loc. VI, q. 5, §§12–14). The sections say that the premotion belongs to the acting of creatures from themselves, and that it does not follow from it that second causes do nothing, but only that they do nothing independently.

71 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. LIV, 454.

What I do not say

I have said nothing in this chapter about an order among the parts of the decree, and nothing about the condition of the redeemed beyond this life. The argument of this chapter has needed only the description of Adam as upright and mutable, the account of the fall as permitted and ordered, and the account of the headship in Romans 5. These are what Scripture and the confessions give, and I have not gone beyond them.

7.7 What This Chapter Has Laid Down

Adam was made upright and mutable, with the law written in his heart and the power to fulfill it, under a command and a stated penalty. He had regulative control and guidance control, and he had them in the way set out in Chapter 6.

The fall was his act. He was tempted from outside, he turned willingly and without compulsion, and the turning was the act of a will that was good and not yet fixed in the good. The Confession says that God permitted it, having purposed to order it to his glory, and that this was not bare permission. The sinfulness proceeds only from the creature. I have called the creature's will in the fall the deficient cause of the sin, and I have described sin as a privation, a lack of the good that ought to be. I have not explained why an upright will turned, and I have said where I think that question lies.

Romans 5 teaches that the many were made sinners through the one man's disobedience, as the many will be made righteous through the one man's obedience. I have held the doctrine on verses 18 and 19, where the text is plain, and I have not rested it on a choice among the readings of the phrase in verse 12. The race fell in Adam seminally and covenantally, and the guilt that came to us is punishable guilt. God owes no one salvation.

The four causes at two levels apply to the fall. The creature's efficient cause acted, and the creature's material cause was changed. God's formal and final causes are the idea and the purposes within which the fall was permitted and ordered. This is the same structure that governs salvation, run the other way.

God is not the author of sin, in the sense of the one whose intention it is, nor in the sense of the one who approves it. He is the cause of the act as an act, and he is not the cause of the lack that makes the act sin.

The next chapter takes up what the fall left, which is the fallen will. What remains to the creature in whom the material cause is bound? What does regeneration do, and how does the regenerate creature stand in relation to the freedom I have called LUF, limited ultimate freedom? By that I mean freedom of ambition, desire, thought, action and choice without coercion, to pursue, want, think, act or choose otherwise in the circumstances, limited by the creature's being a creature and, after the fall, by a will bound to sin (5.1). Chapter 8 gives my answer to them.

Chapter 8. The Fallen Will, the Regenerate Will, and the Redeemed Will

8.1 What the Fall Left, and What It Took

Chapter 7 ended with a change in the creature. When Adam's efficient cause acted, the material cause on which it acted was changed. I said that the nature was no longer what it had been, and that the Confession's words for it are that our first parents "became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body."[1] This chapter asks what that left of the will, what the work of God in salvation does to it, and what it becomes in glory. I take the fallen will first, in 8.1 and 8.2, then regeneration in 8.3, the gifts of faith and repentance in 8.4, imputation and restoration in 8.5, the regenerate will in 8.6, the objections in 8.7, and the redeemed will in glory in 8.8.

What was left

The fall did not make man something other than a man. The Canons of Dort say it in the passage on regeneration, where they describe what the fall did not do: "man by the fall did not cease to be a creature endowed with understanding and will, nor did sin which pervaded the whole race of mankind deprive him of the human nature, but brought upon him depravity and spiritual death."[2] The fallen man has understanding and will. He is a creature who deliberates and chooses. He knows, in part, what is right. The Canons say in the same place that "there remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, or natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and shows some regard for virtue and for good outward behavior."[3] The Confession says that God has

1 Westminster Confession of Faith 6.2, text at opc.org/wcf.html. All quotations of the Westminster Confession in this chapter are from that text.

2 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 16, text at ccel.org/ccel/anonymous/canonsofdort.iv.i.html (Christian Classics Ethereal Library). All quotations of the Canons in this chapter are from that text.

3 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 4.

endued the will of man "with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor, by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good, or evil," and it says this at the head of the chapter on free will, before it describes the will in each state of man.[4]

In the terms I set in Chapter 5, what remains is natural ability: the understanding, the will, and the power of the body to carry out what the will chooses. It is natural ability that makes the fallen man a person who can be addressed, who can weigh a command, who can tell the truth or lie, keep a promise or break it, help a neighbour or pass by. In the terms of Chapter 6, the faculties that do this are the same faculties Adam had, and in the same divided sense they have real potency to the contrary within the range of their natural ability. The fallen man's deliberation is not ersatz. It is the deliberation of a real agent among real options.

The control he has over what he does is guidance control, in the sense I took from Fischer and Ravizza in Chapter 5: the mechanism that issues in his act is his own, and it is responsive to reasons. He has guidance control for the spiritual good and not the regulative control that Adam had. Adam alone had that for the spiritual good. Toward God the fallen have guidance control only. I do not ground the posterity's inability in what fallen men would freely choose, as though they were free toward God and merely unwilling in every circumstance. That would make the bound will free toward God, which Romans 8:7 denies. The inability is a fact of the will's nature, brought on the race in Adam by the just judgment of God, and not a fact about its choices.

What was taken

What was taken is moral ability, which I have defined as the power to will and to love what is spiritually good. The Confession's statement is exact: "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural

4 Westminster Confession of Faith 9.1.

man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."[5] The Canons state the same condition: "all men are conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto; and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, or to dispose themselves to reformation."[6]

Two words in the Canons need to be held together: *neither able nor willing*. The fallen man is not an unwilling man who would be willing if he were able, as a prisoner might be. He is not a willing man who is unable, as a man might be who wants to walk and has no legs. He is neither able nor willing, and the two are one condition. The inability is in the will itself. It is a state of the will, which does not will the good because it is averse to it, and which cannot will the good because it is averse. That is why Paul can say that the mind set on the flesh is hostile to God, "for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot."[7] The cannot and the does not are the same fact seen from two sides.

Scripture's portrait

Scripture's portrait of the fallen is consistent. Paul says to the Ephesians that they "were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked," and that "we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."[8] The dead do what the dead do, and what the Ephesians did in that state was to carry out desires. They were not prevented from doing what they wanted. What they wanted was the flesh.

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5 Westminster Confession of Faith 9.3.

6 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 3.

7 Rom. 8:7 (ESV).

8 Eph. 2:1–3 (ESV).

Jesus says: “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.”[9] The slave of sin is a slave in the sense that sin is his master and he serves it. He does not serve it against his will. The Corinthians are told that “the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”[10] The word is *not able*, and the reason given is that the things of the Spirit are spiritually discerned. Jesus also says in the sixth chapter of John: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”[11]

Each of these texts puts the inability in the man. None puts it in an obstruction between the man and something he wants. In the language of Chapter 6, it is the inability of a diseased tree: “A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.”[12] The tree bears the fruit it has.

Paul’s argument in Romans begins with the whole human race under the wrath of God, and it puts the fault in the men. God’s wrath, he says, “is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”[13] What can be known about God is plain to them, and “they are without excuse.”[14] The darkness is described as theirs: “although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”[15] Three times he says that God “gave them up,”[16] and each giving up follows what the men had already

9 John 8:34 (ESV).
10 1 Cor. 2:14 (ESV).
11 John 6:44 (ESV).
12 Matt. 7:18 (ESV).
13 Rom. 1:18 (ESV).
14 Rom. 1:19–20 (ESV).
15 Rom. 1:21 (ESV).
16 Rom. 1:24, 26, 28 (ESV).

done. The last is this: “since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.”[17] The sin that follows is theirs: “they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”[18]

In Romans 3 Paul gathers the verdict from the Scriptures: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”[19] The verdict is on a race of which it is said that “no one seeks for God,” and I read that as the same fact I described above with the Canons’ words, that the fallen man is neither able nor willing. Paul gives the purpose of the verdict: “so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.”[20] The world is held accountable, and the inability is therefore not an excuse.

8.2 The Bound Will, and Why It Is Still Responsible

Not coercion

The bound will is not a coerced will. I say this plainly because the objection that the doctrine makes man a puppet, or a prisoner, trades on the confusion. A coerced act is an act that is forced against the will of the one who does it. The fallen man’s sin is not forced against his will. It is his will. The Confession says, of the sin of Adam’s posterity, that “from this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.”[21] The corruption is the source, and the transgressions proceed from it. The man who is wholly inclined to evil does evil because he is inclined to it. He is not pushed.

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17 Rom. 1:28 (ESV).

18 Rom. 1:32 (ESV).

19 Rom. 3:10–12 (ESV).

20 Rom. 3:19 (ESV).

21 Westminster Confession of Faith 6.4.

In the terms of Chapter 6, the necessity that attends his sin in spiritual things is not coaction. It is a necessity of the state of his will, and it is a necessity that his will, being what it is, imposes on his acts. It is a necessity of the kind that Turretin names when he says that choice need not be immune from "the intrinsic necessity of determination by the intellect."[22] I do not rest on Turretin here, whom I have cited only for the shape of the distinction. I rest on the texts. The bound will chooses, and chooses the flesh, and it chooses it because it is what it is.

The distinction that does the work

What the bound will lacks is not the faculty of choosing. It lacks the power to will and love what is spiritually good. In Chapter 5 I called this moral ability, and I said that the fallen man keeps natural ability. In Chapter 6, I said that the divided-sense potency of the fallen is the potency of his natural faculties in the range of natural ability. I now add the Scripture for the line between them. The fallen man is not able to submit to God's law (Rom 8:7). He is able to do many things that conform outwardly to it. The Canons say that he "shows some regard for virtue and for good outward behavior."[23] The difference is the difference between an act that conforms to the law and an act done from love of God. The first is within natural ability. The second is not. The Canons say further that the light of nature is not sufficient to bring a man to a saving knowledge of God, that he "is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil," and that he "renders wholly polluted" the light that is left.[24] I take these words to say that what remains is used without the love of God and so wrongly, and not that the faculties cease to work.

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22 Franciscus Turrettinus, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae, Pars Prima* (Edinburgh: John D. Lowe, 1847), 604–5 (Loc. X, q. 3, §12), quoted with its Latin in 6.4. The translation is mine.

23 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 4.

24 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 4.

Section 6.6 granted that the objection from the strongest motive comes nearer the truth for the fallen creature in spiritual matters, and this is the concession: the fallen will, in those matters, chooses as its nature inclines it, and that is moral inability.

I do not say that this resolves every question about what the fallen can do. Paul says of the Gentiles in Romans 2 that they sometimes do by nature what the law requires.[25] I do not enter that discussion. My claim is the narrower one that Scripture, the Confession and the Canons all put the line where I have put it, between the natural faculty that remains and the moral power to will the spiritual good that is lost.

Why he is still responsible

If the fallen man cannot will the good, how is he responsible for not willing it? The question is the oldest objection to the doctrine, and it has an answer in the texts I have already given, which I now bring together.

The first part of the answer is that the inability is the man's own. The Canons say that those who reject the call have the fault in themselves. "It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ offered therein, nor of God, who calls men by the gospel and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of the Word refuse to come and be converted. The fault lies in themselves."[26] The inability is not a decree to be resisted. It is the state of a will that does not will the good, and it is their will.

The second part is Paul's. He says of those who have seen God's power and divine nature in the things that he made that "they are without excuse."[27] The inability is not an excuse because it is not the kind of thing that excuses. An excuse is a fact that stands between a man and what he

25 See Rom. 2:14–15 (ESV).

26 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 9.

27 Rom. 1:20 (ESV).

wanted, so that he did not do what he wished. The fallen man's inability stands between him and nothing that he wants. In Chapters 5 and 6 I used Frankfurt's observation that a person is not morally responsible for what he has done if he did it only because he could not have done otherwise. The fallen man does not sin only because he cannot do otherwise. He sins because he wants to. His inability does not explain why he sinned in the way that an obstruction would. His desire is what explains it.

The third part is the one I gave in Chapter 7. The loss is judicial. It came through the one man's disobedience, "in consequence of the just judgment of God."[28] The race stood in its head, and the head fell. A creature cannot plead inability as a defence against the judgment that produced the inability, since the plea would be a plea against the judgment, and the judgment is just. I do not say that this makes the matter easy to hear. I say that it is what the texts say, and that it is consistent.

Commands to the unable

The last question on this part is why God commands those who cannot obey. He commands them. Paul says that God "commands all people everywhere to repent."[29] In Chapter 4, I argued that the command is the divinely conditioned condition, and I do not repeat the argument. I add only that the command does what Scripture says the law does. It shows what the creature ought to be, and what he is. The Canons say of the law of the decalogue that it "reveals the greatness of sin, and more and more convinces man thereof," and that it "neither points out a remedy nor imparts strength to extricate him from his misery."[30] The obligation to obey rests on what the creature is made to be, and not on what the creature in his fall is able to be. That the

28 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 2.

29 Acts 17:30 (ESV).

30 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 5.

ability is lost does not remove the obligation. It shows the need of a remedy. And the remedy is the subject of the next sections.

The conditioned knowledge has work to do only where a will can go either way. Adam's could. The fallen will, toward God, cannot: "it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot."[31] God does not need to consider what a fallen man would freely do toward him in this circumstance or that, for he knows from the man's nature that in every circumstance he will not turn. That is natural knowledge of what such a nature can and cannot do, not knowledge of what a free choice would be. No arrangement of circumstances could convert him, because circumstances do not change a nature, and so the grace that converts must change the will itself. Le Blanc, who held the conditioned knowledge, said that it "in no way fights with grace efficacious of itself,"[32] and that the opinion which builds God's decrees on a foreseen inclination of the will "can hardly be reconciled" with grace that "subjects free choice to itself."[33] The conditioned knowledge therefore has no part in election, in regeneration, or in the efficacy of grace.

8.3 Regeneration

What Scripture says God does

Scripture does not describe the change from the bound will to the free will as a decision the bound will makes. It describes it as a work of God. Paul says: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved."[34] The words *even when we*

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31 Rom. 8:7 (ESV).

32 Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu, "Theses theologicae de concordia libertatis humanae cum decretis divinis," pars I, th. LXV, in *Theses theologicae, variis temporibus in Academia Sedanensi editae et ad disputandum propositae* (London: Moses Pitt, 1675), 455.

33 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars III, th. XXXV, 467.

34 Eph. 2:4–5 (ESV).

were dead are the point. The making alive does not wait for a response from the dead. Jesus says to Nicodemus: "unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," and "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."[35] A man does not bring about his own birth.

The prophets promised it in terms of the heart and the will. God says through Ezekiel: "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."[36] The sentence has the structure I want the reader to notice. God removes the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh, which is a change in the nature. Then he puts his Spirit within, and *causes* the people to walk in his statutes and to be careful to obey. The change is in the creature, and the walking is the creature's walking. Luke records of Lydia that "the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul."[37] The Lord opened, and she paid attention.

What the Confession and the Canons say

The Westminster Confession places the work in the effectual call, and says that God is pleased "effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace."[38] The last clause is the one I want to dwell on. They are

35 John 3:3, 5 (ESV).

36 Ezek. 36:26–27 (ESV).

37 Acts 16:14 (ESV).

38 Westminster Confession of Faith 10.1.

determined to the good, and they come *most freely*. The same two things that Chapter 6 held together in the doctrine of the decree are held together here, in the doctrine of grace. The determination is by his almighty power, and the coming is the creature's own and is most free.

The Confession adds that the call is "of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it."[39] The man is passive in the quickening. He is not passive in the answer. After the quickening he is "enabled to answer," and the answer is his.

The Canons give the most detailed account. When God works true conversion in the elect, he does more than see the gospel preached and the mind enlightened; it is, in their words, "by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit He pervades the inmost recesses of man; He opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised; infuses new qualities into the will, which, though heretofore dead, He quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, He renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions."[40] The tree is the tree of Matthew 7. The diseased tree cannot bear good fruit, and God makes it a good tree, so that it bears good fruit.

Not violence

The Canons are as insistent on what regeneration is not as on what it is. They say: "this grace of regeneration does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks, nor take away their will and it[s] properties, or do violence thereto; but [it] spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully bends it, that where carnal rebellion and resistance formerly

39 Westminster Confession of Faith 10.2.

40 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 11.

prevailed, a ready and sincere spiritual obedience begins to reign; in which the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consist."[41] The phrase "sweetly and powerfully" holds the two halves together. Powerfully, because the change is real and is certain. Sweetly, because it is not violence. It is the work of a God who does not treat the will as a block but as a will.

Elsewhere in the same head they say that the renewed will "is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence becomes itself active. Wherefore also man himself is rightly said to believe and repent by virtue of that grace received."[42] The will is acted upon, and then the will acts. The man himself believes.

Where the causes come in

The four causes at two levels, which Chapter 7 applied to the fall, govern salvation as well, but run the other way. In the fall, the creature's efficient cause acted and the material cause was changed. In regeneration, God acts on the creature's material cause, the bent soul, and changes it, and he does so by acting in the creature's own agency and not around it. In Chapter 3 I wrote that God "takes over" the creature's efficient causation in order to change the material cause. The phrase needs its limit stated. It does not mean that God sets the creature's agency aside and acts in its place. The Canons deny that, in the words I have just quoted. It means that in regeneration the initiative is wholly God's: the creature does not begin the change, as a man does not begin his own birth. God's action in the will is what makes the will able to act, and the will then acts as itself. The change is in the nature, the material cause, which was dead and is made alive. And the creature's own willing and believing, which come after, are the creature's own efficient causation, and it is now free.

41 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 16.

42 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 12.

This is not a symmetry of equals. In the fall the creature acted and God ordered. In regeneration God acts and the creature, once changed, acts freely. I take this to be what the Canons mean when they say that the will thus renewed is "not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence becomes itself active."

Certain, and free

The Canons say that this work is "not inferior in efficacy to creation or the resurrection from the dead," and they deny that it is "such a mode of operation that, after God has performed His part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not, to be converted or to continue unconverted." They say that "all in whose heart God works in this marvelous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe."[43] The certainty is not in doubt. It is the certainty of the decree, and it falls under what Chapter 6 said about the necessity of the consequence. If God has determined to give faith to this man, then it is necessary, as a consequence of that determination, that this man will believe. It is not necessary that the man's believing be forced, and it is not forced. The Confession's phrase is that they come "most freely, being made willing by his grace."

I say this here because the objection to the doctrine of grace is often the objection to the doctrine of the decree under a new name, and the answer is the same. A necessity of the consequence does not make the consequent necessary in itself. The man who has been made willing wills, and his willing is an act of the will. Had God not made him willing, he would not have willed. That is a counterfactual dependency of the kind Chapter 6 described, and it is not an entailment of the act by anything other than the act's own cause.

43 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 12.

8.4 Faith and Repentance, Given

The texts

If regeneration is God's work, then the faith and repentance that follow are his gift. Scripture says so in several places. Paul tells the Philippians: "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake."[44] The word *granted* is used of belief as well as of suffering. When Peter reported to the believers in Jerusalem that the Gentiles had received the Spirit, "they glorified God, saying, 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.'"[45] Paul says to the Ephesians that "by grace you have been saved through faith," and that salvation is "not a result of works, so that no one may boast."[46]

The Westminster Confession is exact. "The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts."[47] And in the chapter on justification, speaking of the faith by which the sinner receives and rests on Christ and his righteousness: "which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God."[48]

The Canons are the fullest. "Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure, but because it is in reality conferred upon him, breathed and infused into him; nor even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his own free will consent to the terms of salvation and actually believe in Christ, but because He who works in man both to will and to work, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to

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44 Phil. 1:29 (ESV).

45 Acts 11:18 (ESV).

46 Eph. 2:8–9 (ESV).

47 Westminster Confession of Faith 14.1.

48 Westminster Confession of Faith 11.1.

believe and the act of believing also."[49] The Canons go further than the claim that God gives the ability. They say that he gives the will to believe and the act of believing. And they say, as I quoted above, that the man himself is rightly said to believe and repent.

What this does and does not say

The doctrine says that faith is a gift and that faith is the creature's act. Both are in the texts, and the Confession and the Canons do not set them against each other. Paul says to the Philippians: "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."[50] The command is to work. The reason given is that God works in them to will and to work. He does not say that God works so that they need not. He says that God works, *therefore* they are to work. This is the same shape as the doctrine of concurrence in Chapter 6: the first cause draws after itself the concurrence of the second, and the second acts as the cause that it is.

I do not say that this removes every difficulty. The question why God gives faith to some and not to others is a question I leave open in this chapter. The Canons themselves begin their answer with the statement that "God is under no obligation to confer this grace upon any," and they add that "the manner of this operation cannot be fully comprehended by believers in this life."[51] They teach that the one who becomes the subject of grace "owes eternal gratitude to God," and that with respect to those not yet called "we are in no wise to conduct ourselves towards them with haughtiness, as if we had made ourselves to differ."[52] I follow that restraint. I say what Scripture says of the gift, and I say what it says of the responsibility of those who refuse it, and I do not claim to reconcile the two beyond what the texts do.

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49 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 14.

50 Phil. 2:12–13 (ESV).

51 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 15 and art. 13.

52 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 15.

8.5 Imputation, Justification, and the Restoration of Freedom

The man who has believed

The man who has been made alive and has believed stands in a new relation to God, and the Confession describes it in the doctrine of justification. “Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone.”[53] It describes the ground: God justifies by “imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness, by faith.”[54]

This is the counterpart of what Chapter 7 said about Adam. Adam stood as head, and his disobedience was counted to those he represented, so that “by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners.” The same passage says that “by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”[55] Paul states the exchange in another place: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”[56] The righteousness is not ours in ourselves. It is ours in him, by imputation.

I notice that the passage in Romans uses the verb in the same sense in both halves, *were made* and *will be made*. Chapter 7 gave the reason for reading the first as a constitution, a setting in a place, and not a mere accounting. The second is the same kind of thing. Those in Christ are set in the place of the righteous, and the Confession adds at once that justification is not alone in

53 Westminster Confession of Faith 11.1.

54 Westminster Confession of Faith 11.1.

55 Rom. 5:19 (ESV).

56 2 Cor. 5:21 (ESV).

the person justified, “but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.”[57]

The gospel as the instrument

The work of God in the will is not separate from the means he uses. Paul writes that the gospel “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”[58] The preaching of the gospel is the ordinary instrument by which God works in the elect. The Confession says that faith “is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.”[59] The Canons add that regeneration is not effected “merely by the external preaching of the gospel, by moral suasion,” but by a supernatural work of the Spirit.[60] The Word is the instrument, and the Spirit’s power is the agent. This is the pattern of the two levels once more: the creature’s means, and God’s efficacy working in them.

Freedom restored

Jesus said: “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”[61] Paul says to the Romans: “But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.”[62] The freedom is described as being set free *from sin*, and the result is described as obedience *from the heart*. The word *slaves* remains, and

57 Westminster Confession of Faith 11.2.

58 Rom. 1:16 (KJV).

59 Westminster Confession of Faith 14.1.

60 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 12.

61 John 8:36 (ESV).

62 Rom. 6:17–18 (ESV).

its object changes. The will that was in bondage to sin is set free to serve righteousness, and it serves from the heart, as its own.

This is what the Canons mean by "the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will."[63] The freedom is not freedom to choose between serving God and serving sin as though the two were open on equal terms. That was Adam's freedom, and I discuss in 8.6 how it differs from what the believer has. It is the freedom of a will that has been healed, so that it wills what it was made to will. The Canons put the contrast without softening it: "unless the admirable Author of every good work so deal with us, man can have no hope of being able to rise from his fall by his own free will, by which, in a state of innocence, he plunged himself into ruin."[64]

8.6 The Regenerate Will, and Limited Ultimate Freedom

What is restored

In Chapter 5 I defined limited ultimate freedom (LUF) as freedom of ambition, desire, thought, action, and choice without coercion, specifically to pursue, want, think, act, or choose otherwise in the circumstances. It is the original created freedom of Adam, and it continues as the freedom of the creature after the fall. In Adam the limit is the limit of grounding, which is to say of being a creature. After the fall a further limit is added, which is a will bound to sin. I say now where the regenerate stand in relation to it.

The regenerate will has what the fallen will lacked, which is moral ability. It can will the spiritual good and love it. It is the ability that Ezekiel promised and Paul described: "cause you to walk in my statutes," and "obedient from the heart." It has also what the fallen will had, which is natural ability. The regenerate man deliberates, weighs, and chooses among real options, and in the same divided sense, he could have chosen otherwise. In this respect he is no different from

63 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 16.

64 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 16.

the fallen man, and it matters that he is not. A regenerate man who sins sins as a free agent, and a regenerate man who obeys obeys as one.

What is not restored

I do not say that the regenerate man is Adam. Adam was made upright, with a will that was good and mutable, and his freedom included the power of regulative control as I set it out in Chapter 5. The regenerate man, like the rest of the fallen race, has guidance control for the spiritual good and not the regulative control that Adam had. The regenerate man has the moral ability that regeneration has given him, but he has it in a nature in which corruption remains. The Confession says: "This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh."[65] And of the will of the regenerate the Confession says that "by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly, nor only, will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil."[66]

The regenerate man's willing of the good is therefore not a power he possesses in himself in the way Adam possessed his. It is a gift that is given. The Confession says that when God converts a sinner and translates him into the state of grace, he frees him from his natural bondage under sin, and "by his grace alone, enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good."[67] The word *freely* is there. The word *enabled* is there. I hold both, and I hold that they are not in competition. The regenerate man wills the good freely, and the willing is a gift.

I add the Apostle's own description of a divided will: "For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."[68] And: "For I have the desire

65 Westminster Confession of Faith 13.2.

66 Westminster Confession of Faith 9.4.

67 Westminster Confession of Faith 9.4.

68 Rom. 7:15 (ESV).

to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing."[69] I do not enter the long dispute about whether Paul describes the regenerate or the unregenerate here. What I take from it is that the man who wants the good and does the evil he does not want is a man who is a real agent in a real struggle, and that the Confession's chapter on sanctification describes the same struggle in the same terms. The believer's freedom is real, and it is not yet whole.

Working out what has been worked in

Paul's command to the Philippians is the practical form of all this: "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."[70] The believer is to work, and he works because God works in him. The command and the gift do not compete. And the Confession says that the work goes on: "the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."[71]

The two levels once more

I bring the four causes back, because this is where the structure is most plainly seen. At the level of God's causation, the formal cause is the idea and the final cause is his glory, as in the fall. At the level of the creature's causation, the material cause is the soul, changed by regeneration from dead to living, and the efficient cause is the creature's own willing. In the fall the creature's efficient cause acted on a material cause that was good and mutable, and the material cause became bent. In regeneration God changes the bent material cause, and the creature's efficient cause then acts on a material cause that is made alive. It acts freely, as itself, and its action is contingent, within the decree.

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69 Rom. 7:18–19 (ESV).

70 Phil. 2:12–13 (ESV).

71 Westminster Confession of Faith 13.3.

I have not said that the regenerate man's efficient causation is the same as Adam's. It is the same in kind, because it is the willing of a creature, and the act is the creature's. It differs in the condition of the material cause. Adam's was good and mutable. The believer's is renewed and still imperfect. The difference is the difference between the garden and the war.

What secures the perseverance of the regenerate is not circumstances God foresees, but grace that preserves. The Canons say that those who are converted "could not persevere in that grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who, having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end."[72] The Confession says that perseverance "depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election."[73] God's ordinary providence over the believer's choices remains real, but perseverance rests on preserving grace.

8.7 Objections

First objection: this is a worse determinism

The objection says that if God changes the will and the man then believes certainly, the man is as determined as a stone, and the fall's inability and regeneration's ability are only two settings of a machine. I answer in four parts.

First, a stone has no understanding and no will. The Canons deny that regeneration treats men "as senseless stocks and blocks." The change they describe is a change in the will, which is then able to act as a will. The man who believes does so because he now sees what he did not see, loves what he did not love, and wills what he did not will. His reasons are real reasons, and he acts on them.

72 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Fifth Head of Doctrine, art. 3; see also art. 8.

73 Westminster Confession of Faith 17.2.

Second, what makes manipulation a threat to responsibility is that the manipulator is a rival cause who displaces the agent's own judgment. Section 6.6 gave that mark of it and showed that the decree is not a rival cause among causes, and the same answer holds here. The grace of regeneration does not go around the faculties. It restores them. Sight given to a blind man does not manipulate his seeing. It is what makes seeing possible. Scripture uses the comparison: Paul writes that "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers," and that "God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."[74] The light is given, and the man sees by it.

Third, the necessity here is the necessity of the consequence. It is not the necessity of the consequent. I have said this in Chapter 6 and I say it again, because the objection depends on missing it. The man will believe, given what God has determined. It does not follow that his believing is necessary in itself, as a stone's falling is necessary given its weight. His believing is contingent in the sense that Chapter 6 gave: it is the act of a cause that could, in the divided sense, have acted otherwise, and it is an act that did not have to be.

Fourth, the objection supposes that a will is free only if it is not shaped by anything that was not itself. But no will is shaped only by itself. Adam's will was made by God, with a nature that was good, and it was free. The fallen will is shaped by the fall, and it is a will. The regenerate will is shaped by grace, and it is a will. In each case the question is whether the act is the agent's own, springs from the agent's own nature, and answers to the agent's own reasons. In each case it does.

74 2 Cor. 4:4, 6 (ESV).

Second objection: the fallen man's inability is a Frankfurt case

A different objector might say that I have described a man who cannot do otherwise than sin in spiritual things, and who is held responsible for it. That is just what Frankfurt's argument is supposed to show is possible, and it means that I have conceded the principle of alternate possibilities where I most need it. I do not think so, and I want to say why, since Chapter 6 used the cases and the reader may ask whether the fallen man is an instance.

In a Frankfurt-style case there is an intervener who stands ready, and who never has to act. The agent acts on his own and the intervener's presence makes no difference to what happens. The incapacity is external and counterfactual. The fallen man has no such intervener. His incapacity is internal. It is the disposition of the tree. Jesus said, "A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit."[75] There is no one waiting behind the tree. The tree is what it is, and its fruit is its own. The fallen man's inability is therefore not a waiting intervener but the agent's own ontological state, and it is a state that came upon the race by the judgment I described in Chapter 7.

The cases serve in my argument as an illustration of one point, which is that responsibility does not require the power to do otherwise in the exact sense the objector wants. The model of the fallen will is Matthew 7. The cases can show that a person may be answerable for an act that he could not have avoided doing; the text shows why the fallen man is answerable, which is that the act came from himself. I do not need the cases for the doctrine. I use them to show the objector that his principle is not as secure as he supposes.

And the "otherwise" is not lost. The fallen man, as I said in 8.1, can will otherwise within the range of his natural ability. What he cannot do is will the spiritual good. For the spiritual

75 Matt. 7:18 (ESV).

good he has guidance control and not the regulative control that Adam had, as I said in Chapter 7. That is part of why I do not rest anything on the Frankfurt-style cases that I used in Chapter 6.

Third objection: why command those who cannot obey?

I answered it in 8.2. I add the point that the command, in Scripture, is the usual means by which God brings the elect to faith. "Repent" is a command, and it is what Peter said at Pentecost, when about three thousand were added that day.[76] The command is the instrument, and the inability is the reason the instrument works only when God works with it. In Ezekiel, the command comes with the promise: "Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!" and later in the same book God says, "I will give you a new heart."[77] I do not harmonize the two passages beyond what they themselves say. What the pair shows is that the command and the gift stand in the same prophet's mouth, and that neither cancels the other.

Fourth objection: why some and not others?

This is the question the Canons would have me leave unanswered, and I leave it unanswered. They say that "God is under no obligation to confer this grace upon any," and they say that "the manner of this operation cannot be fully comprehended by believers in this life." Paul's answer in Romans 9 is a question: "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?"[78] I have said in Chapter 5 how I read Paul's dialogue in Romans 9, and I have nothing to add to it here. Isaiah puts a question of the same kind in the mouth of the clay: "Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'?"[79] I take the question, in both places, as

76 Acts 2:38, 41 (ESV).

77 Ezek. 18:31 (ESV); Ezek. 36:26 (ESV).

78 Rom. 9:20 (ESV).

79 Isa. 45:9 (ESV).

the question of a creature to his maker. I leave the question where Scripture leaves it. I say what the Canons say, that the one who is saved owes eternal gratitude, and the one who is not has the fault in himself and in no one else.

8.8 The Will in Glory

I have followed the will from the garden through the fall and into regeneration: Adam's will, good and mutable; the fallen will, bound to sin; the regenerate will, freed for the spiritual good and not yet whole. An account that stopped there would leave its end unsaid, and a fair objection would stand against it. If the redeemed in glory cannot sin, and the Confession still calls them free, then it seems that the power to do otherwise, which Adam had, was never what freedom needed, or that Adam's freedom was the lesser kind. And if the freedom of the redeemed is not real freedom, then what the saints are said to have forever is not freedom at all. I take the objection here, and I say what the account says of the will in glory.

What is said of it

I say only what Scripture and the Confession say, and I do not describe heaven. The Confession says: "The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to good alone, in the state of glory only."[80] Scripture speaks of "the spirits of the righteous made perfect,"[81] and says of the city of God that "nothing unclean will ever enter it."[82] It says that "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ,"[83] and that "when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."[84] Of the last state it says: "No longer

80 Westminster Confession of Faith 9.5.

81 Heb. 12:23 (ESV).

82 Rev. 21:27 (ESV).

83 Phil. 1:6 (ESV).

84 1 John 3:2 (ESV).

will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads."[85]

Guidance control made perfect

What follows is my inference from these texts and from 8.6. In 8.6 the regenerate man has guidance control for the spiritual good. The mechanism that issues in his act is his own, and it is responsive to reasons, though it works in a nature in which corruption remains. In glory the corruption is gone. The mechanism is the same in kind, because it is still the willing of a creature, and the creature still wills as himself. What has changed is the condition of the material cause. In Adam it was good and mutable. In the fallen it was bent. In the regenerate it is made alive and still imperfect. In the redeemed in glory it is made perfect. At the level of God's causation nothing differs from the fall or from regeneration: the formal cause is the idea and the final cause is his purposes. The efficient cause is the creature's own willing, acting on a material cause that is made perfect, and it acts freely, as itself.

I do not say that the redeemed in glory have the regulative control that Adam had. Adam's will could fall, and the Confession says that this was so: he had freedom "mutably, so that he might fall from it."[86] The will in glory is free "to good alone," and "immutably." Those are not the words for Adam's power. They name another condition, in which the creature's own willing is made perfect and the road has come to its end.

The objection answered

The first answer is that the objection assumes what the account has denied since Chapter 5. I did not say that a creature must have regulative control in order to be free and responsible. I said that the control that matters is guidance control: the mechanism that issues in the act is the

85 Rev. 22:3–4 (ESV).

86 Westminster Confession of Faith 9.2.

creature's own, and it is responsive to reasons. The will in glory is the plainest instance. Nothing coerces it, nothing in it is bent, and nothing hinders it from willing what it loves. If guidance control makes the will free in the fallen man and in the regenerate man, as I held in 8.1 and 8.6, it makes the will free in glory, and more plainly, since nothing remains to stand in its way. The will in glory is not an exception the account must explain away. It is the account at its end.

The second answer is that it does not follow that Adam's power was a defect. I did not say in Chapter 5 that regulative control is the best that a creature can have, and I do not say now that it was a defect. It belonged to the condition of the garden, a will good and mutable in the state in which God made it. The garden and the city differ as the beginning of a road differs from its end, and neither is the lesser for that. Why God began with a mutable will I do not say, beyond what Chapter 3 says of his purposes. Paul's chain runs without a break from foreknowledge and predestination through calling and justification to glory: "those whom he justified he also glorified."[87] The will in glory is therefore within the decree, as every other part of the creature's freedom is, and what I have said of the decree, in its idea, its will and its knowledge, holds of it as of the rest. I do not say how God's purpose to glorify the redeemed stands in order to his other purposes toward the creature. That is the question of the order of the decrees, and my argument does not depend on the answer, as I said in 3.8.

The third answer concerns the certainty. That the redeemed will not sin is certain in the way the effect of regeneration is certain (8.3): by the necessity of the consequence and not of the consequent. God has purposed to bring his work to completion, and what he purposes comes to pass. But the completion is the perfecting of the will and not its override. Nothing is done to the

87 Rom. 8:29–30 (ESV).

redeemed against their own willing. They will the good because they love it, and the certainty that they will is the certainty of a gift that has been given.

The freedom that remains limited

The will in glory is still a creature's will, and so it is still limited. The limit that is the limit of grounding stays (5.1 and 5.2), because no creature grounds himself. What is gone is the second limit, the bondage to sin. I infer that the redeemed in glory also have limited ultimate freedom: ultimate freedom within the temporal arena, limited by the causal antecedents of creation and of its sustaining, since the creature is not the ground of his own existence. This implies that their limited ultimate freedom is now perfected and confirmed in good, and that it is real and of the kind I have described in this chapter.

I include the will in glory because the account must hold at its end as it holds at its beginning. If the freedom of the saints forever were not freedom, I would have to say that real freedom was never the point, and everything I have said of the creature's freedom would be in doubt. I say the opposite. The freedom they have forever is real freedom, of the same kind as the freedom of the regenerate, made perfect, and the creature's freedom is legitimate at every stage of the road, from the garden to glory.

8.9 What This Chapter Has Laid Down

I have said what the fall left and what it took. It left natural ability, the understanding and the will and the power to choose among real options. It took moral ability, the power to will and love the spiritual good. The loss is a state of the will, so the bound will is not coerced. It is responsible because the act is its own and because the loss was a judicial consequence of the race's fall in its head. The commands show what the creature ought to be.

I have said what regeneration does. God makes the dead alive. The change is wholly his, and the man is passive in the quickening and active in the answer. The change is in the material cause, the bent soul, and it is made through the creature's agency and not around it. The effect is certain, by the necessity of the consequence, and free, because the man who has been made willing wills. Faith and repentance are the gift of God, and the man himself believes and repents.

I have said what the gift restores. The justified man stands in the righteousness of Christ by imputation, and the will is freed to serve righteousness from the heart. The regenerate man has moral ability and natural ability, in a nature in which corruption remains. He is not Adam. He is a free agent in a real struggle, and his freedom is limited ultimate freedom, a gift received.

I have said what the end holds for the redeemed will. In glory, the Confession says, the will is made "perfectly and immutably free to good alone." Its guidance control is made perfect, and the objection that the redeemed cannot do otherwise is met: regulative control was never what made a will free, and the freedom of the redeemed is real freedom within the decree, still a creature's and so still limited.

What remains is to meet the objections that this account, and the account of the earlier chapters, must answer if it is to stand: that the idea is only the will renamed, that the whole scheme is Molinism under another title, that it is determinism by another road, that it makes God the source of the first sin, and the objections drawn from the Canons of Dort and from Stratton's treatment of Frankfurt-style cases. Chapter 9 takes them in turn, sets the whole account together in one view, and brings the argument to its end.

Chapter 9. Objections, the Asymmetric Dual-Frame, and Conclusion

9.1 Objections

I take the objections in the order in which I think they press hardest. Each is stated as its holder would state it. I have tried to answer each from what the earlier chapters have laid down, and where the answer rests on an earlier section I name it, so that a reader can test it there.

9.1.1 “This is middle knowledge under another name”: in part, yes

The objection runs as follows. You say that God knows what Adam would do in any circumstance. You say that this knowledge is real and certain. That is what the Molinist calls middle knowledge, a knowledge of what a free creature would do if placed in certain circumstances. You have given it a different location and a different name, and you have kept the very same thing in it.

In part the objector is right, and I would rather say so than be caught saying otherwise. I hold a conditioned knowledge of what a free creature would do, and I hold that it is logically prior to the actual decree. What I do not hold is Molina’s account of it. I grant him one thing at the outset: God’s own supposed will to create, uphold, concur and permit stands in the condition on his account as on mine, so that on neither is anything known of a creature apart from God (4.2). Five marks set mine apart. First, it is no third knowledge but part of God’s simple intelligence. Second, it applies only where a will can go either way, and for the spiritual good that is Adam’s act alone. Third, it has no part in conversion or in the efficacy of grace, which subjects free choice to itself. Fourth, it has no part in election, which rests on God’s good pleasure. Fifth, what it shows is the occasion and not the cause of the decree, God is moved by his purpose in the covenant of redemption alone, and the certainty of what will come to pass rests on the actual decree. Heidegger counted Gomarus, Walaeus and Crocius orthodox within such

limits. Spanheim said the Remonstrant doctrine was falsely imputed to Gomarus and Walaeus. Marck judged that these two differed from the rest more in phrasing than in substance.[1] I keep within those limits. The Westminster divines state the limit in one sentence: "Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions."[2] I read the second clause as the denial of a ground, and I deny that too (9.1.4). I call Molina's view wrongheaded, because it lets truths God did not will and cannot alter mark out whom he can save, and so subjects his grace to the creature's use of it. Even so, I do not call it contradictory, and I do not claim it is provably wrong.

9.1.2 "The idea is only the will renamed"

The second objection is that the three parts of the decree are one part. If the idea is in God, and God is simple, then the idea is the will is the knowledge, and to say that the decree has three parts is to say nothing, or to say something false about the simplicity of God.

I agree that God is simple, and I did not say otherwise. In 4.5 I said that the three parts are distinct in thought and one in God. I take over the way the older writers distinguished the divine attributes: the attributes are many in our conceiving and one in his being. We distinguish God's power from his knowledge, and his justice from his mercy, though in God they are not parts. The distinction is made for the sake of speaking truly of him. The distinction between the idea, the will and the knowledge is of that kind.

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1 Johann Heinrich Heidegger, *Corpus theologiae christianae*, vol. 1 (Zürich, 1700), locus III, §LXII, 85; Friedrich Spanheim the Younger, *Elenchus controversiarum* with the Remonstrants, VII, "De scientia Dei media," §II, in *Opera*, vol. 3 (Leiden, 1703), col. 859; Bernhard de Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus in Johannis Marckii Compendium theologiae christianae didactico-elencticum*, pars 1 (Leiden, 1761), cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660, quoting Johannes Marck, *Exercitationes textuales* XIV, pars IV, §10. Spanheim and Marck name only Gomarus and Walaeus.

2 Westminster Confession of Faith 3.2, text at opc.org/wcf.html. All quotations of the Westminster Confession in this chapter are from that text.

What the distinction does is to answer a question that the one-part account cannot answer. The question is what a decree is a decree *of*. If the decree is only will, then a decree is a bare act of choosing, and the choosing has nothing in it that tells why this world and not another is chosen, or why the creature should be free in it. If the decree is will and knowledge only, then the knowledge either precedes the will, which is the Molinist position, or follows it, in which case the will has nothing before it to choose. The idea supplies what the will chooses. It is the pattern of the world, with the creature in it, in its structure and purpose. That is why I say in 4.5 that the idea gives guidance to the rest, and in 4.6 that it is the idea of a world in which the covenant of redemption can be fulfilled.

The test of whether the distinction is only verbal is whether anything follows from it that would not follow without it. Something does. If the idea is a distinct part, then there is a place in the decree where the creature's freedom is conceived, and conceived as the freedom of a second cause, before it is willed to be and before it is known as to be. That is why I can say, as I said in Chapter 6, that the idea is of the whole world with the creature's acts in it as acts of free second causes. A decree that is only will cannot say it.

9.1.3 "This is determinism by another route"

The third objection is the one from the libertarian side, and it comes in two forms. The first says that if God has decreed whatever comes to pass, the creature's act is determined, and the multiplication of distinctions does not change that. The second is a form of the argument that is sometimes called the direct argument: if what happened in the past and the laws of nature are not up to me, and they necessitate what I do, then what I do is not up to me; and the decree, which is prior to everything, is part of what is not up to me. I state it without attributing it to a

single author, and the reader who wants its best statement may find it in Peter van Inwagen's *An Essay on Free Will*.[3]

I answer the first form with the distinction between the necessity of the consequence and the necessity of the consequent. This is the burden of Chapter 6. If God has decreed that Adam will take the fruit, it is necessary, as a consequence of that decree, that Adam will take it. It does not follow that Adam's taking it is necessary in itself, or that it comes from a source in Adam that leaves him no alternative in the divided sense. The Confession itself asserts both sides: "the liberty or contingency of second causes" is not "taken away, but rather established."[4] The libertarian may say that this does not satisfy him. He is entitled to say so. What he is not entitled to say is that the position I have stated is determinism in the sense that he is attacking. That sense is the sense in which antecedent conditions in the creature's own order suffice to necessitate the act, and I deny that.

The second form depends on the decree being one more item among the antecedents of the act, one more past event in the same series. The argument would transfer a lack of power over the decree onto the act only if the decree were a link in the chain of the creature's temporal past. It is not. The decree is not an event in time. It is God's eternal counsel, which establishes the temporal order in which creatures act. In the language of the next section, it belongs to God's order and not to the creature's. The argument's step presupposes a single series of necessitation, and the account I am giving denies that there is a single series. There are two orders, related in a definite way, and the next section says what the relation is. The argument has force against a view on which the creature's own antecedents suffice to produce the act. It has no force against a view on which they do not.

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3 Peter van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

4 Westminster Confession of Faith 3.1.

I add that the two forms together would have the reader choose between a flat necessity and a flat indeterminacy. That choice is what the account refuses. Under God's order, the futurition of the act is secure. Under the creature's order, the act is the product of his own faculties and is not necessitated by his own antecedents. These are not rival claims, and neither of them is a mere shrug.

9.1.4 "The Canons of Dort forbid this"

The fourth objection comes from the Reformed side. The Canons of Dort teach the total inability of the fallen will and the sole efficacy of grace. An account that speaks of Adam as free in the libertarian sense, of an "otherwise" for the fallen, and of limited ultimate freedom for the regenerate has, the objector says, left the ground of Dort, and is in fact a form of the same doctrine that Dort condemned.

I have tried in Chapters 7 and 8 to keep within the Canons at every point where they speak, and I answer by saying where. On Adam, the Canons teach that "his heart and will were upright, all his affections pure," and that he fell, "revolting from God by the instigation of the devil and by his own free will."[5] I have said no more. That he had the power to stand and the power to fall is the doctrine of the Westminster Confession, and the Canons do not teach otherwise. On the fall, the Canons teach that all men "are conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto; and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God."[6] I have said that, and I have said that the inability is of the will itself and not of its faculties. On the "otherwise" of the fallen, the Canons say that there remain "the glimmerings of

5 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 1, text at ccel.org/ccel/anonymous/canonsofdort.iv.i.html (Christian Classics Ethereal Library). All quotations of the Canons in this chapter are from that text.

6 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 3.

natural light," and that the fallen man "shows some regard for virtue and for good outward behavior." They say also that he "is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil," and that he "renders wholly polluted" the light that is left.[7] I take the last two statements to say that he cannot use what remains rightly, that is, from the love of God and to his glory, and not that his understanding and will cease to work in natural and civil matters, since the same article says that he retains "some knowledge" and "some regard for virtue." The "otherwise" that I allow is natural ability and no more, and I have said that it carries no spiritual good.

On the grace of regeneration, the Canons say that conversion "is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free will, whereby one distinguishes himself above others equally furnished with grace sufficient for faith and conversion," but "must be wholly ascribed to God."[8] I hold that. I have said in 8.4 that faith and repentance are the gift of God, and that the man himself believes and repents; and I have said in 8.7 that the question why God gives them to some and not to others is not one I can answer beyond what Scripture and the Canons say. I do not hold that the difference between the believer and the unbeliever lies in the believer's own exercise of his will, apart from the grace that renews it. I do not say anything about whether the Canons' words reach any Molinist position.

Finally, the Canons themselves add that the almighty operation of God "does not exclude but require the use of means," and say of the regenerating work that it "in no wise excludes or subverts the use of the gospel."[9] That agrees with what I said about instruments in 8.5 and about second causes throughout. The Canons are not the enemy of second causes. They are one of the places where the Reformed churches say that regenerating grace does not take away the will or

7 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 4.

8 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 10.

9 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 17.

do violence to it (art. 16), as the Confession says of the decree that no violence is offered to the will of the creatures (Westminster Confession of Faith 3.1).

Three of the men whose position I follow were at the Synod of Dort. Gomarus sat for Groningen, Crocius for Bremen, and Alsted took part.[10] They held a conditioned knowledge in God, and no one charged them with breaking the Canons. Le Blanc, a generation later, described such holders as "among the Reformed who subscribe to the Synod of Dort."[11] This is not surprising. The Canons condemn election founded "upon foreseen faith and the obedience of faith… as the prerequisite, cause, or condition,"[12] and grace that free will makes effective.[13] I hold neither. They also say Adam fell "by the instigation of the devil and by his own free will."[14]

Westminster speaks more directly, and the Second London Confession repeats the same sentence.[15] God "knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions," yet "hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions."[16] I read the denial as the denial of a ground: the claim that foreseen conditional futurity is the reason for the decree. That is the Jesuit and Remonstrant claim, and I deny it too. God decrees because of his end, the purposes of the covenant of redemption. The knowledge shows him only the occasion. I take this reading to be possible for a subscriber.

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10 J. C. van Slee, "Gomarus, Franciscus," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 9 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1879), 363–65; Walter Hollweg, "Crocius, Ludwig," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1957), 418; Otto Weber, "Alsted, Johann Heinrich," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1953), 206.

11 Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu, "Theses theologicae de concordia libertatis humanae cum decretis divinis," pars I, th. XXV, in *Theses theologicae, variis temporibus in Academia Sedanensi editae et ad disputandum propositae* (London: Moses Pitt, 1675), 449.

12 Canons of Dort (1618–19), First Head of Doctrine, art. 9.

13 See Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 10.

14 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, art. 1.

15 *A Confession of Faith, Put Forth by the Elders and Brethren of Many Congregations of Christians (Baptized upon Profession of Their Faith) in London and the Country* (London, 1677), 3.2, 13–14.

16 Westminster Confession of Faith 3.2.

William Twisse, the Assembly's prolocutor, wrote a treatise against Molina's middle knowledge,[17] and it is a reasonable inference from that fact that some in the Assembly read the clause more strictly than I do. Whether a church allows my reading depends on how strictly it subscribes. That the reading is possible, and that it preserves both halves of the Confession's sentence, is what I claim.

I do not say that I have said everything the Canons say. I say that where they speak to the questions of this book, I have not gone against them, and that I have said so at each point where I thought a reader might doubt it.

9.1.5 Stratton by name

I have answered Tim Stratton in two places, and I gather the answers here.

In Chapter 5 I took his definitions of libertarian freedom as I found them in his book, and I conceded three things. The first is that Adam in the garden was free in the libertarian sense he defines, with the dual power to do or to refrain. The second is that I grant his definitions for the sake of argument, and that they do not take him where he wants to go, because no creature can ground himself, and a definition that no creature can meet, if the Creator's creating and sustaining are counted among the antecedent conditions, cannot mark off one view from another. The third is that God has the power and the prerogative to conceive a creation of libertarian freedom. I said what I do not concede: that the freedom Stratton defends is the freedom of every human being now, that the justice of God requires it, that a God who decrees whatever comes to pass cannot create free creatures, and that the freedom Stratton defends requires Molina's kind of middle knowledge.

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17 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 199 n. 91, which lists William Twisse, *Dissertatio de scientia media tribus libris absoluta* (Arnhem, 1639); Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons; New York: Charles Scribner, 1872), 317, on Twisse as prolocutor.

In 6.7 I answered the charge I quote from his book. On p. 234 of the second edition of his book, replying to Pereboom's conditions (S) and (DE), Stratton says that (S) "shifts the focus away from ontology to epistemology," that real deliberation requires genuine ontological alternatives, and that Frankfurt-style counterexamples are "both irrelevant and misleading" since the person in those cases "retains the active power."[18] I granted what the page requires of deliberation: that the options be real. I said that Adam's were, and that the fallen creature's are, within the range of his natural ability. And I said why the charge does not reach the use I make of the cases. The inability of the fallen is not an observer waiting to intervene. It is the state of the tree, as Jesus says in Matthew 7:18. It is ontological. The loss is a judicial consequence of the fall in Adam, and not a fact about what anyone happens to know.

I add one thing to what I said there. I do not need the Frankfurt-style cases for the doctrine of the fallen will. What I need is the text, and the text says that the diseased tree bears bad fruit. The cases, as I said in 6.7, serve as an illustration of one point, which is that an inability may play no part in explaining why a person did what he did. If Stratton is right that the cases are irrelevant to deliberation, the doctrine stands where it stood. If he is right that in them the person retains an active power, I have not claimed otherwise of the fallen creature in the range of his natural ability. If he is wrong on either count, nothing in the doctrine rests on it.

What remains between us is what Chapter 5 said would remain. I hold that there are genuine alternatives for Adam and for the fallen creature in the natural range. We agree that deliberation requires them. For Adam we agree on the freedom. We differ about its ground, about the range of the fallen will toward God, about whether the knowledge of what free creatures would do has any part in grace, and about whether the justice of God demands it. On

18 Timothy A. Stratton, *Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism: A Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Philosophical Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2026), 234.

those four I have given my reasons, and I call his position wrongheaded in them and do not say that it is provably wrong.

9.1.6 "If God ordains everything, he is the source of the first sin"

Another objection is that, if God has ordained whatever comes to pass, he has ordained Adam's fall, and is therefore the source of the first sin. I answer in 7.2 and 7.6. The sin is Adam's: the act is his act and its intention is his. The lack in it is a privation, and a privation has no cause that makes it, only a deficient cause in the will that turned. God ordained the fall and does not approve it, and his concurrence is with the act as an act and not with its lack.

9.1.7 "Nothing is gained"

The last objection comes from the compatibilist side, and it is the one I most want to meet fairly. It says that I have added a great deal of apparatus, two orders, four causes, an idea, a doctrine of the necessity of the consequence, and arrived at what compatibilism has always said: the creature acts as he wishes, and what he wishes is fixed. The apparatus is ornament.

The reply is that three things are gained, and the objector is invited to say which of them he already has.

The first is an account of what the decree is. The usual compatibilist statement says that God ordains whatever comes to pass and that the creature is free. It does not say what the ordaining consists of, and so it does not say what God's knowledge of the creature's choice stands on, or where the creature's freedom is, from God's side, conceived. I have said that the decree has an idea, a will and a knowledge, that the idea is of a world in which the creature is a free second cause, and that the knowledge of what the creature would do in other circumstances is comprehended in God's simple intelligence, under a decree supposed, and serves the decree as occasion. The compatibilist may take that or leave it, but it answers a question that his statement

leaves open, and it answers it in a way that gives the libertarian the thing he most legitimately wants, which is that the creature's act is not produced by a prior will that bypasses his own will and judgment.

The second is that the account does not leave the creature's contingency to be explained away. I have said that the creature's act is contingent diachronically and synchronically, and I have said what that means in 6.5: that the creature's antecedents do not entail the act, that the faculty has a power to the contrary in the divided sense, and that the act depends counterfactually on his own willing. These are claims that can be wrong, and the account is open to refutation if they are. The compatibilist who says that freedom is just acting on one's desires has not yet made any of these claims.

The third is that the account says where its own limits are. It does not claim to have solved the mystery of how God's decree and the creature's freedom are united. It says that the union is in the simple God, whom we cannot comprehend, and that it has distinguished what can be distinguished in order that nothing be said falsely about either side.

The account is therefore open to three conditions of refutation. It is wrong if the creature's own antecedents suffice to necessitate his act. It is wrong if the creature's contingency amounts to no more than his ignorance of the decree. And it is wrong if desert is assigned by God's order alone, without regard to the creature's. I have argued that none of the three holds, and a mere relabelling of one deterministic sequence would not be open to any of them.

9.2 The Asymmetric Dual-Frame Summarized

The earlier Asymmetric Dual-Frame paper, which this book rebuilds and enlarges, had a short central claim. I restate it here in the terms that the chapters of this book have given it, in eight points, which I take in turn.

Two orders, and not two observers

The first is that there are two orders, and that they are orders of ground and not of knowledge. God's order includes the eternal decree, his comprehension of the whole, and his relation as the First Cause to what comes to pass. It is not one more push among the pushes in time. The creature's order includes his nature, his history, his deliberation, his motives, and the powers by which his will acts. It does not include the decree as a datum within the temporal stream, as if Adam had consulted a transcript of the decree before he stretched out his hand.

I put it as an order of grounds because the alternative misleads. If the difference between the two were only that God sees the end and the creature does not, then the creature's freedom would be ignorance of a fixed script, and I have refused that in 6.6. The difference is in what grounds what. The certainty of the event comes from the immutability of the decree. It does not come from the nature of the second causes, as if they had been emptied of liberty and contingency. The same act is assessed under two orders, and the two assessments answer two quite different questions, as I have said.

Ranked, and not equal

The second is that the two orders are ranked. The name I gave the paper says *asymmetric* for this reason. God's order is prior. The creature's order is a real creaturely mode of the same act, and not a second universe in which the decree is false. If the two were peers, blame would float with the standpoint, or the account would collapse into contradiction at a third standpoint that judged between them. The ranking prevents that. God's order measures what is ordained, and the creature's order measures what second causes are and do in their own nature. The Confession implies the ranking when it says that "in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same

providence, he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently."[19]

Scripture speaks in the same two registers of single events. Joseph tells his brothers: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."[20] Peter says of the cross that Jesus was "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God," and that "you crucified and killed" him "by the hands of lawless men."[21] And the proverb: "The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps."[22] In each, there is one event, a purpose on each side, and neither purpose cancels the other. The account does not make that pattern. It only describes the pattern that is there.

No transfer of modal status

The third point is the one that does the logical work. Because the two orders differ in kind, necessity and possibility do not carry across from one to the other unchanged. I refuse two inferences. I will not infer, from the necessity of an event in God's order, that it is necessary in the creature's order. And I will not infer, from the possibility of its being otherwise in the creature's order, that it is possible in God's. Written with an index for the order, the first is that necessity in God's order, written $\Box_G e$, does not entail necessity in the creature's order, $\Box_C e$. The second is that possibility in the creature's order, $\Diamond_C \neg e$, does not entail possibility in God's, $\Diamond_G \neg e$. In plain words: the act is secured, and it is not forced by the creature's own prior causes.

I add a third refusal, because the modern objections often run on unavoidability and not on bare logic. From the fact that an event is fixed in God's order, I will not infer that it is unavoidable for the agent in the sense that voids blame in the creature's order. Fixed futurition

19 Westminster Confession of Faith 5.2.

20 Gen. 50:20 (ESV).

21 Acts 2:23 (ESV).

22 Prov. 16:9 (ESV).

under the decree is not coaction, and it is not the creature's own nature necessitating the act. An index that did not forbid this transfer would be a shelter in words. The positive ground for the refusal is the difference of roles stated above, not the indices themselves.

Four causes at two levels

The fourth point is the one that Chapter 3 introduced and that has been used since. God's order and the creature's order are the two levels of the four causes. At God's level are the formal cause, the idea of the world, and the final cause, his purposes, which in the end is the glory of Christ. At the creature's level are the material cause, the creature's nature and the soul with its bent, and the efficient cause, the creature's own willing. The formal is subject to the final, and the creature's efficient cause acts on the creature's material cause within the world that the formal cause has patterned. Chapter 7 used this for the fall, and Chapter 8 for regeneration and for the redeemed will. It is not a second theory beside the two orders. It is the same structure said in terms of causes.

Contingency, and the necessity of the consequence

The fifth point is about what contingency means. For Adam there is one thing more. What the decree contains depends counterfactually on what he would freely do. The necessity that attends the fall is the necessity of the consequence, from a decree that permitted it. The creature's act is contingent diachronically, in that his antecedents do not entail it, and contingent synchronically, in that at the moment he acts his faculty has a real power to the contrary in the divided sense. The necessity that attends it under the decree is the necessity of the consequence, not of the consequent. Chapter 6 set this out in three claims, non-entailment, divided-sense potency, and counterfactual dependency, and with an express denial of any power to do otherwise in the composite sense, with the decree and the act both held fixed. I repeat the denial,

since the whole account is misread without it. Adam did not have it in his power to refrain while the decree that he fall stood. He did have it in his power to refrain in the same circumstances in which he fell; had he been one who would refrain, the decree would have been other. Adam did have in his power the refraining, taken in itself, as a faculty that could have willed otherwise, and he acted without coercion. That sentence says something in each order, and the two things are not the one thing said twice.

Desert

The sixth point is what desert needs. I rejected in Chapter 1 and again in 5.2 the requirement that the creature control the conditions of his own existence. A creature cannot meet it, and it is not required by the nature of responsibility. What I take to be required are two conditions. The first is epistemic: the creature held answerable must know the facts that bear on the act. The second is that the creature's freedom be uncoacted, which means that the act is his own voluntary act as second cause, not produced by bypassing, violating or emptying his will as a will. Manipulation in the sense that threatens responsibility means that an alien controller within the creation substitutes its intention for the agent's practical identity. The decree is not that, for the reasons given in 6.6. These two conditions are what the account needs for desert, and they are a hinge and not a completed theory of moral desert. I do not claim that they are sufficient against every rival account, and a reader who wants a thicker psychology of responsibility is not forbidden it. What the two conditions forbid is bringing back, as the price of blame, the demand for control of existence or for an unindexed power to do otherwise while the decree stands fixed.

God and time

The seventh point is a question on which I have spoken unevenly. In 3.10 I said that God is able to enter the temporal creation, and the earlier paper refused to say that God enters time as a rival frame. I now say one thing. God is not a temporal item among the creature's antecedents, and he is not one more agent among agents. His relation to the course of creaturely events is by concurrence and providence. The concurrence of the first cause does not exclude the concurrence of second causes, but draws them after itself. He upholds all things. Paul tells the Athenians that "in him we live and move and have our being," and the Letter to the Hebrews says of the Son that "he upholds the universe by the word of his power."[23]

That is a statement of the relation of the Creator to time, and it makes no second divine vantage in the account. I do not say that the Creator is shut out of time. Scripture says that the Son entered it: "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," and "when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law."[24] The Incarnation is the entering of the Son into creaturely history in a human nature. It is not the entering of the decree into the series of creaturely causes as one more cause among them, and nothing in the account turns on denying it. What the account refuses is an extra divine frame that would make a rival to the decree. The two statements do not conflict, and I have no wish to remove either.

What the account asks to be judged by

The eighth point is that the account is exposed to refutation, and says where. It is wrong if the creature's own antecedents suffice to necessitate his act, since then the creature's order would settle what God's order only secured. It is wrong if the creature's contingency is only his ignorance of the decree. And it is wrong if desert is assigned by God's order alone. A relabelling

23 Acts 17:28 (ESV); Heb. 1:3 (ESV).

24 John 1:14 (ESV); Gal. 4:4 (ESV).

of one deterministic sequence would have no such conditions on which it could be shown wrong. This account does, and it has to keep earning its claim against them.

9.3 The Position as a Whole

I began this book by saying that the long quarrel between exhaustive divine determinism and libertarian freedom has been carried on over a picture of the decree that both sides share, in which the decree is a will that fixes outcomes, and the only question is whether a fixed outcome can be free. I said that neither side is provably wrong, and that both are wrongheaded, because neither asks what the decree consists of, or what God purposed in making a creation at all. I now say what I have put in its place, in the order of the chapters, so that the reader can see the whole in one view.

God purposed a creation for his glory, and the centre of the purpose is Christ. The purposes come first, before any will of the creature and before any idea of the world, and the creature is not consulted. The covenant of redemption, in which the Father gives a people to the Son, is the form that the purpose takes, and creation is ordered to it (Chapter 3). The decree that serves the purpose has three parts, an idea, a will and a knowledge, distinct in our thought and one in the simple God. The idea is the pattern of a world in which the covenant can be fulfilled, and a world in which it can be fulfilled is a world of creatures who are free as God is sovereign. God's knowledge of what creatures would do in any circumstance is real and certain. It belongs to his simple intelligence, under a decree supposed, and it is the occasion and never the cause of his decree. His knowledge of what will be is had within the decree (Chapter 4).

The creature is free in the way that a creature can be. His freedom is limited ultimate freedom: he wills, chooses, and acts without coercion, he could have willed otherwise in the exact sense that 6.5 gave, and he is limited by being a creature and, after the fall, by a will bound

to sin. I conceded to Stratton what is true in his position, in three ways. Adam was free in the libertarian sense he defines. I granted his definitions for the sake of argument, and they do not take him where he wants to go, because no creature can ground himself (5.2). And God has the power and the prerogative to conceive a creation of libertarian freedom. I did not concede that the freedom is the condition of every human being now (Chapter 5). Adam alone had regulative control, and the rest of humanity, fallen and regenerate, has guidance control only (Chapters 5 and 8). The joint of the whole account is that the idea is of a world with creatures' free acts in it as acts of second causes, that the necessity of the decree is the necessity of the consequence, and that the creature's act is therefore contingent and yet secured, as Chapter 6 argued.

The fall is the act of a free creature, permitted and ordered by God for his holy ends, and the sin proceeds only from the creature. Adam stood as head of the race, seminally and covenantally, and his disobedience is counted to those he represented. The loss of moral ability in his posterity is a judicial consequence of the one man's trespass, and a creature cannot plead the inability that the judgment produced as a defence against the judgment (Chapter 7). The fallen will is bound, and it is responsible. It has natural ability, and it lacks the moral ability to will and love the spiritual good. God regenerates the dead, and the man who has been made willing believes and repents, and he himself is said to do so. His faith is a gift. The will is restored and not yet whole, and the believer is not Adam but a free agent in a real and unfinished struggle (Chapter 8). In glory the same guidance control is made perfect, and the will of the redeemed is free to good alone (8.8).

Those are the pieces. The claim is the combination, and I make no claim for any one piece taken alone. Several of the pieces have antecedents that I have named, and where I have drawn something out of an older writer's words, I have said that it is an inference and not their

statement. I have not found an author who uses these parameters together as a single paradigm, and the book says only that.

9.4 Three Test Cases

The account is not meant to prove the metaphysics by stories. It is meant to let ordinary Christian speech about providence and responsibility be spoken without the puppet theater, and without the demand to be God before one can be blamed as a man. Three cases will show the use to which it is put.

Adam in mutable innocence

Adam could stand and fall. His liberty in innocence was not an inability to sin, and mutability belonged to that state. Turretin says that it is rightly said that Adam sinned necessarily and freely: necessarily with respect to the decree and the thing's futurition, and freely with respect to his will and the manner, because whatever the necessity of the decree, Adam sinned willing, and therefore most freely.[25] I take that as the right form of words, and I add what I said in Chapter 7. Adam had regulative control as well as guidance control, and in the divided sense he could have refrained. What he had was the power to refrain in his own circumstances; God did not premove him, and the decree permitted the act and took his free choice as its occasion. What he did not have, while the decree that he fall stood, was the composite power to refrain. Nothing in that double respect requires me to say that he authored his own existence. The first sin is the hard case for every account, and the Asymmetric Dual-Frame account invents no new

25 Franciscus Turrettinus, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae, Pars Prima* (Edinburgh: John D. Lowe, 1847), 288 (Loc. IV, q. 4, §8): "Hinc est quod recte dicatur, Adamum necessario, et libere peccasse: Illud quidem respectu decreti, et rei futuritionis; Istud respectu voluntatis ejus, et quoad modum, quia qualiscunque fuerit necessitas decreti, Adamus tamen volens peccavit, et per consequens liberrime." Translations of Latin in this chapter are mine. Latin quoted in these notes keeps its accents as printed, with the long s written s and the ligature æ written ae; abbreviations are expanded in square brackets, and any other oddity is kept as printed with [sic].

mechanism that dissolves the mystery. It refuses two false exits: the caricature of coaction on the one side, and the demand for aseity on the other.

I begin with Adam because mutable innocence is where both sides feel the pressure. The libertarian wants a clean and undetermined turn in a good nature. The crude determinist wants a push that makes willing look like falling rocks. The older answer is that Adam acted necessarily and freely, in different respects. My account states that answer as two orders: the divine order securing the futurition, and the creaturely order not necessitating the act from its own grounds alone, with Adam willing and not coerced.

Judas and Peter

Judas betrays, and Peter denies and is later restored. Jesus says of the betrayer: "For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!"[26] Of Peter he says: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."[27] In both cases the divine order secures what comes to pass, and neither man is turned into a pushed object emptied of will. Judas wills his path. Peter wills his denial and, by grace, his return. Their contingency and their culpability lie in what they are and do as agents. The decree does not become a second Judas behind Judas. Concurrence draws second causes. It does not replace them.

If someone asks whether Judas could have done otherwise in the composite sense, with the ordained betrayal held fixed, the answer is no. If someone asks whether Judas was a coerced puppet with no will of his own, the answer is also no. Flat talk cannot hear both answers. Indexed respects can.

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26 Luke 22:22 (ESV).

27 Luke 22:31–32 (ESV).

An ordinary choice

You choose a word in a conversation, a path home, a yes or no in a small matter. With respect to God's ordaining providence, what you freely do does not fall outside what he has ordained, as the proverb in 9.2 says. With respect to your own deliberation, motives and powers, you are not a stone and not a puppet. You act because you want what you want. Flat talk asks you to choose between saying that your choice was necessary in every respect and saying that it was undetermined in every respect. The account refuses the choice. The act is necessary with respect to one order and contingent with respect to the other. There is no illicit transfer from the one to the other, and no claim that you oversaw your own existence before you spoke.

9.5 What This Account Is Not

I should say plainly what I tried and what this account is not.

I tried pressing standard flat modal logic as if an event's modal status had to be the same across every base of antecedents, and that press forces a false choice. I tried physics and complementarity metaphors, and a paraconsistent tolerance of true contradiction, as if exotic tools could do the work of indexing. Those were the wrong instruments. I do not have a contradiction to tolerate. I have a distinction to draw. Used modestly, necessity relative to a stated body of grounds can say what the older writers said with the necessity of the consequence, and used as an engine to mint a new metaphysics, it distracts. The tool I use is the indexing of necessity and possibility to two ordered kinds of ground, continuous with the older distinction of the necessity of the consequence from that of the consequent. Appendix A sets out the logic, and it is classical.

So this account is not a quantum foundation. Indeterminacy is not agency, and luck is not liberty. It is not a paraconsistent view on which a contradiction is true. It is not observer-

relativism that makes freedom an illusion downstairs. It is not a third logic that replaces the older hinge of Turretin and the Westminster Confession. The account holds that determination and contingency are both real, in two ordered kinds of ground, that the creature's contingency is metaphysical and not epistemic, that no modal status passes unchanged from one order to the other, that the judged creature has no aseity, and that the second causes are not emptied.

The conditioned knowledge I hold does not rescue libertarian desert for the posterity toward God, and it does not ground election. God has still decreed a world, and has decreed it by his own wisdom for his own end. The knowledge showed him the occasion, and the creatures were still unconsulted in their existence. An account that treats God's choosing in light of what creatures would do as if it restored to fallen men a freedom toward God has stopped telling the truth about what the bound will is. I do not say more than this: the knowledge serves God's wisdom, and it never puts the decree in the creature's power.

Last, the account does not soften the diagnosis of Chapter 1. If anything in this book sounded like a rescue of the libertarian program of desert, as if one could have ultimacy after all once the language were indexed, then it was misread. Indexing saves consistency for respects that differ. It does not mint aseity. The existence problem remains, and so does the turning of the charge of the moral monster against any theory that makes desert require control of existence.

9.6 What the Account Claims to Have Added, and What It Does Not

What is claimed should be stated without inflation.

I claim these things. The first is the indexing of necessity and possibility to two ordered kinds of ground, the decree and the creature's own causes. The second is the four causes at two levels, in the use I gave them in 3.10, so that God's formal and final causes and the creature's material and efficient causes do not replace one another. The third is the insistence that the

creature's contingency is metaphysical and not epistemic. I argue it from the extrinsic certainty of the decree and from the proximate causes' real power to have been otherwise in the divided sense. The fourth is the ban on transferring modal status, or non-responsibility, from one order to the other, argued from the difference of causal roles. The fifth is the placing of the composite and divided senses early, so that the leeway of composite power cannot be brought in again under the name of freedom. The sixth is the refusal to multiply divine frames under the heading "God enters time." The seventh, which I take to be the most my own, is the use of the purpose passages, Ephesians 3:10 above all, to say what the created field is for. The field must be one in which the creature's freedom is real, fallible and weight-bearing, so that God's manifold wisdom is displayed with Christ at the center, and so that creatures come to know grace in a deliverance that does not buy mercy at the cost of justice. I claim also a use for the minority's conditioned knowledge that they did not give it. It serves the covenant of redemption, by showing God's wisdom the occasion to carry the covenant out in its fullest form through a free Adam, while the covenant alone moves him.

I do not claim that every scholastic dispute about free choice and indifference has been settled. I do not claim that unindexed libertarianism and unindexed determinism, each at full strength, have been reconciled. I do not claim to have brought in any new source. The claim to novelty may itself be an overstatement. The constructive hinge is older than I am. God is the first cause and does not compete with second causes on their own level. He acts in and through them, and his providence decrees not only that an event occur but the mode of its occurring: necessary causes necessarily, and contingent and voluntary causes contingently and freely. The distinction of the necessity of the consequence from that of the consequent keeps the certainty of God from turning a contingent act into one naturally necessary. Charles Trinkaus, quoting Aquinas, marks

the same thought: “Nor is divine providence in any way a limitation of human freedom, because freedom of the will is in itself a participation in the providential government of the universe.”[28] What later polemics sometimes lose is not the hinge but its balance. Heirs of the humanists and of Molina can stress moral agency until the agent crowds the Creator, and deterministic compressions can stress divine monergy until second-cause desert is thinned to almost nothing. I do not pretend to settle every historical quarrel. I refuse both the emptied second cause and the creature’s aseity, and I keep the older equilibrium under an indexing that the older writers did not need to state.

The account is more complex than a flat compatibilism. It indexes necessity to two orders, it distinguishes in thought the idea, the will and the knowledge, and it says that Adam’s control differed from the control of his posterity. That is the price of keeping together what the Confession and the Scripture keep together, and I have preferred it to a simpler account that would drop one of them.

It helps to say where the nearest neighbors stand. As I read them, the classical accounts of an eternal now, in the line of Boethius and Anselm, secure God’s knowledge of temporal acts without making an exhaustive decree the determining overlay that I affirm. The traditions of physical premotion that secure an exhaustive decree typically refuse a libertarian contingency of second causes. Molinist and kindred schemes keep a strong libertarian reading inside time while denying that the decree itself determines the choice from above. Contemporary defenses of an atemporal God with libertarian agency in time come nearest on the pairing of eternity and freedom, but they ordinarily stop short of indexing an exhaustive decree and a genuine contingency of second causes in one account of two ordered orders. I do not claim that no

28 Charles Trinkaus, “The Problem of Free Will in the Renaissance and the Reformation,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10, no. 1 (January 1949): 51–62, at 53 (quoting Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, cap. 113, English Dominican Fathers trans.).

theologian has touched any piece of the puzzle. The claim is the combination, and the neighbors are neighbors and not twins.

9.7 Conclusion

It remains to say what I think the argument has shown, and what it has not.

It has shown, I think, that the quarrel need not be what it has been. The determinist and the libertarian have each pressed a real truth. The first presses that God is sovereign over everything that comes to pass, and that nothing the creature does falls outside his counsel. The second presses that the creature is free and answerable, that there are real alternatives in his deliberation, and that a God who made a creature to be a willing worshiper did not make a puppet. Scripture says both. I have tried to show that they can be said together without an equivocation, by saying what the decree consists of, in what order its parts stand, where the creature's freedom is conceived, and what kind of necessity the decree brings.

It has not shown that the union of the two is comprehended. I do not comprehend how the decree of the simple God and the contingency of the creature's act are united, and I say here that the union is in the secret counsel of God. What I have claimed is narrower. I claim that nothing that the Scripture teaches about either has been denied, and that the distinctions I have drawn are distinctions that can be held without falsifying what is distinguished. Where the older Reformed writers drew them, I have said so and followed them, and where I have gone beyond them, I have said that too.

It has not shown that the positions it opposes are provably wrong. I have called them wrongheaded, and I have given reasons. The Molinist position lets what creatures would do with grace set the terms of God's will to save them, and makes what free creatures would do the reason for God's choice of a world. The flat compatibilist statement leaves unsaid what the

decree is, and where the creature's freedom stands in it. I have tried to state each at its best, in its own words, and I have said what I grant it. The measure of whether I have done it fairly is whether the holder of each position would recognize his own view in my statement of it, and I have tried to make that the measure.

Last, it has not shown that the account is a finished work. The desert conditions of 9.2 are a hinge, and not a complete theory. The questions of why God gives faith to some and not to others, and of how his purposes bear on each person in particular, are questions on which I have kept the restraint that the Canons and Paul keep. A later hand may press the account where I have not, and the account is built to be pressed: it says where it can be shown to be wrong.

Paul closes his long argument about the mercy and the judgments of God with a doxology, and I have no better close for an argument that began with the question of how the sovereign and the free are one: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."[29]

29 Rom. 11:36 (KJV).

Appendix A. The Modal Logic of the Two Orders, and Frankfurt-Style Cases

This appendix sets out in plain steps the logic that the argument of Chapters 6 and 9 uses, and the structure of the Frankfurt-style cases of Chapters 2, 5 and 6.7. I write it for a reader who has met the symbols and will not be troubled by them, and I keep to what the argument needs.

A.1 The symbols

I write □p for *it is necessary that p* and ◇p for *it is possible that p*. The two are linked: ◇p means the same as ¬□¬p, that is, p is possible just when its denial is not necessary. I write → for "if … then," ∧ for "and," and ¬ for "not."

The system I use for each kind of necessity is the one called S5. It has four things in it. First, every truth of logic holds. Second, if □(p → q) and □p, then □q. Third, what is necessary is true: □p → p. Fourth, what is possible is necessarily possible: ◇p → □◇p. Put in terms of possible worlds, in S5 the worlds that count as possible from any one of them are the same worlds from every one of them. Within a single kind of necessity, then, to be necessary is to be true in every one of the worlds that count, and to be possible is to be true in at least one.

A.2 Two necessities, indexed

The argument does not use one necessity. It uses two, and I give each an index. Necessity in God's order is □G. Necessity in the creature's order is □C. The possibilities, ◇G and ◇C, are linked to them in the same way: ◇G p means ¬□G ¬p, and ◇C p means ¬□C ¬p. Each is an S5 necessity of its own. The fact that each is S5 inside its own order says nothing about how the two stand to each other, and that is the point.

What □G stands for. A thing is necessary in God's order when it holds given the decree. If God decreed that e occur, then in the worlds that count in God's order e occurs.

What □C stands for. A thing is necessary in the creature's order when the causes that belong to the creature's order, taken as they are, suffice for it. The creature's nature, faculties, motives and circumstances are such causes. A thing is possible in the creature's order when those causes leave it open, so that the creature, acting by his own faculties, could do it. The possibility is relative to power and not to knowledge, so that it does not mean that the creature does not know the decree.

A.3 The two inferences I refuse

Written with these indexes, the first two refusals in the third point of 9.2 are these.

1. From □G e, to infer □C e. That is, I will not infer, from the fact that e is necessary given the decree, that e is necessary in the creature's order.

2. From ◇C ¬e, to infer ◇G ¬e. That is, I will not infer, from the fact that not-e is possible in the creature's order, that not-e is possible given the decree.

Neither inference is valid in the logic itself. The rules of S5 for □G and for □C do not connect them, and so no rule of the system takes one to the other. A rule that did so would be an added premise, and the added premise is what I deny. I add that I do not claim the denial is a theorem. I claim only that the inference needs the premise, and that the premise is false.

A.4 A small model

A model shows that the refusal is coherent. Let there be two worlds, w_1 and w_2. In w_1 the creature does the act, e. In w_2 he refrains. Let w_1 be the actual world. Say that, in the creature's order, both worlds count: from w_1 one can reach w_1 and w_2. Say that, in God's order, only w_1 counts, because the decree is that the creature does the act. I evaluate the statements at w_1 only.

Then □G e is true at w_1, because e holds in every world that counts in God's order. And ◇C ¬e is true at w_1, because ¬e holds in w_2, which counts in the creature's order. Both are true

together, and no contradiction arises. The act is secured, since it is necessary given the decree. And it is not forced by the creature's own prior causes, since in the creature's order the opposite is open to him.

This model is an illustration. It is not the doctrine. It shows that the two statements can both be true, and it does not show that they are. One caution belongs here. In S5 a world that does not count in God's order from w_1 is, from its own standpoint, a world in which the decree is otherwise, and so w_2 is that in the model. I do not read w_2 so in the doctrine; in 9.2 I say that the creature's order is not a second universe in which the decree is false. In 6.5 I say that, had Adam been one who would refrain, the decree would have been otherwise. In the model this is shown by a second frame, in which the worlds God's order admits vary with what Adam would freely do, while no world admits Adam's refraining together with the decree that he eat. The world w_2 stands in the model for the power of the creature's own faculties to refrain, and for nothing more. It also shows the shape of the relation: the worlds that count in God's order are a part of those that count in the creature's, so that what is necessary in the creature's order is necessary in God's, and not the reverse. The ordering of the two, and the rule that God's order is prior, I take from the body of the book, and not from the model.

A.5 The necessity of the consequence and of the consequent

The older writers drew a distinction that the modal symbols show at once. The necessity of the consequence is the necessity of the whole conditional: □(if the decree is that e, then e). The necessity of the consequent is the necessity of the last part taken by itself: □e. Here □ is necessity taken absolutely, with no base. □G e of A.2 states the necessity of the consequence with the decree as its base: e holds in every world in which the decree holds. From the first and

the premise that the decree is that e, one may conclude that e. One may not conclude from them that □e. To do so is the fallacy of passing from □(p → q) and p to □q.

In plain terms, the connection between the decree and the event is necessary, and the event is thereby certain, but the event is not made necessary in itself. Turretin's phrase is that the necessity of the decree is hypothetical.[1] I treat the two kinds of necessity, and the older distinction of the composite and divided senses, in 6.4 and 6.5. In the composite sense one asks what the creature can do while the decree is held fixed. In the divided sense one asks what the creature's faculties can do taken apart from it. The creature's "otherwise" of 6.5 is in the divided sense. I do not claim that the creature has the power to do otherwise in the composite sense, and that denial answers the objection that makes the decree a rival to the creature's power. Applied to Adam: with the decree that he take the fruit held fixed, he cannot both take it and refrain, and I deny that he can; taken as the faculty it was, his will had the power to refrain (6.5). Adam alone had regulative control for the spiritual good, and the rest of humanity has guidance control only.

A.6 Frankfurt-style cases

Harry Frankfurt's argument was against the principle of alternate possibilities, the principle that a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have done otherwise.[2] A case has the following structure. A person, Jones, is about to decide. A second person, Black, wants Jones to decide one way, and he is able to make Jones decide that way if he sees signs that Jones is going to decide otherwise. He does not need to act, because Jones decides as Black wants, for reasons of his own. Jones could not have done otherwise, since Black would

1 Franciscus Turrettinus, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae, Pars Prima* (Edinburgh: John D. Lowe, 1847), 442 (Loc. VI, q. 1, §9): "necessitas hypothetica decreti, nullam infert coactionem voluntati," that is, the hypothetical necessity of the decree brings no coaction on the will. Translations of Latin in this appendix are mine. The Latin is quoted as printed, and the passage is given in full in Chapter 6.

2 Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): 829. The case is given at 835–36.

have stopped him, and yet it seems that Jones is responsible. If so, the ability to do otherwise is not required for responsibility.

Two replies are well known, and I place each. The first is the reply of the flicker. In the case, Jones still had a small alternative: the sign that Black watches for is itself something Jones could have shown or not shown, and so Jones had a small alternative before Black acted. Fischer calls it a flicker of freedom.[3] The second is the dilemma of the prior sign. If the sign that Black watches for settles what Jones will decide, the case assumes determinism from the start and cannot move one who thinks that responsibility requires indeterminism. If it does not settle it, Black cannot be sure how Jones will decide, and Jones keeps, even with Black watching, the possibility of beginning to choose otherwise. Two further writers have carried the argument to the question of God's knowledge. Hunt argues that divine foreknowledge is itself a counterexample to the principle, and that no Frankfurt-style case is needed.[4] Bergmann builds a case of the Frankfurt kind in which the intervener knows, by something very much like middle knowledge, what the agent would do.[5] I discuss both in 2.1.

What I take from this is limited. I hold that the principle of alternate possibilities, in Frankfurt's form, is not necessary for responsibility, and I hold Frankfurt's revised principle, that a person is not responsible for what he did if he did it only because he could not have done otherwise.[6] I do not rest the weight of my account on the cases. The fallen will's bondage is not an observer who waits to intervene. It is a condition of the will itself. For that reason the cases

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3 John Martin Fischer, "Recent Work on Moral Responsibility," *Ethics* 110, no. 1 (1999): 93–139, at 110.

4 David P. Hunt, "Frankfurt Counterexamples: Some Comments on the Widerker-Fischer Debate," *Faith and Philosophy* 13, no. 3 (1996): 395.

5 Michael Bergmann, "Molinist Frankfurt-Style Counterexamples and the Free Will Defense," *Faith and Philosophy* 19, no. 4 (2002): 463, 466–67.

6 Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities," 838.

serve in this book as illustrations, and the ground of the argument is elsewhere: in the divided sense, in guidance control, and in the judicial loss of Adam's power.

A.7 The Tools I Use, Limit, and Avoid

A reader who meets this logic may wonder what other instruments I tried, and I give a brief account of them.

Used. The first tool is necessity and possibility relative to a stated base of grounds, written with an index. It lets me say what is necessary given the decree and what is possible given the creature's own nature and history without forcing a flat contradiction. By itself it cannot supply the metaphysics of grounding. That has to be argued, and I argue it in the chapters. The trap in it is to read the creature's possibility as merely epistemic. I state at the definition that $\Diamond C$ is relative to power and not to knowledge. The second tool is the plain recognition that "can" shifts its background set. Competent people talk past each other for centuries because one holds the decree fixed and the other does not, and naming what is held fixed explains it. It cannot yield an ontology alone, and I pair it with the difference of the two orders.

Used with limits. Language of "where I stand," in which the future is open as it is lived, is good for the lived temporal side, and I keep it there. It cannot give a second space of real possibilities that omits the decree. Geometric analogies, the cube that presents a square on a plane, are a teaching image for two accurate descriptions under different relations, and a reminder that a higher whole contains a lower cut. They are not a proof, and the disanalogy is that God's order ranks the creature's, so that the two are not peer dimensions. Metaphors of complementarity get a sentence of illustration, and the next sentence names the disanalogy. They are never an argument that the two orders are mere descriptions.

Avoided as a foundation. I do not rest the account on quantum logic or on the physics that is sometimes called on to supply it. Indeterminacy is not agency, and luck is not liberty. The cost is a borrowed prestige and a second controversy. I do not rest it on paraconsistent logic or on any view that tolerates a true contradiction. What I want is a distinction and not a contradiction, and the theological cost of tolerating contradiction is that it spends the principle by which contradictions defeat heresy.

A.8 What the logic does not do

The logic shows that two statements, one about the decree and one about the creature's order, can both be true. It does not show that they are. It does not tell us how the decree and the creature's act stand to one another, and it does not make the second order depend on the first. These I say in the chapters, from Scripture and from the older writers, and the logic is only what keeps the statements from contradicting one another.

Appendix B. Scripture and Greek Notes

This appendix gathers the places where my argument depends on a word of the Greek New Testament, with the lexical and grammatical data on which I rely. I give the Greek of the SBL edition, the parsing of the MorphGNT edition, and the glosses of the Dodson lexicon, and I give a gloss only where I have it from one of those. English quotations are from the English Standard Version, except Romans 11:36, which is from the King James Version where I say so.[1] Where a word allows more than one reading and I have not chosen among them, I say so.

B.1 Romans 11:36, the three prepositions

In the Greek, the verse reads: ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα· αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.[2] The three prepositions are *ex* (ἐξ), *dia* (διά) and *eis* (εἰς): from him, through him, and to him are all things. Dodson glosses διά with the genitive "through, throughout, by the instrumentality of," and εἰς "into, in, unto, to, upon, towards, for, among."[3] I read the three prepositions as naming God as the source of all things, as the one through whom they are carried out, and as their end. Chapter 3 uses the verse as the shortest statement of the purpose of the whole creation.

B.2 Colossians 1:16–18, creation through and for Christ

The creation verb in Colossians 1:16 is ἐκτίσθη, aorist passive indicative, third person singular, and the verb later in the same verse is ἔκτισται, perfect passive indicative, third person singular.[4] I note the change of form and do not build an argument on it. In verse 17 the verb is

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1 Unless otherwise stated, the Greek is that of Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010); the parsing is from J. K. Tauber, ed., *MorphGNT: SBLGNT Edition*, version 6.12 (2017); and the glosses are from John Jeffrey Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon* (2010; public domain), Open Scriptures XML edition.

2 Rom. 11:36 (SBLGNT). In English, the King James Version has: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

3 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. διά and εἰς.

4 Col. 1:16 (SBLGNT); Tauber, *MorphGNT*, parsing of ἐκτίσθη and ἔκτισται.

συνέστηκεν, perfect active indicative, third person singular, of συνίστημι, which Dodson glosses among its senses "I am composed of, cohere."[5] In verse 18 the clause is ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων. Dodson glosses πρωτεύω "I have preeminence, am chief, am first," and ἵνα "in order that, so that."[6] The clause expresses purpose: Christ is to have the first place in all things.

B.3 Ephesians 1:10, the summing up

Ephesians 1:10 has ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ. Dodson glosses ἀνακεφαλαιόω "I sum up, summarize, recapitulate, gather up in one."[7] God means to sum up everything in Christ, and I take the verse with Colossians 1:18 as stating the purpose of creation.

B.4 Ephesians 3:10–11, the manifold wisdom

The Greek is: ἵνα γνωρισθῇ νῦν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ, κατὰ πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων ἣν ἐποίησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.[8] The verb γνωρισθῇ is aorist passive subjunctive, third person singular, and Dodson glosses γνωρίζω "I make known, declare, know, discover."[9] The adjective πολυποίκιλος Dodson glosses "much varied, manifold," from πολύς, "much, many," and ποικίλος, "various, of different colors."[10] Thayer gives two senses, "much-variegated; marked with a great variety of colors: of cloth or a painting," and "much varied, manifold," and he cites this verse for the second.[11] I take the word to say that the wisdom of God is displayed in a great variety of forms. The noun πρόθεσις Dodson glosses "a setting forth, the show-bread;

5 Col. 1:17 (SBLGNT); Tauber, *MorphGNT*, συνέστηκεν; Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. συνίστημι.

6 Col. 1:18 (SBLGNT); Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. πρωτεύω and ἵνα.

7 Eph. 1:10 (SBLGNT); Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. ἀνακεφαλαιόω.

8 Eph. 3:10–11 (SBLGNT); Tauber, *MorphGNT*, parsing of γνωρισθῇ.

9 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. γνωρίζω.

10 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. πολυποίκιλος, πολύς, and ποικίλος.

11 Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. πολυποίκιλος, public-domain text as transcribed at Bible Hub (biblehub.com/thayers/4182.htm).

predetermination, purpose," and the powers of the heavenly places, ἀρχαῖς and ἐξουσίαις, he glosses in a quasi-personal sense as rulers and spiritual powers.[12]

B.5 Luke 22:29 and Hebrews 7:22, covenant and surety

In Luke 22:29 the verbs are διατίθεμαι, present middle indicative, first person singular, and διέθετο, aorist middle indicative, third person singular, both under the lemma διατίθεμαι. Dodson glosses it "I appoint, make (of a covenant)" and "I make (a will)."[13] The ESV renders the two forms "assign." In Hebrews 7:22 the ESV calls Jesus the "guarantor" of a better covenant, and Dodson glosses ἔγγυος "a surety, security."[14] I use both in Chapter 3 for the covenant of redemption, and there I hold the thing and am modest about the name.

B.6 John 4:23, John 10:18, and 1 Peter 1:12

In John 4:23 the Father seeks worshippers, and the verbs and nouns are ζητέω, which Dodson glosses "I seek, search for, desire, require, demand," and προσκυνητής, "a worshipper."[15] In John 10:18 the word for the command the Son received from the Father is ἐντολήν, which Dodson glosses "an ordinance, injunction, command, law."[16] In 1 Peter 1:12 the clause is εἰς ἃ ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἄγγελοι παρακύψαι, "things into which angels long to look." Dodson glosses παρακύπτω "I stoop, peer in, look down, look intently," and ἐπιθυμέω "I long for, covet, lust after, set the heart upon."[17]

12 Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. πρόθεσις, ἀρχή, and ἐξουσία.

13 Luke 22:29 (SBLGNT); Tauber, *MorphGNT*, parsing of διατίθεμαι and διέθετο; Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. διατίθεμαι.

14 Heb. 7:22 (SBLGNT); Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. ἔγγυος.

15 John 4:23 (SBLGNT); Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. ζητέω and προσκυνητής.

16 John 10:18 (SBLGNT); Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. ἐντολή.

17 1 Pet. 1:12 (SBLGNT); Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. παρακύπτω and ἐπιθυμέω.

B.7 Acts 17:30, "overlooked"

The participle in Acts 17:30 is ὑπεριδών, from ὑπερεῖδον, which Dodson glosses "I overlook, take no notice of, disregard." God is the subject of the participle and of the main verb. The whole sentence is: τοὺς μὲν οὖν χρόνους τῆς ἀγνοίας ὑπεριδὼν ὁ θεὸς τὰ νῦν παραγγέλλει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντας πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν.[18] I use the verse in Chapter 4 as a plain instance of the divinely conditioned condition.

B.8 Romans 5:12 and 5:19

The last clause of Romans 5:12 is ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον. The verb is aorist active indicative, third person plural, of ἁμαρτάνω. The phrase ἐφ' ᾧ allows more than one reading. It can be taken as "in whom," as "because," which is how the English Standard Version renders it, or in a third sense such as "on the ground of which." I have not chosen among them, and in Chapter 7 I show that the conclusion I draw does not wait on the choice.[19]

In Romans 5:19 the clause is διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἁμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί. The verb κατεστάθησαν is from καθίστημι, which Dodson glosses "I set, establish, appoint, conduct," and "I set down, bring down to a place; I set in order, appoint, make, constitute." In the second half of the verse the future passive κατασταθήσονται is the verb for the many being made righteous.[20] The verb is a common one, and I do not build an argument on it alone.

18 Acts 17:30 (ESV and SBLGNT); Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. ὑπερεῖδον.

19 Rom. 5:12 (SBLGNT, as in MorphGNT); English from the ESV.

20 Rom. 5:19 (SBLGNT, as in MorphGNT); Dodson, *Dodson Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. καθίστημι.

Appendix C. The Fourteen Further Reasons for Limited Ultimate Freedom

In 5.4 I gave the chief reason for holding that the creature has limited ultimate freedom (LUF), which stands on the covenants. Beside it there are fourteen further reasons. In 5.5 I gave the six I think strongest, and here I give all fourteen in one order, so that the reader may refer to each by its number. Six of them are given more briefly, with a pointer to 5.5, and the other eight are given in full.

The order is this. The first twelve run in this order: temptation, the permissive will, Ahab, Keilah, the flood, Pharaoh, Adam's answer, Genesis 50:20 with Romans 8:28, Nehemiah 9:33, justice, mercy and grace, the manifold wisdom of God, and the decree that must not replace Christ. To these are added two: the warning against the unpardonable sin, and prayer. The permissive will is counted once, as the second, and no reason is counted twice. The order is not an order of weight. In 5.5 I took the strongest first, and the order there is not this order.

I say of all fourteen what I said in 5.5, with two qualifications. Most are arguments from what a text, or a feature of the biblical story, would mean on one view and what it would mean on the other. The second reason rests on a distinction that the tradition drew, and the twelfth concerns what the doctrine is for. Each can be answered by a compatibilist, and in most I say what the answer would be and what I reply to it. I do not claim that any of them, or all of them together, prove the point. They are cumulative, and they point the same way. I hold the opposed view to be wrongheaded, and I have not shown it to be provably wrong.

C.1 Temptation

In 5.5 I argued that for temptation to be real, and for the tempter to be an enemy of our souls, the one tempted must be able to take the alternative. If he cannot, the tempter's work is theater, and so is the whole story of a trial. The two classic cases are the temptation of the first

pair in Genesis 3 and the temptation of Christ, who corrects the original failure as the second Adam. The compatibilist says that a temptation is real if the tempted man is enticed toward something he in fact wants. That is a fair account of much ordinary temptation. It is not a good account of the temptation of Christ, in which the Gospels present his resistance as something that could have gone otherwise, and as a victory.

C.2 The permissive will

The Reformed writers distinguish what God commands from what he permits. The preceptive will of God is what he commands, and the permissive will is that by which he allows what his preceptive will forbids. He allows sin, wrong choices and mistakes. The distinction was developed to say, at once, that God is not the author of sin, that he does not coerce an agent to sin, and that nothing happens outside his will. Augustine writes: "Nothing, therefore, happens but by the will of the Omnipotent, He either permitting it to be done, or Himself doing it."[1] The Westminster Confession says that God's providence extends even to the first fall and all other sins of angels and men, "and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God."[2]

My reason is only that a concept of permission exists at all. The distinction between what God does and what he allows is a distinction the tradition found it necessary to draw, and it fits a creation in which creatures act as agents of their own deeds. The compatibilist answers that permission is a way of speaking about the manner of God's ordering, and that the Confession

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1 Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love* 95, trans. J. F. Shaw, in *On the Holy Trinity; Doctrinal Treatises; Moral Treatises*, ed. Philip Schaff, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, ser. 1, vol. 3 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1887), 267.

2 Westminster Confession of Faith 5.4, text at opc.org/wcf.html.

itself says it is not bare permission. I agree with the Confession, and I do not rest on the word. I rest on the fact that the tradition needed it.

C.3 God's question about Ahab

In the vision of Micaiah, the Lord asks: "Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?" A spirit offers: "I will entice him." The Lord asks, "By what means?" and the spirit answers that he will be a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets. The Lord says, "You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so."[3]

The scene displays a deliberation in the heavenly court, a question asked, a means proposed, and a commission given. I do not take it to be an account of how God comes to know what he will do. I take it to be a way of showing, in the form of a scene, that God accomplishes his purpose against Ahab through means, and that Ahab's own choices belong to the scene. The compatibilist answers that the scene is accommodated speech and that the means are ordained along with the end. I agree that it is accommodated. My reason is that the form of the accommodation is a genuine interaction and not a decree announced.

C.4 David at Keilah

David asks the Lord whether Saul will come down to Keilah and whether the men of Keilah will surrender him. The Lord answers: "He will come down," and "They will surrender you." David and his men leave, and "when Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition."[4]

What the Lord said would happen did not happen, because David left. The Lord's answers state what would happen in the circumstance in which David stays, and David's leaving changed the circumstance. The passage is the clearest biblical instance of God's knowledge of

3 1 Kings 22:19–23 (ESV).

4 1 Sam. 23:9–13 (ESV).

what creatures would do in circumstances that did not come about. Alsted cites it for exactly that class of things known: what "would exist from creatures, if this or that hypothesis were posited."[5] What the Lord told David, he knew; and David's leaving fulfilled the decree that used that knowledge. The passage fits Alsted's account. It shows God's knowing what would be, it shows the creature acting on the answer, and it shows that what would have been did not come to pass. The compatibilist answers that the knowledge is a knowledge of what the decree makes conditionally the case, and that David's leaving was decreed. I agree that David's leaving was decreed, and I say that that is the point: the conditional was known with God's own will supposed in its condition, and the actual decree contains David's response to it (4.3a).

C.5 The flood

Genesis 6 says: "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart." The Lord says, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land … for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah, the text says, "found favor in the eyes of the LORD."[6]

Two things stand out. The first is the language of regret and sorrow. The usual answer is that such language is the language of accommodation, God speaking of himself in the manner of men, and I do not deny that it is. But the accommodation is of a kind. It presents a response of God to what creatures have become, and the narrative takes the creatures' wickedness to be the occasion of the judgment. The second is the statement that Noah found favor, which is set against the judgment on the rest of mankind and has the force of a contrast. A story of this form

5 Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica, exhibens locos communes theologicos methodo scholastica* (Hanau: Conrad Eifrid, 1618), sect. I, cap. XXI, reg. IV, 79, citing 1 Sam. 23:11–12. Translation mine.

6 Gen. 6:5–8 (ESV).

is naturally told of creatures whose deeds are their own. The compatibilist answers that the story is told in the order of history and not in the order of the decree. I agree that it is, and I take the order of history to be the order in which creatures act as agents.

C.6 Pharaoh

Paul writes: "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills."[7]

The verse is about God's right to pursue his purpose through a particular person, and about the freedom of his mercy and his hardening. It is stated of Pharaoh in a way that marks him out. If every agent's every act were ordained in the same way, one might ask what the singling out adds. The compatibilist answers that the verse is an instance of a general pattern and that Paul singles Pharaoh out because the instance is clear. That is a fair answer, and I do not say it is a poor one. My own reading is different. I take Pharaoh to be an instance of special providence: an occasion, with a few others, on which God steps in and acts on a particular person for a particular purpose. It is not a rival second cause working beside the creature's own, and it is not the ordinary pattern of his dealing with creatures. It is unlike Genesis 50:20 (reason 8), where the causation of the brothers and the simultaneous causation of God are both displayed. I do not repeat here what is said of Romans 9 elsewhere in the book.

C.7 Adam's answer

In 5.5 I took Adam's answer to God in Genesis 3:12, in which he blames the woman and, in the same breath, the God who gave her to him. If there were no freedom of the kind I describe, Adam could have said that God ordained it and asked how it was his fault. That would have been

7 Rom. 9:17–18 (ESV).

the better accusation. The narrative does not give him the thought, and the sentence ends with a confession of the act, "and I ate."[8] The compatibilist says Adam did not make the accusation because it would not have been a good one. I agree that this is what he would say. My reply is that Adam's silence is easier to understand if the narrative takes for granted that the act was his to do or not to do.

C.8 Genesis 50:20 and Romans 8:28

In 5.5 I took Joseph's words to his brothers, "you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good,"[9] as an instance of dual causation in which the brothers' causation and God's are both displayed, and I took Paul's promise in Romans 8:28 with it. In both God is working behind the scenes of free choices, and sometimes against them, for the good of his people. If the decree negated LUF, I ask how it could work around anything. I take it that the verses show God working not only through creaturely actions but around them, and that this is how he has chosen to display and fulfill his purposes.

C.9 Nehemiah 9:33

In 5.5 I took the juxtaposition at Nehemiah 9:33, in which God's faithfulness is set beside the people's wickedness. The verse draws its force from the contrast, and the repentance in the prayer is that of a people who own what they have done. I do not say that a compatibilist could not read the verse. I say that the more natural reading takes the people to be confessing something they might not have done.

C.10 Justice, mercy, and grace

When the Lord passes before Moses and proclaims his name, he says that he is "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping

8 Gen. 3:12 (ESV).

9 Gen. 50:20 (ESV). Rom. 8:28 (ESV).

steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty."[10]

Justice, mercy and grace are attributes whose exercise requires a creature who has acted as an agent. Mercy is shown to someone who has done wrong, and grace to someone who has not earned it. Both presuppose that the wrong was done by the one who receives the mercy, as his own act. I do not say that a compatibilist cannot account for this. The Westminster and Second London Confessions speak of the liberty or contingency of second causes in language that I read as allowing my view, and I have set out why in the chapters on the joint and on the fall. My claim is that these realities are most fully displayed in a creation whose creatures are agents in the sense LUF describes, and that the life, death and resurrection of Christ plumb their depth in a way that a creature who only acted out a script would not call for.

C.11 The manifold wisdom of God

In 5.5 I took Ephesians 3:10, where Paul says that the purpose is that "the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places,"[11] and 1 Peter 1:12, where angels long to look into these things.[12] The wisdom needed to work through and around creatures with LUF is far greater than the wisdom needed to determine by direct act the decisions God alone wants. The second would show his power more than his wisdom. The Greek behind "manifold" is set out in Appendix B. I believe LUF expresses God's wisdom and power more fully in the reality he has made.

10 Exod. 34:6–7 (ESV).

11 Eph. 3:10 (ESV).

12 1 Pet. 1:12 (ESV).

C.12 The decree must not replace Christ

This reason concerns the manner of the debate. Argument on both sides focuses on the substance, timing and extent of the decree, and often does not ask the purpose of the decree in Christ. In a real sense the decree replaces Christ in our thinking. I have argued in Chapter 3 that Christ is the final cause of this creation. The decree serves that end. It is not itself the end. A doctrine of the decree that leaves no room for a creation of real agents, to whom Christ comes as Redeemer and from whom he receives a willing people, has turned the matter around. This is a reason of a different kind from the others. It does not say what a text means. It says what the doctrine is for.

C.13 The warning against the unpardonable sin

Jesus says: "Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."[13] The Letter to the Hebrews warns: "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins."[14]

I do not define the sin here. I say only that a warning that a sin cannot be forgiven is addressed to someone who is told to avoid it. The compatibilist answers that warnings are among the means by which God preserves his people, and that is a true and important answer, which agrees with the Canons of Dort on the use of means.[15] I agree with it. I add that a warning is a means only for a creature who is addressed as one who can heed it. The command and the

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13 Matt. 12:31–32 (ESV).

14 Heb. 10:26 (ESV).

15 Canons of Dort (1618–19), Fifth Head of Doctrine, art. 14, text at ccel.org/ccel/anonymous/canonsofdort.v.i.html (Christian Classics Ethereal Library).

warning address the creature as an agent, and the question of LUF is the question of what that address presupposes in the creature.

C.14 Prayer

In 5.5 I took the prayer of Isaiah 63:17, in which the prophet acknowledges the sovereign hardening of God and, along with that, asks God to change things. He holds in one mind two things that are thought contradictory in this debate, and he does not consider them contradictory. My partial proof that they are not is that the biblical writers, like Isaiah, held them together without thinking they contradicted themselves when they prayed. Prayer of exactly that kind is something God designed creatures to have, through the idea he had of creating an order in which creatures could be free, and could freely worship him and love him without being constrained.

What the fourteen come to

The fourteen further reasons are of different weights. Some of them, such as Adam's answer and the prayer of Isaiah 63:17, strike me as strong. Some, such as the flood, depend on how much weight is put on the form of a narrative. None of them is a demonstration. Together they make a case of a familiar kind: a large number of texts, each of which reads more naturally on one view than on the other, and no text that reads more naturally on the other. I rest on the chief reason of 5.4, and I offer these as cumulative.

Appendix D. Glossary

This glossary gives the sense in which I use each term in the book. Where a term comes from a writer, I name him, and the numbers at the end of an entry give the chapters in which the term is argued.

Antecedent. What comes before an act and bears on it. The antecedents that matter to LUF are causes inside the created order, such as nature, motives, circumstances and prior events. The decree is not one of them. (1, 6, 9.)

Aseity. The attribute by which God alone exists from himself and of himself, depending on nothing. The creature is from another. (1.)

Asymmetric Dual-Frame. The name of the earlier paper that this book rebuilds and enlarges, and of its central claim, which Chapter 9 restates in eight points: that God's order and the creature's order are two orders of ground on one act, that the orders are ranked and not peers, and that necessity and possibility do not carry over from one to the other. For the full statement, see 9.2 and Appendix A. (9.)

Baptized fatalism. The picture in which the decree is the will of God alone, the first link in a chain of causes that carries every event, including every choice of every creature, to the end set for it, and in which nothing is asked about what God conceived, what he intended the creature to be, or what the whole order is for. See *fatalism*. (1.)

Coaction. Compulsion from outside, which overrides the agent's own willing. The older writers say the decree brings no coaction on the will. (6.)

Compatibilism. The view that determinism, in whatever form, is compatible with freedom and with moral responsibility. In the Reformed form I discuss, the freedom is the freedom to act on one's own wishes, desires and reasons, without coercion. (1.)

Composite sense and divided sense. A question about what a creature can do may be asked in the composite sense (*sensu composito*), which holds fixed everything said to be so, including the decree, or in the divided sense (*sensu diviso*), which considers the creature's will and nature taken apart from that. Turretin applies the pair to choice. I hold that Adam's will, and the faculties of the fallen within the range of their natural ability, can do otherwise in the divided sense, and I do not claim the power in the composite sense for any creature. (1, 6.)

Concurrence. God's working with the creature's act, by which the act is at once the creature's and sustained by God. Turretin's clause is that the concurrence of the first cause does not exclude the concurrence of the second causes, but draws it after itself. (6.)

Conditioned knowledge. God's knowledge of what a free creature would freely do in any circumstance, with God's own will to create, uphold, concur and permit supposed in the condition. With Crocius I count it part of simple intelligence. It is logically prior to the actual decree, and it shows the occasion and not the cause of the decree. For the spiritual good its scope is Adam's act alone. See *middle knowledge* and *occasion*. (4.3a, 9.1.1.)

Covenant of grace. The covenant in which the purpose of the covenant of redemption is carried out among men in time. It is not the covenant of redemption. (1, 3.)

Covenant of redemption. The eternal agreement between the Father and the Son, made before creation, in which the Father gives the Son a people and the Son undertakes to redeem them. The older writers called it the *pactum salutis*. It is not the covenant of grace. I hold the thing and am modest about the name. (3.)

Covenant of works. The covenant that God made with Adam, in which he stood for his posterity and life was promised on condition of obedience. (5, 7.)

Decree. God's eternal counsel, by which he ordains whatsoever comes to pass. The Westminster Confession adds that God is thereby neither the author of sin nor an offerer of violence to the will of the creatures, and that the liberty and contingency of second causes are established and not taken away. The decree is not an event in time; the order among its parts is an order of dependence and reason, and not of duration. I distinguish three parts in thought, the idea, the will and the knowledge, which are one in God. (3, 4, 6.)

Deficient cause. My name, in Chapter 7, for the creature's will in the fall, as the cause of the sin by failing and not by supplying anything. The lack is the will's own and not God's. For the sense of the word, see *privation*. (7.)

Desert. Responsibility in the ordinary sense in which a person is held answerable for what he has done: praise and blame, reward and punishment, condemnation and acquittal, that the agent truly deserves. I name two conditions for it: that the creature know the facts that fit him to be held answerable, and that he act freely, in the sense that he is not coerced and not manipulated by an alien controller. (1, 9.)

Determinism and divine determinism. Stratton defines determinism in these words: "A specific event is determined if antecedent conditions are sufficient to necessitate said event."[1] I take his definition with the clarification that the creator's act of creating and sustaining is not among the antecedent conditions. By divine determinism I mean the further claim that the decree of God settles every event by being, in the manner of an antecedent condition, sufficient to necessitate it, so that the creature's own willing makes no difference to what comes about. I argue that the confessions do not teach it. (1.)

1 Timothy A. Stratton, *Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism: A Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Philosophical Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2026), 2.

Diachronic and synchronic contingency. The creature's act is contingent in the diachronic sense when the situation before the act did not fix that it would be done, and in the synchronic sense when, at the moment of the act, the will that wills it has the power not to will it, in the divided sense. (6.)

Divided sense. See *composite sense*.

Divinely conditioned condition. The condition in which God deals with creatures as the creatures they are and where they stand: giving commands to creatures who can disobey, warning of consequences they can bring on themselves, and calling them to repent. The condition is set by God. (4.)

Effectual calling. The work, described in chapter 10 of the Westminster Confession, in which God, by his Word and Spirit, calls the elect out of the state of sin and death to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ, enlightening their minds, renewing their wills and drawing them to Christ, so that they come freely, because his grace has made them willing. (8.)

Epistemic freedom. A freedom that is open only because the agent is ignorant of the outcome. I do not accept it as the meaning of freedom. The contingency I mean is metaphysical: it belongs to the creature's own power and nature. (1.)

Extrinsece. Latin for "from outside." Turretin's word for the source of the certainty of the event, which does not arise from the nature of the second causes, which are free and contingent, but from the immutability of the decree. (1, 6.)

Fatalism. The view that what will be, will be, no matter what we do. As I use the word, it is blind: a chain of causes runs of itself, and nothing in it intended anything. (1.)

Federal headship. The standing of Adam as the head and representative of his posterity under the covenant of works, by which his act is reckoned theirs. I say that the race fell in Adam

seminally, as offspring are in the one from whom they are descended, and covenantally, as he stood for them in the covenant that God made with him. The word *federal* comes from the Latin *foedus*, which means covenant. (1, 7.)

Final cause, formal cause, material cause, efficient cause. The four causes: the four senses of "cause" that Aristotle sets out in the *Physics*, which the scholastic tags (material, formal, efficient and final) name. The final cause is the end for the sake of which a thing is. The formal cause is its pattern. The material cause is what it is made of. The efficient cause is what brings it about. I speak of four causes at two levels: at the level of God, he is the formal and the final cause, and at the level of the creature, the creature is the material and the efficient cause, each in his own order. See 3.10. (3.)

First cause and second cause. God is the first cause. A second cause is the creature as a real cause that acts according to its own nature, under God, the First Cause. Creatures act by the faculties he gave them. (1, 6.)

Frankfurt-style case. A case in which a man acts for reasons of his own while a second man stands ready to make sure he does the same thing if he shows signs of deciding otherwise, and never has to act. Frankfurt used such cases to argue that the principle of alternate possibilities is false. See Appendix A. (1, 2, 5.)

Free knowledge. God's knowledge of what he has willed to be, which follows the decree and rests on it, because things are not future except by the decree. The older writers call it also the knowledge of vision. See *natural knowledge* and *conditioned knowledge*. (4.)

Futurition. That a thing is not only possible but will in fact be. Its passage from being merely possible to being something that will be depends, in every case, on God's will. The older writers' word is *futuritio*. (4.)

God's order and the creature's order. The two orders of ground in the Asymmetric Dual-Frame. God's order includes the eternal decree, his comprehension of the whole, and his relation as the First Cause to what comes to pass. The creature's order includes his nature, his history, his deliberation, his motives, and the powers by which his will acts. The orders are ranked, and God's order is prior. See 9.2 and Appendix A. (9.)

Guidance control. The control an agent has when the mechanism that actually issues in his action is his own and is responsive to reasons. The term is Fischer and Ravizza's. I hold that Adam before the fall had guidance control and regulative control, and that the rest of humanity, since Adam, has guidance control only. (2, 5.)

Hypothetical necessity. See *necessity of the consequence*.

Idea. One of the three parts of the decree in my account: God's conception of the created order, the creatures in it, and the purpose it serves: a hypothetical blueprint conceived whole, which he may choose to actualize or leave unactualized. It is not a species of knowledge. Its matter includes what God's conditioned knowledge comprehends. The idea is distinct from the will in our thought and one with it in God. I do not propose that the idea is the will renamed. (4, 6.)

Imputation. The reckoning of one person's act or standing to another. Adam's sin is reckoned to his posterity, and Christ's righteousness to those who believe. (7, 8.)

Indifferent concurrence. God's concurrence without which no creature acts, of itself indifferent, and given its direction by the creature's will. I take it from Le Blanc, for Adam's act. See *concurrence*. (4.3a, 7.2, 7.6.)

Knowledge, as a part of the decree. God's knowledge of what he has conceived and willed, by which he knows the decreed order as his own. It follows the idea and the will. It is not

the conditioned knowledge, which belongs to simple intelligence and comes before the actual decree. See *conditioned knowledge*. (4.)

LFW. Libertarian freedom of the will, as Tim Stratton defines it: "the ability to choose or act such that antecedent conditions are insufficient to causally determine or necessitate one's choice or action."[2] I add one clarification, that the antecedent conditions are those inside the creation, and that they do not include the creator's activity in creating and sustaining it. I grant this freedom to Adam in the garden, in full; I do not grant it to the fallen will toward God. (1, 5.)

LUF. Limited ultimate freedom: freedom of ambition, desire, thought, action and choice without coercion, specifically to pursue, want, think, act or choose otherwise in the circumstances. It is the freedom each creature has over his own choices within the created order. It is limited because ultimate freedom of the sort God has belongs to him alone. It is the original created freedom of Adam, and it continues as the freedom of the creature after the fall. In Adam it was limited by grounding, by his being a creature; after the fall it is limited further by a will bound to sin. (1, 5.)

Middle knowledge. In Molina's account, a third knowledge standing between God's natural and free knowledge, logically before his decree, of what free creatures would do in any circumstance, and the ground on which God chooses a world. I do not hold it in Molina's form. Alsted used the name for the qualified conditioned knowledge I hold, and later writers reported Gomarus, Walaeus and Crocius as holding it; see *conditioned knowledge*. (2, 4.)

Moral inability and natural ability. Natural ability is the possession of the faculties a man needs to act: understanding, will, and the power of the body to carry out what he wills. Moral ability is the power to will and love what is spiritually good. The fallen keep the first and

2 Stratton, *Human Freedom*, 6.

have lost the second. Moral inability is the state of the faculties of the fallen, which are bound to sin and averse to the good in spiritual things. It is the state of the faculty and not the absence of the faculty, and it is a judicial consequence of the fall. (5, 8.)

Natural knowledge. God's knowledge of himself and of what his power can do, which does not wait on any choice he makes and so precedes the decree. The older writers call it also the knowledge of simple intelligence. (4.)

Necessity of the consequence and necessity of the consequent. The necessity of the consequence is the necessity of the whole conditional, that if the decree is that e then e. The necessity of the consequent is the necessity of e taken by itself. The decree gives the first and does not give the second. Turretin draws the distinction, and the first is also called hypothetical necessity, because it holds on the supposition of the decree. See Appendix A. (6.)

Occasion. That on the part of the creature in view of which God wills something, and which does not move or order his will. The term is Gomarus's; the rule that God's will is not moved by the creature is Alsted's. (4.3a, 6.5.)

Ownership of the mechanism. One of the two parts of guidance control: that the mechanism which issues in the action be the agent's own. (2, 5.)

Pactum salutis. See *covenant of redemption*.

PAP. The principle of alternate possibilities, as Frankfurt states it: "a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have done otherwise."[3] I argue that PAP is not necessary for responsibility, and that Adam nonetheless had it. (2, 5.)

Permissive will. The will by which God allows what his preceptive will forbids. I treat it more fully in Appendix C. (7.)

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3 Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): 829. Frankfurt's title and text have "alternate." Later writers, including Preciado, print "alternative."

Preceptive will. God's will as expressed in his commands. See Appendix C.

Privation. The lack of a good that ought to be present. Sin is a privation in the will, and the lack is the creature's and not God's. (7.)

Reasons-responsiveness. One of the two parts of guidance control: that the mechanism be suitably responsive to reasons. (2.)

Regeneration. The work of God in the soul by which the dead are made alive and the will is renewed, so that it can will the spiritual good. The faith and repentance that follow are the gift of God. (8.)

Regulative control. The dual power of free action: the power to do or to refrain. The term is Fischer and Ravizza's. Adam alone had it for the spiritual good, before the fall; toward the spiritual good the fallen and the regenerate have guidance control only. (2, 5.)

Semicompatibilism. Fischer and Ravizza's name for the position that moral responsibility survives whether or not determinism rules out the freedom to do otherwise. (2.)

Sourcehood, ultimate. The condition that an agent be the final and unconditioned origin of his choice, so that nothing outside him has any part in settling it. Preciado, who calls it the sourcehood condition, reports that guidance control denies it. Taken at full strength it asks of a creature what only the uncreated can have; where a writer means only "the agent's own," I have no quarrel with the word. (1, 2.)

Special providence. God's acting on a particular person or occasion for a particular purpose, as in the case of Pharaoh. It is not a rival second cause working beside the creature's own, and it is not the ordinary pattern of his dealing with creatures. (Appendix C.)

Will. One of the three parts of the decree in my account: God's determining that his idea be the case. See *idea* and *knowledge*. (4, 6.)

Wrongheaded, not provably wrong. My phrase for my verdict on the two main positions on offer today, compatibilism and libertarian freedom. I do not think either could be refuted on its own ground by an argument its holders would be bound to accept. I mean that they focus on the wrong thing, and argue over it. I give the same verdict on Molina's use of the knowledge of what creatures would do. (1, 2.4a, 9.1.1.)

Appendix E. Bibliography

This bibliography lists every work cited in the notes of this book, in alphabetical order by author or, for confessions and anonymous works, by title. Titles of Latin works are given as printed, with the spelling of the title page. The Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version unless a note says otherwise.

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Appendix F. A Qualified Middle Knowledge under the Decree

This appendix is a study of four Reformed writers who held a conditioned knowledge of what free creatures would do, together with Walaeus. It sets out the historical ground of the position I take in Chapters 2 and 4.

F.1 The Question and the Witnesses

The question taken up here is a narrow one. Did any of the Reformed orthodox of the seventeenth century, besides Antonius Walaeus, grant that God knows what a free creature would do under a condition, and if they did, where did they place that knowledge with respect to God's decree? Certain Jesuit writers had given such a knowledge a name, middle knowledge, and had set it before every free decree of God's will. Most of the Reformed rejected it under that name. A few did not reject it outright. They accepted a conditioned knowledge, held under the decree and not in the Jesuit sense, which the title of this appendix calls by its historical name, a qualified middle knowledge. The Reformed writers who came after them knew who they were.[1]

Four of them are the subject of this appendix: Franciscus Gomarus, Johann Heinrich Alsted, Ludwig Crocius, and Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu. With Walaeus they make five. They did not write together, they did not use the same terms, and they did not all draw the line at the same place. My claim is that they nevertheless held a common position. Each grants a knowledge in God of what would come to pass if a condition were posited. Each puts God's own will into the condition, or sets the knowledge after the decree, or does both. None makes it a third knowledge that stands before God's will on its own footing and supplies the ground on which God decrees. And each keeps the certainty of what will in fact come to pass in the decree

1 Quotations from Latin and German sources are given in English, and the renderings are mine. Words in square brackets are supplied. Scripture is quoted from the English Standard Version (ESV).

alone. The differences among them are real, and I shall not smooth them over, but they are differences within one position and not between two.

F.1.1 The Later Witnesses

The witnesses who mark this minority are later Reformed writers.

By "under the decree" I do not mean that the knowledge follows the decree in order. Gomarus, Walaeus and Le Blanc place it before the actual decree. I mean that God's own will is always included in the condition, and that the certainty of what will be rests on the decree. Spanheim's phrase is that they "always suppose an intervening Decree."[2]

Herman Bavinck names Gomarus and Walaeus together on this point. For Gomarus he points to the tenth of his theological disputations, at the thirtieth thesis and following; for Walaeus he points to the locus on the knowledge of God in his Common Places; and he sends the reader to Heppe.[3]

Johann Heinrich Heidegger, in his body of Christian theology printed at Zürich in 1700, opens his section on middle knowledge with a sharp rejection of the Jesuit doctrine, but before he gives his arguments he sets the Reformed exceptions apart:

> "For although a certain conditioned knowledge, whose object is a conditional proposition necessary from the Decree of God, befits God (in which sense even some orthodox Theologians, Gomarus, Walaeus, Ludov. Crocius, and others, defend a middle knowledge, moreover in respect of evil actions, to which Divine Providence concurs not effectively but permissively, and on the supposition of a conditioned or permissive decree; who nevertheless would more rightly refer it to the natural knowledge of God), yet that conditioned [knowledge] by which God, before the Decree and the determination of [His] will, would have known the free acts of Angels or men from the connection of the condition, state or circumstances

2 Friedrich Spanheim the Younger, *Elenchus controversiarum* with the Remonstrants, VII, "De scientia Dei media," §II, in *Opera*, vol. 3 (Leiden, 1703), col. 859.

3 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 199–200 and n. 92. In the note Bavinck cites Gomarus's disputations, X, 30 and following; Walaeus's Common Places in his collected works, I, 174–76; and Heppe, 64.

> to be posited by God with the liberty of the rational creature, is altogether unworthy of God, dangerous, harmful and useless."[4]

Three things in the sentence matter. Heidegger calls Gomarus, Walaeus, and Crocius orthodox. He grants that a conditioned knowledge befits God when its object is a conditional proposition that is necessary from God's decree. And the knowledge he condemns is the one by which God would know the free acts of creatures before the decree and the determination of his will. His one criticism of the Reformed three is that they would have done better to refer the knowledge to God's natural knowledge. He does not say that they held the Jesuit doctrine. He says that they defended it "on the supposition of a conditioned or permissive decree," and that they defended it "moreover in respect of evil actions."[5] The word is "moreover." He does not restrict their position to evil actions.

Heinrich Heppe repeated Heidegger's list in 1861, with two changes. He narrowed Heidegger's "moreover" to "yet only … in respect of evil actions," which says less than Heidegger says, and he added Alsted, quoting Alsted's definition of middle knowledge.[6] Heppe's narrowing should not be read back into Heidegger. Heppe's addition of Alsted is sound, and Alsted's own text bears it out.

Friedrich Spanheim the Younger, in his refutation of the Remonstrant controversies, denies that the Reformed who used the phrase held the Remonstrant doctrine:

> "Falsely, too, is the Middle Knowledge of the Remonstrants imputed to Gomarus, Walaeus, or to our Theologians, who always suppose an intervening Decree as the condition, 'if God should so decree this and that'; and so suppose that nothing at all of those things which God, by His infinite perspicacity, is said to have

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4 Johann Heinrich Heidegger, *Corpus theologiae christianae*, vol. 1 (Zürich, 1700), locus III, §LXII, 85. Heidegger names Gomarus, Walaeus, and Crocius, and then "others." He does not name Alsted.

5 Heidegger, *Corpus theologiae christianae*, vol. 1, locus III, §LXII, 85.

6 Heinrich Heppe, *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformirten Kirche* (Elberfeld, 1861), locus V, 64. Heppe gives Alsted's page as 90. In the Hanau edition of 1618 the definition stands on p. 97, in chapter XXIV, on the knowledge of God; p. 90 falls in chapter XXII, on the will of God, and does not treat the question. See section 3.3 below.

> foreknown by His natural knowledge is future except by the intervention of His Decree."[7]

Spanheim does not say that Gomarus and Walaeus rejected a conditioned knowledge. He says that the knowledge they held was not the Remonstrant one, and he gives the reason: they always put God's decree into the condition.

Johannes Marck went a step further, and Bernhard de Moor quoted and endorsed him. Marck's compendium says that "some of Ours agree in the thesis, in part imprudently, not in the hypothesis,"[8] and in his textual exercises he gives the judgment that De Moor quotes at length:

> "If any of Ours formerly have spoken of some Middle or Hypothetical Knowledge of God, we find that they dissented from us more in phrasing than in substance. Thus our Walaeus … acknowledging such Knowledge together with Gomarus, at the same time disputes against its Jesuitical abuses, and in the substance itself declares himself orthodox enough."[9]

Marck then states the terms on which, as he sees it, no real controversy remains: that the condition be "a condition to be decreed by God together with the event," and that every condition "that would be left to second Causes alone, neither determined nor to be determined by God," be removed far from God's knowledge and will.[10] He doubts that the phrases are apt, and he fears what heretics have made of them, but he does not doubt the orthodoxy of the men. De Moor sets Spanheim's sentence beside Marck's as saying the same thing.[11]

Le Blanc is both a witness and a party. In his theses on the order of the divine decrees he names "Ludovicus Crocius, Professor in the School of Bremen, Gomarus and Walaeus" among

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7 Spanheim, *Elenchus controversiarum*, VII, §II, in *Opera*, vol. 3, col. 859.

8 Bernhard de Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus in Johannis Marckii Compendium theologiae christianae didactico-elencticum*, pars 1 (Leiden, 1761), cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660, quoting Marck's compendium.

9 De Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus*, pars 1, cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660, quoting Marck's compendium and his *Exercitationes textuales* XIV, pars IV, §10. On these pages De Moor and Marck name only Gomarus and Walaeus among the Reformed.

10 De Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus*, pars 1, cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660, quoting Marck.

11 De Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus*, pars 1, cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660, citing Spanheim, *Elenchus controversiarum*, in *Opera*, vol. 3, col. 859.

those who "seem to admit in God that conditioned knowledge."[12] I take him up in his own section below.

F.1.2 Walaeus and Gomarus

The tie to Walaeus is direct. In the locus on the knowledge of God in his Common Places, Walaeus records that the question divides the orthodox. Some, he says, do not admit the knowledge. Then he turns to the other side, and he writes that there are "some among the orthodox, and among others Franciscus Gomarus," who think "that it should be affirmed outright."[13] He then states his own position:

> "from those places and others like them it is manifest that there is some such hypothetical knowledge in God before every decree of his, concerning what was certainly going to be."[14]

He adds at once that a conditional decree is included in the conditional predictions, and that "this does not remove the thing itself."[15] Walaeus therefore names Gomarus as one who holds what he holds, and he holds it with a decree included in the condition. That is the position the later witnesses describe.[16]

The paper takes the four writers in turn, Gomarus, Alsted, Crocius, and Le Blanc, and then asks what the five held in common and how their position differs from Molina's.

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12 Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu, *Theses theologicae, variis temporibus in Academia Sedanensi editae et ad disputandum propositae* (London: Moses Pitt, 1675), "De decretorum divinorum ordine," th. XLI, 185.

13 Antonius Walaeus, *Loci communes*, "De Dei scientia," in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Franciscus Hackius, 1643), 174 (right column)–175 (left column).

14 Walaeus, *Loci communes*, "De Dei scientia," 175 (left column).

15 Walaeus, *Loci communes*, "De Dei scientia," 175 (left column).

16 Henri Krop, "Reformed Orthodoxy and the *Libertas philosophandi* in the Netherlands," *Church History and Religious Culture* 100, no. 2–3 (2020): 190 n. 17, says that the knowledge Walaeus refers to at this place was rejected by Gomarus and received by other orthodox theologians. Walaeus says the reverse. The writers who do not admit it are left unnamed, and Gomarus is named among those who affirm it.

F.2 Franciscus Gomarus

Franciscus Gomarus (1563–1641) taught theology at Leiden from 1594 to 1611, where he opposed Arminius, and from 1618 until his death he was professor at Groningen. He sat at the Synod of Dort as a delegate of Groningen.[17] His collected works were printed at Amsterdam, and the second edition of 1664 is the one cited here. Four places in it bear on the question: the tenth of his theological disputations, on predestination; the third, on the true God; the sixth chapter of his reconciliation of the orthodox doctrine of providence; and his comment on Matthew 11:21.

F.2.1 Two Foreknowledges

In the disputation on predestination Gomarus explains God's foreknowledge before he explains the decree, because, he says, what he has said of predestination will become clearer "by a succinct and distinct explanation of the foreknowledge of God, properly taken."[18] The foreknowledge of God is "the most perfect knowledge in God of all things universally, and of each singly, that can come to be."[19] Its object is whatever can come to be, and with respect to that object it is distinguished in two ways: one foreknowledge is of things possible simply, which are defined to neither side, and the other is of those possibles that are future.[20] He names the two:

> "Hence the former has customarily been called indefinite foreknowledge and foreknowledge of simple intelligence, and also natural and necessary, because it would belong to God nonetheless even if He had decreed nothing at all. The latter is named definite, because it is occupied about things as defined by the decree."[21]

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17 J. C. van Slee, "Gomarus, Franciscus," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 9 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1879), 363–65.

18 Franciscus Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, "De divina hominum praedestinatione," th. XXIII, in *Opera theologica omnia*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Joannes Janssonius, 1664), Pars II, 27 (right column).

19 Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXIV, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column).

20 Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXV–XXVI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column).

21 Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXVII, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column). The proof texts are Acts 2:23 and 15:18.

The division is the ordinary Reformed one. The first knowledge is natural to God and does not depend on any decree. The second is of things as the decree has defined them. Gomarus adds the reason why the first must be wider than the second: all future things can come to be, "but innumerable things can [come to be] which are never future," and if God were ignorant of anything that he could effect, he would not be omniscient, "and therefore not God."[22]

F.2.2 The Conditioned Foreknowledge

Into that division Gomarus places the conditioned knowledge. He does not add a third member. He puts it under the first:

> "Now under indefinite foreknowledge (which regards all the modes of things simply possible) is contained also that [foreknowledge] which is commonly named conditioned. And it is that by which God, out of the infinite light of His knowledge, foreknew certain future things, not absolutely, but upon a certain condition posited."[23]

He explains what that means. If a certain series of things and circumstances were posited, God most certainly foreknew what event would follow from it, necessary or contingent, "not by Stoic fate, but according to the nature of the causes," and he foreknew it "whether that series, upon the decree of God following, be defined, or remain undefined."[24] Then comes the sentence on which the whole place turns: "this indefinite foreknowledge does not at all depend on the defining decree, but necessarily precedes it in the order of nature (as the object, its adjunct)."[25]

Gomarus is plain about the order. The conditioned foreknowledge precedes the defining decree, as an object precedes the act that is about it, and it does not depend on that decree. But the precedence is the precedence of the indefinite foreknowledge as a whole. The conditioned

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22 Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXVIII–XXIX, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column).

23 Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXX–XXXI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column).

24 Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXXII, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column).

25 Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXXII, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column). The antecedent of "it" is the defining decree.

knowledge is not given a place of its own between the two foreknowledges. It is part of the knowledge that would belong to God "even if He had decreed nothing at all."

He gives two kinds of example. The first kind is of a series that remained undefined, where neither the condition nor the event came to pass. God foreknew "that David, if only he remained in the city of Keilah, would be attacked by Saul and delivered up by the citizens," and neither was carried out, "because of David's flight." And God foreknew, and foretold, that foreign nations would hear Ezekiel if he were sent to them, "although neither the thing itself nor the antecedent condition of the future thing came to pass."[26]

The second kind is of a series that the decree afterward defined, and the example is the Fall. God foreknew that if he should create certain men in Adam in the upright state of original righteousness, "and should give a command concerning abstinence from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, should not hinder the temptation of Satan, and should direct [it] agreeably to His holy power and to the liberty of men (as He did)," then they would fall by transgression of the command.[27] The condition here is made up of what God would do: create, command, not hinder, direct. Gomarus does not say in so many words that God's will is included in the condition. But by inference it is, since every member of the antecedent is an act of God, and the knowledge is a knowledge of what would follow upon God's so acting. That is near to what Spanheim later says of the Reformed, that they suppose an intervening decree as the condition.

The next thesis sets the limit. God regarded this series of things as set before him, "not as a cause but as an occasion in this predestination," and "by a free and wise decree distinctly

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26 Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXXIII, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column). Gomarus cites 1 Sam 23:11–12 and Ezek 3:6.

27 Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXXIV, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column).

predefined it."[28] The conditioned foreknowledge supplies the matter of the decree. It is not the cause of the decree. The decree is free, and the event is the certain index of it.

F.2.3 The Object of God's Knowledge

The disputation on the true God says the same thing more briefly. The object of God's knowledge is everything that can be known, and under that object are contained things past, present, and future, all things possible, and:

> "things future by hypothesis, that is, what would come to pass upon a condition posited: not only what is necessary from a necessary cause, but also what is contingent from a contingent cause (1 Sam 23:12; Matt 11:21). All which things God embraces by the infinite light of His essence."[29]

The proof texts are the two that recur throughout this dispute, Keilah and Tyre and Sidon. The knowledge is one knowledge with a single act, "by one infinite and simple act of intelligence," and the things future by hypothesis are one part of its object.[30] Gomarus does not speak here of a middle knowledge. He speaks of a knowledge that takes in the hypothetical with everything else.

F.2.4 The Reconciliation

The sixth chapter of the reconciliation of the orthodox doctrine of providence works out the relation between the two foreknowledges and the decree, and it ends with a rule that bears on the later verdict about Gomarus.

The definite foreknowledge, Gomarus says, is the proper and necessary effect of predefinition. The order is set out in one sentence:

> "For as the indefinite foreknowledge of God (by which God knows all things that can simply happen …) precedes the predefinition of God in order, as the subject and matter from which certain future things can be defined; so also predefinition,

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28 Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXXV, in *Opera*, Pars II, 28 (left column).

29 Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. III, "De Deo vero," th. XLII, in *Opera*, Pars II, 7 (left column).

30 Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. III, th. XL, in *Opera*, Pars II, 7 (left column).

> determining certain future things out of the foreknown possibles, precedes definite foreknowledge (which is of future things) in order and in causality, as the efficacious object and the first principle of the determination of future things."[31]

The indefinite foreknowledge, which includes the conditioned, is the matter from which the decree defines. The decree is the first principle of the determination of future things. And so "the definite foreknowledge of God does not flow from the future things, but from the decree of God determining the future things."[32] Gomarus goes on to ask whether foreknowledge is the cause of things, and he answers with distinctions. Taken properly, as bare knowledge, foreknowledge is not the efficient cause of things: "there are innumerable things (as we showed before) which God indefinitely foreknew which will never be future."[33] Taken in the wide sense of a ground of consequence, "indefinite foreknowledge cannot be a cause, but definite [foreknowledge] can, excellently," because the definite foreknowledge is of things predefined by the decree, and the decree "is constant and immutable."[34]

He closes the chapter with a rule for reading the orthodox when they speak differently:

> "Therefore, since the Orthodox agree among themselves in the thing itself, there is no reason why, offended by variety of speaking, we should set them at odds either among themselves or with the Sacred Letters. For it belongs to a candid man to interpret the sayings of others kindly, unless the contrary opinion is more thoroughly established."[35]

He wrote this of the dispute over whether foreknowledge may be called a cause. Marck later applied the same measure to Gomarus himself and judged that he differed from the other orthodox "more in phrasing than in substance."[36]

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31 Gomarus, *Conciliatio doctrinae orthodoxae de providentia Dei*, cap. VI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 129.

32 Gomarus, *Conciliatio*, cap. VI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 129 (right column).

33 Gomarus, *Conciliatio*, cap. VI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 130 (left column).

34 Gomarus, *Conciliatio*, cap. VI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 130 (left column).

35 Gomarus, *Conciliatio*, cap. VI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 130 (right column).

36 De Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus*, pars 1, cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660.

F.2.5 Tyre and Sidon

Gomarus's comment on Matthew 11:21 is the place that others quoted.[37] Christ says that if the mighty works done in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented. Gomarus first asks what kind of repentance is meant, and, as Le Blanc reports his reading, he takes it to be of the kind "which is common to the Elect and the Reprobate, to believers and non-believers," such as the repentance of the Ninevites in sackcloth.[38] Then he asks how the truth of the saying is known:

> "But as to what He asserts concerning this future repentance of the Tyrians, that condition being posited, its truth stands firm from the indefinite foreknowledge of His divine nature, by which He knew what would have followed upon a given antecedent being posited, even though neither [antecedent nor consequent] came to pass. For that, this condition being posited, one or the other would have come to pass (namely that they would either repent or not repent) is known to all, from that principle that two opposites cannot be true at the same time. But which of them would have been future, since the matter was contingent, He alone foresaw who by His infinite knowledge sees all things, and certainly foretells not only necessary things but also future contingents."[39]

The comment agrees with the disputation. The knowledge of what Tyre would have done is placed under the indefinite foreknowledge of God's nature, which is his natural knowledge. Gomarus does not call it a third knowledge, and he does not make it the ground of any decree. He says only that God, who sees all things, knew which of two opposites would have been future.

F.2.6 Gomarus's Position

Gomarus holds a conditioned foreknowledge in God, and he holds it plainly. He places it under the indefinite and natural foreknowledge, not beside it. He says that it does not depend on

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37 Matt 11:21 (ESV): "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

38 Le Blanc, "Theses theologicae de concordia libertatis humanae cum decretis divinis," pars I, th. XXV, in *Theses theologicae*, 449. Compare Gomarus, *Explicatio* of Matthew, on Matt 11:21, in *Opera*, Pars I, 56 (right column).

39 Gomarus, *Explicatio* of Matthew, on Matt 11:21, in *Opera*, Pars I, 56 (right column). Gomarus adds that Ezek 3:6–7 is a similar place. Le Blanc quotes the same passage; see F.5.2 below.

the defining decree and precedes it in the order of nature. He treats the series of things that it presents as an occasion of the decree and not as its cause. And he makes the decree the first principle of the determination of all that is future, and the only ground of definite foreknowledge. His example of the Fall puts God's own acts into the condition, and by inference God's will is in the hypothesis from the start. That is the position Walaeus names when he names Gomarus.

F.3 Johann Heinrich Alsted

Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588–1638) taught at the academy of Herborn, in the philosophical faculty and then in the theological, took part in the Synod of Dort, and from 1629 until his death worked at Weissenburg in Transylvania. He was the author of encyclopaedic works in philosophy and theology.[40] His scholastic and didactic theology, printed at Hanau in 1618, treats God's intellect and will in two chapters and then gives a chapter on God's knowledge, and it is in the last of these that he defines middle knowledge. The two earlier chapters show what he means by it.

F.3.1 The Intellect of God

The chapter on the intellect of God has one rule on the extent of its object. God understands himself, and next "He knows all possible things, of which there are three kinds."[41] The first kind is of things that God's power can reach immediately. The second is of this kind:

> "The second is of those things which can exist from creatures (whether these are to exist or not) by His conservation, motion, aid, concurrence, permission; and which would exist from creatures, if this or that hypothesis were posited (1 Sam 23:11–12)."[42]

40 Otto Weber, "Alsted, Johann Heinrich," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1953), 206.

41 Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica, exhibens locos communes theologicos methodo scholastica* (Hanau: Conrad Eifrid, 1618), sect. I, cap. XXI, reg. IV, 79.

42 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXI, reg. IV, 79.

The third kind is of "those things which God can do concerning the acts of creatures, either agreeably to Himself or to the acts."[43] Alsted then gathers the rule into a summary: God knows all things that have any entity, "will have it, can have it, [or] would have it by hypothesis," and "He knows all things which would exist upon some hypothesis being posited."[44]

Two points are clear. The things that would exist on a hypothesis are counted among the possibles, which are the object of God's natural knowledge. And they are described as what would exist from creatures "by His conservation, motion, aid, concurrence, permission."[45] God's concurrence and permission belong to the description of the thing known. Alsted does not use the name middle knowledge anywhere in this chapter.

The last rule of the chapter guards the knowledge on two sides. God understands all things "infallibly," because his essence is infinite, so that he understands all things most presently, "even future contingents." He understands them "independently," so that his understanding is "caused by no external cause, not even by the object." And he understands them agreeably to the nature of things: "the understanding of God, however certain and infallible, yet imposes no necessity on things, but rather establishes contingency in them."[46] The knowledge of what a creature would do does not depend on the creature, and it does not destroy the creature's contingency.

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43 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXI, reg. IV, 79. The proof texts are Matt 11:21, Jer 18:6, and Isa 44:7.

44 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXI, reg. IV, 80.

45 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXI, reg. IV, 79.

46 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXI, reg. X, 82.

F.3.2 The Will of God

The chapter on the will of God supplies the other half. Here the question is how God's will stands to the acts of creatures that his knowledge foresees, and Alsted gives a series of distinctions and rules.

The will of God is absolute or conditional. "The absolute is that by which God wills to do or to hinder something." "The conditional will of God is that by which He wills something to be done or not done by creatures endued with intellect, with a condition adjoined. It is called the will of the sign; also the inefficacious will."[47] In the rules he adds that the conditional will is called the will of the sign because it signifies what is pleasing to God and what is our duty, while the absolute will is the first and supreme cause of all things.[48]

The will of God also regards either God only or the creature. "The will which regards God only is that by which God wills something of Himself, not on account of any cause placed outside Himself." "The will of God which regards the creature is that by which He wills something on account of another prior cause placed on the part of the creature."[49] And it is antecedent or consequent, according as the act of the divine will precedes or follows the volition or action of the rational creature.[50]

Alsted then holds this together with the independence of God's will. The act of God's will is independent, because God is the first cause, and all other wills depend on it, "but that the will of God is not moved and ordered by the will of the creature." It is infinite, because it is not moved to will by any external cause, "not even by the object." And he adds: "To this truth it is

47 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, praec. V, 83.

48 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. XIII, 91.

49 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, praec. VII, 84.

50 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, praec. VIII, 84.

no obstacle that He would not will or do some things unless some act of the creature intervened."[51]

The order of the objects of God's will is completed in five degrees, and the fifth is "those things which God according to His infinite wisdom judges are to be done concerning the acts of rational creatures."[52] The next rule allows that the act of a creature, or its omission, "can thus far be the occasion … of some divine volition: so that, apart from the consideration of that act or omission, God would forbear such a volition."[53] And the rule after that keeps the second causes in their own mode. God acts through them so as to let them produce their effects according to their proper mode: "necessary [causes] necessarily, contingent contingently, free freely." Their contingency and liberty do not hinder the certainty of what God works through them, and "therefore the certain futurition of the event does not include the necessity of coaction."[54]

The connection with the knowledge chapter is direct. God wills some things on account of a prior cause placed on the part of the creature, and some of his volitions have the creature's act as their occasion. If so, God must know the creature's act in the circumstance in which he places it. But Alsted does not let that knowledge move God's will. The will is independent, it is not moved by its object, and the creature's act is its occasion and not its cause. By inference, then, the knowledge of what a creature would do serves God's will without governing it. Alsted does not say this in one sentence. He says it in the rules taken together.

He says one thing more that bears on the order of God's acts. God's free volitions concerning creatures can be necessary "not absolutely, but in a certain respect and from

51 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. IV, 86.

52 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. V, 87.

53 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. VI, 87.

54 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. VII, 87–88.

hypothesis; namely, inasmuch as it can be bound by another act of willing prior in order."[55] The order among God's volitions is an order of hypothesis, in which one free act is presupposed by another. A like pattern appears in his account of knowledge.

F.3.3 The Knowledge of God

The chapter on God's knowledge gives three divisions. Knowledge is theoretical or practical. It is knowledge of vision, by which God knows himself and all beings that are, will be, or have been, or knowledge of simple intelligence, by which he knows all possible things. And it is natural, free, or middle:

> "It is natural or necessary, free, or middle. The natural knowledge of God is that by which God knows Himself and all possible things. Free is that by which He knows all other beings. Middle is that by which He knows: if this should be, that will be future."[56]

This is the sentence that Heppe quoted. Alsted places the three in order in the rule that follows:

> "The necessary knowledge of God precedes every free act of the divine will. The free [knowledge] follows the act of the will. The middle [knowledge] does indeed precede the act of the will, but sees something to be future from the hypothesis of it."[57]

The words "of it" can be read in two ways. They can refer to the act of the will, so that the middle knowledge sees something future on the hypothesis of a divine act of will. Or they can refer more widely to the "this" of the definition. The gloss that follows fits the wider reading. But on either reading, the middle knowledge is a knowledge from hypothesis, and on the first reading God's act of will is itself the hypothesis.

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55 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. IX, 88. Alsted cites Thomas, *Contra Gentiles*, bk. 1, c. 83.

56 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXIV, praec. III, 97.

57 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXIV, reg. III, 98.

The gloss is the more important part of the rule, because in it Alsted qualifies the threefold division:

> "All knowledge of God is necessary. For, any object whatever being posited, the divine intellect necessarily knows it on account of the infinity of [His] essence. Likewise, any object whatever being posited from hypothesis, God necessarily understands what will come forth from it. Nevertheless it is rightly divided into necessary, free and middle, in the mode in which we said in the precepts."[58]

The middle knowledge, then, is necessary knowledge. It is God's knowledge of what will come forth from an object posited by hypothesis, and it is necessary in the same way that his knowledge of any posited object is necessary. The threefold division stands, but only "in the mode in which we said in the precepts," where the three are defined by their objects. By inference, it is a division of what God knows and of its order, not of God's knowing into three distinct knowledges.

The next two rules settle what causes what. The free knowledge, or knowledge of vision, follows the free act of God's will and "is not the cause of things."[59] The practical knowledge of simple intelligence, which is necessary, is the cause of all things "by way of prescribing and directing, the action of the will and the power being added. Although it is necessary that that middle knowledge intervene in things which depend on the liberty of created choice."[60] The middle knowledge intervenes. It is not itself the cause of things. The cause is God's practical knowledge with his will and power added.

F.3.4 The Compendium and the Distinctions

Alsted repeats the threefold division in his theological compendium of 1624. The aphorism on God's intellect lists the ways God knows, and ends: "Himself by necessary

58 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXIV, reg. III, 98.

59 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXIV, reg. IV, 98.

60 Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXIV, reg. V, 98.

knowledge; by free knowledge the creatures and all existing things; by middle knowledge all that which is future if this or that should be."[61] The same aphorism puts all possible things under the knowledge of simple intelligence. It does not say whether the middle knowledge precedes the will or follows it. The definition is the definition of 1618.

His distinctions of 1626 give the division a single line among others: "The knowledge of GOD is natural, or necessary, free, or middle; of simple intelligence or of vision; … absolute or conditional."[62] Between the last two members he sets a division into theoretical, practical, and permissive knowledge. The middle knowledge stands beside the pair of simple intelligence and vision, and the pair of absolute and conditional knowledge stands beside both. A later distinction adds that God knows things after they are "necessarily, but not from necessity of nature," which agrees with the rule of 1618 that all God's knowledge is necessary.[63]

F.3.5 Alsted's Position

Alsted uses the name middle knowledge, which Gomarus does not, and he defines it in a single line: the knowledge by which God knows that if this should be, that will be future. He says that it precedes the act of God's will. But he places its objects among the possibles, he describes them as what would exist from creatures by God's conservation, concurrence, and permission, he says that it sees what is future from a hypothesis that may be God's own act of will, and he says that all God's knowledge, the middle included, is necessary. It intervenes in what depends on created free choice, but it is not the cause of things. On the side of the will, the creature's act may be the occasion of a divine volition, but God's will is not moved by its object or ordered by

61 Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Compendium theologicum* (Hanau, 1624), pars IV, locus II, aph. VII, 205.

62 Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Distinctiones per universam theologiam* (Frankfurt, 1626), cap. III, dist. 13, 17. The next distinction gives the will of God as absolute or conditional.

63 Alsted, *Distinctiones*, cap. III, dist. 50, 22.

the will of the creature. Heppe was right to add his name, and the definition Heppe quoted stands in Alsted's chapter on the knowledge of God.

F.4 Ludwig Crocius

Ludwig Crocius (1586–1655) was pastor in Bremen and professor at its gymnasium, which he later headed, and in 1624 he became superintendent of the Bremen church. With Matthias Martinius and Heinrich Isselburg he represented Bremen at the Synod of Dort.[64] His system of sacred theology, printed at Bremen in 1636, treats the intellect of God in the fifteenth chapter of its third book, and the question of conditioned knowledge falls in the middle of that chapter.

F.4.1 The Certainty of Conditioned Futures

Crocius begins from the certainty of God's intellect: "The intellect of God is always certain, nor can it ever be deceived, not even in future contingents." Future contingents, he says, are of two kinds, some future absolutely and some future under a condition. That the first are foreknown certainly is established from Scripture. Of the second, some deny that they are known by God, and others grant that they are known but only doubtfully and by conjecture. Crocius answers: "the knowledge of these also is certain and infallible to God."[65] He gives four reasons. God is the first truth; his intellect is infinite; God permits sins for a certain end, and to permit is to foresee what will be unless one hinders it; and if God knew conditioned futures only by conjecture, David could have doubted the divine answer at Keilah without sin.

He then asks where the certainty is to be sought. First, "from the infinite perfection and perspicacity of the divine intellect," which knows more in the causes than is in them in act. A

64 Walter Hollweg, "Crocius, Ludwig," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1957), 418.

65 Ludovicus Crocius, *Syntagma sacrae theologiae quatuor libris adornatum* (Bremen: Bertholdus Villerianus, 1636), lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 13, 569–70.

prudent father who knows his sons can foresee probably what each would do in a given occasion, and "much more can God foresee certainly and infallibly what each man would do if these or those circumstances were." Second:

> "From the in-some-manner determinate truth of future contingents, which in conditioned futures does not presuppose any free decree of the divine will, but in absolute [futures] does presuppose [it]."[66]

He gives the reason for the difference. Things would not be absolutely future "unless God had decreed to produce them, whether through Himself or also through second causes, or at least not to hinder that they come to exist from second [causes]."[67] The truth of what is absolutely future rests on the decree. The truth of what would be future under a condition, he says, does not presuppose a free decree.

Crocius is honest about what he cannot explain. How things that are indifferent to being and not being are known certainly by God, "that, I confess, it is not in our power here to explain more clearly."[68] And the next aphorism, on the contingency that God's knowledge leaves in things, repeats almost word for word Alsted's rule: "The intellection or knowledge of God, however certain and infallible, yet imposes of itself no necessity on things, but rather establishes contingency in them."[69] Crocius then appeals to Walaeus. He refers here, not unwillingly, to a saying that "the celebrated Dr. Walaeus" writes had always pleased him greatly in this hard question: the saying of Stadianus, Melanchthon's teacher, who said that he knew both that God

66 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 13, 570.

67 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 13, 570.

68 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 13, 571. He refers the reader to Zanchi, Suárez, Molina, and Álvarez.

69 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 14, 571. Compare Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXI, reg. X, 82.

foreknows and determines all things and that there is contingency, "but how these things should be reconciled so as to satisfy any contentious person, he did not altogether perceive."[70]

F.4.2 The Instants

Crocius then turns to the divisions of God's knowledge. The doctors, he says, to declare a very arduous matter in some fashion, "distinguish three instants or signs, not of time but of reason." In the first they place the knowledge of simple intelligence, in the second the free decrees of the will, in the third the knowledge of vision. And:

> "Some set up a fourth instant after the first, in which they consider a certain middle knowledge, before the free decrees of the will."[71]

He defines the knowledge of simple intelligence as "the cognition of all possibles, that is, of all and singular things which can come to pass, whether they have a contingent or a necessary connection with their causes, preceding in God the free act of the will," and the knowledge of vision as the knowledge "by which God knows, after the decree of the will, all other things besides Himself which are, will be, or have been."[72] The natural knowledge, he adds, is "in a certain mode the same as the knowledge of simple intelligence."[73]

F.4.3 The Definition He Accepts

The decisive passage comes in the gloss on the free knowledge. Crocius first repeats, again almost word for word, Alsted's rule:

> "If we speak strictly, all knowledge of God is necessary. For not from this, that the free act of the will furnishes the intellect with an object, is the intellection of God free; but, any object whatever being posited, the divine intellect necessarily knows it on account of the infinity of His essence and perspicacity. So also, any

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70 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 14, 571–72. Crocius cites Walaeus against Corvinus, chapter 3, on providence, and gives the saying as Chytraeus reports it of Melanchthon.

71 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XII, 572–73.

72 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XIII–XIV, 573.

73 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVI, 574.

> object whatever being posited from hypothesis, God necessarily understands what would come forth from it."[74]

He then reports that some younger men of the school, "as is to be seen in Suárez, Molina, Fonseca, Bellarmine and Becanus, here set up a middle knowledge, which not all explain clearly enough, on account of conditioned possibles." Others define it differently:

> "But some define it thus: that it is the knowledge by which God, after the decree of His will, knew, not absolutely but under a condition, what men and angels would do according to their liberty, if they were placed with these or those circumstances, in such or such an order of things."[75]

And he gives his verdict:

> "The thing itself comprehended in this definition I judge is not to be denied, but so that we make this foreknowledge a part of simple intelligence, which is the knowledge of all possible things and connections: so that by the infinite perfection of [His] nature He necessarily understands not only that that can be if this be, but also that it either is going to be or is not going to be. Yet there seems to be no need of a knowledge distinct from simple intelligence and vision."[76]

The verdict has three parts. The thing itself is not to be denied. It is to be made part of simple intelligence. And no third knowledge is needed. Crocius then gives the order in three steps. First there is the natural intelligence of what God himself can create, and of what would be future in such a creation, one thing being posited after another, "He either determining or permitting." Second, when the end he sees arising from a world so founded and governed has pleased him, God decrees all the antecedents together, "relating Himself to some effectively and properly, to others permissively." Third comes the knowledge of vision, by which he foresees as truly future all that he had understood would follow, necessarily or contingently, "if the prior things were posited."[77]

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74 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 574. Compare Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXIV, reg. III, 98.

75 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 574–75.

76 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 575.

77 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 575.

F.4.4 Two Statements

The two passages do not sit easily together, and they should not be made to. On page 570 Crocius says that the determinate truth of conditioned futures does not presuppose any free decree of God's will. On page 575 he accepts the thing contained in a definition that says God knew conditioned free acts after the decree of his will, and he places that knowledge in simple intelligence, which by his own definition precedes the free act of the will.

One way of reading the two together may be offered as inference. What Crocius accepts on page 575 is the content of the definition, a knowledge of what men and angels would do under given circumstances, and not its placement after the decree; he relocates the content into simple intelligence. And the simple intelligence of his first step already includes God's own acts in the hypothesis, since it is the knowledge of what would follow in a creation "He either determining or permitting."[78] On that reading the statement of page 570, that the conditioned truth presupposes no free decree, means no actual decree, while God's determining and permitting are supposed within the condition itself. Crocius does not say this. It is what his three steps imply, but the statement of page 570, taken as it stands, says more than the three steps require.

What is not in doubt is where Crocius places the certainty of what will in fact come to pass. The theoretical knowledge, which is the knowledge of vision, is called foreknowledge because God sees something to be future in act, "because He decreed that that should be created upon whose existence He certainly understood that other thing would follow." Of this knowledge it is said that the decree is the cause of foreknowledge:

> "For the ground of it is the decree, partly efficacious, by which God determined to produce that cause, and those things upon whose existence He understood that

78 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 575.

> some act, whether good or evil, would contingently follow; partly permitting, by which He determined not to hinder that which, a condition being posited, He understands will be future, contingently indeed, but certainly. For without this decree He would never see something to be future in act and in reality."[79]

F.4.5 Crocius's Position

Crocius holds that God knows conditioned futures certainly and infallibly. He accepts the thing that the name middle knowledge was used for, and he accepts the thing contained in a definition that places it after the decree. He refuses to set it in a fourth instant before the decrees, and he folds it into simple intelligence, so that there is no third knowledge. His order runs from natural intelligence, which includes God's determining and permitting, to the decree of the end and of all the antecedents, to the vision of what will in fact be. And the decree, partly efficacious and partly permitting, is the ground of all foreknowledge of what will actually come to pass. Heidegger names him with Gomarus and Walaeus, and Le Blanc names him first.

F.5 Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu

Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu (1614–1675) was professor of theology at the Academy of Sedan and was known for a conciliatory spirit.[80] His theological theses, printed at London in 1675, include a series on the concord of human liberty with the divine decrees, in three parts. The first part treats the conditioned knowledge, the second the doctrine of the Roman school, and the third the doctrine of the Reformed school. Le Blanc is the latest of the four, and he reports the views of others more fully than any of them.

F.5.1 The Jesuit Doctrine as He States It

The first part opens with the title of its subject: the cognition attributed to God "of things contingently future, not absolutely but under a condition, which in the Schools they call middle

79 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XIX, 576.

80 John McClintock and James Strong, "Beaulieu, Louis le Blanc de," in *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1867–1887); Post-Reformation Digital Library, "Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu (1614–1675)."

or conditioned knowledge." Le Blanc says that among the things devised to reconcile human liberty with the certainty of the divine decrees, this knowledge "has above all prevailed," and that Luis Molina and Fonseca first sought the reconciliation in it, "and after them very many, both in the Roman School and among the Protestants themselves."[81]

He states the doctrine with care. The foreknowledge of what is absolutely future follows a decree of God's will. But of the things that would be future only on a hypothesis, "they will have it that this knowledge of those things which are not simply future, but would be future only from hypothesis, precedes in God every free decree of the will."[82] And he adds that even on their account a decree is included in the condition:

> "But although this knowledge precedes any free decree in God, nonetheless, as is plain from what has been said, in the condition under which the thing is said to be future a decree is included: not indeed one which is conceived to be in God in act, but one which would necessarily have to be posited in God in order that that thing could be."[83]

The point matters for what follows. Le Blanc does not distinguish the Reformed position from the Jesuit one merely by saying that the Reformed put a decree in the condition. On his account the Jesuits do so too. He records as well that some in the Roman school called it simply conditioned knowledge and reduced it to the knowledge of vision or to simple intelligence.[84] The difference lies elsewhere.

F.5.2 The Reformed Who Admit It

Le Blanc then turns to the Protestants. The Remonstrants, he says, approve the middle knowledge by common consent, and he quotes Episcopius's threefold division and reports that

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81 Le Blanc, "Theses theologicae de concordia libertatis humanae cum decretis divinis," pars I, title and th. I, in *Theses theologicae*, 445.

82 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. III, in *Theses theologicae*, 446.

83 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. IV, in *Theses theologicae*, 446.

84 See Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. VIII–XI, in *Theses theologicae*, 446–48.

Curcellaeus praised Gomarus for having acknowledged "a conditioned knowledge in God."[85] Then he comes to the Reformed:

> "But also among the Reformed who subscribe to the Synod of Dort there are found some acknowledging in God that conditioned knowledge by which, before every decree of His will, He knew what any free cause whatever would do, in any order of things whatever, according to the liberty inborn in it."[86]

He names four. The first is Gomarus, and he quotes the comment on Matthew 11:21 by way of Balduinus Walaeus.[87] The second is Robert Baron, who "expressly approves the opinion of Fonseca, who posits in God a certain conditioned knowledge, before His free decree, which precedes the absolute foreknowledge of future things."[88] Le Blanc quotes Baron's comparison of God with a wise builder, who before he decrees absolutely "thought what would follow" if he should set up the heaven and the earth in the order in which he afterward disposed them.[89]

The third is Walaeus, and Le Blanc quotes him. Walaeus acknowledges in God "a middle knowledge, by which things future by hypothesis are known, even though they are not, or are not yet, absolutely future," and he proves it from Scripture, so that there is "some such knowledge in God, before every decree of His, concerning that which certainly was going to be."[90] But in the same place Walaeus warns "that it is not necessary that this hypothetical knowledge be set up as some third species of knowledge, because it pertains to the knowledge of simple intelligence,"

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85 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXII–XXIV, in *Theses theologicae*, 448–49. Curcellaeus's praise of Gomarus stands in his preface to Arminius's examination of Gomarus's theses on predestination.

86 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXV, in *Theses theologicae*, 449.

87 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXV, in *Theses theologicae*, 449.

88 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXVI, in *Theses theologicae*, 449.

89 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXVII, in *Theses theologicae*, 449–50, quoting Baron, *Metaphysica generalis*, sect. 12, disp. 2, nn. 55 and 56.

90 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXVIII, in *Theses theologicae*, 450. Le Blanc cites the quarto edition of Walaeus's Common Places, p. 160. Compare Walaeus, *Loci communes*, "De Dei scientia," 175 (left column).

and he warns against two abuses: resting the decree of election on the good use of free choice, and denying God's efficacious operation in converting the will.[91]

The fourth is Paul Ferry, minister at Metz, who admits "this conditioned knowledge of future things, and [one] which precedes the free decree." In the passages Le Blanc quotes, Ferry writes that God first foresaw "that man would fall, if he were created fallible and tempted," and that then, "because He saw that it was expedient that it be so," it pleased him that this should come to pass, "not by bringing force upon man, but by so creating man and permitting [him] to temptation and to himself."[92]

Le Blanc closes the list with the majority: "But many other Theologians of the Reformed reject this Middle and conditioned knowledge in God as vain and superfluous; not all, however, in the same mode, nor resting on the same foundations."[93]

The list is not the same as the later witnesses' list. Le Blanc adds Baron and Ferry, and he puts Baron with Fonseca. Of the five considered in this appendix, he names Gomarus and Walaeus here, and he names Crocius in his theses on the order of the decrees. He does not name Alsted.

F.5.3 His Own Position

Le Blanc then states what he himself thinks, and his first point is one that he says all grant:

> "But that I too may briefly open what I myself think: First, this is certain and, as is plain from what has been said, granted by all, that nothing is freely future under any condition, and can be known as such, unless in the condition under which it is

91 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXIX–XXX, in *Theses theologicae*, 450.

92 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXXI, in *Theses theologicae*, 450, quoting Ferry, *Vindiciae pro scholastico orthodoxo*, 203, 209, and 210.

93 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXXII, in *Theses theologicae*, 450.

> said to be future there is included a decree of God concerning not denying to the creature the concurrence necessary for acting."[94]

His second point is that propositions about conditioned free futures, with that condition understood, are determinately true or false. He then meets the objection that nothing is future except dependently on God's decree:

> "I answer that, in order that a thing be absolutely future, there is indeed prerequired some decree of God on which its futurition depends; but in order that a thing be not simply future, but only would be future under some condition, there is not required a decree which is in God in act, but a decree suffices which, according to the hypothesis, would have to be posited in God."[95]

From these points he draws his conclusion:

> "It cannot therefore with any reason be denied, and it ought to be granted by all, that there is given in God a certain knowledge of those things which are freely and contingently future under a certain condition, before we conceive any actual decree in God concerning future things. The whole difficulty is whether the condition under which the thing is said to be future must include a decree concerning premoving and predetermining the second cause to act, or whether it suffices that the decree which, according to that condition, would have to be posited in God be only concerning furnishing a certain concurrence of itself indifferent, and which is determined by the second cause to a certain species of action."[96]

Le Blanc takes the second side. "But we are of this opinion, that second causes do many things in time to which they are not predetermined by God," for he does not see how God would not be the author of sin if he predetermined free causes to acts evil in themselves.[97] He therefore concludes: "I see nothing therefore why we should deny to God the knowledge of those things which would be freely future under a certain condition, although in that condition there is not included a decree concerning predetermining the free cause to this or that."[98]

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94 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XLV, in *Theses theologicae*, 453.

95 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XLVIII, in *Theses theologicae*, 453.

96 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. LIII, in *Theses theologicae*, 454.

97 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. LIV, in *Theses theologicae*, 454.

98 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. LXIII, in *Theses theologicae*, 455.

Two limits follow at once. The first is that this knowledge is not needed for the purpose for which the Jesuits devised it:

> "I add that this knowledge of things conditionally future, such as we have so far described, has no necessary connection with the various errors for defending and plastering over which very many abuse it. Especially, however, we contend that it in no way fights with grace efficacious of itself, nor is it necessary that we apply it for reconciling the efficacy of divine grace with the liberty of human choice."[99]

The second limit comes in the third part of the series, on the doctrine of the Reformed school. There Le Blanc reports that Arminius's disciples, Grevinchoven among them, "expressly apply middle knowledge for untying this knot, as very many Jesuits are wont," and that among the Reformed who subscribe to Dort there are some who follow the same way, among them Robert Baron.[100] After reviewing the opinions he says that he cannot rest in any of them, and of the opinion that builds a conditioned knowledge before the decrees he writes:

> "For that opinion which builds a conditioned knowledge before the divine decrees, concerning the future inclination and propensity of the will to this or that part if such an occasion of acting be offered to it … this opinion, I say, avoids indeed many inconveniences by which the other opinions are pressed; but with it can hardly be reconciled the victorious and of itself efficacious grace which subjects free choice to itself, and is by no means to be subjected to free choice, which the orthodox School proclaims."[101]

He adds that even if God foreknows what the will would do in given circumstances, a decree that predefines something as simply future brings a certain antecedent necessity with it, "since that knowledge does not make such a decree of God to be in our power."[102]

F.5.4 Le Blanc's Position

Le Blanc grants more than any of the other four. He grants a knowledge of conditioned free futures before any actual decree, and he grants that the decree supposed in the condition

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99 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. LXV, in *Theses theologicae*, 455.

100 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars III, th. II–III, in *Theses theologicae*, 462.

101 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars III, th. XXXIV–XXXV, in *Theses theologicae*, 467.

102 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars III, th. XXXVI, in *Theses theologicae*, 467.

need be only a decree of indifferent concurrence and not of predetermination. In that respect he stands nearest to the Jesuit account as he himself states it. But he denies the use for which the Jesuits devised the knowledge. It is not needed to reconcile efficacious grace with liberty, it has no necessary tie to their errors, and the opinion that builds God's decrees on a foreseen inclination of the will can hardly be reconciled with the grace that subjects free choice to itself. He holds the knowledge, but he does not let it govern the decree.

On the narrower question, whether a conditioned knowledge of how men would use their free choice is to be put before the decree of predestination, he reports that very many of the Reformed deny it, and that "Some, however, seem to admit in God that conditioned knowledge, as Ludovicus Crocius, Professor in the School of Bremen, Gomarus and Walaeus, and others whom we have mentioned in our Theses on Middle knowledge."[103] The word is "seem." And in his own report of Walaeus he records that Walaeus forbids this use of the knowledge for election.

F.6 What They Held in Common

The five did not write as a party, and they did not all say the same thing. Gomarus does not use the name middle knowledge; Alsted does. Gomarus and Walaeus say that the conditioned knowledge precedes the decree. Crocius accepts a definition that places it after the decree and then folds it into simple intelligence, which precedes. Alsted says that the middle knowledge precedes the act of the will but sees something future from the hypothesis of it. Le Blanc places it before any actual decree, with a supposed decree of concurrence in the condition. These differences are real. But the common position can be stated in four points. Not every writer states every point, and where a point is only implied I say so.

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103 Le Blanc, "De decretorum divinorum ordine," th. XLI, in *Theses theologicae*, 185.

The first is that God knows what would come to pass if a condition were posited, and knows it certainly. Gomarus calls it the conditioned foreknowledge. Alsted calls it the middle knowledge. Crocius says that the knowledge of conditioned futures is "certain and infallible to God."[104] Walaeus calls it the hypothetical knowledge. Le Blanc says that it cannot with any reason be denied.

The second is that this knowledge is not a third knowledge standing on its own footing beside God's natural and free knowledge. Gomarus puts it under the indefinite and natural foreknowledge. Walaeus says that it pertains to the knowledge of simple intelligence and need not be set up as a third species. Crocius makes it part of simple intelligence and says that no distinct knowledge is needed. Alsted keeps the threefold division, but he says that all God's knowledge, the middle included, is necessary, and that the division holds only in the mode he gave. Le Blanc does not take up the point in his own name. He reports Walaeus's reduction of the knowledge to simple intelligence, and in his own theses he grounds it in the principle that no truth escapes the divine intellect.[105] Heidegger's one criticism of the Reformed three, that they would more rightly have referred the knowledge to God's natural knowledge, is in effect a criticism of their terms more than of their doctrine, since that is where Gomarus, Walaeus, and Crocius in fact place it.

The third is that God's own will is in the condition. Walaeus says that a conditional decree is included in the conditional predictions. Le Blanc says that all grant that nothing is freely future under any condition unless a decree of concurrence is included in it. Crocius's first step is a knowledge of what would follow in a creation "He either determining or permitting." Alsted describes the hypothetical objects as what would exist from creatures by God's

104 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 13, 569.

105 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XLIX, in *Theses theologicae*, 453.

"conservation, motion, aid, concurrence, permission." Gomarus's example of the Fall makes the condition out of God's own acts. Gomarus and Alsted do not say in so many words that a decree is included, and for them the point is an inference from the way they state the condition. But it is the point on which Spanheim rested his defense of the Reformed, that they "always suppose an intervening Decree as the condition."[106]

The fourth is that the knowledge is not the cause of the decree, and that the certainty of what will in fact come to pass rests on the decree alone. Gomarus says that the series of things the knowledge presents is regarded "not as a cause but as an occasion," and that definite foreknowledge flows from the decree and not from future things.[107] Alsted says that the middle knowledge intervenes in what depends on created choice, but that God's will is not moved by its object and that the creature's act is at most an occasion of a divine volition. Crocius says that without the decree God would never see anything to be future in act. Walaeus writes that the treasure of things known by the divine mind "is not to be set up as the cause of any decree afterwards [made] by God."[108] Le Blanc says that the futurition of what is absolutely future depends on a decree, and that the knowledge may not be used to subject grace to free choice.

How does this position differ from Molina's? Not chiefly in the order of the instants, and not chiefly in whether a decree is supposed in the condition. Le Blanc, who sets out the Jesuit doctrine at length, reports that on their account too a decree is included in the condition, and Le Blanc himself places the conditioned knowledge before any actual decree. The difference lies in what the knowledge is permitted to do. In the Jesuit account, as Le Blanc states it, the knowledge

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106 Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 575; Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXI, reg. IV, 79; Spanheim, *Elenchus controversiarum*, VII, §II, in *Opera*, vol. 3, col. 859.

107 Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXXV, in *Opera*, Pars II, 28 (left column); Gomarus, *Conciliatio*, cap. VI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 129 (right column).

108 Walaeus, *Consilia et epistolæ*, letter to Johannes Polyander, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Franciscus Hackius, 1643), 406 (right column).

is the ground of the reconciliation of liberty with the decrees. In the opinion he examines in his third part, God foreordained the actions of men no otherwise than by willing to create them in a given state and to offer them occasions from which he foresaw how they would act.[109] The five refuse that order. Walaeus forbids the knowledge to be used to rest election on the good use of free choice or to take God's efficacious operation out of conversion. Le Blanc says that it is not needed to reconcile grace with liberty and that the opinion which builds the decrees on a foreseen inclination can hardly be reconciled with efficacious grace. Gomarus calls the foreseen series an occasion and not a cause. Alsted makes God's absolute will the first and supreme cause of all things, and Crocius makes the decree, partly efficacious and partly permitting, the ground of all that is actually future. By inference, the knowledge of what would be serves God's free decree in all five, and in none of them does it govern it.

That is why the later witnesses could judge as they did. Heidegger called the three he named orthodox and said only that they would more rightly have referred the knowledge to God's natural knowledge. Spanheim said that the Remonstrant knowledge was falsely imputed to them. Marck said that they differed from the rest "more in phrasing than in substance,"[110] which is the measure Gomarus himself had laid down for reading the orthodox when they speak differently. The five held a conditioned knowledge in God, and they held it under the decree. Their common ground is the ground on which the question of God's knowledge within the decree has to be taken up.

F.7 The Use Made of Them

The book of which this appendix is a part follows Gomarus on occasion, Alsted on the will and the order of its objects, Crocius on classification, and Le Blanc on concurrence. It keeps

109 Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. I and III, in *Theses theologicae*, 445–46; pars III, th. XXXV, 467.
110 De Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus*, pars 1, cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660.

within their limits by confining the knowledge to Adam's two-way will and excluding it from grace and election. Its own addition is that the knowledge serves the Covenant of Redemption: God is moved by the covenant alone, and the knowledge shows the occasion.

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