

**EVANGELICAL UNION  
DOCTRINAL SERIES.  
(SEVENTH ISSUE.);  
FREEDOM OF THE WILL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649588114

Evangelical Union Doctrinal Series. (Seventh Issue.); Freedom of the Will by William Taylor

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**WILLIAM TAYLOR**

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FREEDOM OF THE WILL.

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# FREEDOM OF THE WILL.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM TAYLOR,

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LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.

GLASGOW: THOMAS D. MORISON.

1881.

265. k. 245.

"I stand ready to confess to the forementioned Divines, if they can maintain their peculiar notion of freedom, consisting in the self-determining power of the will as necessary to moral agency, and can thoroughly establish it in opposition to the arguments lying against it, then they have an impregnable castle, to which they may repair, and remain invincible, in all the controversies they have with the Reformed Divines concerning original sin, the sovereignty of grace, election, redemption, conversion, the efficacious operation of the Holy Spirit, the nature of saving faith, perseverance of the saints, and other principles of the like kind."—EDWARDS, *On Original Sin*, Part IV., chap. i.



## P R E F A C E.

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AMID the manifold discussions already existing concerning the Freedom of the human Will, this contribution to the controversy may be regarded by many as altogether unnecessary and vain. Still, the questions involved are of perennial interest, and also of decisive importance in all scientific, moral, and theological thought; and, therefore, demand renewed consideration. Between the Theistic and the non-Theistic Scientist, with their widely different theoretic philosophies of the universe, the generic point of divergence is found in the mind of man as free, or not free from an absolute necessitation in thought, feeling, and volition. For if there is no freedom in the mind of man, there is no freedom of mind in the universe,—no God, rationally conceivable. Freedom of Will as a fact in man is the only rational basis on which the Theistic interpretation of the universe is possible. The conception of God as the Personal, and Free, First Cause, determinating movements for an end, is the rational implicate of the consciousness of the fact in man that he himself is a personal, free, first cause of certain movements for given ends. Apart from this fact in man's consciousness, the conception of God swims in the air, a baseless imagination. Therefore, the great question between the Theologian and all Materialists and non-Theistic Scientists, resolves itself ultimately into this,—is the mind of man, as we know it in man, free or not free, at least in some respects, from absolute necessitation? For a free, personal man, and the Free, Personal God, stand or fall together in rational thought.

As between Theologians themselves, their doctrinal conceptions of God, and their principles of Divine moral government, are theoretically determined, as the great Edwards clearly saw, by their doctrine of the human Will. The distinctive Calvinian dogmas concerning God and His moral, and Christian governments, are based on the human Will as determined absolutely in all its choices according to the Divine decree which fore-ordains all events material and spiritual. But if man's will is free, and is not causally determined, then the whole conception is changed, and the distinctive doctrines of the Calvinian system are convicted of gravest error.

President Edwards wrote his celebrated *Inquiry* as the philosophical defence of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism; in defence of Human Freedom this volume has been written. The principal arguments of President Edwards have been followed; partly because they are extensively supposed to be, if not unanswerable, at least as yet unanswered, and partly because he has raised the questions of chief interest and decisive importance to Theologians in their respective doctrinal systems.

Those who wish to see a more extended examination of the Necessitarian theory, and one of the ablest defences of Human Freedom, may consult H. P. Tappan's *Treatise on the Will*. To Dr. Tappan this writer expresses his heartfelt obligations for having been delivered in early life from the perplexities and moral chaos in which he was involved by the work of Edwards.

With some fears and hesitations, is this little book sent forth. But such as it is, let it go, and speak as it best can for Human Freedom and for God.

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