

THE COMPLETE POETRY
AND ESSENTIAL PROSE
OF JOHN MILTON



*Edited by William Kerrigan,
John Rumrich,
and Stephen M. Fallon*



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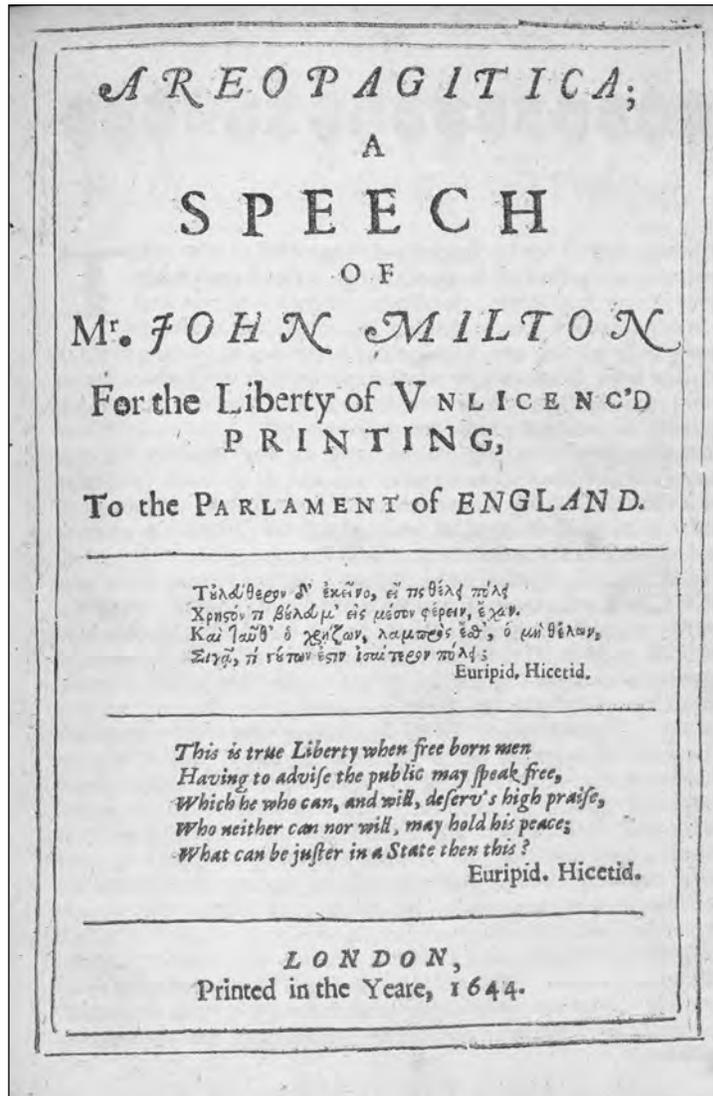
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FIRST EDITION



Title page to *Areopagitica* (1644).

is of bad books, that they to a discreet and judicious reader serve in many respects to discover, to confute, to forewarn, and to illustrate. Whereof what better witness can ye expect I should produce than one of your own now sitting in Parliament, the chief of learned men reputed in this land, Mr. Selden, whose volume of natural and national laws proves, not only by great authorities brought together, but by exquisite reasons and theorems almost mathematically demonstrative, that all opinions, yea errors, known, read, and collated, are of main service and assistance toward the speedy attainment of what is truest.⁵² I conceive, therefore, that when God did enlarge the universal diet of man's body, saving ever the rules of temperance, he then also, as before, left arbitrary the dieting and repasting of our minds, as wherein every mature man might have to exercise his own leading capacity.

How great a virtue is temperance, how much of moment through the whole life of man!⁵³ Yet God commits the managing so great a trust, without particular law or prescription, wholly to the demeanor of every grown man. And therefore when he himself tabled the Jews from heaven, that omer which was every man's daily portion of manna is computed to have been more than might have well sufficed the heartiest feeder thrice as many meals.⁵⁴ For those actions which enter into a man, rather than issue out of him and therefore defile not,⁵⁵ God uses not to captivate under a perpetual childhood of prescription but trusts him with the gift of reason to be his own chooser. There were but little work left for preaching, if law and compulsion should grow so fast upon those things which heretofore were governed only by exhortation. Solomon informs us that much reading is a weariness to the flesh,⁵⁶ but neither he, nor other inspired author tells us that such or such reading is unlawful; yet certainly had God thought good to limit us herein, it had been much more expedient to have told us what was unlawful than what was wearisome. As for the burning of those Ephesian books by St. Paul's converts, 'tis replied the books were magic—the Syriac so renders them.⁵⁷ It was a private act, a voluntary act, and leaves us to a voluntary imitation: the men in remorse burnt those books which were their own; the magistrate by this example is not appointed; these men practiced the books; another might perhaps have read them in some sort usefully.

Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned, that those confused seeds which were imposed on Psyche as an incen-

52. John *Selden* (1584–1654) served in Parliament and was one of England's most distinguished scholars, especially of legal history. He begins *De Jure Naturali et Gentium juxta Disciplinam Ebraeorum* (1640) with the claim that truth is best served when dissent is published.

53. On knowledge, nourishment, and temperance, cp. *PL* 7.126–30.

54. See Exod. 16.

55. One of Jesus' sayings (Mark 7.15).

56. Eccles. 12.12.

57. See Acts 19.19.

sant labor to cull out and sort asunder, were not more intermixed.⁵⁸ It was from out the rind of one apple tasted that the knowledge of good and evil as two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the world. And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evil, that is to say, of knowing good by evil.

As therefore the state of man now is, what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring⁵⁹ Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. That virtue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an excremental⁶⁰ whiteness; which was the reason why our sage and serious poet, Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas,⁶¹ describing true temperance under the person of Guyon, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon and the bower of earthly bliss that he might see and know and yet abstain.⁶² Since therefore the knowledge and survey of vice is in this world so necessary to the constituting of human virtue, and the scanning of error to the confirmation of truth, how can we more safely and with less danger scout into the regions of sin and falsity than by reading all manner of tractates and hearing all manner of reason? And this is the benefit which may be had of books promiscuously read.

But of the harm that may result hence, three kinds are usually reckoned. First is feared the infection that may spread. But then all human learning and controversy in religious points must remove out of the world, yea the Bible itself; for that oftentimes relates blasphemy not nicely, it describes the carnal sense of wicked men not unelegantly, it brings in holiest men passionately murmuring against providence through all the arguments of Epicurus.⁶³ In other great disputes it answers dubiously and darkly to the common reader; and ask a Talmudist what ails the modesty of his marginal Keri, that Moses and all the

58. Apuleius tells of Psyche and the heap of mixed seeds (*Golden Ass* 4–6).

59. Cp. Eph. 6.11. The first edition has “wayfaring,” but in all known presentation copies *y* is crossed out and *r* substituted. The change is thus probably authorial.

60. **excremental**: external, superficial.

61. John Duns *Scotus* (1265–1308) and St. Thomas *Aquinas* (c. 1225–74) were scholastic philosophers much studied in the universities.

62. Milton’s account of Spenser is significantly erroneous. The palmer, representing reason, does not accompany Guyon, the Knight of Temperance, into Mammon’s cave.

63. That is, the skepticism of holy men as recorded in Scripture sometimes corresponds to arguments of Epicurus (see, e.g., Eccles. 8.15). **nicely**: delicately.

tions,⁸³ as the bonds and ligaments of the commonwealth, the pillars and the sustainers of every written statute. These they be which will bear chief sway in such matters as these, when all licensing will be easily eluded. Impunity and remissness for certain are the bane of a commonwealth, but here the great art lies to discern in what the law is to bid restraint and punishment, and in what things persuasion only is to work. If every action which is good or evil in man at ripe years were to be under pittance, and prescription, and compulsion, what were virtue but a name, what praise could be then due to well-doing, what gramercy⁸⁴ to be sober, just, or continent?

Many there be that complain of divine providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions.⁸⁵ We ourselves esteem not of that obedience, or love, or gift, which is of force. God therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object, ever almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence. Wherefore did he create passions within us, pleasures round about us, but that these rightly tempered are the very ingredients of virtue? They are not skillful considerers of human things who imagine to remove sin by removing the matter of sin. For, besides that it is a huge heap increasing under the very act of diminishing, though some part of it may for a time be withdrawn from some persons, it cannot from all, in such a universal thing as books are; and when this is done, yet the sin remains entire. Though ye take from a covetous man all his treasure, he has yet one jewel left; ye cannot bereave him of his covetousness. Banish all objects of lust, shut up all youth into the severest discipline that can be exercised in any hermitage, ye cannot make them chaste that came not thither so: such great care and wisdom is required to the right managing of this point.

Suppose we could expel sin by this means; look how much we thus expel of sin, so much we expel of virtue. For the matter of them both is the same; remove that, and ye remove them both alike. This justifies the high providence of God, who though he command us temperance, justice, continence, yet pours out before us even to a profuseness all desirable things and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limit and satiety. Why should we then affect a rigor contrary to the manner of God and of nature, by abridging or scanting those means which books freely permitted are, both to the trial of virtue and the exercise of truth? It would be better done to learn that the law must needs be frivolous which goes to restrain things uncertainly and yet equally working to good and to evil. And were I the chooser, a dram of well-doing should be preferred before many times as much the forcible hindrance of evil-doing. For God sure es-

83. Plato, *Laws* 1 (643–45), a passage that may have suggested the ensuing puppetry metaphor.

84. **gramercy**: occasion for thanks.

85. For the identification of reason and choice, cp. *PL* 3,95–128. **motions**: puppet shows.

teems the growth and completing of one virtuous person more than the restraint of ten vicious.

And albeit whatever thing we hear or see, sitting, walking, traveling, or conversing may be fitly called our book, and is of the same effect that writings are, yet grant the thing to be prohibited were only books, it appears that this order hitherto is far insufficient to the end which it intends. Do we not see—not once or oftener, but weekly—that continued court-libel against the Parliament and City printed, as the wet sheets can witness, and dispersed among us, for all that licensing can do?⁸⁶ Yet this is the prime service a man would think wherein this order should give proof of itself. If it were executed, you'll say. But certain, if execution be remiss or blindfold now and in this particular what will it be hereafter and in other books? If then the order shall not be vain and frustrate, behold a new labor, Lords and Commons, ye must repeal and proscribe all scandalous and unlicensed books already printed and divulged—after ye have drawn them up into a list, that all may know which are condemned and which not—and ordain that no foreign books be delivered out of custody till they have been read over. This office will require the whole time of not a few overseers, and those no vulgar men. There be also books which are partly useful and excellent, partly culpable and pernicious; this work will ask as many more officials to make expurgations and expunctions, that the commonwealth of learning be not damnified.⁸⁷ In fine, when the multitude of books increase upon their hands, ye must be fain to catalogue all those printers who are found frequently offending and forbid the importation of their whole suspected typography. In a word, that this your order may be exact and not deficient, ye must reform it perfectly according to the model of Trent and Seville,⁸⁸ which I know ye abhor to do.

Yet though ye should condescend to this, which God forbid, the order still would be but fruitless and defective to that end whereto ye meant it. If to prevent sects and schisms, who is so unread or so uncatechized in story that hath not heard of many sects refusing books as a hindrance and preserving their doctrine unmixed for many ages only by unwritten traditions? The Christian faith, for that was once a schism, is not unknown to have spread all over Asia ere any gospel or epistle was seen in writing. If the amendment of manners be aimed at, look into Italy and Spain, whether those places be one scruple the better, the honester, the wiser, the chaster, since all the inquisitional rigor that hath been executed upon books.

Another reason, whereby to make it plain that this order will miss the end it seeks, consider by the quality which ought to be in every licenser. It cannot be denied but that he who is made judge to sit upon the birth or death of books

86. Milton refers to the weekly Royalist newspaper, *Mercurius Aulicus*, published from 1642 to 1645.

87. **damnified**: injured or impaired.

88. Milton has already identified the Council of Trent (1545–63) as the historical origin of prepublication licensing. The Spanish Inquisition, instituted in 1481, had its seat in *Seville*.

Selections from
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE
John Milton
ENGLISHMAN

To All the Churches of Christ and to All in any part of the world
who profess the Christian Faith, Peace, Knowledge of the Truth,
and Eternal Salvation in God the Father and in our
Lord Jesus Christ.¹

The process of restoring religion to something of its pure original state, after it had been defiled with impurities for more than thirteen hundred years,² dates from the beginning of the last century. Since that time many theological systems have been propounded, aiming at further purification, and providing sometimes brief, sometimes more lengthy and methodical expositions of almost all the chief points of Christian doctrine. This being so, I think I should explain straight away why, if any work has yet been published on this subject which is as exhaustive as possible, I have been dissatisfied with it, and why, on the other hand, if all previous writers have failed in this attempt, I have not been discouraged from making the same attempt myself.

If I were to say that I had focused my studies principally upon Christian doctrine because nothing else can so effectually wipe away those two repulsive afflictions, tyranny and superstition,³ from human life and the human mind, I should show that I had been concerned not for religion but for life's well-being.

But in fact I decided not to depend upon the belief or judgment of others in religious questions for this reason: God has revealed the way of eternal salva-

1. "Renaissance theologians tended to address their works to noblemen, patrons, friends, or to the reader; and I have not noted another Renaissance systematic theology directed, like Milton's, to the combined churches of Christ and all Christians" (Kelley).

2. That is, from the early fourth century, when Constantine (306–37) legalized Christianity and the Council of Nicaea (325) formulated the doctrine of the Trinity.

3. Cp. *Def* (Yale 4:535): "the two greatest evils in human life, the most fatal to virtue, namely, tyranny and superstition"; *REW*: "the two most prevailing usurpers over mankind, superstition and tyranny" (p. 1117).

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1 Sam. 2.2: *there is none as holy as Jehovah*, and 6.20 [. . .]; Job 15.15: *the heavens are not clean in his eyes*; Isa. 6.2 [. . .], 6.3 [. . .]; 40.25 [. . .], and 41.20 [. . .]; Hab. 1.13 [. . .].

Secondly, also under the concept of WILL, God is SUPREMEY KIND. Ex. 34.6: *merciful, gracious, patient, of great kindness and fidelity*. Similarly Ps. 86.15 and 103.8 and 5.4: *evil will not dwell with you*, and 25.6: *kindnesses from the beginning of the world*, 103.11 [. . .] and 103.17 [. . .] and 119.68 [. . .]; Lam. 3.22 [. . .]; Matt. 19.17 [. . .]; Luke 6.36 [. . .]; 2 Cor. 1.3 [. . .]; Eph. 2.4 [. . .]; 1 John 4.8 [. . .]. From God's supreme wisdom and goodness may be deduced a further proof of his immutability, for a being supremely wise and good neither would nor could, without contradicting his own nature, change his state of supreme goodness.

Thirdly, just as God is the true God by nature, so with respect to his WILL he is TRUE and FAITHFUL. Ps. 19.8: *the testimony of Jehovah is true*; and John 7.28: *he who sent me is true*; Rom 3.4: *let God be true, but every man a liar*; 2 Tim. 2.13 [. . .]; 1 Cor. 1.9 and 10.13 [. . .]; Rev. 6.10 [. . .].

Fourthly, he is JUST. Deut. 32.4: *all his ways are justice, he is without iniquity, just and right*; Ps. 36.6 [. . .] and 119.137 [. . .]; Isa. 5.16 [. . .]. But I am not concerned at this juncture to discuss God's justice, and what is consistent or inconsistent with it, more widely. For either it is self-evident, or it will be dealt with more conveniently when occasion arises later in the work. Severity, also, is attributed to God: Rom. 11.22: *abrupt severity to those who fell away*.

The flower of all these attributes is that supreme excellence of God, by virtue of which he is truly perfect and truly blessed in supreme glory, and through which he is most justly and deservedly the supreme Lord of all things, as he is often called. Ps. 16.11: *in your sight is an abundance of joys*, and 104.1: *you have clothed yourself in glory and majesty*; Dan. 7.10 [. . .]; Matt. 5.48: *as the Father is perfect*; 1 Tim. 1.11 [. . .]; 6.15 [. . .].

Some description is extant of this divine glory, in so far as mortals can comprehend it. Ex. 19.18, etc.: *Mount Sinai smoked . . .*, and 24.10, etc.: *they saw the God of Israel, and beneath his feet something resembling a pavement of sapphire, and like the very body of heaven in brightness*; 33.9, 10: *as the cloudy pillar descending*, etc., and 33.18; 1 Kings 19.11 [. . .]; 8.10, 11 [. . .], 22.19 [. . .]; Ps. 18.8, etc., and 104; Micah 1.3, etc.; Nahum 1.3, etc.; Isa. 6; Ezek. 1 and 8.1-3 and 10.1, etc., and 43.2, 3; Hab. 3.3, etc.; Dan. 7.9; Rev. 4.

It follows, finally, that we must call God WONDERFUL and INCOMPREHENSIBLE. Judges 13.18: *why do you make eager enquiries about my name, since it is an object for wonder?*; Ps. 145.3: *there is no finding out his greatness*; Isa. 40.28 [. . .].

CHAPTER 3

OF DIVINE DECREE

Up to now I have examined God from the point of view of his nature: now we must learn more about him by investigating his efficiency.

God's EFFICIENCY is either INTERNAL or EXTERNAL.

God's INTERNAL EFFICIENCY is that which begins and ends within God himself. His decrees come into this category: Eph. 1.9: *which he had determined beforehand in his own mind.*

A DECREE of God is either GENERAL or SPECIAL.

God's GENERAL DECREE is that by which HE DECREED FROM ETERNITY, WITH ABSOLUTE FREEDOM, WITH ABSOLUTE WISDOM AND WITH ABSOLUTE HOLINESS, ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH HE PROPOSED OR WHICH HE WAS GOING TO PERFORM.

ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH, etc.: Eph. 1.11: *who does all things according to the resolution of his own will.* This does not mean the things which others perform, or which God performs in co-operation with others, to whom he has granted, by nature, freedom of action, but rather the things he performs or purposes singly and by himself. For example, he decreed by himself to create the world, and he decreed by himself that he would not curse the earth any longer, Gen. 8.21.

FROM ETERNITY. Acts 15.18: *all God's works are known to him from the beginning of the world;* 1 Cor. 2.7 [. . .].

WITH ABSOLUTE FREEDOM: that is, not forced, not impelled by any necessity,²⁸ but just as he wished: Eph. 1.11, as above.

WITH ABSOLUTE WISDOM: that is, according to his perfect foreknowledge of all things that were to be created. Acts 2.23: *by the deliberate counsel and foreknowledge of God,* and 4.28: *to do whatever your power and counsel foreordained,* 15.18: *all God's works are known to him from the beginning of the world;* 1 Cor. 2.7 [. . .]; Eph. 3.10, 11 [. . .].

It is absurd, then, to separate God's decree or intention from his eternal resolution and foreknowledge and give the former chronological priority. For God's foreknowledge is simply his wisdom under another name, or that idea of all things which, to speak in human terms, he had in mind before he decreed anything.²⁹

So we must conclude that God made no absolute decrees about anything which he left in the power of men, for men have freedom of action. The whole course of scripture shows this: [. . .]. In 2 Kings 20.1, though God said that Hezekiah would die straight away, this did not happen: therefore God had not decreed it without reservation. The death of Josiah was not positively decreed, but he did not listen to Necho's speech, which was derived from the word of God, warning him not to march out, 2 Chron. 35.22. Again, Jer. 18.9, 10: *at that moment when I speak about a nation or a kingdom, saying that I will build or plant it, if, through not paying attention to my voice, it do something that seems evil in my sight, I shall, in turn, repent of the good which I said I should do for it.* In other words, I shall reverse

28. The Latin of the manuscript reads "*nulla necessitate impulsus.*" Cp. PL 3.120: "So without least impulse or shadow of fate."

29. Cp. PL 7.554-57: "Thence to behold this new created world/Th' addition of his empire, how it showed/In prospect from his throne, how good, how fair/Answering his great idea."

my decree because that nation did not keep the condition upon which the decree depended. Here we have a rule given by God himself! He wishes us always to understand his decrees in the light of this agreement, and always clearly to appreciate the condition upon which the decree depends. Jer. 26.3: *if it should happen that they are obedient and that each man turn from his evil path, so that I repent the harm I intend to do them because of the depravity of their behavior.* So, too, God had not decreed absolutely even upon the destruction of Jerusalem: Jer. 38.17, etc [. . .]; Jonah 3.4: *yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown*, but, at 3.10, when he saw they had reformed God repented, although Jonah was angry and thought it did not become God in the least.³⁰ Acts 27.24, 31: *I have given you all as a gift. But unless these men stay on board . . .*; here Paul revokes the divinely inspired statement which he had made: God takes back the gift given to Paul unless they all take care of themselves to the utmost of their ability.

Judging from these passages of scripture then, and from many others of the same kind, which we are immediately bound to acknowledge as authoritative, it is beyond dispute that the supreme God has not absolutely decreed all things.

Each side of this controversy has hosts of adherents, all arguing at great length and with altogether more subtlety than weight. However, if it is allowable to apply the standards of mortal reason to divine decrees, this method of making decrees in a non-absolute way can be readily defended, even with regard to human considerations, as supremely wise and in no way unworthy of God. For if the decrees of God quoted above, and others of the same kind which frequently occur, were interpreted in an absolute sense without any implied conditions, God would seem to contradict himself and be changeable.

[. . .]³¹

It is no good replying that this necessity is not the result of compulsion but that it springs from God's immutability, by virtue of which everything is decreed, or from his infallibility of foreknowledge, by virtue of which everything is foreknown. I shall give a full exposure of these two purely academic types of necessity later. Meanwhile I recognize no other type of necessity than the one which Logic, that is, reason teaches:³² namely, when a given cause produces some single unalterable effect either as a result of its own inherent propensity, as when fire burns, which is called natural necessity, or as the result of the compulsion of some external force, which is called compulsory necessity. In the latter case, whatever effect the given cause produces is said to be produced *per*

30. On divine repentance and its implications, see previous chapter, note 15.

31. In the deleted paragraph, Milton considers and rejects the claim that God predestines not only the end but the means to the end of his decree. Milton revisits the point in chapter 4.

32. Cp. *Art of Logic* (Yale 8:211): "For the theologians produce rules about God, about divine substances, and about sacraments purportedly out of the middle of logic, as though these rules had been furnished simply for their own convenience, although nothing is more foreign to logic, or indeed to reason itself, than the grounds for these rules as formulated by them."

accidens.³³ Now any necessity operating externally upon a given cause either makes it produce a certain effect or limits it from producing other effects. In either case it is clear that the cause loses all freedom of action. In God a certain immutable internal necessity to do good, independent of all outside influence, can be consistent with absolute freedom of action. For in the same divine nature each tends to the same result. However, it does not follow from this that I must allow the same possibility where two different natures are concerned, namely the nature of God and the nature of man. For in this case the external immutability of the one and the internal liberty of the other may not have the same aim at all but point in opposite directions. Nor, incidentally, do I concede the point that there is in God any necessity to act. I grant only that he is necessarily God. For scripture itself bears witness to the fact that his decrees and still more his actions, whatever they may be, are absolutely free.³⁴

But it is said that divine necessity, or the necessity of a first cause, does not bring any compulsion to bear upon the liberty of free agents. I reply that, if it does not compel, then either it restricts liberty within certain limits, or assists it, or does nothing. If it restricts or assists then it is either the only or the joint and principal cause of every action,³⁵ good and bad, of the free agent. If it does nothing, it is not a cause at all, still less should it be called necessity.

We imagine nothing unworthy of God if we maintain that those results, those conditions which God himself has chosen to place within man's free power, depend upon man's free will. In fact, God made his decrees conditional in this way for the very purpose of allowing free causes to put into effect that freedom which he himself gave them.³⁶ It would be much more unworthy of God to announce that man is free but really deprive him of freedom; and freedom is destroyed or at least obscured if we admit any such sophistical concept of necessity as that which, we are asked to believe, results not from compulsion but from immutability or infallibility. This concept has misled and continues to mislead a lot of people.

However, I affirm that, strictly speaking, the divine plan depends only upon God's own wisdom. By this wisdom he had perfect foreknowledge of all things

33. Cp. *Art of Logic* (Yale 8:226–27): “An efficient cause is such either *per se* or *per accidens*. . . . A *per se* efficient cause is one which causes efficiently through its own power, that is, one which produces an effect from an intrinsic principle. . . . A *per accidens* efficient cause is one which causes through an eternal power, that is, one not its own.”

34. Cp. *Art of Logic* (Yale 8:227): “Only God does all things with absolute freedom, that is, He does whatever he wills; and He can act or not act. This is attested to throughout Sacred Scripture.” See S. Fallon 1988.

35. Cp. *Art of Logic* (Yale 8:224): “An efficient cause works either by itself or along with other efficient causes, and of all these often one will be the principal cause, while another is less principal, or an assisting and helping cause.”

36. Cp. *Art of Logic* (Yale 8:227): “Only those causes act freely *ex hypothesi* which do things through reason and deliberation, as angels and men—on the hypothesis, to be sure, of the divine will, which in the beginning gave them the power to act freely. For freedom is the power to do or not to do this or that, unless of course God wills otherwise or some other force violently interferes.”

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in his own mind, and knew what they would be like and what their consequence would be when it eventually occurred.

But, you ask, how can these consequences which, on account of man's free will, are uncertain, be reconciled with God's absolutely firm decree? For it is written, Ps. 33.11: *Jehovah's intention will be stable for ever*, similarly Prov. 19.21; Isa. 46.10; Heb. 6.17: *the immutability of his plan*. My reply is that, in the first place, these consequences are not uncertain from God's point of view, but known with absolute certainty. They are not, however, inevitable, as we shall see later. Secondly, in all the passages quoted the divine plan is said to stand in the face of all human power and intention. It is not said to stand in opposition to the freedom of the will in matters where God himself has made man his own master, and decreed to make him so from all eternity. If it were otherwise, one of God's decrees would contradict another. This would lead to the result you object to in the arguments of others, that is, God becomes mutable so long as you make those things which by his command are matters of free will, appear inevitabilities. But God is not mutable if he makes no positive decree about anything which, through the freedom he decided to give man, could turn out otherwise. He would be mutable, and his intention would not be stable, if, by a second decree, he thwarted the freedom he had once decided upon, or cast the least shadow of necessity over it.

From the concept of freedom, then, all idea of necessity must be removed. No place must be given even to that shadowy and peripheral idea of necessity based on God's immutability and foreknowledge. If any idea of necessity remains, as I have said before, it either restricts free agents to a single course, or compels them against their will, or assists them when they are willing, or does nothing at all. If it restricts free agents to a single course, this makes man the natural cause of all his actions and therefore of his sins, just as if he were created with an inherent propensity towards committing sins. If it compels free agents against their will, this means that man is subject to the force of another's decree, and is thus the cause of sins only *per accidens*, God being the cause of the sin *per se*. If it assists free agents when they are willing, this makes God either the principal or the joint cause of sins. Lastly, if it does nothing at all, no necessity exists. By doing nothing it reduces itself to nothingness. For it is quite impossible that God should have made an inflexible decree about something which we know man is still at liberty to do or not to do. It is also impossible that a thing should be immutable which afterwards might or might not take place.

Whatever was a matter of free will for the first created man, could not then have been immutably or absolutely decreed from all eternity. Obviously, either nothing ever was in the power of man, or if anything was, God cannot be said to have made a firm decree about it.³⁷

37. This statement opposes Calvinist orthodoxy. Cp. Calvin, *Institutes* (3.23.7): "The decree is dreadful, I confess. Yet no one can deny that God foreknew what end man was to have before he created him, and consequently foreknew because he so ordained by his decree."

The absurdities which are said to ensue from this argument are either not absurdities or do not ensue from it. For it is neither absurd nor impious to say that the idea of certain things or events might come to God from some other source. Since God has decreed from eternity that man should have free will to enable him either to fall or not to fall, the idea of that evil event, the fall, was clearly present in God from some other source: everyone admits this.

It cannot be deduced from this that something temporal may cause or limit something eternal; for nothing temporal, but rather eternal wisdom supplied a cause for the divine plan.

The matter or object of the divine plan was that angels and men alike should be endowed with free will, so that they could either fall or not fall. Doubtless God's actual decree bore a close resemblance to this, so that all the evils which have since happened as a result of the fall could either happen or not: if you stand firm, you will stay; if you do not, you will be thrown out: if you do not eat it, you will live; if you do, you will die.

Those, then, who argue that man's freedom of action is subordinate to an absolute decree by God, wrongly conclude that God's decree is the cause of his foreknowledge and antecedent to it. But really, if we must discuss God in terms of our own habits and understandings, it seems more consonant with reason to foresee first and then decree, and indeed this is more in keeping with scripture, and with the nature of God himself, since, as I have just proved, he decreed everything with supreme wisdom in accordance with his foreknowledge.

I do not deny that God's will is the first cause of everything. But neither do I divorce his foreknowledge and wisdom from his will, much less pretend that the latter is antecedent. In short, God's will is no less the first cause of everything if he decrees that certain things shall depend upon the will of man, than if he had decreed to make all things inevitable.

To sum up these numerous arguments in a few words, this is briefly how the matter stands, looked at from a thoroughly reasonable angle. By virtue of his wisdom God decreed the creation of angels and men as beings gifted with reason and thus with free will.³⁸ At the same time he foresaw the direction in which they would tend when they used this absolutely unimpaired freedom. What then? Shall we say that God's providence or foreknowledge imposes any necessity upon them? Certainly not: no more than if some human being possessed the same foresight. For an occurrence foreseen with absolute certainty by a human being will no less certainly take place than one foretold by God. For example, Elisha foresaw what evils King Hazael would bring upon the Israelites in a few years' time: 2 Kings 8.12. But no one would claim that these happened inevitably as a result of Elisha's foreknowledge: for these events, no less than any others, clearly arose from man's will, which is always free.³⁹ Similarly, nothing happens

38. Cp. *PL* 3.108: "reason also is choice"; also 9.351–52: "But God left free the will, for what obeys/Reason, is free."

39. "*arbitrio semper libero*." In classical usage, *arbitrio libero* denotes discretionary power.

because God has foreseen it, but rather he has foreseen each event because each is the result of particular causes which, by his decree, work quite freely and with which he is thoroughly familiar. So the outcome does not rest with God who foresees it, but only with the man whose action God foresees. As I have demonstrated above, there can be no absolute divine decree about the action of free agents. Moreover, divine foreknowledge can no more affect the action of free agents than can human foreknowledge, that is, not at all, because in both cases the foreknowledge is within the mind of the foreknower and has no external effect.⁴⁰ Divine foreknowledge definitely cannot itself impose any necessity, nor can it be set up as a cause, in any sense, of free actions. If it is set up in this way, then liberty will be an empty word, and will have to be banished utterly not only from religion but also from morality and even from indifferent matters. Nothing will happen except by necessity, since there is nothing God does not foresee.

To conclude, we should feel certain that God has not decreed that everything must happen inevitably. Otherwise we should make him responsible for all the sins ever committed, and should make demons and wicked men blameless. But we should feel certain also that God really does foreknow everything that is going to happen. My opponent, of course, snatches up this last remark and thinks I have conceded enough for him to prove either that God does not foreknow everything, or that all future events must happen by necessity because God has foreknown them. But though future events will certainly happen, because divine foreknowledge cannot be mistaken, they will not happen by necessity, because foreknowledge, since it exists only in the mind of the foreknower, has no effect on its object.⁴¹ A thing which is going to happen quite freely in the course of events is not then produced as a result of God's foreknowledge, but arises from the free action of its own causes, and God knows in what direction these will, of their own accord, tend. In this way he knew that Adam would, of his own accord, fall. Thus it was certain that he would fall, but it was not necessary, because he fell of his own accord and that is irreconcilable with necessity.⁴² [. . .]. From all that has been said it is sufficiently clear that neither God's decree nor his foreknowledge can shackle free causes with any kind of necessity. There are some people, however, who, struggling to oppose this doctrine through thick and thin, do not hesitate to assert that God is, in himself, the cause and author of sin.⁴³ If I did not believe that they said such a thing from

40. Cp. *Art of Logic* (Yale 8:236): "While [an end] is still only in the mind . . . and has not been achieved, it does not yet truly exist; and since it does not yet exist, how can it be a cause?"

41. Cp. *Art of Logic* (Yale 8:229): "Theology will discuss providence better than logic will. But in passing let this much be said: fate or divine decree does not force anyone to do evil, and on the hypothesis of divine foreknowledge all things are certain, to be sure, but not necessary."

42. Cp. *PL* 3:111–23.

43. Arminius, whose theology of free will and predestination anticipates Milton's, writes that the doctrine that God by eternal decree determines our choice or inclines us in one direction or another "makes God to be the author of sin, and man to be exempt from blame. . . . It constitutes God as the real, proper, and only sinner" (*Apology or Defense*, art. 7, in *The Writings of James Arminius*, trans. James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall, 3 vols. [Baker Book House, 1956], 1:298). See Danielson.

error rather than wickedness, I should consider them of all blasphemers the most utterly damned. If I should attempt to refute them, it would be like inventing a long argument to prove that God is not the Devil. So much for God's GENERAL DECREE.

God's first and most excellent SPECIAL DECREE of all concerns HIS SON: primarily by virtue of this he is called FATHER:⁴⁴ Ps. 2:7: *I shall declare the decree: Jehovah said to me, You are my son I have begotten you today*; Heb. 1:5 [. . .]. And again *"I shall be a Father to him and he shall be a son to me"*; 1 Pet. 1:19, 20 [. . .]; Isa. 42:1 [. . .]; 1 Pet. 2:14 [. . .]. From all these quotations it appears that the Son of God was begotten by a decree of the Father.

Distinct mention is nowhere made of a SPECIAL DECREE of God about THE ANGELS: but it is implied in 1 Tim. 5:21: *of the elect angels*; Eph. 1:9, 10: *the mystery of his will etc. that he might collect together under a single head in Christ, all things in heaven, etc.*

CHAPTER 4 OF PREDESTINATION

The principal SPECIAL DECREE of God which concerns men is called PREDESTINATION: by which GOD, BEFORE THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE WORLD WERE LAID, HAD MERCY ON THE HUMAN RACE, ALTHOUGH IT WAS GOING TO FALL OF ITS OWN ACCORD, AND, TO SHOW THE GLORY OF HIS MERCY, GRACE AND WISDOM, PREDESTINED TO ETERNAL SALVATION, ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE or plan IN CHRIST, THOSE WHO WOULD IN THE FUTURE BELIEVE AND CONTINUE IN THE FAITH.

In academic circles the word "predestination" is habitually used to refer to reprobation as well as to election. For the discussion of such an exacting problem, however, this usage is too slapdash. Whenever the subject is mentioned in scripture, specific reference is made only to election: Rom. 8:29, 30: *he predestined that they should be shaped to the likeness of his son: and those whom he has predestined he has also called, justified and made glorious*; 1 Cor. 2:7 [. . .]; Eph. 1:5 [. . .], and 1:11 [. . .]; Acts 2:23: *when he had been given to you by the deliberate counsel and foreknowledge of God, compared with 4:28: that they might do everything which your power and your counsel predestined would be done*—in order, that is, to procure the salvation of man.

When other terms are used to signify predestination, the reference is always to election alone: Rom. 8:28: *who are called according to his purpose, or plan, and 9:23, 24: vessels of mercy which he prepared for glory beforehand; even those whom he has called;*

44. "Milton is here laying the foundation for his argument against the eternal generation of the Son: the Son was begotten in consequence of a decree; the decree preceded the execution of the decree; therefore the Son was begotten within the limits of time" (Kelley). On the prominence of Psalm 2 in contexts concerning the generation of the Son, see chapter 5, note 74.

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Eph. 3.11 [. . .]; 2 Tim. 1.9 [. . .]; 1 Thess. 5.9: *God has not appointed us to anger, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.* It does not follow from the negative part of this last quotation that others are appointed to anger. Nor does the clause in 1 Pet. 2.8: *to which they had been appointed,* mean that they were predestined from eternity, but rather from some time after they rebelled, just as the apostles are said to be “elected” in time and “appointed” by Christ to their employment, John 15.16.

If, in such a controversial question, any importance can be attached to metaphor and allegory, it is worth noting that mention is often made of “enrollment among the living” and of “the book of life,” but never of the “book of death”: Isa. 4.3: *enrolled among the living*; Dan. 12.1: *at that time the people will be set free, each one that will be found written in that book*; Luke 10.20 [. . .]; Phillip. 4.3 [. . .]. However this metaphor from writing does not seem to signify predestination from eternity, which is general, but rather some particular decree made by God within the bounds of time, and referring to certain men, on account of their works. Ps. 69.28: *let them be blotted out from the book of life, and not enrolled with the righteous*: it follows they were not enrolled from eternity. Isa. 65.6 [. . .]; Rev. 20.12: *the dead were judged in accordance with the things which had been written in these books, in accordance with the things they had done*—clearly, then, this was not the book of eternal predestination, but of their deeds.⁴⁵ Similarly those people were not marked down from eternity who are described in Jude 4 as *marked down for this doom long ago*. Why should we extend the sense of *long ago* so much, and not interpret it rather as “from the time when they became inveterate and hardened sinners”? Why, I repeat, should we extend the meaning of *long ago* so far into the past, either in this quotation or in the passage from which it seems to be taken, 2 Pet. 2.3: *the judgment long ago decreed for them has not been idle; destruction waits for them with unsleeping eyes?* Here it clearly means “from the time of their apostasy,” however long they concealed it.

Another text which is quoted against me is Prov. 16.4: *Jehovah has made all things for himself, even the wicked man for the day of evil.* But God did not make man wicked, much less did he make him so “for himself.” What did he do? He threatened the wicked man with the punishment he deserved, as was just, but did not predestine to punishment the man who did not deserve it. The point is clearer in Eccles. 7.29: *that God has made man upright, but they have thought up numerous devices.* The day of evil follows as certainly from this as if the wicked man had been made for it.

PREDESTINATION, then, must always be taken to refer to election, and seems often to be used instead of that term. What Paul says, Rom. 8.29: *those whom he foreknew, he also predestined* has the same meaning as 1 Pet. 1.2: *elect according to foreknowledge*; Rom. 9.11 [. . .] and 11.5 [. . .]; Eph. 1.4 [. . .]; Col. 3.12 [. . .]; 2 Thess. 2.13 [. . .]. There could, then, be nothing of reprobation in predestination: 1 Tim. 2.4: *who wishes that all men should be saved and should come to a knowledge of the*

45. Cp. PL 1:362–63: “blotted out and razed/By their rebellion, from the Books of Life.”

truth; 2 Pet. 3.9: *he is patiently disposed towards us, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Towards us*, that is, all men: not only the elect, as some propose, but particularly towards the wicked; thus Rom. 9.22: *tolerated the vessels of wrath*. If, as some object, Peter would hardly have numbered himself among the unbelievers, then surely neither would he have numbered himself, in the previous quotation, among the elect who had not yet repented. Besides, God does not delay on account of the elect, but hurries rather: Matt. 24.22: *those days shall be shortened*.

I do not understand by the term election that general or, so to speak, national election by which God chose the whole nation of Israel as his own people, Deut. 4.37: *because he loved your forefathers and elected their seed after them*, and 7.6–8: *Jehovah selected you to be a people peculiar to him*, and elsewhere, Isa. 45.4 [. . .].⁴⁶ Nor do I mean the election by which, after rejecting the Jews, God chose the Gentiles to whom he wished the gospel should be preached. This is spoken of particularly in Rom. 9 and 11. Nor do I mean the election by which he chooses an individual for some employment, 1 Sam. 10.24: *do you see whom Jehovah has chosen?*; John 6.70: *have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil*; whence they are sometimes called elect who are superior to the rest for any reason, as 2 John 1: *to the elect Lady*, which means, as it were, most excellent, and 2 John 13: *of your elect sister*; 1 Pet. 2.6: *the elect stone, precious*; 1 Tim. 5. 21: *of the elect angels*. I mean, rather, that special election which is almost the same as eternal predestination. Election, then, is not a part of predestination; much less is reprobation. Predestination, strictly speaking, includes a concept of aim, namely the salvation at least of believers, a thing in itself desirable. The aim of reprobation, on the other hand, is the destruction of unbelievers, a thing in itself repulsive and hateful. Clearly, then, God did not predestine reprobation at all, or make it his aim. Ezek. 18.32: *I have no pleasure in the death of a man who dies*, and 33.11: *may I not live, etc. if I have pleasure in the death of the wicked, but etc.* If God wished neither for sin nor for the death of the sinner, that is neither for the cause nor for the effect of reprobation, then certainly he did not wish for reprobation itself. Reprobation, therefore, is no part of divine predestination.

BY WHICH GOD: meaning, of course, the Father.⁴⁷ Luke 12.32: *it was your father's pleasure*; similarly whenever mention is made of the divine decree or plan: John 17.2: *as many as you have given him*; 17.6 [. . .]; similarly 11.24. Eph. 1.4 [. . .], 1.5 [. . .], 1.11: *predestined according to his purpose*.

BEFORE THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE WORLD WERE LAID: Eph. 1.4; 2 Tim. 1.9: *before the world began*; similarly Tit. 1.2.

HAD MERCY ON THE HUMAN RACE, ALTHOUGH IT WAS GOING TO FALL OF ITS OWN ACCORD. The matter or object of predestination was not simply man who was to be created, but man who was going to fall of his own free will. For the demonstration of divine mercy and grace which

46. Cp. PL 12.111–12: “And one peculiar nation to select/From all the rest”; also 12.214–15.

47. As the next chapter makes clear, in Milton's view, the Father alone is truly God.

God purposed as the final end of predestination necessarily presupposes man's sin and misery, originating in man alone. Everyone agrees that man could have avoided falling.⁴⁸ But if, because of God's decree, man could not help but fall (and the two contradictory opinions are sometimes voiced by the same people), then God's restoration of fallen man was a matter of justice not grace. For once it is granted that man fell, though not unwillingly, yet by necessity, it will always seem that that necessity either prevailed upon his will by some secret influence, or else guided his will in some way. But if God foresaw that man would fall of his own accord, then there was no need for him to make a decree about the fall, but only about what would become of man who was going to fall. Since, then, God's supreme wisdom foreknew the first man's falling away, but did not decree it, it follows that, before the fall of man, predestination was not absolutely decreed either. Predestination, even after the fall, should always be considered and defined not so much as the result of an actual decree but as arising from the immutable condition of a decree.⁴⁹

PREDESTINED: that is designated, elected. He made the salvation of man the goal and end, as it were, of his purpose. Hence may be refuted those false theories about preterition from eternity and the abandonment of the non-elect. For in opposition to these God has clearly and frequently declared, as I have quoted above, that he desires the salvation of all and the death of none, that he hates nothing he has made, and has omitted nothing which might provide salvation for everyone.

TO SHOW THE GLORY OF HIS MERCY, GRACE AND WISDOM. This is the supreme end of predestination: Rom. 9.23; *that he might make known the riches of his glory towards the vessels of mercy*; Eph. 1.6 [. . .]; 1 Cor. 2.7 [. . .].

ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE or plan IN CHRIST: Eph. 3.10, 11: *the wisdom of God in all its forms; according to his eternal purpose, which he appointed in Jesus Christ our Lord*; 1.4 [. . .]; and 1.5 [. . .]; 1.11: *in him, in whom indeed we have been given our share, as we were predestined according to his purpose*. Hence that love of God shown to us in Christ: John 3.16: *God loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten Son*; Eph. 2.4, 5 [. . .]; 1 John 4.9, 10 [. . .], etc. Except for Christ, then, who was foreknown, no grace was decided upon, no reconciliation between God and man who was going to fall.⁵⁰ Since God has so openly declared that predestination is the effect of his mercy, love, grace, and wisdom in Christ, we ought not attribute it, as is usually done, to his absolute and inscrutable will, even in those

48. In fact, not everyone agreed that man could have avoided falling. For the argument that God not only foresaw but necessitated the Fall of Adam and Eve, see Calvin's *Institutes* 2.12.5 and 3.23.7–8. Blithe assertion of a contested opinion is characteristic of Milton; cp. *TKM* (p. 1028): “No man who knows aught can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were born free.”

49. Cp. *PL* 3.124–34.

50. Cp. *PL* 3.274–75: “O thou in Heav'n and Earth the only peace / Found out for mankind under wrath.” Arminian soteriology tends to stress the Son's unique role in effecting God's decision to show mercy. This emphasis is even more pronounced in Milton's works because his Arianism also renders the Son's self-sacrifice voluntary; see chapter 14.

passages which mention will alone: Ex. 33:19: *I shall be gracious to him to whom I shall be gracious*, that is, not to elaborate further upon the causes of my graciousness at present. Rom. 9:18: *he has mercy on whom he will*, that is to say, by the method he determined upon in Christ: and in passages of this kind God is, in fact, usually speaking of his extraordinary grace and mercy, as will be evident when we examine particular texts. Thus Luke 12:32: *it was your father's pleasure*; Eph. 1:5: *by himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will*, 1.11 [. . .]; James 1:18: *because he wished it he has begotten us by the word of truth*, that is, through Christ, who is the word and truth of God.

THOSE WHO WOULD IN THE FUTURE BELIEVE AND CONTINUE IN THE FAITH. This is the immutable condition of his decree. It does not attribute any mutability to God or his decrees. *This, God's solid foundation, stands sure and bears this inscription*, 2 Tim. 2:19: *the Lord knows his own, and these are all who leave wickedness and name the name of Christ*, that is, all who believe. The mutability is all on the side of those who renounce their faith: thus in 2 Tim. 2:13: *if we do not believe, nevertheless he remains faithful, he cannot deny himself*. It seems, then, that predestination and election are not particular but only general: that is, they belong to all who believe in their hearts and persist in their belief. Peter is not predestined or elected as Peter, or John as John, but each only insofar as he believes and persists in his belief. Thus the general decree of election is individually applicable to each believer, and is firmly established for those who persevere.⁵¹

The whole of scripture makes this very clear. It offers salvation and eternal life to all equally, on condition of obedience to the Old Testament and faith in the New. Without doubt the decree as it was made public was consistent with the decree itself. Otherwise we should have to pretend that God was insincere, and said one thing but kept another hidden in his heart. This is, indeed, the effect of that academic distinction which ascribes a twofold will to God: the revealed will, by which he instructs us what he wants us to do, and the will of his good pleasure, by which he decrees that we will never do it.⁵² As good split the will in two and say: will in God is twofold—a will by which he wishes, and a will by which he contradicts that wish! But, my opponents reply, we find in scripture these two statements about the same matter: God wishes Pharaoh to let the people go, because he orders it: he does not wish it, because he hardens Pharaoh's heart. But, in fact, God wished it only. Pharaoh did not wish it, and to make him more unwilling God hardened his heart. He postponed the accomplishment of his will, which was the opposite of Pharaoh's, so that he might punish the latter all the more severely for his prolonged unwillingness. To order us to do right but decree that we shall do wrong!—this is not the way God dealt with our forefather, Adam, nor is it the way he deals with those he calls and invites to grace. Could anything be imagined more absurd than such a

51. Cp. *PL* 3:185–97.

52. Cp. *DDD* (p. 891), where Milton similarly rejects the Calvinist tenet of God's twofold will.

theory? To make it work, you have to invent a necessity which does not necessitate and a will which does not will.

The other point which must be proved is that the decree, as it was made public, is everywhere conditional: Gen. 2.17: *do not eat of this, for on the day you eat it you will die*. This is clearly as if God had said: I do not wish you to eat of this, and therefore I have certainly not decreed that you will eat it; for if you eat it you will die, if you do not you will live. Thus the decree itself was conditional before the fall, and it is evident from numerous other passages that it was conditional after the fall as well: Gen. 4.7: *surely, if you do well, lenity awaits you? but if you do not do well, sin is at the door*; or rather, sin's penalty, ever watchful. Ex. 32.32, 33: *blot me out now from your book which you have written. I shall blot out from my book the man who sins against me*. Here Moses, on account of his love for his people, forgot that the faithful cannot be blotted out so long as they remain faithful: or perhaps his speech should be modified by reference to Rom. 9.1, etc.: *indeed I should wish, if it were possible . . .* But God's reply, though metaphorical, shows quite clearly that the principle of predestination has a conditional basis: *I shall blot out the man who sins*. This is shown at greater length when the compact of the law is laid down, Deut. 7.6, 7, 8. [. . .]⁵³

Two difficult texts remain, which must be explained by reference to many clearer passages which resemble them; for clear things are not elucidated by obscure things, but obscure by clear.⁵⁴ The first passage is Acts 13.48, the second Rom. 8.28–30. I shall deal first with the latter as in my opinion it is less difficult. The words are as follows: *but we know that with those who love God all things work together for good; with those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined that they should be shaped to the likeness of his Son, etc. and those whom he has predestined he has also called; those he has called, he has also justified, and those he has justified he has also made glorious.*⁵⁵

First it must be noticed that, in 8.28, *those who love God* and *those who are called according to his purpose* are the same, and that they are identical with *those whom he foreknew* and *those whom he has predestined* and *those he has called* in 8.30. Hence it is evident that the method and order of general election is being outlined here, not of the election of certain individuals in preference to others. It is just as if Paul had said: We know that with those who love God, that is, those who believe (for those who love, believe) all things work together for good: and the order of events is as follows. First, God foreknew those who would believe; that is, he

53. In the deleted passage, Milton cites various examples of divine decree conditional on the law in the Old and on faith in the New Testament.

54. Cp. *Areop* (p. 956): "To be still searching what we know not by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it . . . , this is the golden rule in theology as well as in arithmetic"; also, *Art of Logic* (Yale 8:391).

55. Cp. *Art of Logic* (Yale 8:388), where Milton quotes these verses to exemplify *sorites*: "propositions proceeding in a continuous series in such a way that the predicate of the preceding proposition is invariably the subject of the following, until finally the consequent of the last proposition is concluded of the antecedent of the first." (The final clause of Rom. 8.30 reads, "Therefore, those whom he has foreknown, he has glorified.")

decided or approved that it should be those alone upon whom, through Christ, he would look kindly: in fact, then, that it should be all men, if they believed. He predestined these to salvation, and, in various ways, he called all men to believe, that is, truly to acknowledge God. He justified those who believed in this way, and finally glorified those who persevered in their belief. But to make it clearer who they are whom God has foreknown, it must be realized that there are three different ways in which God is said to know a person or thing. First, by universal knowledge, as in Acts 15.8: *all God's works are known to him from the beginning of time*. Secondly, by knowledge which implies approval or grace, which is a Hebraic idiom, and must therefore be explained more fully: Ex. 33.12: *I know you by name, and also you have found grace in my eyes*; Ps. 1.6 [. . .]; Matt. 7.23 [. . .]. Thirdly, by knowledge which implies displeasure: Deut. 31.21: *i know the product of their imagination etc.*; 2 Kings 19.27 [. . .]; Rev. 3.1: *I know all your works, that you have a name for being alive, but are dead*. It is clear that, in our passage, the knowledge which implies approval can alone be intended. [. . .].⁵⁶ God has predestined and elected each person who believes and persists in his belief. What is the point of knowing whether God had prescience about who in the future would believe or not believe? For no man believes because God had prescience about it, but rather God had prescience about it because the man was going to believe.⁵⁷ It is hard to see what purpose is served by introducing God's prescience or foreknowledge about particular individuals into the doctrine of predestination, except that of raising useless and utterly unanswerable questions. For why should God foreknow particular individuals? What could he foreknow in them which might induce him to predestine them in particular, rather than all in general, once the general condition of belief had been laid down? Suffice it to know, without investigating the matter any further, that God, out of his supreme mercy and grace in Christ, has predestined to salvation all who shall believe.

The other passage is Acts 13.48: *when the Gentiles heard this they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed*. The difficulty lies in the author's sudden introduction of an idea which is at first sight quite inconsistent with the rest of scripture, including the part he wrote himself. For he had just recorded Peter's speech, Acts 10.34, 35: *truly I perceive that God is no respecter of the person or, of the appearance, but anyone in any nation who fears him and follows righteousness is acceptable to him*. "Acceptable" here certainly means elect. Moreover, in case it should be objected that Cornelius was already a proselyte, Paul says the same even of those who are ignorant of the law: Rom. 2.10, 11, 14: *with God there is no respect of persons. He who has not the law, etc.*; 1 Pet. 1.17: *who, without respect of persons, judges according to each man's work*. But those who teach that each man believes because he was ordained, not that he was ordained because he was going to believe, cannot avoid the conclusion that God is a

⁵⁶ The deleted sentences discuss intricacies of divine foreknowledge, causes of a believer's faith, and predestination.

⁵⁷ Cp. *PL* 3,102–22.

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respector of persons which, as he so often asserts, he does not wish to be thought. Again, if the Gentiles believed because they were ordained to do so, this same reason will account for the Jews' failure to believe, Acts 13.46, which excuses them to a large extent, for it would appear that eternal life was not offered them but merely shown them. If this were so, moreover, it would not be likely to encourage other nations, for they would immediately draw the conclusion that what was necessary for eternal life was not any will or exertion of their own, but some sort of fatal decree. But on the contrary, scripture is absolutely clear on this point throughout: all who have been ordained to eternal life believe, not simply because they have been ordained, but because they were ordained on condition that they believed. For this reason interpreters who are, in my opinion, more acute, think there is some ambiguity in the Greek word τεταγμένοι, normally translated *ordained*. They consider it equivalent to "well or moderately disposed or affected," that is, of a composed, attentive, upright and not disorderly mind, and, with reference to eternal life, unlike those Jews who had rejected God's word and shown themselves unworthy of it. A similar sense of this word "ordained" is not unknown among the Greek writers: it is found in Plutarch's *Pompey*. In 2 Thess. 3.6, 11 we find *those who behaved in a disorderly way*, meaning, undoubtedly, disorderly from the point of view of attaining eternal life. This meaning, and the very application which we wish to give it, is not uncommonly found in the scriptures, expressed in other words: Luke 9.62: *well disposed or fit for the kingdom of God*; Mark 12.34: *not far from the kingdom of God*; 2 Tim. 2.21: *a vessel fit to grace his Lord's use, and prepared for every good work*. For, as we shall show later, some traces of the divine image remain in man,⁵⁸ and when they combine in an individual he becomes more suitable, and as it were, more properly disposed for the kingdom of God than another. Since we are not mere puppets, some cause at least should be sought in human nature itself why some men embrace and others reject this divine grace. One thing may be established at the outset: although all men are dead in sin and children of wrath, nevertheless some are worse than others. This may be observed every day, in the nature, disposition, and habits of those who are most estranged from God's grace. It may also be inferred from that parable in Matt. 13 where, before any seed had been sown, there were four, or at any rate three kinds of soil, some stony, some covered with thorns, and some, compared at least with the rest, quite good. See also Matt, 10.11, etc.: *inquire who is worthy in it, etc. and if the house is worthy let your peace come upon it*. How could anyone be worthy before hearing the gospel preached, unless he were ordained, in the sense of being well inclined or disposed to eternal life? Christ teaches that others will be made to feel the truth of this by the punishment which they suffer after death: Matt. 11.22: *it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, etc.*; Luke 12.47, 48: *he shall be beaten with many stripes, he with few*. Lastly, everyone is provided with a sufficient degree of innate reason for him to be able to resist evil desires by his own effort; so no one can add

⁵⁸ Cp. PL 11.512–13: "Retaining still divine similitude / In part."

strength to his excuse by complaining that his own nature is peculiarly depraved. But, you will object, God does not aim to pick out the less wicked from among the wicked, but prefers more often the inferior, Deut. 9.5: *it is not on account of your righteousness or your upright mind that you are going to march in and possess their land*, and Luke 10.13: *if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes*. My answer is that we cannot be sure from these passages what it is God looks for in those he chooses. [. . .].⁵⁹ Finally, you will quote at me: *it does not depend on him that wills or on him that runs but on God who is merciful*, Rom. 9.16. But I reply, I am not talking about anyone willing or running, but about someone being less unwilling, less backward, less opposed, and I grant that God is still merciful, and is, at the same time, supremely wise and just. On the other hand, those that say *it does not depend on him that wills or on him that runs*, do presuppose a man willing and running, only they deny him any praise or merit. However, when God determined to restore mankind, he also decided unquestionably (and what could be more just?) to restore some part at least of man's lost freedom of will. So he gave a greater power of willing or running (that is, of believing) to those whom he saw willing or running already by virtue of the fact that their wills had been freed either before or at the actual time of their call. These, probably, represent here the "ordained." Thus we find: 1 Sam. 16.7: *Jehovah looks on the heart*, that is, either on the natural disposition as it is in itself, or as it is after receiving grace from God, who calls to it. The famous quotation, *to him that has shall be given*, illustrates the same point. [. . .].⁶⁰

But the following objection may, perhaps be made: if you decide that God has predestined men only on condition that they believe and persist in their belief, then predestination will not be entirely a matter of grace but will depend upon human will and faith, so that the esteem in which divine grace is held will not, in fact, be consistent with its real importance. I insist, on the contrary, that it will be absolutely consistent, not less so in any way, but indeed much more so, and far more clearly so than if we were to accept the theory of those who raise this objection. For God's grace is acknowledged supreme, firstly, because when we were going to fall through our own fault, he had any pity for us at all; secondly, because he loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten Son for it; lastly, because he granted that we should once again be able to use our wills, that is, to act freely, when we had recovered liberty of the will through renewing of the Spirit. In this way he opened Lydia's heart, Acts 16.14. The condition upon which God's decision depends, then, entails the action of a will which he himself has freed and a belief which he himself demands from men. If this condition is left in the power of men who are free to act, it is absolutely in keeping with justice and does not detract at all from the importance of divine grace.

59. The deleted sentences reply to two minor objections to Milton's account of human responsibility.

60. The deleted sentences cite more scriptural examples of those more or less naturally suitable for eternal life.

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For the power to will and believe is either the gift of God or, insofar as it is inherent in man at all, has no relation to good work or merit but only to the natural faculties. God does not then, by my argument, depend upon the will of man, but accomplishes his own will, and in doing so has willed that in the love and worship of God, and thus in their own salvation, men should always use their free will. If we do not, whatever worship or love we men offer to God is worthless and of no account. The will which is threatened or overshadowed by any external decree cannot be free, and once force is imposed, all esteem for services rendered grows faint and vanishes altogether.⁶¹

Many people decry this theory and violently attack it. They say that, since repentance and faith have been foreseen already, predestination is made subsequent to man's works. Thus, they say, this predestination depends upon human will. They say this deprives God of some of the glory of our salvation. They say that man is thus swollen with pride, that Christian consolation in life and death is shaken, and that gratuitous justification is denied. None of these objections can be allowed. On the contrary, this theory makes the method and consequently the glory not only of divine grace, but also of divine wisdom and justice considerably more apparent, and to show this was God's principal aim in predestination.

It is quite clear, then, that God has predestined from eternity all who would believe and persist in their belief. It follows, therefore, that there is no reprobation except for those who do not believe or do not persist, and that this is rather a matter of consequence than of an express decree by God. Thus there is no reprobation from eternity of particular men. For God has predestined to salvation all who use their free will, on one condition, which applies to all. None are predestined to destruction except through their own fault and, in a sense, *per accidens*. Thus, for example, even the gospel is said to be a stumbling-block and a bane to many. [. . .].

If God decreed unconditionally that some people must be condemned, and there is no scriptural authority for such a belief, it follows from this theory of unconditionally decreed reprobation that God also decided upon the means without which he could not fulfill his decree. But the means are sin, and that alone. It is no use evading the issue in the conventional way by saying that God did not decree sin but decreed that he would permit sin, for there is this objection: if he decreed that he would permit, then he does not merely permit, because he who permits a thing does not decree anything, but leaves it free.

[. . .].⁶²

If, then, God rejects none except the disobedient and the unbeliever, he undoubtedly bestows grace on all, and if not equally upon each, at least sufficient

61. Cp. *PL* 3,103–6: “Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere/Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,/Where only what they needs must do, appeared,/Not what they would? What praise could they receive?”

62. The deleted paragraph insists that even if Scripture admitted the possibility of divine reprobation, repentance on the part of the reprobate would undo it.

to enable everyone to attain knowledge of the truth and salvation.⁶³ I say not equally upon each, because he has not distributed grace equally, even among the reprobate, as they are called: Matt. 11.21, 23: *woe to you etc. For if the miracles which were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon*, similarly Luke 10.13. For like anyone else, where his own possessions are concerned, God claims for himself the right of making decrees about them as he thinks fit, without being obliged to give a reason for his decree, though he could give a very good one if he wished: Rom. 9.20, 21: *indeed, who are you, man, to answer God back? Shall the statue say to the sculptor, Why have you made me like this? Has not the potter power over his clay?* So God does not consider everyone worthy of equal grace, and the cause of this is his supreme will.⁶⁴ But he considers all worthy of sufficient grace, and the cause is his justice. [. . .]. Clearly he wishes only that sinners should turn from their wickedness, Ezek. 33.11, as above, if he wishes that everyone should be saved, 1 Tim. 2.4, and that none should perish, 2 Pet. 3.9, he must also wish that no one should lack sufficient grace for salvation. Otherwise it is not clear how he can demonstrate his truthfulness to mankind. It is not enough that the grace in question should be sufficient only to deprive us of any excuse: we should perish without excuse even if we had no grace at all. But once grace has been revealed and offered, surely those who perish will always have some excuse, and will perish unjustly, unless it is quite clear that that grace is really adequate for salvation. So what Moses said, Deut. 29.4, in his address to the Israelites, *Jehovah has not given you a mind to understand, eyes to see and ears to hear until today*, must be explained by reference to Moses' kindness and tenderness. These made him avoid the accusations of severity or harshness which he would have incurred had he openly, before so large an assembly of the people, reproved the hardness of their hearts at that particular time, when they were about to enter into covenant with God. Their impenitence might be ascribed to two causes: either God, who was free to turn their minds to penitence whenever he wished, had not yet done so, or they had not yet obeyed him. Accordingly Moses mentioned only the first, God's free will, and left the second, their obstinacy, to be understood. For indeed no one can fail to understand that, in the first place, if God had not turned their minds to penitence until that day, their own obstinacy was the chief cause, and, secondly, that God who had performed so many miracles for their sake, had in fact given them mind, eyes and ears in ample measure, though they had refused to make use of his gifts.

Of one thing, then, we may be absolutely positive: God, to show the glory of his long-suffering and justice, excludes no man from the way of penitence and eternal salvation, unless that man has continued to reject and despise the offer

63. Cp. *PL* 3:185–90: “The rest shall hear me call, and oft be warned/Their sinful state, and to appease betimes/Th’ incensèd Deity, while offered grace/Invites; for I will clear their senses dark,/What may suffice, and soften stony hearts/To pray, repent, and bring obedience due.”

64. Cp. *PL* 3:183–84: “Some I have chosen of peculiar grace/Elect above the rest; so is my will.”

of grace, and of grace sufficient for salvation, until it is too late.⁶⁵ For God has nowhere declared, unambiguously and directly, that his will is the cause of reprobation. On the contrary he has frequently explained the considerations which influence his will in the matter of reprobation: namely, the heinous sins of the reprobate, either already committed or foreseen by God; the absence of penitence; the contempt for grace; and the refusal to listen to God's repeated call. Unlike the election of grace, then, reprobation must not be attributed to the divine will alone: Deut. 9.5: *it is not on account of your righteousness or your upright mind that you are going to march in; but Jehovah is expelling those nations on account of their wickedness.* It is unnecessary to give any cause or reason for the exercise of mercy, other than God's own merciful will. On the other hand, the cause of reprobation, which is followed by punishment, must, if it is to be just, be man's sin alone, not God's will. I say sin, meaning sin either committed or foreseen, and when the sinner has either spurned grace right to the end, or has looked for it too late, and then only because he fears punishment, when the time-limit for grace has already passed. God does not reprobate for one reason, and condemn and assign to death for another, though this distinction is commonly made. Rather, those whom he has condemned for their sin, he has also reprobated for their sin, as in time, so from eternity. This reprobation lies not so much in God's will as in their own obstinate minds, and is not so much God's decree as theirs, resulting from their refusal to repent while they have an opportunity: Acts 13.46: *since you reject it and consider yourselves unworthy of eternal life;* Matt. 21.43: *the stone they rejected, etc. therefore the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you.* Similarly 1 Peter 2.7, 8. Matt. 23.37: *how often have I wished, etc. and you would not?* It would be no less unjust to decree reprobation for any cause other than sin than it would be to condemn for any cause other than sin. Condemnation does not occur except because of unbelief or sin, John 3.18, 19: *he who does not believe is already condemned because he has not believed, etc. this is the condemnation: light came into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light,* and 7.48 [. . .] 2 Thess. 2.12 [. . .]. Similarly all the texts which are produced to prove a decree of reprobation will be seen to point to the fact that no one is excluded by a decree of God from the way of penitence and eternal salvation unless he has rejected and despised the offer of grace until it is too late. [. . .]⁶⁶

[. . .] That is, it was appointed that they should be disobedient. Why? Because they had rejected the stone and stumbled over it: they rejected it themselves, before they were rejected. Attention to these points will quickly reveal the fact that, in discussion of this doctrine, difficulty mostly arises when no distinction

65. Cp. *PL* 3.198–202: “This my long sufferance and my day of grace/They who neglect and scorn, shall never taste;/But hard be hardened, blind be blinded more,/That they may stumble on, and deeper fall;/And none but such from mercy I exclude.”

66. The deleted passage continues the discussion of election owing to God's good will and reprobation owing to the sinner's perverse will, particularly with respect to “the undeserved calling of the Gentiles after the Jews' merited rejection” (*Yale* 6:196). We resume the excerpt in the midst of the chapter's final paragraph.

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is made between a decree of reprobation and that punishment which involves the hardening of a sinner's heart. Prov. 19.3 has an apt comment: *man's foolishness leads him astray, and his spirit is roused in indignation against Jehovah*. For those who believe in a decree of reprobation do, in fact, accuse God, however strongly they may deny it. Even a heathen like Homer emphatically reproves such people in *Odyssey* 1.7:⁶⁷

They perished by their own impieties.

—and again, through the mouth of Jupiter, 1.32:

O how falsely men
Accuse us gods as authors of their ill,
Where by the bane their own bad lives instill
They suffer all the miseries of their states—
Past our inflictions and beyond their fates.

CHAPTER 5

PREFACE

I am now going to talk about the Son of God and the Holy Spirit, and I do not think I should broach such a difficult subject without some fresh preliminary remarks. The Roman Church demands implicit obedience on all points of faith. If I professed myself a member of it, I should be so indoctrinated, or at any rate so besotted by habit, that I should yield to its authority and to its mere decree even if it were to assert that the doctrine of the Trinity, as accepted at present, could not be proved from any passage of scripture. As it happens, however, I am one of those who recognize God's word alone as the rule of faith; so I shall state quite openly what seems to me much more clearly deducible from the text of scripture than the currently accepted doctrine. I do not see how anyone who calls himself a Protestant or a member of the Reformed Church, and who acknowledges the same rule of faith as myself, could be offended with me for this, especially as I am not trying to browbeat anyone, but am merely pointing out what I consider the more credible doctrine. This one thing I beg of my reader: that he will weigh each statement and evaluate it with a mind innocent of prejudice and eager only for the truth. For I take it upon myself to refute, whenever necessary, not scriptural authority, which is inviolable, but human interpretations. That is my right, and indeed my duty as a human being. Of course, if my opponents could show that the doctrine they defend was revealed to them by a voice from heaven, he would be an impious wretch who dared to raise so much

67. Cp. *DDD* (p. 892): "Man's own free will corrupted is the adequate and sufficient cause of his disobedience besides fate; as Homer also wanted not to express both in his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*."