

Monergism

Concerning  
the Irresistibility  
of Converting Grace

JOHN PRESTON

Monergism

Concerning  
the Irresistibility  
of Converting Grace

JOHN PRESTON

# Concerning the Irresistibility of Converting Grace

JOHN PRESTON,

Doctor in DIVINITY, SOMETIMES MASTER OF EMANUEL  
COLLEGE IN CAMBRIDGE, And Preacher at Lincoln's Inn

LONDON, Printed by J. G. for Nathaniel Webb, and William  
Grantham at the sign of the Bear in St. Paul's Churchyard near the  
little North Door. 1654.

**The Position of Dr. Preston,  
Master of Emmanuel College in  
Cambridge, Concerning the Irresistibility  
of Converting Grace.**

It is often professed by Arminius that he attributes as much to Grace as anyone else. He claims that nothing is said about the efficacy of Grace by others that he does not also affirm. He even acknowledges everything that is thought or imagined to explain the power of Grace. Therefore, he argues that he is misreported by those who accuse him of being injurious to the grace of God and one who attributes too much to free will.

You will find in Augustine that Pelagius makes similar professions about himself. However, in the meantime, it remains true that if Arminius's opinion is upheld, all this efficacy of Grace, which he praises so highly in words, depends on the will of man. This is because, by virtue of its inherent liberty, the will can either accept or reject this grace, use it or not use it, and make it effective or in vain. This cannot be otherwise unless we abolish the freedom of the will and destroy the properties that are inseparable from its nature.

Lest anyone should suspect that I am attributing to him an opinion that is not his, let his own words be read. They can be found in a treatise entitled "Decl. sent. Arm." on page 181. His words are as follows: "Grace (says Arminius) is described in Scripture in such a way that it may be resisted, received in vain, and that man may hinder his assent to it, deny cooperation with it. Therefore, an irresistible power and working should not be attributed to Grace." Now, if Arminius in these words does not undermine what he seemed to build up earlier, let others judge.

I am aware that Arminians object to the word "Irresistible" used by Calvin and other Divines of our tradition. They claim that our opinion turns men into passive beings, not acting at all in the work of conversion but being acted upon and moved like stones by another. They even go as far as saying that men do not believe, but it is God in man who repents and believes.

However, it will become evident how falsely these things are attributed to us, and how accurately we express that Arminius diminishes the grace of God more than the Jesuits. I will faithfully present their opinions and briefly compare them with our own, addressing four key points: First, I will restate the opinion of our adversaries. Second, I will explain our own opinion. Third, I will provide reasons to support our opinion. Fourth, I will respond to objections, at least addressing one or two of the main ones raised against our opinion.

Regarding the first point, some Jesuits argue that Sufficient grace, in terms of means, is given to all, including Reprobates, but Effectual grace, which will certainly and infallibly achieve its goal, is given only to the Elect. When asked where they place the efficacy of this Grace, they respond that it is not in a physical determination of the will but

in a moral persuasion. This persuasion is not of any kind but congruous, meaning it is offered with such circumstances of place, person, and time that God, who knows all the inclinations of the will from eternity, foresees that the will will undoubtedly yield to it. They, therefore, distinguish between Sufficient and Effectual grace. Those whom God has chosen for eternal life, by virtue of His absolute decree, intend to offer not only sufficient persuasion but also at the right time, knowing that the person called will unquestionably obey God's call. However, for those whom God has not chosen, He also offers sufficient persuasion but not at an opportune time, and He foresees that they will not obey the divine call.

From whence we gather, that this is the opinion of the Jesuits:

1. That effectual vocation does follow, and not precede the decree of election, and consequently, that the decree is absolute, not conditional.
2. That the same and equal grace is not granted to the converted and unconverted; but that which is given to the elect is always more effectual, although not in respect of itself, yet in respect of the suitability, which it has to the will of the man to be converted.
3. That all to be converted shall be certainly and infallibly converted, and that only by the power of Converting Grace; but others certainly also and infallibly shall not be converted, not only because they will not, but in regard to the defect of congruity in the grace offered. This Grace, although as to the substance of it (as they say) is sufficient, so that by the help of it, men might be converted (if they would), yet as to the circumstances, it is not sufficient because it is not offered at a suitable time. For thus Suarez: Moral persuasion, though

abundant, is not sufficient. A physical or real determination is too much, for it takes away liberty, but the whole efficacy of grace consists in Certainty, Congruity, or Convenience.

But the Arminians, although they seem to assert, that the beginning, progress, and perfection of every good work, is to be attributed unto Grace, so that no man (without preventing, accompanying, and following Grace) is able to think, will, or act anything that is good: yet when they plead, that all this is done after a manner resistible, so as to leave it in the power of the Will, to use or not to use that grace unto conversion. It is apparent, that they do only in pretence, and not heartily and really attribute these things unto grace. This will easily appear by a distinct opening of the opinion of the Arminians.

1. First, they grant, That the Understanding is irresistibly illuminated by Divine Grace.
2. That the Affections also are excited and renewed by the same Grace irresistibly.
3. That the Will is also so stirred up by assisting Grace, that it is now disentangled, whereas before it was encumbered; now freed, whereas it was before bound; now awakened, whereas before it was asleep. But that the Will is renewed, and by a real operation inclined unto good, by God; or that any quality or habit of holiness is infused into the Will, by virtue of which it is inclined more to good works than to evil, the Arminians utterly deny. Because, that if any of this were granted, the natural liberty of the Will (as they suppose) were destroyed; unto which liberty they hold it essential that the Will be free to act, or not to act, when all things required for its acting are in being. Let their very words be seen, "The Conference at The Hague," page 298. Into the Mind (say they) is infused a habit of knowledge, into the

Affections holiness is infused, as Hope or Fear, etc. But such an infusion cannot be made into the Will, because of its nature, freedom to will good or evil. Hence (as they say) First there is a moral persuasion stirred up in the Understanding, but by the help of Preventing Grace: Secondly, To this persuasion the Will may assent, but by the help of Concomitant Grace: And thirdly, This assent may be produced into act, but by virtue of Subsequent Grace. But to all this they diligently annex this caution, although the Will can do none of these things without the help of Grace, yet it is in the power of the Will to resist this Grace, to put it by, to neglect it, or cast it away if it pleases. Neither can it be otherwise, if the natural properties of the Will are preserved. Thus is the state of the question explained by Johannes Arnoldus, against Bogerman, p. 263. allowing all those which God uses in working our conversion; yet conversion itself does so far remain in our power, that we may not be converted.

This opinion being asserted, the Arminians are constrained to defend these Positions more false than those of the Jesuits.

1. They defend a conditional Decree grounded on the prescience of Faith. For if the Will, supposing all the actions of God toward it, may convert or not, believe or not, it is necessary that God first foresee who will believe and who will not before He can choose some for life and appoint others for wrath. But the Jesuits hold the Decree to be absolute, and Faith to be an effect or fruit following thereupon.
2. The Jesuits grant that more grace, in terms of the manner of dispensing it, is bestowed upon those who are converted than upon those who are not. Contrariwise, the Arminians claim that



more grace (in terms of manner) is often conferred upon the unconverted than the converted.

3. Hence also, the Arminians do ordinarily place a portion of the principle of Conversion upon the will of man (regardless of their professions to the contrary in words), whereas the Jesuits attribute it entirely to the good pleasure and will of God.
4. Furthermore, the Arminians hold that converting and quickening Grace is not exclusive to converted and chosen individuals but is common to others as well. The Jesuits, on the other hand, confess that congruous or suitable vocation (in which they place the efficacy of Grace) is specific to the Elect.
5. The Jesuits believe that all those whom the Holy Ghost intends to convert are certainly and infallibly converted. The Arminians vehemently deny this; hence, they often boldly assert that the Holy Ghost may be resisted, even when it works with the intention of a person's conversion.

These things being premised, I will now briefly lay down what our opinion is. But for our judgment to be thoroughly understood, we must know that the conversion of a man is perfected in these four degrees:

1. God infuses into the whole soul, and thus into the will, a habit or quality of holiness, renewing it and transforming it from evil to good, from unwillingness to willingness. Through this means, what is inherent in the nature of the will remains intact, while what was corrupted is rectified.
2. From this quality so infused, certain imperfect inclinations immediately arise in the will, preceding the notice of reason.

These inclinations are similar to what the Scholastics call the very first motions of the heart. Through these inclinations, the will does not fully and effectively will that which is good, but it is initially and incompletely inclined towards those good works that please God. As a result, such acts may be described more as wishes and desires than full-fledged intentions.

3. These inclinations are presented to the understanding, which examines them, deliberates upon them, and seeks counsel about them. Eventually, when the ultimate and conclusive judgments of the understanding have endorsed them, they are proposed to the will as things to be chosen.
4. After these initial inclinations, which arise from infused grace, have passed the scrutiny of the understanding and have been approved by its preceding judgment, the will finally exhibits complete and effective willingness. This willing is the immediate consequence of conversion, or rather, this very willingness constitutes a person's conversion to God. The conversion of man is accomplished in these four stages:

Firstly, the reception of the habit of infused grace is indeed irresistible, but it is neither free nor voluntary. The will is entirely passive in receiving it, and therefore does not exercise its freedom.

Secondly, the inclination arising from grace is irresistible because it emanates from the will, which has been formed and endowed with grace. It operates not in a moral but a physical manner, meaning it is not a matter of persuasion but a real operation. However, it is voluntary because it is generated by the will in an active manner. Yet it is not free because it lacks one of the prerequisites of freedom, which is the preceding judgment of the understanding.

Thirdly, the judgment of the understanding regarding this initial and imperfect inclination is irresistible. The understanding, enlightened by divine grace, irresistibly and infallibly approves this inclination, and it is to some extent free as far as the understanding can possess freedom.

Fourthly, when the understanding has issued its final and conclusive verdict, the will, as I mentioned earlier, expresses complete and executive willingness. This is the actual conversion to God. This willing is both irresistible and free. It is irresistible because it necessarily follows the real inclination of the will that precedes it and the final judgment of the understanding that confirms it. It is also genuinely free because it possesses the necessary elements of freedom. In this case, the will is not passive but active.

Additionally, it is not generated except through moral persuasion, meaning it does not occur without the prior judgment of the understanding, which weighs all aspects of what is best to be done. Every active and complete act of willingness, following such deliberation and determination by the understanding regarding the presented object, must be correctly described as genuinely and properly free.

The definition of freedom stating that something is free when, assuming all prerequisites for action are in place, it can either act or not is a definition solely upheld by the Jesuits. It lacks support among the Church Fathers, the ancient philosophers, or even the more ancient Scholastics, whom Suarez tries to twist in order to support his opinion.

So have you our opinion; according to which, a man is converted irresistibly, and yet freely. To help you understand this further, these

Axioms follow from it, which are contrary to those of the Jesuits and Arminians.

1. We do not say that Free-will, or the faculty of the Will, concerning spiritual matters, is half alive and half dead, as the Arminians would have it (see Conference at The Hague, p. 300). We do not compare it to the power of movement in one who is bound in fetters or to the faculty of seeing in one who is confined in a dark place, as the Papists claim. Instead, we believe that the faculty of the Will, in relation to truly spiritual good, is entirely extinguished, like the power of life in a dead person or the ability to move in a slain person, or the sight in someone whose eyes are blinded.
2. They also argue that the Will is only stirred up by moral or assisting Grace, knocking at its door and advising it, but not changed by habitual Grace, which heals and renews it. In their words, "There is no reason why moral Grace, that is morally persuading, may not make a natural man spiritual." In contrast, we assert that the will is quickened and renewed by the infusion of habitual Grace, a new quality imprinted on the Will. This quality acts as an inward principle that enlivens and changes the Will, from which all good inclinations and actions proceed.
3. They believe that the Will is differently involved in Conversion, not in an active manner. We argue that the Will in the initial act of Conversion is partly passive and partly active; first passive, then active. In this way, it collaborates with God, not partly through natural ability and partly through supernatural strength received from grace, but by virtue of wholly supernatural power conferred by infused and quickening grace. This aligns with

Augustine's statement, "To will is of ourselves, but to will well, both partly and wholly, is of grace."

4. The Arminians think that the quickening grace of the Spirit and everything else required for a person's conversion is communicated to both the Reprobate and the Elect, with the intention of their salvation. Otherwise, they argue that God would deal deceitfully and hypocritically when offering the Word to them. According to their words (see Conference at The Hague, p. 308), we believe that the quickening grace of God, suitable for healing and renewing the Will, is specific to the Elect. It is imparted to them as a result of the divine Decree for their salvation. However, it is denied to others, and we affirm that God has not determined to save them.
5. They claim that the Will, when stirred up by quickening grace, can choose to act or not act, turn to God or not, and that this is necessary for it to be considered free. They believe that liberty consists in the Will having the choice to act or not, even when all the acts of God are granted. This aligns with Corvinus' argument against Tilenus (see p. 337), stating, "Grace does not so provide the Will with strength that it always remains within the power of the Will to use it or not use it." In contrast, we say that the Will cannot resist or oppose the actual motion proceeding from Grace or the divine persuasion offered to it by an enlightened understanding. It necessarily follows the guidance of God, in line with Augustine's statement, "Free-will cannot resist God in the work of salvation."
6. They argue that the Will, when excited by Grace, properly works together with God as a co-ordinate joint-cause, a partial Concomitant-cause, and has such an influence on the effect that

if it is withheld, the effect cannot occur. In contrast, we believe that the Will cooperates, but as a cause entirely subordinate and fully subject to God's authority as the principal agent. It cannot properly be called a co-worker; rather, it acts as it is acted, moves as it is moved, and when turned towards God, it turns itself toward God.

7. They assert that God cannot convert us in an irresistible way unless we are turned into stocks and blocks, thus driven with a continual motion, acting nothing ourselves but leaving it all to God. In contrast, we maintain that stocks and stones have no power to act while being acted upon. However, human beings are free agents, possessing the power to act while being acted upon by God. Therefore, they can genuinely be said to act and turn themselves. When the will is changed from evil to good, from unwilling to willing, it contains an inward principle of willing good within itself. From this, the authority over its own action, in which it turns towards God, can be rightfully attributed to it. Although the grace of God is the principle by which it operates, the will of man is the principle that performs the action. Similarly, even though God is the first and total efficient cause of conversion, the will is the next efficient cause, total in the category of second causes. Consequently, just as effects are typically attributed to second and created causes, even though they act through the agency of the first cause, conversion is most appropriately attributed to the will, although it acts entirely with the strength of God and converting grace.

8. Finally, they deny that the irresistibility of divine Grace and the liberty of man's Will can coexist. Conversely, we argue that Conversion is irresistible and yet free. We make distinctions concerning the irresistibility of Grace:

1. There is one kind of irresistibility in which regenerating Grace infused by God is received by the Will. We admit that this irresistibility of reception cannot coexist with liberty.
2. There is another kind in which the inclination towards spiritual good flows from the Will after a physical or real manner, shaped by Grace. We assert that this motion arises irresistibly and voluntarily from the Will but not freely.
3. There is an irresistibility in which the Will assents to this physical motion from Grace and to the persuasion of the Understanding approving it, both necessarily or certainly. We maintain that this type of irresistibility can coexist with Liberty because it encompasses the two elements on which Liberty is based:
  1. The Will is active, not passive when producing this final act of willing.
  2. The moral persuasion or judgment of the Understanding, which believes that the proposed conversion, either accepting or rejecting the offered object, lies within man's power, has preceded it.

We affirm that whatever is accomplished in the act of Conversion, either through mere Reception or through a physical (or powerful) Determination, is not free. True freedom in every act of the Will only emerges when it is generated actively and stems from rational persuasion. This is due to the fact that reason remains indifferent to opposing things, and reason is the sole source and foundation of all Liberty. Consequently, every act of the Will influenced by reason is the most free.

You now understand our opinion, which we have taken time to elucidate because the explanation is the primary means of confirming it and refuting the opposing viewpoint. Additionally, it is challenging to express the Arminian stance in this debate because they cloak their opinion in ambiguous and specious language.

There yet remain the Arguments by which our opinion is to be confirmed, and I shall be brief. Two things are to be proved:

1. That qualities or habits may be infused into the Will, which they deny, as they suppose that such an infusion utterly destroys and takes away the nature and liberty of the Will.
2. That this habitual and quickening Grace, being thus infused, we are converted by God in a certain way, and by us, it is irresistible.

Arg. I: That there is such an infusion of Grace renewing and healing the Will, inclining and determining it to one of the two opposites in the act of Conversion, appears by this. All Divines hold that there is in the Will an habitual aversion from God and an habitual turning to sensible and carnal things. But this habitual corruption of nature cannot be healed by the sole help of Grace merely exciting. Just as corporeal, so spiritual diseases are not cured but by contraries. Therefore, habitual corruption cannot be changed except by an habitual quality imprinted on the Will. Prosper, therefore, rightly says, "The inward sense is not opened to do spiritual things until the foundation of Faith and fervour of Love are planted in the Heart."

2. Unless it is granted that such an habitual Grace is infused into the Will, by which it is inclined to good after a physical manner, there will be found no formal principle in man from which good acts may be produced. Just as in corporeal things, no man sees unless he first has eyes or hears unless he has ears, so in spiritual things, no man



sees unless God has first given him eyes to see, nor hears unless he has given him ears to hear. By the same reason, no man can turn himself to God unless he has a new Heart; that is, a new Will to turn and love God. What does that Scripture mean, "An evil Tree brings forth evil Fruit, a good Tree brings forth good Fruit"? It signifies that the Will must first be made good before it can perform any spiritual work. This must necessarily be done not by exciting or persuading Grace but by Grace healing and regenerating.

3. Let it be supposed that the Will, deformed by habitual corruption, could, by the mere help of exciting Grace, be raised to the putting forth of spiritual acts. Yet, this would be contrary to that sweetness of Divine Providence acknowledged by all Divines. For God should not sweetly put forward the Will so disposed, but would in a forced way hurry it on to its work, from which its own inclination is yet averse. Therefore, it is more appropriate to place in the Will a certain habitual Propension towards spiritual good. This can be performed not by virtue of exciting grace but from the infusion of habitual grace.

4. It is confessed by all that the Will, unrenewed, has no principle in it that is truly spiritual. Yet, they will not deny that this act of turning towards God is truly spiritual and supernatural. But how can the Will, only excited by motioning Grace and not changed by Grace regenerating, be placed in the rank of supernatural agents, I do not understand.

5. I will ask, what is it that makes a man truly holy and godly, not simply performing good and godly acts? As the Philosopher says, acts do not determine the subject to be such; it must, therefore, be some habit by virtue of which a man is called godly and holy. But that habit is not placed in the irrational part of the soul, for that is not properly

capable of virtue or vice, but only by participation, to the extent that the rational part of the soul influences it. However, if it must be placed in the rational part, it cannot be in the understanding. For no one is deemed good or evil solely because they understand good and evil things (as Aquinas observes). Rather, a person is called a good or evil person because they will things that are good or evil. Therefore, the habit of holiness can only be placed in the will, as it is the subject most properly capable of both habitual holiness and habitual corruption, which is contrary to it.

6. If the will is indifferent in itself and equally inclined to either side, how can it exhibit facility and promptness in action? Just as the will contracts a stain disposed to evil through evil actions, it acquires a better disposition towards good through good actions. This is independent of the operation of moving and exciting Grace.

7. All notable theologians acknowledge that charity, or the love of God, is not merely an act but a permanent habit. However, this habit has no place in the understanding because it is an affection, nor in the sensitive appetite, which cannot be elevated to spiritual love. Therefore, it is peculiar to the will, and thus the will is the most suitable subject for habits and habitual grace.

8. Lastly, how absurd it is to grant that the whole person is dead in sin, unable to reach any truly spiritual good, and yet to argue that the will, which guides the soul, drives all faculties, and influences all human actions, including spiritual good and evil, is neither spiritual before the Fall nor carnal after the Fall. It is considered entirely void, devoid of both the corruption introduced by the first sin and the spiritual gifts infused during man's regeneration.

It would be easy to expose this opinion to more absurdities, but these will suffice. All these factors make it abundantly clear that a new

quality or habit of grace is infused into or impressed upon the will, which is vehemently denied by the Arminians, as has been previously demonstrated using their own words. However, anyone still doubting whether this is their opinion should read the Hague Conference, page 298 of Bertius' translation. There, they diligently and purposefully argue that in spiritual death, spiritual gifts are not separated from the will of man, nor were they implanted in it before that death in the state of innocence. This is because if the will were inclined to either side by these kinds of gifts, its liberty would be taken away, which, they claim, consists in its ability to equally bend itself to either side when all the requisites for action are provided.

**It remains now briefly to be proved that God, whether immediately or mediately, both by infused grace and moral persuasion, turns sinners to himself after an irresistible manner. But this caution is to be premised: by the word "Irresistibly," we do not understand any force offered to the Will that is repugnant to its nature, but only an insuperable efficacy of Divine Grace, which inclines the Will sweetly and agreeably to its own nature. But it does so certainly and necessarily (the necessity we understand is certainty) that it cannot be rejected by the Will.**

1. The truth of this Opinion is evident from the fact that, in Scripture, the conversion and regeneration of a sinner are attributed to God alone, and to His good will and pleasure. Every form of cooperation is taken away from man himself. Romans 9 states, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." He has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will, He hardeneth. This could not be truly said if a person, of their own freedom and choice, allowing all the actions of God necessary for

conversion, might receive the quickening grace of God in vain, and render it void (as Arminius suggests). Notice from these words that repentance and hardening are attributed to God alone, and the will and efforts of man are utterly excluded from having any part in this process. It is not, says the Apostle, of him that willeth or runneth, etc. Just as a wheel does not run well to become round but is round first, a person does not will or run so that God might have mercy on them and regenerate them through the quickening grace of the spirit. Instead, because God first has mercy, they will and run in the path of righteousness.

2. The second reason comes from the infallible connection of the Effect with the Cause, that is, Conversion with converting and quickening Grace. If this quickening Grace always achieves its effect and is only offered to those in whom it is effectual for healing and regeneration, we must attribute to it a certain, prevailing, and irresistible operation. Numerous passages of Scripture suggest that this grace always achieves its purpose in those to whom it is communicated. John 6:37 states, "Whatsoever my Father giveth me cometh unto me." Jeremiah 31:23 says, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." From this, we can infer that whoever receives grace suitable for a person's conversion is undoubtedly and infallibly converted. Otherwise, a person could not say to God, "Turn me," implying that perhaps the will, which has the power to accept or reject grace, might render it void. The same idea is evident from John 6:45, "Whosoever hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me," meaning that anyone who has heard and been taught by God in such a way as to also receive and absorb the quickening Grace of the Spirit has undoubtedly come to Christ. This suggests that Grace suitable for conversion is never frustrated, but it unfailingly achieves its effect in a manner that can never

be thwarted by the human will. This is further confirmed by the nature of Grace and the powerful manner in which God infuses it into the human heart. If Grace is the result of infinite power, as it is, and if man is regenerated by the same power that raised Christ from the dead, then God, in implanting it in the human will, exerts that almighty power, which no created faculty can resist.

3. This Argument may also be added: the grace of God is so the efficient cause of Conversion that it allows no co-ordinate cause, although it has a subordinate cause—the will of man joined to it. If the will, when excited by assisting grace (as they call it), can resist it, then it can also assist it; if it can withstand it, then it can also collaborate with it to produce the same effect. If it can make it void, it can also make it effective. Thus, it may be considered a co-ordinate cause with the grace of God in bringing forth the initial act of conversion. However, it is clear that God converts or regenerates people by His own and only work, excluding all co-ordinate causes. This is frequently mentioned in Scripture, such as, "The Lord converteth, the Lord gives repentance." It states that God circumcises, takes away the stony heart, and gives a heart of flesh.

4. Lastly, God regenerates and, by His own power, raises from the death of sin.

I let pass the force of the similitude, as no man can contribute anything to his own generation or resurrection; so neither to his spiritual regeneration or resurrection. God (I say) doth all these things; but they could not be attributed to him alone, if he had any cause so co-operating with him, as that if it refused, no such effect could follow.

I add that of the Schoolmen it is most true that God is the cause of the whole Being, that is, although God be not the efficient cause of sin (which is not a being but rather a defect of what should be in a faculty or act), but rather a deficient will. But of every good work (of which kind our first conversion is a chief one), if it be most full of Being, or if it be a whole Being, as it is, of such a whole work, it is necessary that God should be the cause. For God alone is the cause of the whole Being wherever it is found. Yes, all Divines acknowledge that so far as Sin itself is a Being, God is the cause of it. Therefore, although the Will be the secondary and subordinate efficient cause of conversion, from whence it is that the Scriptures exhort us to turn ourselves, circumcise our hearts, and so forth, yet as a co-ordinate cause, it cannot resist the quickening grace of God and receive it in vain (as Arminius speaks).

I add that even if God were to admit a Partner in this work, the will, which is wholly depraved and dead in sin, can no more co-operate with exciting and moving grace than a carcass, prepared and disposed by rubbing, can revive itself and put forth vital acts. But to conclude this point, let it be supposed that the Will may work together with the grace of God or not, according to its liberty. Yet if this opinion stands, how much more than is proper will be arrogated unto man, and how much will be derogated from the glory of God? Man may well boast that his will contributed so much to regeneration that if he had not willed, it would never have been produced. Just as he who, being admonished by another, gives an alms, attributes the work more to himself than to the one who persuaded or stirred him up to it, so he whose will, only moved or admonished by assisting grace, turns itself toward God, ascribes his conversion more or at least equally to himself as to Divine Grace. This is because Divine Grace would never have produced that effect

unless he had consented to it and made its persuasions effective. He had the power to render them futile.

The fourth reason is taken from hence, That the Decree of Election (by which God determined with himself to save some persons selected from the common Mass) is absolute, and therefore doth necessarily and infallibly attain its effect. That the Decree of Election is absolute, so that the Lord looked upon nothing foreseen in the persons chosen, but absolutely decreed to work in them all conditions required for salvation, is so clearly manifest from many places of Scripture that it scarcely needs any proof. If we choose not God, but He chooses us (John 15). If we are chosen that we might be holy, not made holy that we might be chosen. If He chose Jacob rather than Esau when both were of like and equal condition (Romans 9). If effectual vocation and justifying faith are the fruits and effects of predestination, not the preceding conditions (Romans 8). Lastly, if God's mere good pleasure is the only reason for the Decree ["He has mercy on whom He will, and hardens whom He will"], it necessarily follows that God has absolutely decreed to save some and to bestow upon them Grace, Faith, and Holiness.

Granting these things, it appears that God converts all the Elect after a manner that is irresistible. Because if they could resist that Grace, which is given to convert them and is fit for that purpose, then this absolute and peremptory Decree of God might be disappointed by the creature, which should not be imagined. It should not be objected that by the same reason, those whom God has rejected, sin irresistibly. We deny that there is the same reason for both. Although Faith is the effect of predestination, infidelity is not the proper effect of Reprobation. Faith requires an efficient cause of itself, which has a true and proper influence on its effect. But no efficient cause is

required for unbelief; it follows solely from the defect and absence of the cause by which Faith should be wrought. As with the illumination of the air, the Sun or some other efficient cause is required, having an influence on that effect. But the absence of the Sun is enough to cause darkness. Similarly, although the sins of Reprobates infallibly follow from the determinate counsel of God, who has decreed their outcome, Conversion and Faith follow the absolute Decree of God in a much different manner. Sins follow infallibly indeed, but only by a necessity of consequence, with God permitting but not causing or effecting them. Faith and good works follow by a necessity of consequence, as of which God must properly be called the Author, according to all Divines. No one ever said that men believed, were regenerate, turned to God, or did good works with God only permitting but not causing or working.

If it is granted to us (as it must) that Faith and Conversion follow the absolute decree of God by a necessity of consequence, that is, a necessity causing and co-working, I see no reason it can be denied that it is wrought in us after an irresistible manner. When any Agent so works upon the patient that it necessarily overcomes it, it is properly said to work irresistibly. Similarly, if God converts a sinner in such a way that he is necessarily converted by a necessity of consequence, then He converts him irresistibly, in a manner that the patient must yield. From this, I wonder why those who deny that election depends on foreseen faith still defend that conversion is wrought in a resistible manner, and so that it may be frustrated.

Let this be the first and last reason. If conversion is wrought in the resistible manner described by those who follow Arminius, then Divine election cannot be certain according to their principles. This is because it depends on the mutable will of man, which, as described by Arminius, could not be foreseen even by God himself. Let's



suppose, as the foundation of that prevision, that God perfectly foresees all the ways by which the will may be turned aside or inclined towards good. Let's also assume that God foreknows all objects or circumstances that may be offered or proposed to the will. Finally, let's suppose that God perfectly knows how every object or circumstance is fit to move the will and influence it by persuasion. Yet if the condition of the will is such that, while allowing any objects or even further, allowing any suitability in these objects or circumstances to incline the will in one direction or another, it may still, by virtue of its intrinsic liberty, either act or not act, I see no way that God can foresee what the will will certainly and infallibly do, namely, whether it will turn to God or not. This is not because God is incapable of discerning what the will will strive for, but because the thing itself is unknowable. There cannot be greater certainty in knowledge than in the object of knowledge, and therefore it is contradictory to say that knowledge is true when the thing known is uncertain. Just as it is contradictory to say that the thing being measured is greater or less than the measure while also being equal to it. I should add that even if it is true that God knows all the ways in which the will may be inclined towards good or evil, if the will is entirely undetermined, admitting nothing to determine it, neither from within itself nor from external sources, as they defend, it implies a contradiction to say that any certain way by which the will should be ordered or disordered can be determined by God himself. From all these considerations, it is clear that if converting grace moves the will in a manner that can be resisted by it, God cannot infallibly foreknow who will believe and who will not. Consequently, all election would be completely eliminated. Therefore, it remains that converting grace is both imparted by God and received by us in an irresistible manner.

FINIS.

-----

## **MONERGISM BOOKS**

Concerning the Irresistibility of Converting Grace, by John Preston.  
Copyright © 2023

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions September 2023. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn Or 97068