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*Prayer and the Power of Contrary Choice:
Who Can and Cannot Pray
for God to Save the Lost?*



C. Samuel Storms

I want to introduce this article by taking us back some forty-two years to the initial publication of what soon became an evangelical classic: J. I. Packer's *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (InterVarsity Press, 1961). The book was an expansion of the address Packer delivered to The London Inter-Faculty Christian Union (LIFCU) on October 24, 1959, at Westminster Chapel.¹ What makes Packer's book so instructive for us today is the utter incredulity on his part, in 1961, regarding a theological perspective that today, in 2003, is widespread and pervasive in its influence.

Packer begins his defense of divine sovereignty in salvation by appealing to what he believes is, or at least should be, an evangelical consensus on the practice of prayer. He appears to assume that no one who embraces a high view of Scripture could possibly think otherwise. It is more than simply *that* we pray, but also *how* and *what* we specifically ask God to do that Packer believes supports his understanding of the activity of God in saving a human soul. Here is what he says:

You pray for the conversion of others. In what terms, now, do you intercede for them? Do you limit yourself to asking that God will bring them to a point where they can save themselves, independently of Him? I do not think you do. I think that what

you do is to pray in categorical terms that God will, quite simply and decisively, save them: that He will open the eyes of their understanding, soften their hard hearts, renew their natures, and move their wills to receive the Saviour. You ask God to work in them everything necessary for their salvation. You would not dream of making it a point in your prayer that you are not asking God actually to bring them to faith, because you recognize that that is something He cannot do. Nothing of the sort! When you pray for unconverted people, you do so on the assumption that it is in God's power to bring them to faith. You entreat Him to do that very thing, and your confidence in asking rests upon the certainty that He is able to do what you ask. And so indeed He is: this conviction, which animates your intercessions, is God's own truth, written on your heart by the Holy Spirit. In prayer, then (and the Christian is at his sanest and wisest when he prays), you *know* that it is God who saves men; you *know* that what makes men turn to God is God's own gracious work of drawing them to Himself; and the content of your prayers is determined by this knowledge. Thus by your practice of intercession, no less than by giving thanks for your conversion, you acknowledge and confess the sovereignty of God's grace. And so do all Christian people everywhere.²

He also appeals to what he believes is the underlying theological assumption for our gratitude. Why do you "thank" God for your conversion, he asks? It is, he says, "because you know in your heart that God was *entirely responsible* for it."³ You thank God because "you do not attribute your repenting and believing to your own wisdom, or prudence, or sound judgment, or good sense."⁴ Packer believes he is speaking for all Christians when he says,

You have never for one moment supposed that the decisive contribution to your salvation was yours and not God's. You have never told God that, while you are grateful for the means and opportunities of grace that He gave you, you realize that you have to thank, not Him, but yourself for the fact that you responded to His call. Your heart revolts at the very thought of talking to God in such terms. In fact, you thank Him no less sin-

cerely for the gift of faith and repentance than for the gift of a Christ to trust and turn to.⁵

Of course, today there is an increasing number of professing evangelicals who happily do precisely what Packer contends they "would not dream" of doing. Packer's incredulous "Nothing of the sort!" is today's "orthodoxy." What Packer claims you would never attribute to the human will is the very thing advocates of libertarian freedom insist upon. What Packer says we would never tell God, indeed, that thought at which our hearts would revolt, is being preached and published at a dizzying pace in 2003.

In all fairness to Packer, one must assume that such language is intentional hyperbole, a writer's way of jolting his readers into thinking through what he believes are the unacceptable implications of the theological system he opposes. But the fact remains that what Packer argues most certainly cannot (or should not) be the conscious intent of any thinking Christian is precisely that for most, if not all, open theists. Given the latter's insistence on libertarian free will, what Packer contends we would never ask of God is precisely what open theists applaud as the essence of intercessory prayer.⁶

I have yet to read an open theist who does not make much of the argument from prayer. Some would even appear to have embraced this theological model in large part because it alone invests in intercessory prayer a value and efficacy that warrant its practice. One often hears open theists declare that classical theism, in its affirmation of exhaustive divine foreknowledge, destroys the foundations of prayer and transforms otherwise meaningful dialogue with God into a sham. Greg Boyd is typical of most open theists when he says: "My conviction is that many Christians do not pray as passionately as they could because they don't see how it could make any significant difference."⁷ Again, he writes, "I do not see that any view of God captures the power and urgency of prayer as adequately as the Open view does, and, because the heart is influenced by the mind, I do not see that any view can inspire passionate and urgent prayer as powerfully as the Open view

can."⁸ The same sentiment may be found in David Basinger's treatment of prayer as part of a larger concern with the practical implications of the open view of God.⁹

Clearly, open theists are convinced that their system will energize the prayer life of the Christian and help reverse the lethargy and indifference that are so prevalent in the Body of Christ. My focus is one specific element in prayer, namely, intercession for lost souls. Open theists would have us believe that they alone provide a framework within which prayer for the lost is meaningful and effective. My aim is to challenge this notion head on. I do not for a moment suggest that open theists *don't* pray for the lost. Many of them (all of them, I should hope) are faithful and fervent intercessors. Neither am I saying they *shouldn't* pray for the lost. What I am saying is that they cannot petition God actually to save a human soul and remain consistent with their system. What I am saying is that what open theists affirm about human freedom and the self-determination of the will precludes their asking God to intervene effectually in a human soul and bring a person to saving faith in Jesus Christ. It may well be that open theists would immediately concur. Perhaps some will say, "Yes, you are correct. What you and Packer insist is the focus of our requests on behalf of lost souls, we deny. We do pray for them, but not in the terms you have expressed." Nevertheless, my suspicion is that open theists do pray as Packer contends all Christians should, but that they do so only at the expense of what is foundational to their theological enterprise: libertarian or self-determining freedom. My purpose is simply to make the latter point clear. Perhaps, at the end of the day, one might conclude that open theists are correct in declining to ask God to save human souls. That is not my concern. I wish to focus solely on the fact that such is precisely what they must do. The reason for this is found in their notion of libertarian freedom, to which we now turn our attention.

LIBERTARIAN FREEDOM: A DEFINITION

Clark Pinnock believes that "Scripture, like human experience itself, assumes libertarian freedom, i.e., the freedom to

perform an action or refrain from it."¹⁰ Libertarian freedom, says Pinnock, is something the biblical story simply "presupposes."¹¹ Hasker provides the following definition: "On the libertarian (or 'incompatibilist') understanding of free will, *an agent is free with respect to a given action at a given time if at that time it is within the agent's power to perform the action and also in the agent's power to refrain from the action.*"¹² He argues that to say the action

is "within one's power" means that nothing whatever exists that would make it impossible for the power in question to be exercised. If I am free in this sense, then whether or not the action is performed depends on me; by deciding to perform the action I bring it about that things happen in a certain way, quite different from some other, equally possible, way things might have happened had I refrained from the action.¹³

On this basis John Sanders contends that "a person does not have to act on her strongest desire. It is within the agent's self-determining ability to change her desires."¹⁴ Thus a person is free if and only if he or she "could have done otherwise than she did in any given situation."¹⁵

According to David Basinger, for a person to be free he must have it within his power "to choose to perform action A or choose not to perform action A. Both A and not A could actually occur; which will actually occur has not yet been determined."¹⁶ R. K. McGregor Wright, certainly no champion of libertarian freedom, defines it similarly as

the belief that the human will has an inherent power to choose with equal ease between alternatives. This is commonly called "the power of contrary choice: or "the liberty of indifference." This belief does not claim that there are no influences that might affect the will, but it does insist that normally the will can overcome these factors and choose in spite of them. Ultimately, the will is free from any necessary causation. In other words, it is autonomous from outside determination."¹⁷

Frame writes:

On the libertarian view, our character may influence our decisions, as may our immediate desires. But we always have the freedom to choose contrary to our character and our desires, however strong. This position assumes that there is a part of human nature that we might call the will, which is independent of every other aspect of our being, and which can, therefore, make a decision contrary to every motivation.¹⁸

Pinnock provides this lucid summary:

What I call "real freedom" is also called libertarian or contra-causal freedom. It views a free action as one in which a person is free to perform an action or refrain from performing it and is not completely determined in the matter by prior forces—nature, nurture or even God. Libertarian freedom recognizes the power of contrary choice. One acts freely in a situation if, and only if, one could have done otherwise. Free choices are choices that are not causally determined by conditions preceding them. It is the freedom of self-determination, in which the various motives and influences informing the choice are not the sufficient cause of the choice itself. The person makes the choice in a self-determined way. A person has options and there are different factors influencing us in deciding among them but the decision one takes involves making one of the reasons one's own, which is anything but random.¹⁹

Be it noted that libertarians do not argue that there are no causes for human choices, but only that "none of them is sufficient to incline the will decisively in one direction or another."²⁰ According to the notion of a "self-determining" being, "the power to decide between alternatives, to turn possible courses of actions into actual courses of action, must ultimately lie within themselves."²¹ Self-determination means that "regarding any genuinely free act, free agents themselves ultimately transition a range of possible acts into one actual act. . . . They are *the ultimate cause and explanation* for the move from 'possibly this or possibly that' to 'certainly this and certainly not that.'"²² The most important point, at least in terms of my purpose in this article, is that according to libertarianism

"the *ultimate source and explanation*"²³ for one's deeds must reside within oneself.

ASKING GOD FOR "WHAT"?²⁴

This brings me to the question: *Given the existence of libertarian freedom, precisely what may an open theist ask God to do in and on behalf of an unregenerate person?* One thing he may not ask is that God act on the soul with sufficient power and persuasion that the unbelieving heart believes. Why do I say this? Because, as John Piper explains, those who affirm the power of contrary choice

do not believe that God has the right to intrude upon a person's rebellion, and overcome it, and draw that person effectually to faith and salvation. They do not believe that God has the right to exert himself so powerfully in grace as to overcome all the resistance of a hardened sinner. Instead they believe that man himself has the sole right of final determination in the choices and affections of his heart toward God. Every person, they say, has final self-determination in whether they will overcome the hardness of their hearts and come to Christ.²⁵

According to libertarianism, the most that God can do is restore in fallen people a measure of enabling grace (indeed, as I point out below, open theists cannot consistently ask that God even do this). This being the case, the ultimate reason one person repents and another does not is to be found in them, not God. My question is this: *Does enabling grace actually and effectually save anyone?* The answer is, of course, no. It only makes it possible that each soul might believe. If that is the case, when an open theist prays for the lost he is not really praying for God to act upon their souls or to influence their wills so as to actually and effectually bring them to saving faith and repentance, but only to act so as to *make it possible for the soul itself* to act in such a way that salvation will be the result. Pinnock's description of God's influence on the human soul confirms this point (in all the following statements the emphasis is mine):

God puts the question and **does everything possible to win our consent** but . . . “the final decision, the final right of refusal, he has vested in us, and we, not God, are answerable for the answer we return.”²⁶

God’s grace is a **persuasive** not a coercive power. God does not force people to love him, as if that were possible, but pursues personal relations.²⁷

Grace **motivates** the sinner to come home; it does not compel.²⁸

God reveals his love for us in Christ and **inspires** us by the Spirit to respond. God **enables** us to make the choice, but he **empowers by motivating inspiration** and not through irresistible force.²⁹

The grace of God at work in us is always **preparing** us to receive more grace. There is a role for human participation in salvation but it is grounded in God’s **gracious empowering**, not in our inherent abilities.³⁰

Rather than thinking of God as creating a new state in us, we should think of God as **motivating** us to make a choice.³¹

Our very desire to respond to God reflects the grace of God at work in us, but its effectiveness depends on our cooperating with it. God does not save us without our participation.³²

Thus, according to Pinnock, God “does everything possible” to bring someone to faith short of actually bringing someone to faith. God persuades, motivates, inspires by the Spirit, enables, prepares, and graciously empowers. Pinnock rightly envisions the unregenerate soul as “dissenting” from the gospel (if indeed his “consent” must be “won”), as being “unpersuaded” of its truth, lacking motivation to believe and feeling “uninspired” to repent given his “desire” to remain in sin. So what precisely is it that Pinnock is asking God to do? For him to act on such a will in any degree is to move it contrary to present preference. But how can this be done without depriving the will of “ultimate responsibility” for what it prefers? If the “self” must exercise ultimate “determination” for

all present preferences, God can’t. And if God can’t, it is futile for us to ask him to. Pinnock contends that we are not asking God to “move” the will at all, but simply to give the will good reasons for choosing to move itself. But if such be true we are then *not* asking God to exert saving or converting or regenerating influence on the soul, which is precisely my point.

Boyd concurs in the nature of God’s operation on the soul. Libertarian or self-determining freedom would demand that, in the case of any particular act of will, God is *not* ultimately responsible. Only the individual free moral agent is responsible. One wonders, yet again, if this be the case, what is it that we are petitioning God to do in an unbeliever’s soul when we intercede for their salvation? If God cannot be “ultimately responsible” for the transition of this soul from unbelief to belief, for what should one pray? One cannot pray that God effectually and efficaciously save this soul, for if God were to do so then “ultimate responsibility” would shift from the individual to God, something that is antithetical to the notion of self-determination. Boyd wishes to retain the idea of “causal conditions” which serve to “specify the parameters within which our behavior must operate.”³³ But “these causal conditions (including our reasons and desires) do not meticulously *determine* our particular actions. Given the exact same set of conditions, we could have done otherwise. It was *up to us* as free agents to decide.”³⁴

One presumes that among these “causal conditions” is the activity of God’s Spirit on the human soul. God may communicate by revelation or illumination reasons why Christianity is true; may orchestrate providentially an encounter or experience or sight that confirms the truth of Christianity. But *how much* communication is permitted? *How clear* can it be? *How impressive* is the evidence? *How powerful* is the encounter? According to libertarianism, all such inducements or acts of illumination or providential encounters must be ultimately ineffective, must fall short of actually causing the transition from unbelief to belief. Simply put, according to libertarianism, there is a definitive limit beyond which God cannot go in exerting influence on the way people think, feel, and choose.

At no point can God exert such influence on the will of an individual that would invariably result in faith. God must be meticulously and scrupulously careful that his work of illumination is not *too* clear nor his arguments *too* convincing nor his reasoning *too* logical nor his love *too* appealing nor his conviction *too* painful nor his providential oversight of external circumstances *too* stunning.

Open theists, as expected, deny irresistible grace. Boyd argues that "God graciously makes it *possible* for us to believe. But he does not make it *necessary* for us to believe"³⁵ But how can God make it even "possible" for us to believe without effectually overcoming at some point our volitional resolve to disbelieve, or whatever volitional resolve accounts for the impossibility that God's grace has now effectually neutralized? If it is said that God restores volitional capacity lost in the fall, that is to be "ultimately responsible" for the capacity to believe, i.e., it is to act in such a way as to overcome the incapacity to believe, *an incapacity that is the volitional preference of the unbeliever*. If all humanity is in a state where it is "impossible" for them to believe and God exerts an influence so as to effectually cause their transition to a state in which it is now "possible" for them to believe, then God is "ultimately responsible" for a volitional transition which then serves as the foundation and fount for all subsequent volitions.³⁶ But if so, how can any human volition be morally meaningful in the libertarian scheme?

It would appear that advocates of libertarian freedom have reduced prayer to the following: "Oh God, please do something ineffectual in John's soul in such a way that you don't bring him to act contrary to his current convictions." But couldn't we pray that God would "plant in the lost soul an inner unrest and longing for Christ?" Let me say two things in response to that question.

First, to say that in response to our prayers God might cause the unregenerate soul to experience "unrest" and "longing" implies that the soul, of its own accord, preference, and choice is, in fact, *"at rest" without Christ and "longs" to remain in unbelief*. Therefore, any action God might take in answering our

prayer for that lost soul would be a violation of the soul's self-determination to say *no* to Christ. In other words, you must ask yourself this question: "When I ask God to plant unrest and longing in an unregenerate soul, what exactly am I asking God to do?" It would seem that for God to do *anything at all that might to any degree* sway or influence the unbelieving heart to believe or the unwanting heart to want, is to violate or infringe upon the soul's alleged right to determine itself. To influence the will to choose against its present choice is inconsistent with the belief in absolute free will and self-determination.

Second, if one should somehow overcome this first problem and conclude that it is, in fact, legitimate for God to "plant a longing" in an unregenerate person's heart, another question must be answered: "How strong and powerful and persuasive can that longing be which you are praying that God plant in his heart?" As Piper notes, "there are two kinds of longings God could plant in an unbeliever's heart. One kind of longing is so strong that it leads the person to pursue and embrace Christ. The other kind of longing is not strong enough to lead a person to embrace Christ. Which should he pray for? If we pray for the strong longing, then we are praying that the Lord would work effectually and get that person saved. If you pray for the weak longing, then we are praying for an ineffectual longing that leaves the person in sin (but preserves his self-determination)."³⁷

This would appear to mean that people who really believe that man must have the ultimate power of self-determination can't consistently pray that God would convert unbelieving sinners. Why? "Because, if they pray for divine influence in a sinner's life they are either praying for a successful influence (which takes away the sinner's ultimate *self-determination*), or they are praying for an unsuccessful influence (which is not praying for *God* to convert the sinner). So either you give up praying for God to convert sinners or you give up ultimate human self-determination."³⁸ It would appear that open theists must opt for the former.

Let's remember that a person in need of conversion is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1); he is "enslaved

to sin" (Romans 6:17; John 8:34); "the god of this world has blinded his mind that he might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Corinthians. 4:4); his heart is hardened against God (Ephesians 4:18) so that he is hostile to God and in rebellion against God's will (Romans 8:7). If the individual has the ultimate responsibility of self-determination, you cannot petition God to make him alive or release his will from bondage or enlighten his mind or soften his heart, so that hostility is effectually replaced with affection and rebellion is actually turned to submission. But if God cannot do such things in the human soul, in what meaningful sense can it be said that God saves a soul in answer to your prayers for him?

Only the person who rejects human self-determination can consistently pray for God to save the lost. My prayer for unbelievers is that God will do for them what he did for Lydia: he opened her heart (which would have otherwise remained "closed") so that she gave heed to what Paul said (Acts 16:14). I will pray that God, who once said, "Let there be light!", will by that same creative power utterly and effectually dispel the darkness of unbelief and "shine in their hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). I will pray that he will "take out their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). I will pray that they be born not of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God (John 1:13). And with all my praying I will try to "be kind and to teach and correct with gentleness and patience, if perhaps God may grant them repentance and freedom from Satan's snare" (2 Timothy 2:24-26). The only alternative, it would appear, is to ask God *not* to be successful in, as Pinnock says, doing "everything possible" to win the sinner's consent. We would be left asking God to diminish or moderate the appeal of Christ's beauty lest he irresistibly overcome the sinner's self-determination to remain in unbelief.³⁹

CONCLUSION

My purpose in this article was not to offer a critique of libertarian freedom or the power of contrary choice.⁴⁰ Neither

was it my intent to challenge the theological or biblical foundations of open theism. My principal aim was simply to alert us to the consequences of libertarian freedom for intercessory prayer. Thus I conclude with these words from Bruce Ware with whom I wholeheartedly agree:

If we know God cannot penetrate the stubborn heart of an individual, if we know God cannot soften and move decisively the free will of another person, then are we not asking God to do something he simply cannot do? Or if we believe . . . that God loves all perfectly and so would already be working in every way he could for their good, then would we not wonder what is the point of prayer? What are we asking God for that he is not already doing? Do I care about this person more than God does? Of course the answer is no. So, is not God already working in ways far better than anything I can imagine in order to accomplish his purposes? And yet, if God ultimately cannot break through the stubbornness, apathy, and misconceptions of free moral creatures, then all this calls for the question, What really, then, is the point of prayer?⁴¹

Author

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Notes

1. The history and widespread impact of *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* has been chronicled by Alister McGrath in his book, *J. I. Packer: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 89-96.
2. J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1971 [third American printing]), 15-16.
3. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 12 (emphasis mine).
4. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 12.
5. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 13.
6. It must be noted that the point applies no less to anyone, of whatever theological orientation, who advocates libertarian freedom.
7. Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 95.
8. Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 98.

9. See his chapter, "Practical Implications," in *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), especially pages 156-62.
10. Clark Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 41.
11. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 41.
12. William Hasker, "A Philosophical Perspective," in *The Openness of God*, 136-37.
13. Hasker, "Philosophical Perspective," 137.
14. John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 221.
15. Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 221.
16. David Basinger, "Middle Knowledge and Classical Christian Thought," *Religious Studies* 22 (1986), 416.
17. R. K. McGregor Wright, *No Place for Sovereignty* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996], 43-44.
18. John Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 2001, 120-21).
19. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 127.
20. Stephen J. Wellum, "Divine Sovereignty-Omniscience, Inerrancy, and Open Theism: An Evaluation," in *JETS* 45 (June 2002):259.
21. Gregory Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2001), 60.
22. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 375 (emphasis mine).
23. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 60 (emphasis mine). Others would insist that affirming the human will to be the ultimate source, cause, or explanation of the act by which one embraces Jesus Christ does not itself preclude gratitude to God for salvation. See the discussion in Terrence Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2000, 91-93).
24. The Bible itself provides little, if any, explicit guidance on what it is that we are to ask God to do when we ask him to save someone. That we are to pray, no one disputes. That we are to pray for the lost to be saved, no one denies. Jesus does not pray for people to believe but for the unity of those who will believe through the evangelistic word of those who already believe (see John 17:20-21). Paul's grief for lost souls is intensely sincere (Romans 9:1-5), and his "heart's desire" and "prayer to God for them" is for their "salvation" (Romans 10:1; see also his admonition in 1 Timothy 2:1-2 that "prayers" and "petitions" be offered up on behalf of "all men"). His advice to Timothy that he "with gentleness" correct those in opposition is made on the grounds that "perhaps God may grant them repentance" (2 Timothy 2:25). The problem is that in none of these instances is it specified what we are to ask or petition God to do in the heart of an unbeliever.

25. John Piper, *The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God's Delight in Being God* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 2000), 217.
26. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 163.
27. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 163.
28. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 164.
29. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 164.
30. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 164.
31. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 165.
32. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 166.
33. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 72.
34. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 72.
35. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 83.
36. For what is perhaps the best treatment of the notion of prevenient or enabling grace from an Arminian perspective, see H. Orton Wiley in his *Christian Theology*, 3 volumes (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1952), 2:344-57.
37. Piper, *The Pleasures of God*, 219.
38. Piper, *The Pleasures of God*, 219.
39. This understanding of intercessory prayer finds expression in arenas other than praying for the lost. Tiessen proposes a model in which "we can pray for the victory of God's gracious persuasion in the minds of those who rule. We can pray for the spread of the gospel in societies and that God will work directly on the hearts and minds of rulers, giving them impulses to do good, a desire for justice and mercy toward those whom they govern. God can send them good advisers and encourage them to take that good advice" (*Providence & Prayer*, 356). We can pray for effectual divine influence because of his definition of freedom as "the ability to act according to one's own wishes, without coercion, rather than in terms of the power of contrary choice (libertarian free will)," 338.
40. The most extensive and, to my mind, convincing critique of libertarian freedom is the classic work of Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, edited by Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973). I find it interesting that, whereas open theists often mention Edwards' work, none, so far as I can tell, have actually engaged and responded in depth to his arguments. I honestly wonder how many open theists have actually read his treatise. See also my analysis in the article, "Jonathan Edwards on the Freedom of the Will," *Trinity Journal* 3 NS (1982):131-69. More recently John Frame has provided a penetrating response to libertarian freedom in his book *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 2001).
41. *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2000), 174-75.