

J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. proposed a fifth category of cause (in addition to Aristotle's four) -- "chargeable creditable cause" -- and asserted that God is not the chargeable cause of moral evil, but is the creditable cause of moral good. Of course, this is simply another way of saying that God is in no sense the Author of sin, but is the Author of all good.

In any case, God does not cause everything that comes to pass. He causes some things; He permits other things. And this distinction must be reflected in His decrees. Thus we may say that God determines to cause some things; others He determines to permit.

(4) Christ's acts were all most free; yet by God's decrees it was certain that He would continue to be holy, harmless, and undefiled, would fulfill God's perfect Law, and would go to the cross to accomplish our redemption.

c. In light of these considerations, "free agency" must be defined rather precisely.

A free agent is not one who is free from all influences, external, and internal, but one who, in the midst of external forces and influences, freely acts in harmony with his previous thoughts and judgments, his inclinations and desires, and his character. A free agent is one who is free to determine to act in accordance with his disposition, inclinations, desires, and preferences -- in a word, in accordance with what he or she is.

A free moral agent is one who is free to decide not contrary to, but in accordance with, his or her own moral nature.

This conception ties together human nature, human will, and human actions. Human beings will in accordance with their natures, and act, in accordance with their wills.

d. In this definition free agency is not destroyed by the decrees. If the situation is defined in such a way that God is viewed as having decreed what human beings, acting from themselves, will do, then free agency is preserved, and responsibility with it.

2. The decrees are destructive of all motivation to human exertion.

a. This objection states: "People will naturally say that if all things are bound to happen as God has determined them, they need not concern themselves about the future and need not make any efforts to obtain salvation."

b. This objection may be responded to in the following ways:

(1) Strictly speaking, the decrees are not addressed to human beings as a rule of obedience or action.

(a) The rule of action addressed to mankind's obedience is God's revealed Preceptive Will, found in the Law and in the gospel.