

**THE LORD REIGNS SUPREME:
AN INVESTIGATION ON STEPHEN CHARNOCK'S EXEGETICAL,
DOCTRINAL, AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY CONCERNING THE
EXISTENCE AND THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD**

Julián E. Gutiérrez S.

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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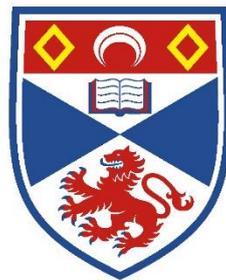
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University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy
at the
University of St Andrews

August, 2017

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I, Julián E. Gutiérrez S., hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 86.000 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in August, 2013 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in August 2013; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2013 and 2017.

I, Julián E. Gutiérrez, received assistance in the writing of this thesis in respect of grammar, spelling, and syntax, which was provided by Dr. Cassia Martin, Dr. David Ford, and Rev. David MacPherson.

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*The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength;
Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.
Your throne is established from of old; You are from
everlasting... The LORD on high is mighty. Your testimonies
are fully confirmed; Holiness befits Your house, O LORD,
forevermore. (Ps. 93)*

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the method and theological content in Stephen Charnock's discourses on the attributes and the existence of God with the intention to determine whether this material is structured upon the influence of the scholastic method. This is accomplished (1) by locating Charnock within his own academic and historical context and by interpreting his works according to the theological genre to which they belong, (2) by identifying the conceptual and methodological presuppositions that framed the discourses, (3) by examining and accounting for the order of exposition found in the discourses, and (4) by performing a descriptive analysis of the material seeking to identify traces of the scholastic method and style of argumentation. The findings of this investigation indicate that Charnock's discourses are theological sermons primarily intended for homiletical purposes and yet organised and reasoned per the scholastic method.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In most cases, the culmination of a project of this magnitude involves the communal effort of many individuals; a doctoral dissertation requires of an assembly of gifts that hardly ever are in possession of one single person. Moved by a deep sense of gratitude, the following words seek to honour those who in one way or another contributed to the fulfilment of a dream that began thirteen years ago.

First, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my family. To my wife, Diana, whose resolute conviction in the calling of God led her to embark, without regrets, in a journey of abnegation: your love and camaraderie throughout all these years have nurtured my life and my soul in ways that cannot be expressed simply by words. Tenderly, you strengthened me during times of weakness. Patiently, you waited when, though physically present, I was emotionally absent. Unconditionally, you stood behind me when I was left alone. Unreservedly, you offered the best of your talents to make of our little place a refuge of joy and solace. Faithfully, you encouraged me to seek the Lord in prayer during moments of uncertainty and great sadness. Rejoice in knowing that I would not be writing these words, had not you walked along next to me all the way.

To my children, Andrés and Vivian, whose existence is by itself enough reason for mine: I admire your bravery because ever since you were born you

have had to live in so many places and adapt to so many new circumstances. I owe you so much for enduring an innumerable number of times in which I could not attend your needs because I was busy reading a book or typing on my laptop. May God grant me the opportunity to make up for everything you have given up for me through all these years. I love you with all my heart.

I want to thank my parents, Amanda and Eduardo, for their parental love and for a life devoted to care for their children and grandchildren. Nothing worthy that I have accomplished in life could have been possible had not my parents sacrificed a great deal to establish the foundations upon which I have built my life.

Second, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to those who became instruments in the hands of God for personal instruction, encouragement, and comfort. Thanks to Emilio A. Nuñez; he is responsible for planting and nurturing the seed that is about to flourish; my former pastor, a mentor, and a substitute father during our time in California. My gratitude goes also to Dr Guillermo Monroy for his unconditional support and for believing in the importance of this project. I should also mention Rev David MacPherson and his family; their generosity will never be forgotten. Finally, thanks to my brothers and sisters at Bon Accord Free Church; I owe them for their countless manifestations of love, support, and encouragement ever since we attended church in Scotland for the first time.

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Last, but not least, I wish to honour the memory of my former supervisor and mentor, Rev Canon Prof John Webster. Undeservedly, I had the privilege to sit under his tutoring for almost five years, first as his MTh student at the University of Aberdeen and then as his PhD student at the University of St. Andrews. Though there are invaluable lessons in Christian theology that I learned from him, many of which anyone would find in his books or recorded lectures, I will always treasure the most in my heart those private moments in which Prof Webster ministered to my soul by manifesting a genuine interest for my personal and spiritual well-being.

Soli Deo Gloria

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CD — Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Edited by Thomas F. Torrance and Geoffrey William Bromiley Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957.

PRRD — Muller, Richard. *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to 1725*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2003.

ST — Aquinas, St. Thomas. *Summa Theologiae* [in Latin text with parallel English translation]. Edited and translated by Thomas Gilby and Thomas C. O'Brien. 61 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964-1976.

Works — Charnock, Stephen. *The Works of Stephen Charnock*. 5 vols. Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1864-1866. Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, 2010.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, a growing number of scholars have manifested an academic interest for the type of theology that was practiced by the Reformed divines in Continental Europe and England during the period known as Protestant orthodoxy.¹ In the last two decades there has been a significant increase in the volume of academic literature available on a variety of themes concerning Reformed scholasticism including the treatments of specific doctrinal subjects, methodological considerations, and the analysis of specific theologians.² This renewed attraction for Reformed orthodox theology has

¹ In this study, the term 'orthodoxy' is used to indicate a specific era during the history of Protestantism (ca. 1560-1790). Unless otherwise noted, references to 'scholasticism' and the compound 'Reformed scholasticism' are meant to denote, respectively, a method of academic investigation and an academic school of theology during Protestant orthodoxy distinguished by being methodologically shaped by the scholastic method and theologically determined by the confessions of the Reformed tradition. See Willem J. Van Asselt and Pieter L. Rouwendal, "Introduction: What Is Reformed Scholasticism?," in *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*, ed. Willem J. Van Asselt, et al. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011), 5-9.

² J. Martin Bac, *Perfect Will Theology: Divine Agency in Reformed Scholasticism as against Suarez, Episcopius, Descartes, and Spinoza* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Aaron C. Denlinger, *Reformed Orthodoxy in Scotland: Essays on Scottish Theology, 1560-1775* (London: T&T Clark, 2015); Aza Goudriaan, *Reformed Orthodoxy and Philosophy, 1625-1750: Gisbertus Voetius, Petrus Van Mastricht, and Anthonius Driessen* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Adriaan Cornelis Neele, *Petrus Van Mastricht (1630-1706): Reformed Orthodoxy: Method and Piety* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Sebastian Rehnman, *Divine Discourse: The Theological Methodology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002); Herman J. Selderhuis, *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy* (Boston: Brill, 2013); Willem J. Van Asselt et al., eds., *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011); Willem J. Van Asselt et al., *Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology, Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010); Willem J. Van Asselt and Eef Dekker, eds., *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001); Maarten Wisse et al., eds., *Scholasticism Reformed: Essays in Honour of Willem J. Van Asselt* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Dolf te Velde, *The Doctrine of God in Reformed Orthodoxy, Karl Barth, and the Utrecht School: A Study in Method and Content*. Studies in Reformed Theology (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

been prompted by a series of investigations aimed at reassessing the theological value of the material belonging to the post-Reformation Protestant era.³ As well as accounting for the recent academic consideration of Reformed scholasticism, these studies have been fundamental in at least two other ways: (1) they have presented a more judicious interpretation of the method, sources, and content in the Reformed scholastic theological tradition; (2) they have created a new paradigm for the ongoing development in historico-theological studies by undermining the predominant (mostly negative) assessment concerning Reformed scholasticism in the academic world ever since the nineteenth-century.⁴ Therefore, in seeking to partake with the current academic exploration on themes related to Reformed scholastic theology, this dissertation investigates the method, the presuppositions, and theological content of the discourses treating the doctrine of the existence and the attributes of God according to Stephen Charnock (1628-1680).

Even though Charnock was a highly-educated scholar, a well-respected theologian, a powerful preacher, and a highly-regarded minister within the corridors of political power within the nonconformist party of his time, and in

³ Originally published in 1987, the magisterial work on this matter still is Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, Ca. 1520 to Ca. 1725.*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003). In addition, consult Idem., *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008; repr., Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, 1988), 1-13; John Platt, *Reformed Thought and Scholasticism: The Arguments for the Existence of God in Dutch Theology, 1575-1650* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 1-9; Carl R. Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 1998); Willem J. Van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

⁴ For a detailed review of the literature representing the older school of thought, consult Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 63-102. Cf. Van Asselt and Rouwendal, "State of Scholarship," 22-25.

spite of the fact that his *Discourses* cover a substantial range of doctrinal and practical themes, his theology has remained virtually neglected by academia.⁵ One can roughly quantify the scale of this gap in the current scholarly material by observing that the number of doctoral dissertations on figures akin in time and location to that of Charnock are counted by the dozens, if not more, whilst only two monographs have been completed where Charnock's theology is the primary object of exploration.⁶ In addition to the works of Lee and Siekawitch, there are a few other dissertations that include a passing discussion of Charnock's theological beliefs. Amongst these, a couple are worth noting in this introduction as they contain disperse observations about certain aspects of Charnock's theology.⁷

It is significant to note, in justifying this research, that in reviewing the academic literature on Charnock only one monograph, Lee's *Trinitarian Theology and Piety*, decisively delivers an examination of Charnock's theology concerning the nature and perfections of God.⁸ Apart from the aforementioned work, there are only a few published articles and a scarce

⁵ For a more detailed bibliographical account of Charnock's life, refer to pp. 9-14 below in this study.

⁶ Hansang Lee, "Trinitarian Theology and Piety: The Attributes of God in the Thought of Stephen Charnock (1628-1680) and William Perkins (1558-1602)" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Ediburgh, School of Divinity, 2009); Larry Daniel Siekawitch, "Stephen Charnock's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Case Study of the Balance of Head and Heart in Restoration Puritanism" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wales, 2007).

⁷ Steven J. Duby, "Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of St Andrews, School of Divinity, 2014); Wallace W. Marshall, "Purtitanism and Natural Theology" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston College, Theology, 2007); Bruce A. Ware, "An Evangelical Examination of the Doctrine of the Immutability of God" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Theology, 1984).

⁸ However, even in this case the dissertation is not devoted entirely to the analysis of Charnock's doctrine of God.

number of chapters in books (including partial segments or disperse references) discussing aspects of the doctrine of God in Charnock's theology.⁹

The limited number of scholarly sources dealing with Charnock's doctrine of God is staggering even for a relatively unknown figure such as Charnock given that the scant recognition he does enjoy is due to what has been described as his *magnum opus*: the material contained in the discourses upon the existence and the attributes of God.¹⁰ This fact by itself provides an opportunity, in general, to partake in the expansion of the scholarship on the subject of Reformed orthodoxy and, in particular, to contribute in increasing the secondary literature on Stephen Charnock's doctrine of God.

In specific terms, this study consists of an in-depth descriptive analysis of Charnock's theology focused primarily, but not exclusively, in the discourses pertaining to the existence and the attributes of God. Furthermore, this examination considers Charnock's thought in its own context, that is, in relation to the historical, intellectual, and religious milieu of seventeenth-century Britain. A conscious effort is made to interpret Charnock's theology by

⁹ This material lacks homogeneity and, thereby, varies in length and depth from one author to the other. Consult Joel Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 59-84; James E. Dolezal, *God without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 202-204; F. K. Drayson, "Divine Sovereignty in the Thought of Stephen Charnock" in *Puritan Papers: Volume One (1956-1959)*, ed. J. I. Packer (Phillisburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2000); Colin Gunton, *Act and Being: Towards a Theology of the Divine Attributes* (London: SCM, 2002), 89-92, 113, 117; Jan Hoek, "God Nearby and God Far Away: Stephen Charnock on Divine Attributes," *In die Skriflig: The Journal of the Reformed Theological Society* 48, no. 1 (2014); Rob Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned: Toward a Theology of Divine Emotion* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2013), 119-122; Carl R. Trueman, "Reason and Rhetoric: Stephen Charnock on the Existence of God," in *Reason, Faith and History: Essays in Honour of Paul Helm*, ed. Martin Stone (Abingdon, UK: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2008).

¹⁰ Stephen Charnock, *The Works of Stephen Charnock*, 5 vols., vol. 1 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1864; repr., Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, 2010); *ibid.*, 2.

acknowledging not only the pious and intellectual ethos commonly associated with those linked to the puritan and Reformed tradition, but also by considering the literary genre of Charnock's *Discourses* (viz., theological sermons). This is significant as one should not expect to find in Charnock's material, much less impose on it, the doctrinal systematisation and thematic taxonomy required for other literary genres of the seventeenth-century such as the *systema*, the *compendia*, and the *medulla*.

This dissertation argues, then, that the influence of scholasticism can be observed in Charnock's style of argumentation and in his method of organising the different subjects pertaining to the doctrine of God. That this dissertation argues for the influence of the scholastic method upon Charnock's doctrine of God does not dispense with the fact that the *Discourses* primarily reflect the characteristics of a work on homiletical theology rather than the features of those works written in explicit scholastic style.¹¹ More specifically, it is contended that, in his own homiletical style, Charnock's *methodus* of presentation for the discourses on the existence and the attributes of God follows a sequential pattern of analysis that is primarily dictated by the *quaestio*, the method of investigation used by the schoolmen of the medieval and post-Reformation eras wherein the study of a subject generally included: (1) the attestation of the existence of a being/object (*an sit*), (2) the analysis of the being's/object's quiddity (*quid sit*), and (3), an examination of what sort of being/object is being studied (*qualis sit*).¹² Additionally, the forgoing proposal

¹¹ See the explanation provided in Muller, *PRRD*: 3:115-119.

¹² Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century; Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, edited and translated by Jerome Taylor

is presented throughout this study by an exposition of Charnock's exegetical, doctrinal, and practical material with constant reference to well-known representatives of the Reformed scholastic tradition. In like manner, this study intentionally visualises its thesis by a projection of it in both the structure and the sequence of chapters three to six of this dissertation, being chapters one and two the introductory sections that framed the project.¹³

This study is, therefore, structured in the following manner. Chapter one provides a biographical and historical account seeking to locate Charnock within his own historical context. This chapter also includes a discussion about the different theological sources and the philosophical influences shaping Charnock's theological reasoning.

Chapter two draws upon the Reformed scholastic systems some methodological considerations implicit in Charnock's theological enterprise. This chapter also includes an introduction to the notion of divine simplicity and a discussion of its import for explaining the doctrine of the divine attributes in Charnock's discourses. Specifically, this chapter touches upon those features that, while not being explicitly addressed anywhere in the *Discourses*, are nevertheless foundational and, hence, implicitly assumed by Charnock in his construal of the divine perfections.¹⁴ In the final section of this

Lester K. Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 291. Muller has indicated that the *quaestio* method is not *per se* a scholastic invention. In fact, important features of it have been detected in the works of classical authors and ancient philosophers such as Quintilian (35-100) and Aristotle (384 B.C.-322 B.C.). See Muller, *After Calvin*: 28.

¹³ For a better visual of this point, see 'Table of Contents' below.

¹⁴ The use of the term 'Reformed orthodox' throughout this thesis refers to the mainstream within the post-Reformation Reformed tradition and, thus, it does not assume an absolute uniformity amongst its representatives.

chapter, this investigation discusses the meaning and significance of the doctrine of divine simplicity and it argues that this notion is, in fact, foundational for Charnock's concept of the divine nature.

Chapter three discusses the first question of the *quaestio* method: *An sit Deus?* (whether God exists?). The chapter is divided in three main sections: the first section proposes an explanation dealing with some preliminary concepts including the place and function of the theme of the 'existence of God', and a brief overview of the types of arguments for the existence of God used by the Reformed divine during the seventeenth-century. This is followed by the second section wherein Charnock's exegetical insights are discussed in anticipation of the subsequent doctrinal formulation and conclusive assessment that atheism is irrational.

Chapters four to six of this paper expounds on the second question of the *quaestio* method: *Quid sit Deus?* (what God is?). Though these three chapters are one conceptual unit, as far as they attempt to answer the same inquiry of the *quaestio*, they are treated independently for methodological reasons. Accordingly, chapter four discusses the attributes of the first order vis-à-vis the scholastic notion of the *via negativa* (the way of negation), that is, it contains an analysis of Charnock's theology on those attributes exclusively pertaining to the divine existence (spirituality, eternity, immutability, and omnipresence).¹⁵ The chapter ends with a section dedicated

¹⁵ The analysis for each attribute in this chapter includes its exegetical foundation and their corresponding doctrinal formulation, in addition to a recurrent interaction with other primary sources of the Reformed orthodox era and with occasional commentaries on more contemporary theologians. This pattern repeats itself throughout chapters six and seven, though there are instances in these chapters wherein the reader will find a more in-depth conversation with some of Charnock's critics.

to explain Charnock's thoughts on the practical use of the attributes of this order.

Chapter five and six are both about the attributes of the second order, involving the perfections of God that are analogically reflected in the creature (knowledge, wisdom, power, holiness, goodness, dominion, and patience). Once more, these chapters are divided both for the sake of organisation and to reflect that the order listed in the *Discourses* matches the scholastic distinction between attributes according to the divine intellect (knowledge and wisdom) and according to the divine will (power, holiness, goodness, dominion, and patience).¹⁶

¹⁶ Chapters five and six conclude with a recapitulation of the practical application of knowing the attributes according to the divine intellect and the divine will.

CHAPTER I
LIFE AND INFLUENCES:
CHARNOCK WITHIN HISTORICAL AND ACADEMIC CONTEXT

Biographical & Historical Background

Historical-theological investigation occasionally identifies influential individuals who have been overlooked in modern academic discussion, though in their own days and in generations afterwards, they enjoyed prestige and public respectability among their peers. This is certainly the case of Stephen Charnock, the seventeenth-century British divine, whose theological acumen and pious character was recognised by his early biographers and editors: 'In a word, for weight of matter, for energy of thought, for copiousness of improving reflection, for grandeur and force of illustration, and for accuracy and felicitousness of expression, Charnock is equalled by few, and surpassed by none of the writers of the age to which he belonged.'¹⁷ Still, biographical accounts of Charnock are scarce and mostly sympathetic (rather than critical).¹⁸

¹⁷ William Symington, "Life and Character of Charnock," in *Discourses Upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1853; reprint, BakerBooks: Grand Rapids, 1996), 17. Citations refer to the BakerBooks edition.

¹⁸ For the sources used in this biographical outline, besides Symington's *Life and Character* referenced above, see Edmund Calamy and Samuel Palmer, *The Nonconformist's Memorial*, 2 vols. (London: W. Harris, 1775), 1:159-161. Particularly, consult James M'Cosh, "Introduction," in *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1864; reprint, Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, 2010), vii-xxvii. Unfortunately, M'Cosh reports to his readers (in *ibid.*, 1:vii.) that what it could have been the most comprehensive no longer in existence. For recent literature containing descriptions about Charnock's life (including a revision of Calamy's work), see J. I. Packer, *Puritan Portraits* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2012), 47-56; Trueman, "Reason and Rhetoric," 29; Joel R. Beeke and Randall Gleason, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006); Richard L. Greaves, *Oxford Dictionary of National*

Stephen Charnock (Charnocke)¹⁹ was born in the ancient parish of St. Katharine Creechurch in London in the year of 1628; his ancestry can be traced through his father, a solicitor named Richard Charnock, back to the Lancashire kinfolk, 'the Charnocks of Charnock.'²⁰ On May 30th, 1642, at the age of 14 years old, young Charnock was matriculated at Emmanuel College, the puritan stronghold at Cambridge University during the seventeenth-century.²¹ Charnock's matriculation at Cambridge took place during a time when the university's enrolment was in decline due to concerns posed by the beginning of the civil war and by the socio-political havoc coming with it.²² In 1646 and 1649, Charnock obtained respectively the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts.

In 1650, Charnock was appointed Fellow of New College at the University of Oxford by the elected visitors representing the parliament, two years later he was incorporated Master of Arts, and in 1654 designated Senior Proctor of the university, a position Charnock held until his departure to

Biography, s.v. "Charnock, Stephen (1628-1680)."; J.C. Spalding, *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, s.v. "Stephen Charnock."; A. G. Matthews et al., *Calamy Revised: Being a Revision of Edmund Calamy's Account of the Ministers and Others Ejected and Silenced 1660-1662* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), 111.

¹⁹ As the surname is spelled in some early editions of Charnock's works, as for instance in *Several Discourses Upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (London: D. Newman, et. al, 1682).

²⁰ M'Cosh, "Introduction," vii.

²¹ John Venn and John Archibald Venn, eds., *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, from the Earliest Times to 1900*, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924), 1.1:326.

²² See Victor Morgan and Christopher Brooke, *A History of the University of Cambridge: Vol. 2 1546-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 464-468.

Ireland in 1655.²³ In general, the sentiment at Oxford before and during the civil war was sympathetic to the royal agenda; however, by June 1646 the city of Oxford surrendered to the parliament prompting an internal purge that was executed by the new regime in its attempt to exercise control over the university.²⁴ As an institution, Oxford was committed to develop a breed of scholars that were academically able as fervently committed to living a moral life and even though some feared that this new ethos at Oxford might have fostered a 'somewhat narrow scholarship', this concern never materialised.²⁵ On the contrary, during the 1650's Oxford enjoyed an intellectual flourishing in the sciences as never before.²⁶

In 1655, Charnock accepted an invitation to go to Ireland; he arrived to Dublin in July of the same year.²⁷ Once there, he became chaplain of Henry Cromwell, chief governor of Ireland and brother of Robert Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, Scotland, and Ireland.²⁸ A powerful preacher, known for his expository depth, prodigious memory, and vivid imagination, Charnock

²³ Spalding, *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*.

²⁴ Anthony Wood and Philip Bliss, *Athenae Oxonienses: An Exact History of All the Writers and Bishops Who Have Had Their Education in the University of Oxford: To Which Are Added the Fasti, or Annals of the Said University*, 3 ed., Anglistica & Americana (Hildesheim: Olms, 1969); M'Cosh, "Introduction," xiv.

²⁵ Idem., "Introduction," xv.

²⁶ See A. L. Rowse, *Oxford in the History of the Nation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), 118.

²⁷ In personal communication with the archivist at New College Oxford it was added that, '[i]n 1655 he [Charnock] received a licence signed by Oliver Cromwell, dated 5 May, to be absent from the college yet still enjoy the income of his fellowship while being employed on special service for the State in Ireland.', Jennifer Thorp, electronic message to this author, December 12, 2013.

²⁸ Henry Cromwell, Oliver Cromwell's son, was also Chancellor of Trinity College, Dublin. Peter Gaunt, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Cromwell, Henry (1628-1674)."

was appointed by the city council minister for a weekly lecture at Christ Church and shortly after he replaced Thomas Wilkinson at St. Werburgh's church.²⁹ Charnock continued cultivating his academic career during his time in Ireland where he was made Bachelor of Divinity and Fellow of Trinity College by the University of Dublin.³⁰

The imposition of a draconian legislation after Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660 forced Charnock to leave his posts in Ireland and to return to England.³¹ Charnock disappeared from public life from 1660 to 1675 as a result of the ban imposed on non-conformists partisans, it is believed that during this time of obscurity Charnock travelled to France and Holland where, most likely, he was exposed to Continental Reformed theologies.³² In 1666, a few years after being banned from office, Charnock lost his personal library

²⁹ M'Cosh, "Introduction," xvi-xviii; Trueman, "Reason and Rhetoric," 29; John Seymour, *The Puritans in Ireland, 1647-1662*, ed. C. H. Firth and Walter Raleigh, 12 vols., Oxford Historical and Literary Studies (London: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), 12:141. Charnock's role as preacher was extended to at least other five well-known churches in Dublin, including St. Patrick, St. John, and St. Catherine. In Spalding, *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*. Cf. Seymour, *The Puritans in Ireland*: 12:111.

³⁰ M'Cosh, "Introduction," 1:xviii, note †. However, according to one modern biography, Henry Cromwell did not succeed in appointing Charnock Senior Fellow at Trinity without giving up his fellowship at New College, Oxford. Greaves, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

³¹ The new legislation is explained in the Corporation Act and the Clarendon Code, see J. A. Cannon, *The Oxford Companion to British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), s.v. "Corporation Act."; J. R. Jones, *ibid.* (2002), s.v. "Clarendon Code." There are accounts that locate Charnock in Dublin after 1660, as in M'Cosh, "Introduction," xix; Greaves, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Charnock was officially expelled from the established Church two years after Charles' restoration to the throne.

³² M'Cosh, "Introduction," xxii. Cf. Trueman, "Reason and Rhetoric," 29. Greaves says that Charnock might have used his knowledge in medicine as a means for living/travelling during this time of isolation, *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*.

and all his manuscripts during the great fire that consumed great part of central London.³³

In 1675, once the impositions of the Clarendon Code strictness began to dwindle, Charnock received a call to co-pastor with Rev. Thomas Watson (1620-1686) a congregation in Crosby Hall, London. Albeit preceded by a great reputation and respectability, Charnock's last years as a preacher at Crosby Hall were not as successful as before. His lack of memory and limited eyesight, forced him to read his sermons with a glass reducing his preaching prowess significantly.³⁴ On July 27 1680, Stephen Charnock died at the age of 52 years old. Three days after, Charnock's body was buried at St. Michael's Church, in Cornhill, where John Johnson preached a funeral sermon based on Matthew 3:43-49.³⁵ Charnock's was honoured with the publication of a series of poems, the compilation of some of his sayings, and a requiem upon his death.³⁶ All of Charnock's works were published posthumously apart from one sermon that was printed in 1676.³⁷ From 1677 to 1680, Charnock was invested

³³ It would be difficult to measure with certitude the loss accrued by the fire in what could have been a sizeable part of Charnock's theological work.

³⁴ Nevertheless, his sermons never were considered jejune; on the contrary, they were criticized for being 'too thoughtful', M'Cosh, "Introduction," xxiii.

³⁵ John Johnson, *Eklampsis Ton Dikaion, or, the Shining Forth of the Righteous: A Sermon Preached Partly Upon the Death of That Reverend and Excellent Divine, Mr. Stephen Charnock* (London: Parkhurst, Miller, and Alsop, 1680). According to M'Cosh, Johnson had originally prepared the sermon for another funeral but due to Charnock's sudden death, he was forced to adapt it to the new circumstances. M'Cosh, "Introduction," xxv, n. †.

³⁶ "New Poems Upon the Death of That Eminent Servant of God, and Truly Pious and Learned Minister of the Gospel Mr. Stephen Charnock," (London: Thomas Snowden, 1680); Stephen Charnock, "The Sayings of That Reverend and Great Preacher Mr. S. Charnock, Who Departed This Life on Wednesday the 28 of July, 1680, and Was Solemnly Interred the 30th Following," (London: [s.n.], 1680); "An Elegy on the Death of the Truly Reverend, Learned, and Pious, Mr. Stephen Charnock," (London: J.A for Thomas Cockeril, 1680).

³⁷ Included in the nineteenth-century edition, see Stephen Charnock, "A Discourse of the Sinfulness and Cure of Thoughts," in *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, ed.

in completing a series of lectures on the attributes of God, though the project was cut short by his death in 1680.³⁸

Formative Stimuluses

Like any other theologian in history, Charnock's religious mind was shaped under the stimulus of a myriad of interrelated factors. Charnock was exposed to the academic milieu during the seventeenth-century in England, he was determined to find ways to interconnect mind and heart echoing the pious impulses of a devoted puritan.

In what follows, this study offers a brief description of the theological, literary, and philosophical influences that shaped Charnock's writings. This sections draws from the material listed as being part of Charnock's personal library, which, in addition to Charnock's own writings, and the existent library at Emmanuel College around the time he was a student at Cambridge, provide the most significant sources for the identification of Charnock's early intellectual influences.³⁹

Richard Adams and Edward Veal, *Nichol's Series of Standard Divines: Puritan Period* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1864; reprint, Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, 2010), 5:288-316.

³⁸ In volumes 1 and 2, *Idem.*, *The Works of Stephen Charnock*, 5 vols. (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1864-1866; repr., Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, 2010). 'God's Patience' was the last theme treated in the series.

³⁹ Charnock's library was originally destroyed during the great fire of London, but rebuilt in the following years, as it is attested in *Bibliotheca Charnockiana Sive Catalogus Librorum... Viri Domini Steph. Charnock, S.T.B.* (London: 1680).

Theological Sources

Scripture

Charnock's formative years at Cambridge (and later at Oxford) were shaped by the religious ethos that followed the Reformation. The new sentiment at Cambridge was evidenced by the effort to accomplish three main objectives: (1) the education of the student body, (2) the solidification and development of the mind considering the Reformation, and (3) the pursuit of knowledge.⁴⁰ These goals were framed within a clear theological context wherein the Bible was the ultimate source of divine revelation and, thus, normative for the Christian life.

Cambridge was an epicentre of the 'golden era' of biblical scholarship during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Protestant advancements in biblical exegesis, textual studies, and linguistics during seventeenth-century are firmly established in modern scholarship.⁴¹ For instance, three decades before Charnock enrolled at Cambridge, a massive amount of editorial work on a new translation of the Bible (the Authorized Version) was completed by a joint effort of scholars from Oxford and Cambridge, comprising notable puritans like Laurence Chaderton and William Branthwaite, master and fellow of Emmanuel College respectively.⁴²

There is no explicit treatment of the doctrine of Scripture in Charnock's published material; however, a cursory overview of the *Discourses* will suffice

⁴⁰ Morgan and Brooke, *A History of the University of Cambridge*: 441.

⁴¹ Muller, *After Calvin*: 49-51.

⁴² Morgan and Brooke, *A History of the University of Cambridge*: 442.

to demonstrate that Scripture played a foundational role in structuring Charnock's theology. For example, every discourse in Charnock's works begins with an exposition of a biblical text and each theological point is buttressed by a battery of biblical references and their corresponding exegetical insights. Thus, it comes as no surprise to read that: 'All truth is to be drawn from Scripture... Scripture is the source of divine knowledge; not the traditions of men, nor reason separate from Scripture.'⁴³ In this sense, one can argue that there are no substantial differences in the doctrine of Scripture between a seventeenth-century divine such as Charnock and the magisterial teaching of the reformers. In fact, recent scholarship concerning the doctrine of Scripture in Reformed theology has proven that the differences between Reformation and post-Reformation Reformed theologies are not essential but purely formal.⁴⁴

According to post-Reformation Reformed theology, the *verbum Dei* is the word of God acknowledged as: (1) the eternal Word, (2) the incarnate Word, (3) the inspired word of Holy Scripture, and (4) the internal word of the Spirit.⁴⁵ Comprehended as (3), the *verbum Dei* is distinguished as *internum* (i.e., as divinely inspired to the writer and thus principal) and *externum* (i.e.,

⁴³ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 8.

⁴⁴ John V. Fesko, "The Doctrine of Scripture in Reformed Orthodoxy," in *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 429-464; esp. 430, 455, 464. For the authority and self-authentication of Scripture during the periods of Early and High Orthodoxy, consult Henk van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust*, Studies in Reformed Theology (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 117-177.

⁴⁵ Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 1995), 324.

as rendered by the writer and thus instrumental).⁴⁶ Furthermore, the *verbum Dei externum* is understood as *agraphon* and *engraphon*, that is, the word of God communicated to the prophets and apostles and the written word divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁷ Thus, Scripture (i.e. *verbum Dei externum et engraphon*) is the special vehicle whereby God had decided to disclose himself and his will to the human race. Moreover, the content of Scripture is *autopistos in se et per se* (trustworthy in and by itself) and thus its weight does not depend on any given-authority conferred by the church or by tradition. In other words, the commanding nature of Scripture is independent from any form of human validation as far as Scripture's *auctoritas* (authority) lies in its divine origin as *verbum Dei* (word of God).⁴⁸

Patristic Literature

Echoing the reformers' critical appreciation for patristic teaching, the puritan movement of the seventeenth-century welcomed the instruction of the Fathers since they were part of a tradition that carried with it a qualified form of authority: *auctoritas patrum*.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Belt, *The Authority of Scripture*: 143.

⁴⁷ This distinction can be traced back to Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), see *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1849-1852), 1:36-37.

⁴⁸ The Westminster Confession states that '[the authority of Scripture] dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.' (§I. 4) See also '*autopistos*' in Muller, *Dictionary*: 54.

⁴⁹ The most recent comprehensive case-study of the puritan's reception of the Fathers is Ann-Stephane Schäfer, *Mainzer Studien Zur Amerikanistik, Volume 58: Auctoritas Patrum?: The Reception of the Church Fathers in Puritanism* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang AG, 2012). For the reception of the Fathers within Reformed orthodox circles, see Irena Backus, "The Fathers in Calvinist Orthodoxy: Patristic Scholarship," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. Irena Backus (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 839-866; E.P. Meijering, "The Fathers in Calvinist Orthodoxy: Systematic Theology,"

Although Charnock's *Discourses* are not saturated with direct quotes from the early fathers—or from any other literary source for that matter—his familiarity with patristic sources is manifested by the variety of authors he refers and by the ample range of topics he covers.⁵⁰ Charnock's appeal to the writings of the church fathers add up to the eclectic nature of his theology, which is anchored in the most venerable sources of the Christian tradition.⁵¹ On the one hand, Charnock relishes the early fathers' teachings as he considers that they represented the earliest form of the apostolic message to the church after the New Testament era, a post-apostolic mode of authority: a *testes veritatis* [witness of the truth].⁵² On the other hand, it must be noted that Charnock's appreciation of the *argumentum patrum* was always qualified by the Reformation conviction concerning the supremacy of the authority of Scripture over tradition.⁵³ In sum, the puritans acknowledged the primacy of the *Word of God* (i.e. Scripture) as a direct consequence of its divine origin

ibid., 867-888. For patristic reception amongst the magisterial reformers, see Manfred Schulze, "Martin Luther and the Church Fathers," *ibid.*, 2:573-626; Irena Backus, "Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer and the Church Fathers," *ibid.*, 2:627-660; Johannes van Oort, "John Calvin and the Church Fathers," *ibid.*, 2:661-700; A. N. S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999).

⁵⁰ A list of the patristic writers referred, cited, and/or quoted in Charnock's writings as they appear in the 1865's edition of *The Complete Works* includes: Ambrose (340-397), Athanasius (296-373), Augustine (354-430), Basil (330-379), Boëthius (480-524), Chrysostom (349-407), Clement of Rome (?), Cyprian (200-258), Epiphanius (315-403), Eusebius (260-340), Gregory of Nazianzen (330-389), Jerome (342-420), Justin Martyr (100-165), Lactantius (240-320), Origen (185-254), Tertullian (155-240), and Theodoret (393-466). Charnock seems to be also acquainted with specialised literature on patristics, as it is attested in Millington, *Bibliotheca Charnockiana*.

⁵¹ In this sense, Charnock's appropriation of the Fathers echoes the manner wherein patristic material was managed by other puritan authors (e.g. William Perkins or John Foxe). Cf. Schäfer, *Auctoritas Patrum?*: 53-64.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 144. Cf. Meijering, "The Reception of the Church Fathers," 867.

⁵³ Though no explicit treatment of the doctrine of Scripture is found in the *Discourses*, the Reformation concept of *sola scriptura* remains implicit throughout all of his theological sermons.

and, thereby, they concluded that any attempt to replace Scripture by tradition was an affront to God himself.⁵⁴

Medieval Theology

It would be mistaken to assume that the theological traditions at Emmanuel College during the 1640s were wholly unified around Puritanism. On the contrary, the historical evidence indicates that despite the strong puritan ethos of the time, a broad variety of Protestant traditions resided within the College during the early decades of the seventeenth-century.⁵⁵ The concomitance of Puritanism with other Protestant trends within the confines of institutions of higher learning, in addition to the former's appreciation for the academic education of the day, the established catholicity of Reformed theology, and the reading of the reformers in light of its immediate context (i.e. late medieval theology), prevented the censorship of sources that in many ways could have been considered *prima facie* hostile towards the core tenets of the Reformation.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ See David C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings: From Geiler Von Kaysersberg to Theodore Beza* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 102 Cf. J. I. Packer, "The Puritans as Interpreters of Scripture," in *Puritan Papers: Volume 1 (1956-1959)*, ed. J. I. Packer (Phillipsburgh, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2000), 193-195.

⁵⁵ Morgan and Brooke, *A History of the University of Cambridge: 475-476*. This coexistence at Emmanuel College, however, should not to be understood as to indicate some sort of conceptual recognition among the parties, particularly between Protestants and Roman Catholics. See Paul R. Schaefer, "Protestant Scholasticism at Elizabethan Cambridge: William Perkins and a Reformed Theology of the Heart," in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 153.

⁵⁶ Muller, *After Calvin: 47-62*.

Akin to the church fathers' writings, the literature of the medieval doctors is hardly ever mentioned directly in Charnock's *Discourses*.⁵⁷ A full explanation accounting for such austerity in Charnock's writings is beyond the aim of this section; however, it is doubtful that this 'anomaly' had been caused by Charnock's ignorance of the main theological trends discussed during the Middle Age. This can be seen in Charnock's lecture on the existence of God wherein he deploys a series of metaphysical and philosophical principles drawn from the schoolmen of the medieval era, which included the use of the laws of logic, the notion of efficient causality, the concept of necessity, the appeal to teleology, the impossibility of infinite regressions, etc.⁵⁸

Reformation and Post-Reformation Theologies

Material assessments of the theological content found within the works of the Protestant divines during greater part of the seventeenth-century (Charnock's *Discourses* included) points towards a significant doctrinal continuity with the magisterial divines of the previous century. Besides John Calvin (1509-1564), Charnock positively refers to the work of other reformers including Johannes Oecolampadius (1482-1531), Martin Luther (1483-1546), Philip Melancthon (1497-1560), Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563), Paul Fagius (1504-1549), Girolamo Zanchi (1516-1590), and Martin Chemnitz

⁵⁷ Thomas Aquinas's *Summae* and Peter Lombard's *Sentences* are the two most prominent medieval theologians cited in Charnock, *Works*. Charnock refers to non-Christian medieval sources, including the Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides (1138-1204) and the 'Turkish Alcoran', the first English translation of the Koran (1649). See *ibid.*, 1:65, 271, 426; 5:160, 289 and 1:58, respectively.

⁵⁸ The core of Charnock's argument for the existence of God has been described, and rightly so, as the 'context in which Charnock develops the metaphysical heart of the discourse', the place where the reader observes the 'standard kind of theistic proofs so common in theology from the Middle Ages onwards.' In Trueman, "Reason and Rhetoric," 35.

(1522-1586). In accordance with the catholic nature of his theology, Charnock appears to be familiar also with the work of important Roman Catholic theologians such as Thomas Cajetan (1469-1534), Pierre Charron (1541-1603), Francisco Suárez (1548-1617), Denis Pétau (1583-1652), and Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655).

Like other seventeenth-century Reformed divines, whose theological material was built up upon sources within the Christian tradition ranging from Patristic and Medieval theologies to the doctrines of the first and second-generation reformers, Charnock's theology is in essential continuity with the fundamental teachings of the divines (within the Reformed tradition) who preceded him during the Reformation era.⁵⁹ In terms of religious identification, Charnock belonged to a particular breed of seventeenth-century's Protestants in England known as 'puritans'.⁶⁰ A comprehensive analysis of the complexities involved in the identification of the nature of the

⁵⁹ This study assumes that just as there is a continuity between certain aspects of medieval theology with that of the Reformation era, there is a substantial agreement between Reformation and post-Reformation Reformed theologies. Richard A. Muller's reappraisal of the nature of Reformed theology during the Reformation and of its development and accommodation into the systems of the seventeenth-century has become a powerful resource supporting the position assumed in this monograph. For a historico-theological assessment of the transition from Reformation to post-Reformation Reformed theologies see, "Calvin and the 'Calvinists': Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities between the Reformation and Orthodoxy" parts 1 and 2 in Muller, *After Calvin*: 47-80; Idem., *PRRD*: 1:37-40; Idem., *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 13-69.

⁶⁰ In its origin, the tag 'puritan' was a slur not a medium of self-identification; it was a discriminatory term of abuse dedicated to those—in the clergy and the laity—who strove for reforms within the Church of England. The aim of the moniker was to 'stigmatize its targets as busybodies, hypocrites or political deviants, or sometimes all three together.' John Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603-1689* (New York: Macmillan, 1998), 17. Interestingly, some have noted that it was the Arminian party the responsible for the semantic transposition of the term: from its purely sociological (derogatory) meaning to its theological characterization (Orthodox Calvinism). See, Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism C.1590-1640*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 45-55; cf. Ian Hugh Clary, "Hot Protestants: A Taxonomy of English Puritanism," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 2, no. 1 (2010): 47.

puritan movement is out of the scope of this investigation. It suffices to indicate that conceptions of Puritanism prompted by anti-puritan sentiments, as the ones propagated after the nineteenth-century wherein puritans are depicted as religious bigots and pre-modern obscurantists, must be rejected as they are historically inaccurate and theologically simplistic.⁶¹

Literary and Methodological Sources

Humanism and scholasticism

‘Humanism’ and ‘scholasticism’ are included here considering their significance for theological matters in the Reformed scholastic tradition.

These terms are understood respectively as: (1) an intellectual movement within the Renaissance era determined to recover the value and meaning of the original text (*ad fontes*) through the development of sophisticated tools of literary analysis such as philology and textual criticism and (2) a method of academic investigation that intertwines concepts, distinctions, definitions, syllogisms, rhetoric, and disputational forms of argumentation.⁶²

⁶¹ Carl Trueman, for example, points out to John Owen’s *Bibliotheca Oweniana*, which contains, apart from theological books, numerous volumes on music theory, mathematics, politics, philology, history, geography, philosophy, law, classical literature, and even gardening, social life, and magic. See Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 12-17. Charnock himself, in addition to his theological acumen, demonstrated a sophisticated knowledge in the medical sciences, and a clear interest in mathematics, classical literature, law, history, and philosophy. See Charnock, *Works*: 1:xiii, xxiv; cf. *Bibliotheca Charnockiana*. Moreover, a look at the curriculum at Cambridge while Charnock was at Emmanuel College (the so-called ‘Puritan bastion’ of the university) indicates that as an undergrad student Charnock was exposed to the study of logic, physics, mathematics, rhetoric, ethics, metaphysics, and cosmography. See William T. Costello, *The Scholastic Curriculum at Early Seventeenth-Century Cambridge* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 36.

⁶² For more details consult, James Hankins, "Humanism, Scholasticism, and Renaissance Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 30-32; Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Humanism," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Anthony Vos, "Reformation and

In the last decades a significant number of scholars have reassessed the significance of the medieval period in shaping the theologies of the Reformation and post-Reformation era.⁶³ Recent studies have determined that humanism and scholasticism coexisted in the work of many of the mainstream reformers and thereby the two methods of academic analysis should not to be seen as arriving at contradictory theologies (or philosophies).⁶⁴ Renaissance humanism and scholasticism were used in tandem as the philological and pedagogical tools to elaborate the dogmatic systems of the seventeenth-century.⁶⁵

The reassessment mentioned above accounts for the traces of both humanism and scholasticism in Charnock's *Discourses*. Concerning humanistic impulses, Charnock engages the biblical text selected for each discourse showing a sophisticated knowledge of the original languages while applying philological tools for the proper understanding of the passage.⁶⁶

Scholasticism," in *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise*, ed. Willem J. Van Asselt and Eef Dekker (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2001), 106.

⁶³ Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation: Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992); Steven E. Ozment, *The Age of Reform, 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (London: Yale University Press, 1980); Idem., "Humanism, Scholasticism, and the Intellectual Origins of the Reformation," in *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History*, ed. George Huntston Williams, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1979).

⁶⁴ The ground breaking work on this subject is Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanistic Strains* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 92-119. For the place of scholasticism in the thought of Luther and Calvin, consult D.V.N. Bagchi, "Sic Et Non: Luther and Scholasticism," in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2005), 3-15; David C. Steinmetz, "The Scholastic Calvin," *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Muller, *After Calvin*: 39.

⁶⁶ For the influence of humanism in Puritan exegesis, see Henry M. Knapp, "Revealing the Mind of God: Exegetical Method in the Seventeenth Century," in *Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Muller on the Maturation of a Theological Tradition*, ed. Jordan J. Ballor, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 543-548.

Regarding the influence of scholasticism, Charnock's material exhibits an unapologetic appeal to logical reasoning, just as an appeal to propositional argumentation, definitions, and methods of disputation in his discussion of doctrinal matters.⁶⁷

In retrospect, Charnock's style might be explained by the fact that the syllabus to which he was exposed during his time at the University of Cambridge had received after the Reformation a reinvigorated emphasis on certain areas of study such as grammar, rhetoric, and the study of the classics, precisely as a consequence of the influence brought Protestants shaped by humanistic instincts.⁶⁸ Still, scholasticism, as a method of investigation, was also an integral part of Cambridge's seventeenth-century curriculum, as it is attested by the way lectures and disputations were structured.⁶⁹

Philosophical Sources

Aristotelianism

Charnock's theology manifests a noticeable awareness of Aristotelian philosophy, though Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC) himself is not cited as often as

⁶⁷ Note, for instance, the use of humanistic and scholastic tools in Charnock's sermon titled 'The Necessity of Christ's Death', in Stephen Charnock, *The Works of Stephen Charnock*, 5 vols., vol. 5 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1866; repr., Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, 2010), 3-48. Charnock begins by exegeting Luke 24:26, then he establishes three points of inquiry concerning Christ's suffering: (1) its nature; (2) its necessity; and (3), its consequences. From these three general themes, Charnock infers/affirms two doctrines: (i) the necessity of Christ's sufferings; and (ii) the necessity of Christ's exaltation. Then, Charnock proceeds to tackle (i) by explaining *what kind of necessity this is*. This is done by demonstrating that *it was necessary*, and, finally, by indicating the *practical use* of the doctrine. Charnock then engages in a series of arguments—buttressed by biblical texts, tradition, propositions, and logical inferences—to accomplish his objective.

⁶⁸ Morgan and Brooke, *A History of the University of Cambridge*: 441.

⁶⁹ That is, in the form of propositions, definitions, syllogisms, questions, and articles. Costello, *The Scholastic Curriculum*: 11-12.

other philosophers in the *Discourses*.⁷⁰ Charnock's acquaintance with the philosophy of Aristotle is explained by being exposed, while at Cambridge, to Aristotle's thought through primary and secondary literature including Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* and Bartholomäus Keckermann's *Systema Sacrosanctae Theologiae*.⁷¹ It is not surprising, then, to observe philosophical principles derived from Aristotle in Charnock's theological argumentation.

In the realm of logical thinking, Charnock explicitly relies on key Aristotelian trends such as the law of non-contradiction (*principium contradictionis*).⁷² For Charnock, compliance with the law of non-contradiction was an indispensable requirement for the coherence of any rational argument. In this sense, logic is reckoned foundational to theological discourse rather than being antithetical to it.⁷³ Besides, Charnock draws from Aristotle the distinction between *essential* predications (things that are said to be *per se*) and *accidental* predications (things that are not necessary or essential) to affirm the ontological otherness of God in comparison with the creature. Creatures are subjected to change in regards to their 'substance' and 'accidents', which is to say that they experience variations in their being

⁷⁰ Aristotle is directly named (or referenced) five times in Charnock, *Works*: 3:116; 5:303, 386, 399, 471. The Greek and Latin editions of *Aristotelis opera* are listed in the *Bibliotheca Charnockiana*, 9.

⁷¹ Consult Costello, *The Scholastic Curriculum*: 9, 37, 45-46. Cf. Morgan and Brooke, *A History of the University of Cambridge*: 511-512. It is noteworthy that the entrance of Aristotelianism into the classrooms at Emmanuel was preceded by a critical accommodation of Aristotle's own philosophy. Schaefer, "Protestant Scholasticism," 151.

⁷² Charnock, *Works*, 1: 1:147.

⁷³ Cf. Theo J. Pleizier and Maarten Wisse, "'As the Philosopher Says': Aristotle," in *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*, ed. Willem J. van Asselt, et al. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011), 30-32.

whereas God's being subsists without successions (i.e. variations of any kind).⁷⁴ Furthermore, Charnock argues by mean of syllogisms—another feature of Aristotelian pedigree—to stress the cogency of an argument and to maximize the force thereof.⁷⁵ Finally, Charnock alludes frequently—directly or by inference—to Aristotle's fourfold model of causality: material, formal, final, and efficient.⁷⁶

None of the above makes Charnock's theology 'Aristotelian', not if by the term one understands an uncritical acceptance of Aristotle's ideas.⁷⁷ In his account of the existence of the universe Aristotle assumes, for example, a metaphysical model wherein the unmoved mover (i.e., the ultimate cause of reality) is accountable for the existence of reality out of ingenerated, eternal, and infinite raw matter.⁷⁸ On the contrary, while agreeing with the notion of causality to explain the existence of the universe, Charnock rejects that matter is eternal and infinite. Aristotle's explanation of the universe as formed from

⁷⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 351-352. Cf. 1025a-1, and 1029b-4 in Aristotle, *Metaphysics: Volume I (Book I-IX)*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933), 289-291; 321.

⁷⁵ Stephen Charnock, *The Works of Stephen Charnock*, 5 vols., vol. 4 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1865; repr., Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, 2010), 4:183.

⁷⁶ See for instance, Idem., *Works*: 1:15, 65, 165, 304; 2:232, 412, 490; 3:169, 281, 309; 4:154, 221, 362; 5:47, 171, 417.

⁷⁷ Richard A. Muller, "Reformation, Orthodoxy, 'Christian Aristotelianism,' and the Eclecticism of Early Modern Philosophy," *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis* 81, no. 3 (2001): 313-314.

⁷⁸ Consult Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, trans. J. L. Stocks, 2 vols., vol. 1, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Bollingen Series* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 279b, 13 ff; 301b 31, 494.

existing matter is replaced by the Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing).⁷⁹

In sum, Charnock's metaphysics should not be depicted as 'Aristotelian' in nature since they reflect a Christian revision of Aristotle's ideas, one that was critically assessed by and, thus, compatible with confessional Christianity.⁸⁰

Ramism

A brief explanation is due concerning the potential influence of the French logician and educator Petrus Ramus (1515-1572) on the theology of Stephen Charnock.⁸¹ Limitations of scope will not allow this investigation to determine the entire scope and impact that Ramus' thought could have had in Britain's academia during the seventeenth-century. In what matters this study, it may be said that Ramus sought to modify the style of doing academic investigation and to improve the study of all academic subjects by simplifying the syllabus of dialectic and rhetoric; additionally, he developed a highly-organized method of inquiry based on charts and dichotomies (binary divisions) so that the apprentice could avoid the technical hitches ingrained into the traditional Aristotelian system of thought.⁸²

⁷⁹ See Charnock, *Works*: 2:129,184; 4:115.

⁸⁰ This modified form of Aristotelianism used by the Reformed orthodox may sometimes be better described as a 'highly modified Thomism often with Scotistic or nominalistic accents.' See Muller, "Reformation, Orthodoxy, 'Christian Aristotelianism,'" 323.

⁸¹ Ramus' legal name was Pierre de la Ramée.

⁸² Other features of the Ramist method are: (1) it is fundamentally a 'deductive' system (*contra* 'inductive' system); (2) it divides subjects into parts logically connected; and (3), it reaches its conclusions without appealing to syllogisms. See Donald K. McKim, *The*

Usually, Ramus and Ramism are introduced as an antidote against the alleged rationalism of Aristotle and the stiffness of Aristotelian logic.⁸³

However, the real significance of Ramism has been the subject of a lively debate among scholars. While some historians have considered Ramus' thought as a turning point in intellectual history, others have reckoned Ramus' works as no more than intellectual exercises in shallowness and vulgarisation.⁸⁴

Before one makes a definite judgment concerning the real influence of Ramus' thought on Charnock's theological material, it is worth to ponder on recent scholarship on Ramus. On one side, Mordechai Feingold has noted that despite being foundational for building up Protestant curricula outside the higher educational establishment, the logical system proposed by Ramus was never elevated above the work of other logicians at the major universities—not even at Emmanuel College, presumably the puritan stronghold at

Oxford Encyclopedia of Reformation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v. "Ramus, Petrus."

⁸³ Ibid. Some have illustrated well this point by quoting Ramus himself, "but (oh shame!) we have almost made this philosophy of Aristotle the foundation of the Christian religion... Theologians deliver Christianity from this pestilence." Quoted in Keith L. Sprunger, "Ames, Ramus, and the Method of Puritan Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 59, no. 2 (1966): 138. Alister McGrath, following the 'Calvin against the Calvinists' narrative, has claimed, for instance, that the challenge posed by the French theologian Moïse Amyraldus (1596-1664) to the orthodox doctrine of predestination was precipitated by the latter's use of Ramist logic in response to Theodore Beza's 'Aristotelian syllogistic logic'. In *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 193-194. Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, "Zur Bedeutung Des Petrus Ramus Für Philosophie Und Theologie in Calvinismus," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 68, no. 3-4 (1957).

⁸⁴ For a succinct evaluation of these contradictory assessments of Ramus, consult James Veazie Skalnik, *Ramus and Reform: University and Church at the End of the Renaissance* (Kirksville, Mo: Truman State University Press, 2002), 3-5. A more nuanced assessment can be read in Mordechai Feingold, "English Ramism: A Reinterpretation," in *The Influence of Petrus Ramus: Studies in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Philosophy and Sciences*, ed. Mordechai Feingold, et al. (Basel: Schwabe & CO AG, 2001). Also Aza Goudriaan, "Theology and Philosophy," in *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

Cambridge.⁸⁵ Similarly, it is useful to observe the results of Feingold's examination of the libraries belonging to the scholars who died while at Cambridge during the late sixteenth and earlier seventeenth centuries. Feingold concludes that quantitatively the material on the classics and theology took a place of ascendancy over logic and philosophy, and within this latter set Ramist books were usually in the minority compared with other texts on logic and rhetoric.⁸⁶ On the other side, there are those who unequivocally affirm that Ramus' method and logic were rooted in the configuration of the theological material of the puritans.⁸⁷

In his monograph on Charnock and Perkins, Hansang Lee declares that the influence of Ramism is proven by the existence of divisions and subdivisions in Charnock's material.⁸⁸ In response, one may note that Lee's research is circumscribed almost exclusively to Charnock's discourses on the existence and attributes of God, leaving a significant portion of Charnock's material without analysis. Furthermore, Lee assumes that the use of dichotomies and thematic subdivision (assuming that Charnock followed such structure in his works) was an exclusive trademark of Ramist methodology when in fact this was not the case.⁸⁹ But even if it were, there is no indication

⁸⁵ The direct relationship between Ramism and Puritanism is a common place for many contemporary historians. See for instance, Elizabethanne Boran, "Ramism in Trinity College: Dublin in the Early Seventeenth Century," in *The Influence of Petrus Ramus: Studies in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Philosophy and Sciences*, ed. Mordechai Feingold, et al. (Basel: Schwabe & CO AG, 2001), 199.

⁸⁶ Mordechai Feingold, "English Ramism: A Reinterpretation," *ibid.*, 131-133.

⁸⁷ As in Donald K. McKim, *Ramism in William Perkins' Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987); Sprunger, "Ames, Ramus, and the Method of Puritan Theology."

⁸⁸ See, "Theology and Piety," 49.

⁸⁹ Walter J. Ong, *Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 199. Ong goes

that Charnock had ever used Ramus' system of charting and diagramming to convey any of his theological ideas. Moreover, the influence of Ramism was predominant during the Early Orthodoxy (1560-1620), a period that precedes Charnock's time for almost a decade.⁹⁰ Finally, though not a definitive argument *per se*, it is significant that neither Ramus' name nor any of his texts are ever cited or hinted in the whole of Charnock's *Works*.⁹¹

However, this does not preclude the possibility that some of Ramus' ideas could be spotted in Charnock's theological sermons. For example, the consideration given to the elements of Christian obedience and practice in the process of learning sound teaching, just at the similarities between Ramus' *usus et exercitatio* and Charnock's 'Uses' of Christian doctrine are noteworthy, and although Charnock never explicitly answered the question 'what is theology?', it would not be hard to imagine him approving in principle to Ramus' definition: *Theologiae est doctrina bene vivendi* [Theology is [the] doctrine of living rightly].⁹² In the end, this study concludes that the role of Ramus' thought in shaping Charnock's theology is tangential at best since no

further and says that there is, 'little, if any, theoretical foundation' for Ramist dichotomies. In *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Muller, *PRRD*: 1:62.

⁹¹ In contrast, as we have pointed out before, Aristotle is referred several times (directly and indirectly) throughout the *Works*. See notes, 97, 101, 102, and 103. Yet, Charnock cites the work of William Ames, presumably 'one of the most consistent theological Ramist'. Sprunger, "Ames, Ramus, and the Method of Puritan Theology," 149. For Charnock's references on Ames see, *Works*: 1: xiii; 3:90, 171.

⁹² See Petrus Ramus, "Commentariorum De Religione Christiana, Libri Quatuor," (Frankfurt: Apud Andream Wechelum, 1577), 6. The closest Charnock comes to define theology is on his discourse on the Knowledge of God, and this only by making 'knowledge of God' in his 'what kind of knowledge [of God] this is?' as synonymous with 'theology', in Charnock, *Works*: 4: 15ff.

clear evidence have been found pointing in the direction of a significant incidence of Ramus' logic and method in Charnock's *Discourses*.⁹³

⁹³ Cf. M'Cosh, "Introduction," xii-xiii. Here, Ramus's name is omitted amongst the most influential philosophies in Charnock's theology.

CHAPTER II

METHOD AND CONTENT: FUNDAMENTALS IN CHARNOCK'S DOCTRINE OF THE EXISTENCE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Methodological Considerations

This segment explores aspects related to Charnock's theological methodology. The purpose is to identify the presuppositions and principles used by Charnock in his theological task and to analyse their importance in the discourses on the existence and attributes of God. More precisely, this unit investigates the role of divine revelation and hermeneutics in forming Charnock's theology. In doing this, this chapter intentionally circumvents the discussion of themes such as the definition, the parts, the object, the nature, and the aim of theology, neither does it include a discussion concerning the relation between theology, reason, and philosophy. The justification for this self-imposed restriction rests upon the fact that there is no evidence that Charnock ever intended to codify the contents of Christian doctrine in a systematic way.⁹⁴

Here is the place to discuss Lee's characterisation of the type of material illustrated in Charnock's discourses on the existence and the attributes of God. Though Lee employs the term 'theological prolegomena' to depict the methodological and theological presuppositions found in

⁹⁴ For original and further developed versions of theological prolegomena during the orthodox era, see respectively Franciscus Junius, *De Theologia Vera* (Lugduni Batavorum: Officina Plantiniana, 1594), 17-45; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, 3 vols. (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1992), I/1, i-xiv; 1:1-54. Junius' work has been translated into English as *A Treatise on True Theology: With the Life of Franciscus Junius*, trans. David C. Noe (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2014).

Charnock's material, the use of this nomenclature is incorrect considering that theological prolegomenon has its place in a theological genre known as *systema theologiae* (systems of theology), but not in the collection of a series of theological sermons such as in Charnock's *Discourses*.⁹⁵

The main objection to Lee's description of Charnock's methodological assumptions is the imposition of a technical descriptor that does not apply for the literary genre of Charnock's discourses.⁹⁶ By ignoring the methodological differences between the theological system and the theological sermon, Lee incorrectly uses the category of the former to account for the methodological presuppositions of the latter, a shortcoming that is prompted by an effort to accommodate, rather artificially, Charnock's material in an attempt to mimic the methodological structure of the seventeenth-century theological systems.⁹⁷ On the contrary, by acknowledging the differences in style and content between a system of theology and a theological sermon, this study seeks to interpret Charnock in consideration of the literary genre to which his theological discourses belong. Therefore, rather than proposing a synthetic theological prolegomenon for Charnock's works, the following section analyses some aspects of the prolegomena found in the Reformed scholastic

⁹⁵ Typically, the theological systems of the seventeenth-century were organised according to *loci* (topics) explained systematically as one interconnected unit. This is also the case for other material closely related to the *systema*, such as the *loci communes theologiae* (the universal topics of theology), the *corpus* (body), the *compendia* (compendium), and the *medulla* (marrow). Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 178.

⁹⁶ See, for example, Lee, "Theology and Piety," 7, 30-31, 39, 57, 74-75, 140, 189, 221.

⁹⁷ Perhaps symptomatic of a more fundamental problem is that at one point Lee attributes to Muller the description of Charnock's works as a 'discursive system' and as a 'technical theological system'. However, a reading of Muller's words in their original context proves that Lee's assertion is baseless. See *ibid.*, 39. Cf. Muller, *PRRD*: 1:73, 2:466.

systems and extracts from them those features that concur with the presuppositions manifested in Charnock's lectures on the existence and the attributes of God.

Ontic and Epistemic Principles:
Charnock and the *principia theologiae*

Like those in the Reformed scholastic tradition, Charnock establishes God as the objective ground or the essential foundation (*principium essendi*) of theology whilst Scripture is acknowledged as the epistemic or cognitive foundation (*principium cognoscendi*) thereof.⁹⁸ While Charnock implicitly assumes that both God and Scripture are the *principia* of the theological task, it is God—the *principium essendi*—which takes precedence in the order of religious acceptance, if not in the exposition of Christian theology: 'The belief of a God must necessarily precede the belief of any revelation; the latter cannot take place without the former as the foundation... [t]he principal foundation of faith is not the word of God, but God himself, and God as considered in this perfection [goodness].'⁹⁹ This in no way diminishes the significance of Scripture for the theological task for, in fact, Charnock acknowledges that written revelation is the 'principle' and the 'medium' whereby God communicates and makes known his grace to mankind.¹⁰⁰

In general, Charnock's exposition on the existence and the attributes of God exhibits a theological method that recognises the significance of the

⁹⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 4: 491, n. *.

⁹⁹ Idem., *Works*, 1: 180; *ibid.*, 2: 383.

¹⁰⁰ Idem., *Works*, 4: 491.

principia theologiae without necessarily framing its content according to a particular ontological or epistemological order (*ordo essendi* or *ordo cognoscendi*); instead, the material is organised according to a pedagogical order (*ordo docendi*).¹⁰¹ However, it is important to note that the chief metaphysical assumption is that God (*principia essendi*) takes logical precedence in the task of formulating doctrine. This is to say that the *principium essendi* is for Charnock the *assumptio sine qua non* for the exposition of Christian theology given that no knowledge about the divine comes but through the mediation and self-disclosure of God himself.

Divine Revelation: Natural and Supernatural Knowledge of God

More explicit turns out to be the evidence for Charnock's belief in the natural and the supernatural knowledge of God (i.e., theology), even though it must be noted that the discussion of these themes belong to a series of lectures included in volume four of the *Complete Works* and, thereby, a comprehensive analysis of such subjects fall outside the scope of this investigation.¹⁰² It suffices to note, however, that the natural/supernatural scheme is observed throughout the theology of the *Discourses*, including those on the existence and attributes of God.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Somehow resembling the method that elicited the order in Calvin's *Institutes*. For an explanation about the latter, consult Muller, *Unaccommodated Calvin*: 118-139.

¹⁰² Charnock, *Works*, 4: 3-163. It is noteworthy that in the only comprehensive treatment concerning Charnock's epistemology, the 'supernatural' knowledge of God seems to be treated exclusively under the theme of 'special revelation', Siekawitch, "Charnock's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God," 196-256. This provides an opportunity for further investigation on this matter.

¹⁰³ In his own style, Charnock follows the natural/supernatural distinction of theology used by several of his peers including Mastricht, John Owen (1616-1683), Thomas Barlow (1608-1691), Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669), Polanus, and Junius, among others. Rehnman,

Instead of rejecting altogether the possibility of acquiring true knowledge about God through the created order, Charnock limits the power of natural revelation by declaring it ineffective for human redemption. The power of natural knowledge in the soul may provide some intelligible information about the nature of God, but transmits nothing ultimately substantial about the redeeming work of Christ.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, natural revelation by itself does not reveal God's hatred of sin and the benefits of divine grace.¹⁰⁵ Ultimately, the finest of natural knowledge is outranked by the content of supernatural knowledge and thereby the former is inferior to the latter in delivering the best knowledge about God.¹⁰⁶

Having noted the limitations of natural knowledge of God, this knowledge, though theoretical, insufficient, and limited for contemplation, it is intrinsically valuable since by it God secures his people from the wickedness of the world whilst concurrently justifies his punitive actions towards worldly evils.¹⁰⁷ What is more, natural revelation is still capable, though in a limited manner, of revealing God's power, wisdom, goodness, immutability, eternity, omniscience, sovereignty, spirituality, aseity, and majesty.¹⁰⁸ This knowledge

Divine Discourse: 73-74, n. 1. For natural and supernatural revelation in puritan thought (including Charnock), see Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*: 11-26.

¹⁰⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 4: 16. This claim correlates the Christological tone of the formulations that Charnock offers in this discourse: (1) 'The knowledge of God, and Christ the mediator, is the necessary means to eternal life and happiness'; and (2), 'The true and saving knowledge of God is only in and by Christ.' In *ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 16-17. Cf. Lee, "Theology and Piety," 41-42.

¹⁰⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 4: 115-116.

remains 'dim in the discovery of his perfections' and, thus, 'it sees not light enough to raise it up to any close act of a fiducial dependence on him [God].'¹⁰⁹ Besides, natural knowledge serves as the necessary foundation for acquiring saving knowledge: one can have natural knowledge without special knowledge, but not the latter without the former.¹¹⁰ In sum, Charnock's acceptance of the legitimacy of natural revelation (as a medium for divine disclosure) and his assessment of the superlative status of supernatural revelation remain within the boundaries of his theological tradition.¹¹¹

In addition to natural knowledge, there is a knowledge that is supernatural in character. The primary objective of this sort of knowledge is the deliverance of saving knowledge, not simply contemplation (natural knowledge's aim).¹¹² Supernatural knowledge has its origin in God himself and it finds in Scriptures and in the person of Christ its means of communication.¹¹³ It is worth noting that for Charnock Christ is the embodiment and the source of all supernatural knowledge concerning the divine, in Christ resides all the knowledge that one can get about God, the

¹⁰⁹ In *ibid.*, 31.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹¹¹ *Westminster Confession of Faith* (§XXI.1).

¹¹² Charnock's treatment of the Knowledge of God and the Knowledge of God in Christ unequivocally illustrates this Christological emphasis, see Charnock, *Works*, 4: 3-163. It must be noted that Charnock frames the uniqueness of Christ's work in the dispensation/acquisition of saving grace within the acknowledgment of the work of the Triune God as the efficient cause of regeneration. For Charnock's treatment of the latter theme, see *ibid.*, 3: 250-306.

¹¹³ Junius, *Treatise*: 198; Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*: 18-21. Beeke rightly indicates that this supernatural knowledge is framed within a covenantal context. In *ibid.*, 25.

supreme ‘medium’ of revelation for discovering God in creation.¹¹⁴

Supernatural revelation provides the creature with a specific knowledge of God, one that exceeds the knowledge acquired through natural revelation.¹¹⁵

Hermeneutics: Exegesis and Biblical Interpretation

In the concluding remarks of an essay titled *Puritan Hermeneutics and Exegesis*, theologians Joel Beeke and Peter Jones argue that one would get an informed idea of the biblical literacy and interpretative sophistication of the puritans by reading, amongst other notable puritans, the material attributed to Charnock.¹¹⁶ Drawing from Beeke’s and Jones’s essay, this section seeks to provide an explanation of the most significant concepts considered by the Reformed puritans in interpreting the Bible. By understanding these features in the puritan tradition, Charnock’s hermeneutical and exegetical method becomes more predictive and easy to understand.

In the first place, the authors note the covenantal framework from which puritan hermeneutics operated. Given that covenant theology was popular in Reformed circles during the middle of the 1700’s, it is not unexpected observing that the puritans read and interpreted Scripture under a covenantal framework. This way of reading Scripture considers the relation established by God with his creation as the interpretative key for rightly unfolding the drama of redemption as revealed in the Bible. Within this

¹¹⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 4: 126, 132, 413.

¹¹⁵ Idem., *Works*, 5: 485.

¹¹⁶ Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*: 40.

covenantal structure, there is the covenant of works and the covenant of grace: the former understood as the pre-lapsarian pact (*foedus operum*) between God and Adam, the federal representative of humanity, while the latter taken as the post-lapsarian agreement (*foedus gratiae*) between God and his people, wherein Christ is the federal head of the church.¹¹⁷ It is worth noting that references about the theological concept of the covenants are not scarce in Charnock's *Discourses*, a notable example is illustrated in the lecture titled *God the Author of Reconciliation*, where Charnock writes in Christological terms about the intrinsic relation of the covenants.¹¹⁸

Though familiar with the pattern of a twofold covenantal scheme, not every puritan followed it. Charnock himself operated within a threefold covenantal configuration which, in addition to the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, included a third pact: an intra-Trinitarian, pre-temporal covenant known as *pactum salutis* (covenant of redemption or covenant of peace).¹¹⁹ Though normally explained in terms of a Father-Son agreement, the *pactum salutis* is a Trinitarian act in which the Holy Spirit, while active as *potentia Deitatis*, does not participate as a legal partner, but as an “implementing subject”.¹²⁰ Doctrinally, the covenant of redemption is an

¹¹⁷ Consult R. Scott Clark, "Christ and the Covenant: Federal Theology in Orthodoxy," in *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Leiden: Brill, 2013). For a comprehensive study on the first systematic presentation of covenantal theology, see Van Asselt, *Federal Theology*.

¹¹⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 3: 375.

¹¹⁹ For a standard definition of the covenant of redemption, see Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), 298. See Van Asselt, *Federal Theology*: 235.

¹²⁰ This is clearly the case in the thought of Johannes Cocceius and Herman Witsius (1636-1708), among others. See Richard A. Muller, "Toward the *Pactum Salutis*: Locating the Origins of a Concept," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 18 (2007): 15, 23.

internal work (*ad intra*) of the Triune God that functions as the foundation for the external work (*ad extra*) of redemption: '[T]he covenant of redemption is the foundation of the covenant of grace.'¹²¹

Equally important is the emphasis given in puritan hermeneutics to Christ as the hermeneutical key to understand Scripture. Accordingly, Charnock asserts that the redemptive knowledge of God cannot be obtained apart from the revelation in and by Christ since Scripture reveals that he acts as the exclusive mediator and communicator of saving knowledge.¹²² For Charnock, the foundational knowledge of God comes through an interpretation of the Bible wherein the reader (1) handles revelation responsibly, (2) considers the history of Christ (as revealed in the biblical text), and (3) discerns the Christological motif by means of analogy, prophecy, and typology in the relation between Old and New Testaments.¹²³

Besides, the puritans assumed the principles of *analogia fidei* (analogy of faith) and *analogia Scripturae* (analogy of Scripture) in their hermeneutical and exegetical method. By presupposing the internal coherence of the Bible, the *analogia fidei* suggests a manner of interpreting the Bible whereby the reading of Scripture on any subject should be confirmed with a correlated reading elsewhere. Similarly, by presupposing the unity of the Bible, the *analogia Scripturae* states that the best way of interpreting a

¹²¹ Charnock, *Works*, 3: 376. Cf. *Idem.*, *Works*, 2: 343.

¹²² *Idem.*, *Works*, 4: 120ff. Here, the use of typology is evident to explain that all things under the law are but shadows of the promises of redemption to be fulfilled in Christ. See Charnock's discourse titled *Christ our Passover*, in *ibid.*, 509ff.

¹²³ See *ibid.*, 15.

specific passage in Scriptures is by determining its significance in the whole of Scriptures.¹²⁴ Charnock echoes this belief as he explains:

As God is the author of his law and word, so he is the best interpreter of it; the Scripture having an impress of divine wisdom, holiness, and goodness, must be regarded according to that impress of divine wisdom, holiness, and goodness, must be regarded according to that impress, with a submission and meekness of spirit and reverence of God in it.¹²⁵

A further aspect in Charnock's hermeneutics considers the method to make effective the transition from biblical exegesis to doctrinal formulae. Given that Scripture is the *principium cognoscendi theologiae* (the cognitive principle of theology), it should be the epistemic source from which dogmatics is built up.¹²⁶ This signifies that neither reason alone nor ecclesiastical tradition should replace Scripture as the basis for theological truth or, to put it differently, the theologian should not relinquish the role of Scripture as her prime epistemic source for knowing God.¹²⁷

Another important subject in Charnock's hermeneutics concerns the role of reason for interpreting the Bible. Reason is a cognitive ability that, under the direction of the Spirit, enables the interpreter to understand Scripture, to infer doctrinal matters from the text, and to find ways of application for the doctrine acquired.¹²⁸ Some have argued that by making

¹²⁴ See Knapp, "Revealing the Mind of God," 537-538.

¹²⁵ In Charnock, *Works*, 1: 222.

¹²⁶ See the discussion on *Natural and Supernatural* revelation in pp. 35-38 above.

¹²⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 8.

¹²⁸ Deductive reasoning as an interpretative device is expressed in Reformed creeds such as in the Westminster Confession of Faith: "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by *good and necessary consequence* may be deduced from Scripture..." (§I.6. Emphasis mine). For a detailed account of the principle of 'good and necessary consequence' in the Westminster Confession, consult Ryan M. McGraw, *By Good and Necessary Consequence*, (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012); C. J. Williams, "Good and Necessary Consequences in the Westminster Confession," in *The Faith Once Delivered:*

'logically exploitable arguments in a systematic discourse' the Reformed orthodox have made the inferences equally authoritative as the text itself.¹²⁹

Briefly, in response to this reproach, one may note that neither the Reformed orthodox in their theological systems nor Charnock in his theological sermons assumed that every consequence was always good and necessary for their doctrinal formulations. In other words, the criterion whereby an inference is accepted or rejected relies on the compatibility between cogent rational thinking and the testimony of the Bible but never on bare logic.¹³⁰

Divine Essence and the Attributes of God

Discussions on the divine essence in the Reformed systems of the seventeenth-century vary in scope and in metaphysical import.¹³¹ Since the Reformation, Reformed theologians have acknowledged the theological problems of ascribing '*naturam*' (nature) or '*essentia*' (essence) to God.¹³² The

Essays in Honor of Dr. Wayne Spear, ed. Anthony T. Selvaggio (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2007).

¹²⁹ Bert Loonstra, "Scholasticism and Hermeneutics," in *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise*, ed. Willem J. Van Asselt and Eef Dekker (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001), 298-299. Loonstra's main concern has to do with an alleged dismissal of the historical context and scope of the text for the sake of rational deduction within a particular logical framework. *Ibid.*, 299.

¹³⁰ McGraw, *By Good and Necessary Consequence*. 23. As far as this study concerns, no instances have been found in the *Discourses* where the biblical orientation of Charnock's theological method is sacrificed for a rationalistic version of the Christian faith. In fact, Charnock notes: 'Scripture is the source of divine knowledge; not the traditions of men, nor reason separate from Scripture.' In Charnock, *Works*, 2: 8. Cf. Goudriaan, *Reformed Orthodoxy and Philosophy*: 36-65; Richard A. Muller, "Vera Philosophia Cum Sacra Theologia Nusquam Pugnatur: Keckermann on Philosophy, Theology, and the Problem of Double Truth," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15, no. 3 (1984).

¹³¹ See, for instance, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae: Synopsis of a Purer Theology*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 158-165; Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, trans. Bartel Elshout, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1995), 1:88-89; Amandus Polanus, *Syntagma Theologiae Christianae* (Hanoviae: Johannis Aubrii, 1615), II/v; pp. 135-137.

¹³² For instance, Musculus explores whether it is proper to affirm that God has a nature, see *An Natura Locum Habeat in Deo* in Wolfgang Musculus, *Loci Communes in Usus Sacrae Theologiae* (Basel: Sebastianum Henricipetri, 1599), XLIII/ii; p. 430. Ultimately,

older divines realised that any explanation concerning God's nature would require a qualification indicating that the divine nature cannot be placed within any metaphysical classification since God transcends all known *genus* and *differentia*.¹³³ The Reformed scholastics understood the essence of God as that which denotes his *quidditatem* (whatness), that is, that which makes God divine: *ESSENTIA DEI est ipsa Deitas, qua Deus à se & per se absolute est & exsistit*.¹³⁴

Generally, the Reformed systems of the orthodox era include a section wherein their authors offer an exegetical analysis of the names of God and the doctrinal corollaries derived from such study. While not in the same manner, Charnock's *Discourses* evidence a similar approach: 'It is not *Jehovah*, which name signifies the essence of God as the prime and supreme being, but *Elohim*, which name signifies the providence of God, God as rector and judge.'¹³⁵ It is, then, the discussion of the names of God (not speculative metaphysics) the foundation that serves as the groundwork for the doctrine of the attributes of God in both the Reformed systems and in Charnock's *Discourses*.¹³⁶ In sum, the treatment of the names of God served as the means

Musculus predicates nature to God, though after presenting a detailed qualification of the meaning of the term.

¹³³ Daniel Chamier, *Corpus Theologicum Seu Loci Communes Theologici* (Geneva: Samuelis Chouet, 1653), III/v; p. 87.

¹³⁴ [The essence of God is deity itself, [that] by which God is and exists completely by and for himself.] In Polanus, *Syntagma*: II/v; p. 135.

¹³⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 127. Cf. William Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity* (London: Henry Overton, 1642), IV/13-14; p. 11.: 'This *Essence* of God is declared in his Name *Jehova*.'

¹³⁶ For example, from their analysis of the divine name *Jehovah*, theologians contended that God is eternal, independent, immutable, constant, and the most efficient cause. See Turretin, *Institutes*: III/4, v; 1:184-185; Polanus, *Syntagma*: II/vi; pp.137-141. Cf.

by which one has access to the content concerning the *quid sit Deus* just as the epistemic basis for the *locus de Deo*.¹³⁷

The Reformed scholastics realised that a correct understanding of the divine attributes require of some qualifications: (1) that God's act of existing (*esse*) is identical to the quiddity of his being (*essentia*) and, thereby, contrary to the ontology of the creature in whom *esse* and *essentia* are distinguishable,¹³⁸ (2) that the divine attributes should be understood as necessary properties of the divine ontology, namely, *proprietates essentialis*—properties that are intrinsic to God's being as to whatsoever subsists in God is tantamount to his essence,¹³⁹ (3) that there are no distinctions between the divine attributes and the divine essence nor real distinctions among the attributes themselves,¹⁴⁰ (4) that the divine attributes subsists as pure actuality, that is, they are in God at the fullest and devoid of any potentiality, and lastly, (5) that the attributes of God remain eternally immutable and, thereby, their operations does not depend on the act of creation.¹⁴¹

Charnock, *Works*, 1: 40, 360, 366; *ibid.*, 2: 121, 126, 162, 432; *Idem.*, *Works*, 3: 124-125, 251; *ibid.*, 4: 237, 484, 570; *Idem.*, *Works*, 5: 151, 280, 439.

¹³⁷ Dolf te Velde, "Eloquent Silence: The Doctrine of God in the Synopsis of Purer Theology," *Church History and Religious Culture* 92, no. 4 (2012): 583.

¹³⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, trans. Timothy McDermott, 61 vols., vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 1a. 3, 3; p. 29. Cf. Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*: 1:88.

¹³⁹ This is to say, negatively, that the divine attributes do not subsist in God as *accidentia* (accidents) since they are not contingent for the divine ontology.

¹⁴⁰ In this study, the doctrine divine simplicity is treated below, pp. 47-55.

¹⁴¹ For primary references for the points above, consult *Axiomata* in Polanus, *Syntagma*: II/vii; p. 141. Also Ames, *Marrow*: I/iv, 20-30; pp. 12-13; Edward Leigh, *A Treatise of Divinity* (London: E. Griffin, 1646), 21-22.

Taxonomic Diversity of the Divine Perfections: Patterns of Classification

Since this study argues for the significance of the scholastic method in Charnock's theology and considering that nowhere he discusses the parameters for classifying the divine attributes, it is important to include a proper frame of reference to illustrate what it might be the underlying notion upon which Charnock would classify the perfections of God.

Even though the communicable-incommunicable scheme was the most common pattern of classification during the era of Orthodoxy, this was by no means the only existing method.¹⁴² For instance, Franciscus Gomarus (1563-1641) proposed a classification wherein the attributes were organised according to the manner creatures conceive the perfections of God; thus, the distinction between 'negative' and 'positive' attributes.¹⁴³ Others arrangements were done according to the degree of relationality established between the divine attributes and the creatures: 'absolute', then, stands for those perfections that explain God as he is in himself without any relation to the creature; alternatively, 'relative' denotes those attributes that depict God in relation to his creatures by means of his external acts.¹⁴⁴ Interestingly, Johann Heidegger (1633-1698) adds the qualifiers '*affirmantia*' and '*negantia*' to the

¹⁴² *Contra Muller (PRRD: 3:216.)*, who asserts that the communicable-incommunicable scheme was not the prevailing method of classifying the divine attributes, note Turretin's comments in *Institutes: III/6, i; 1:189*.

¹⁴³ Franciscus Gomarus, *Disputationes Theologicas: Habitaе in Variis Academiis, Opera Theologica Omnia* (Amsterdam: Joannes Janssonii, 1644), III/xxvii; p. 8.

¹⁴⁴ Leigh, *Treatise: 22*. Probably Johannes Wollebius, "Compendium Theologiae Christianae," in *Reformed Dogmatics: Seventeenth-Century Reformed Theology through the Writings of Wollebius, Voetius and Turretin*, edited and translated by John W. Beardslee III (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 37.

traditional communicable-incommunicable set.¹⁴⁵ The *communicabilia-affirmantia* configuration accounts for those attributes that relate to the creature analogically whilst the *incommunicabilia-negantia* scheme denies the existence of any imperfection in the being of God. Still, others appeal to the *via triplex* bearing in mind the *via eminentiae* and the *via negativa*. The way of eminence, then, is used to indicate the infinite nature of the attributes that resemble finite properties whilst the way of negation is used to negate that God owns any of the limitations that are inherent in finite beings.¹⁴⁶ Finally, the ‘communicable’ attributes correspond to those divine properties that are predicated of the creature by means of the analogy of attribution, this means that this predication must be taken always as analogical (not univocal or equivocal).¹⁴⁷ The ‘communicable’ attributes highlight the participative aspect of the creature vis-à-vis her relationship with God. In this relation, the creature resembles the nature of God in a qualified (i.e. analogical) and subordinate (i.e. finite) form. On the other hand, the ‘incommunicable’ attributes are those perfections that are predicated of God *in se* and because of it have no similarity neither analogical resemblance in the creatures.¹⁴⁸ The incommunicable attributes seek to emphasise the ontological uniqueness and the transcendence of God.

¹⁴⁵ Johann Heinrich Heidegger, *Medulla Theologiae Christianae* (Zurich: Joh. Henrici Bodmeri, 1713), I/3, xvii; p. 46.

¹⁴⁶ As we have stated, the way of causality provides us with the knowledge derived from placing God as the cause for everything that exist. In this sense, the *via causalitatis* identifies those attributes proper to the relationship of divine causality and effect.

¹⁴⁷ Turretin, *Institutes*: IV/6; 1:189-191.

¹⁴⁸ In contrast with Turretin, Thysius believes that the incommunicable attributes may be partially reflected by the creature. Velde, *Synopsis*, 165.

Simplicitate Dei: The Fundamental Proposition

The doctrine of divine simplicity is perhaps one of the most baffling, nonetheless fundamental, theological notions in the understanding of the divine nature. The inherent intricacy of the doctrine has led theologians and philosophers, primarily ever since the nineteenth-century, to voice serious objections against it.¹⁴⁹

In terms of its historicity, the pedigree of the doctrine of simplicity antedates to its acceptability amongst the schoolmen of the medieval era.¹⁵⁰ Ever since the mid-second century until pre-modern times, the notion of divine simplicity did enjoy of a venerable place in the mainstream theology of the Christian tradition.¹⁵¹ Throughout the centuries, different aspects of the doctrine were emphasised in accordance with the theological function that it was expected to accomplish. Early patristic writers, for example, used the notion of simplicity to describe God considering different assertions in Scripture whereas pro-Nicene theologians employed it to provide the theological ground upon which they treated the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁵² In

¹⁴⁹ Though some have noted that there have been important reactions against the doctrine as early as the seventeenth-century. DUBY, "Divine Simplicity," 36-37. Barth captures well the sentiment of the critic: '*Starting from the generalised notion of God, the idea of the divine simplicity was necessarily exalted to the all-controlling principle, the idol, which, devouring everything concrete, stands behind all these formulae.*' In *CD*, ed. Thomas F. Torrance and Geoffrey William Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), II/1, 329.

¹⁵⁰ Though the Thomistic account is perhaps the most recognised and discussed version. See Aquinas, *ST*, 2: 1a. 3; pp. 19-47.

¹⁵¹ For an extensive bibliography on the doctrine of simplicity in the patristic and medieval eras, see Muller, *PRRD*: 3:39, n. 57-58. For a detailed study of the doctrinal development of divine simplicity, consult DUBY, "Divine Simplicity," 13-71. Consult also Gavin Ortlund, "Divine Simplicity in Historical Perspective: Resourcing a Contemporary Discussion," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 4 (2014).

¹⁵² See respectively Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7;

continuity with their medieval and Reformation forerunners, the Reformed scholastics recognised the doctrine of divine simplicity as a fundamental axiom for the construal of the *locus de Deo*, particularly for the exposition of the doctrine of the divine attributes.

Definition and Theological Import

For the Reformed scholastics, an adequate definition of divine simplicity included, in its most austere version, a rejection of all sort of composition within the divine nature: ‘By *Simplicity* [we mean that] God is deprived of all composition, coalition, materiality, and diversity; he is perfectly (*absolute*) simple, one and undivided; just as whatever is thought in him, God is.’¹⁵³ More developed explanations of divine simplicity also comprised: (1) a detailed description of the kind of composition to which divine simplicity is antithetical; (2) an assertion declaring that *esse*, *essentia*, and *attributa* are identical in God; and (3), a justification for the compatibility of simplicity with the doctrines of the incarnation and that of the Trinity.

More precisely, the Reformed understanding of the doctrine of simplicity rejects that God can be composed logically, physically (naturally), or metaphysically (supernaturally).¹⁵⁴ In the first place, God cannot be logically discriminated by *genus et differentia* (class and distinction) since his

Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 286-287.

¹⁵³ Heidegger, *Medulla*: I/3, xix; p. 47. Cf. Polanus, *Syntagma*: II/iix; p. 141.

¹⁵⁴ Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Metaphysica, Tribus Libris Tractata* (Herborn: s.n., 1616), I/14, ii; pp. 137-141; Polanus, *Syntagma*: II/iix; pp. 141-142; Leigh, *Treatise*: 26; Velde, *Synopsis*, 165.

exclusive nature transcends any human taxonomy.¹⁵⁵ Second, the notion of simplicity denies that the divine essence is composed of quantitative parts: neither by substance and form nor by subjects and its incidentals. Simplicity predicated of God implies that the divine essence does not subsist by the compilation of different constitutive material elements, as in beings existing in corporeal forms. Likewise, to say that there is no physical composition in God is to affirm that there are no contingent properties in the divine being because everything in God is essential to his being—whatever is of God is God himself. Finally, simplicity rejects that God is metaphysically composed, which signifies: (1) that God's actual *esse* (existence/being) is identical to his actual *essentia* (essence/nature), (2) that *potentia* (capacity to accomplish change) and *actus* (complete operation) are one in the divine essence, and lastly (3) that the *essentia* of God is indistinguishable from his *subsistentia* (individuality/personhood), that is, that the essence of God is his mode of subsisting.¹⁵⁶

The older divines responded to the objections posed by the incarnation and the doctrine of the Trinity by arguing that simplicity does not necessarily contradict such doctrines as far as the denial of composition is not tantamount to the dismissal of distinctions within the Godhead.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Polanus, *Syntagma*: II/iix; p. 142; Wollebius, "Compendium," 39.

¹⁵⁶ Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*: 1:96-99.

¹⁵⁷ In some cases, the Reformed orthodox depicted divine simplicity as being 'absolute' or 'omnimodus'; however, these descriptors were qualified to negate divine composition, not the possibility of distinctions in God. Muller, *PRRD*: 3:280-281.

In accounting for the doctrine of simplicity vis-à-vis the incarnation, the Reformed orthodox noted that the coexistence of the human and the divine in the person of Christ does not lead to divine composition since the concurrence of the two natures in the theanthropic person does not produce additions, changes, or divisions in the divine essence.¹⁵⁸ The incarnation is understood primarily as *unio hypostatica* (hypostatic union), this kind of union considers: (1) that the humanity of Christ is, by way of conception, supernaturally composed of the same substance as that of the virgin Mary, (2) that the human nature is, by way of sanctification, devoid of any moral flaw through the perfecting power of the Holy Spirit, and (3), that the eternal Son takes on, by way of assumption, a human nature into one hypostasis.¹⁵⁹ To summarize, in the *unio hypostatica* neither the divine essence nor the humanity of the incarnate Word are subjected to change, confusion, or mixture, which is to say that in the person of Christ the divine does not become human (neither does humanity become divine), hence no composition is effected in God's essence.

In countering the claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is incompatible with divine simplicity, the older theologians noted that the plurality of persons indicate a *distinctio modalis* (modal distinction), not composition, within

¹⁵⁸ The theological assumption above concerns the person of Christ and the *communicatio idiomatum in concreto* (communication of properties in concrete). Amandus Polanus, *The Substance of Christian Religion: Soundly Set Forth in Two Bookes*, trans. Elijah Wilcocks (London: R.F., 1595), 68. In contrast to the Lutheran's view of *communicatio idiomatum in abstracto* (communication of attributes in abstracto), the Reformed argued that the communication does not take place between the divine and the human, but in *Christo proprium* (the actual person of Christ). Consult Guillaume Bucanus, *Institutiones Theologicae* (Geneva: Samuelis Chouet, 1648), II/xx; pp. 20-21.

¹⁵⁹ William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine: Or, the Description of Theologie...* (London: John Legatt, 1616), 25-26.

the divine essence.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, this modal distinction, while being other than essential (since the divine essence is indivisible), is also rational and nominal (since the divine persons really differ from one another).

Consequently, some Reformed divines defined the modal distinction that discriminates the divine persons as a *distinctio realis modalis* (real-modal distinction).¹⁶¹

Finally, concerning the multiplicity of the divine perfections, the Reformed dogmatists asserted: (1) that certain distinctions among the divine attributes could be discerned rationally based upon the effects of the attributes, viz., God's operations *ad extra*;¹⁶² (2) that the attributes could be discriminated by *ratio ratiocinatae quae habet fundamentum in re* (determined reason that has its basis in the thing) and not exclusively through a *distinctio rationis ratiocinans* (distinction by reason reasoning), a rational distinction without extra-mental basis.¹⁶³ In other words, though not *realis*

¹⁶⁰ 'Modal distinction...which is between being [*ens*], and rank or mode of being [*modu entis*].' In Bartholomèaus Keckermann, *Systema Sacrosanctae Theologiae* (Hanouiae: Guilielmum Antonium, 1602), 1:59. Samuel Maresius (1599-1673), concludes that *relationes personales, non arguant in Deo compositionem, sed distinctionem* [the personal relations within the Godhead do not indicate composition, but only distinction]; furthermore, these relations, *quippe quae non componunt, sed modificant* [do not compose the divine essence, but modify it]. In Samuel Maresius, *Collegium Theologicum* (Groningae Frisiorum: Johannis Cöllen, 1659), II/xxi; p. 42.

¹⁶¹ The divine persons are distinguished *modaliter* [modally] not *essentialiter* [essentially]. Turretin, *Institutes*: III/27, iii-xi; 1:278-280. Mastricht also favours the inclusion of '*realiter modaliter*' as a qualifier to understand the modal distinction that distinguishes the divine persons within God. In Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretico-Practica Theologia* (Utrecht: Thomae Appels, 1699), II/24, ix; p. 238.

¹⁶² Brakel indicates that we may distinguish between the divine attributes by the way they are recognized by the creature and through the effects that the attributes bring upon their objects. In *Christian's Reasonable Service*: 1:89; *ibid*.

¹⁶³ Thus, Mastricht: *Differre utique attributa Dei inter se; sed non tam a parte Dei, quam a parte nostri conceptus... ast non ratiocinante sola... sed ratiocinata, quae distinguendi rationes, accipiat ab ipso Deo*. [Certainly, the attributes of God differ in themselves, not to such an extent as [the distinction] being part of God, but as being part of our conception... not merely upon reasoning alone... but also upon reason reasoned, which

(real) objectively, the distinctions between the divine attributes are more than nominal and subjective inasmuch as they are grounded in God's objective reality.¹⁶⁴

Divine Simplicity in Charnock's Doctrine of God

The doctrine of simplicity is nowhere discussed separately in the *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God*, yet it is foundational for Charnock's understanding of the nature of God and hence for his comprehension of the divine perfections.¹⁶⁵

Charnock's commitment to the notion of divine simplicity is explicitly rendered in the *Discourses*:

God is the most simple being; for that which is first in nature, having nothing beyond it, cannot by any means be thought to be compounded; for whatsoever is so depends upon the parts whereof it is compounded, and so is not the first being. Now God being infinitely simple, hath nothing in himself which is not himself, and therefore cannot will any change in himself, he being his own essence and existence.¹⁶⁶

learns its method of distinguishing from God himself.] In Idem., *Theoretico-Practica*: II/5, vii; p. 93.

¹⁶⁴ Turretin concludes (in *Institutes*: III/5, viii-ix; 1:188-189) that the distinction used to discriminate one divine attribute from another is neither real nor merely conceptual but primarily *eminentem* (eminent) in character. Instances in which the distinctions are understood simply nominally were observed in strong conceptualism (i.e., nominalism), as for instance in the work of medieval theologians such as William of Ockham (ca. 1288-1347) and Gabriel Biel (ca. 1420-1495). For Ockham's position on divine simplicity and the divine attributes, consult the magisterial work of Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham*, 2 vols. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 2:941-952.

¹⁶⁵ Muller explains the absence of divine simplicity in Charnock's material by noting the homiletical character of the *Discourses*. In Muller, *PRRD*: 3:275-276.

¹⁶⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 394.

Yet, Charnock's goal is never to present an explanation of the doctrine, but to use it as the theological background upon which he explains other aspects concerning the divine perfections.¹⁶⁷

Divine simplicity is directly linked to at least eight (spirituality, eternity, omnipresence, knowledge, wisdom, power, and holiness) of the eleven perfections that are treated in the *Discourses*.¹⁶⁸ For Charnock, the attribute of spirituality is the fullest mode of subsistence and the purest form of simplicity. Thus, to subsist as a pure spirit is tantamount to be composed of no parts.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, to say that God is the purest spirit is to say that he is perfect since spirituality and simplicity are directly proportional to perfection.¹⁷⁰

In Charnock's theology, omnipresence and divine simplicity are linked by a causal relation whereby the latter entails the former. The claim follows from confirming the essential presence of God in creation (i.e., omnipresence) by considering his continual operation in the world, in addition to divine infinity and the supreme perfection of God.¹⁷¹ Charnock reasons that since God

¹⁶⁷ Simplicity, for example, prevents one to predicate change in God's essence. If God is simple, he cannot be mutable as far as composition—essential or accidental—presupposes variability. *Ibid.*, 393. Similarly, Polanus: '*Deus esse immutabilem...Quia est actus simplicissimus, in quem nulla cadit compositio, nulla passiva potentia.*' [God is immutable...Because he is the simplest act, in which neither composition nor passive power falls.] In Polanus, *Syntagma*: II/xiii; p. 151.

¹⁶⁸ Charnock, *Works*: 1:264-265, 273, 276, 278, 280, 322, 351, 361, 382-387, 393-394, 429-437, 466, 497-498; 2:12-13, 110, 123-124, 136, 149, 185, 196, 256. Charnock alludes to the notion of divine simplicity also in his lectures on the doctrine of regeneration and that of the object of faith. See *ibid.*, 3:264-265, 273, 276-280, 322; 5:154, 174.

¹⁶⁹ *Idem.*, *Works*, 1: 263.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 264, 268.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 433-439.

is the one who creates and maintains the universe, he exercises his power over all of creation and thereby everything owes its existence and operation to him. This implies that the presence of God in the act of creation must be identical to his presence in the act of preservation given that the divine substance cannot be isolated from the divine power being as the two are identical in God: ‘where the power of God is, his essence is, because they are inseparable; and so his omnipresence ariseth from the simplicity of the nature of God.’¹⁷²

Similarly, whilst treating the divine attribute of power, Charnock presupposes the notion of divine simplicity to say that the former cannot be abstracted from the divine essence as far as power subsists essentially (not accidentally) in God. In other words, given that God is pure simplicity, his power must be identical to his essence. What is more, the doctrine of divine simplicity serves as evidence of God’s omnipotence.¹⁷³ Charnock presents a sequential argument wherein the notions of power, unity, and simplicity are logically linked: ‘Where there is the greatest simplicity, there is the greatest unity; and where there is the greatest unity, there is the greatest power.’¹⁷⁴ This line of reasoning implies that perfect simplicity entails perfect unity, the latter

¹⁷² Ibid., 436-437.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 2: 121-125. It is worth noting that Charnock’s definition of omnipotence (i.e., ‘the divine essence efficacious *ad extra*’) is also conceptually shaped by the metaphysical claims imbedded in the notion of divine simplicity. Ibid., 110.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 124. Interestingly, Charnock seems to invert the sequence elsewhere. In *ibid.*, 1: 265., he writes: ‘Where there is the greatest unity, there must be the greatest simplicity; but God is one.’ This paradox can be explained by noting the purpose of each statement and the context in which they are located. In the first instance, Charnock’s aim is to signal to a sequential chain of causality in order to show the interconnection between power and other divine perfections. Thus, he indicates a direct causal correlation between divine simplicity, divine unity, and divine power. The second statement takes place whilst Charnock is treating the spiritual nature of God. In it, Charnock seeks to explain that for God to be the most perfect unity he ‘must’ be (assumed as) the most simple being, for composition in the divine essence would imply that God is constituted by parts, either finite or infinite, and thus not one.

understood not only in terms of numerical oneness (unity of singularity) but in terms of inner oneness (unity of simplicity), and since the more spiritual a being is, the more powerful he is (for perfections are more united in simplicity than in composition), then God is the most powerful being.¹⁷⁵

The import of divine simplicity in Charnock's doctrine of God is not limited to its *ad hoc* function in configuring the way whereby the divine attributes are to be grasped in relation to their individuality and their multiplicity vis-à-vis the divine essence. The notion of divine simplicity carries a more fundamental assumption for Charnock's theology: to affirm that God is simple is to express his very divinity: '[I]f his [God's] understanding and his essence were not one and the same, he were not simple, but compounded; if compounded, he would consist of parts; if he consisted of parts, he would not be an independent being, and so would not be God.'¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ In the divine essence, the unity of its singularity is ontologically established by the unity of its simplicity. See Dolezal, *God without Parts*: 73-74. Charnock seems to be aware of this distinction considering that in some instances he links unity with numerical oneness whilst in other occasions he refers to divine unity in relation to inner oneness. See respectively, Charnock, *Works*, 2: 208; *ibid.*, 1: 446.

¹⁷⁶ *Idem.*, *Works*, 1: 385.

CHAPTER III

AN SIT DEUS: CHARNOCK ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD (THE ONTOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE)

Introduction: Does God Exist?

Discussions concerning the existence of God during the seventeenth-century are better understood by considering the debates that took place during and after the Reformation era concerning the relation between nature and grace and its corollaries for the doctrine of revelation and the knowledge of God. During the Reformation, the debate was about the Roman Catholic stance on the continuity between nature and grace and about the adequacy of the former in the acquisition of true knowledge of God.¹⁷⁷ Roman Catholic theology operated under the assumption of an ontological dualism between nature and grace, one in which nature is elevated (or perfected) by the aid of grace to achieve its orientation towards the supernatural. In this manner, grace is thought as *donum superadditum* (having been added) to nature. The reformers, on the other hand, rejected the Roman Catholic view by stating that nature needs no to be elevated beyond itself, but rather it requires to be liberated (from sin) to be itself. Furthermore, the reformers argued that the cognitive abilities of the creature became impaired after the Fall making

¹⁷⁷ Platt, *Reformed Thought*: 4-5.

impossible for herself to acquire saving knowledge, though able to have natural knowledge of God.¹⁷⁸

Though scarce in comparison with the material found during the Middle Ages and throughout Post-Reformation times, Roman Catholics and Protestants alike discussed at length the existence of God during the Reformation period.¹⁷⁹ In particular, the reformers gave attention to the theistic proofs for apologetical reasons; they sought to defend the foundational claims of religion against the sceptics of the time, mostly Deists and so-called practical atheists.¹⁸⁰ In modern times, the debate has centred on the possibility and the legitimacy of developing a natural theology and, by derivation, in evaluating the nature and the place of the theistic proofs within Christian dogmatics.¹⁸¹

In most cases, the Reformed orthodox estimated unnecessary to prove (i.e., a rigorous scientific demonstration) the existence of God. In their estimation, to know that 'God is' is self-evident given that, amid other things,

¹⁷⁸ Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 140-146. Cf. Platt, *Reformed Thought*: 4-5.

¹⁷⁹ Peter Anstey, "Early Modern Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction," in *History of Western Philosophy of Religion: Early Modern Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Graham Oppy and Nick Trakakis (Durham, UK: Acumen, 2012), 3.

¹⁸⁰ Here the 'proofs' do not refer exclusively to the traditional demonstrations for the existence of God, as in Aquinas's *quinque viae*, but to a rhetorical argumentation combining elements of logic, philosophy, human nature, and history. See Platt, *Reformed Thought*: 18.

¹⁸¹ Notably, Karl Barth and his polemics against Protestants such as Emil Brunner and Catholics represented by the theology affirmed in the First Vatican Council (1869-1870). In the debate, Barth strenuously rejected Brunner's 'point of contact' and Rome's 'analogy of being'. For a detailed description of the position taken by Barth and his antagonists over natural theology, consult G. C. Berkouwer, *General Revelation*, Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 21-86. For an intramural debate among modern Protestants, see Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising 'Nature and Grace' by Emil Brunner and the Reply 'No!' By Karl Barth*, trans. Peter Fraenkel (London: Centenary Press, 1946).

the idea of 'God' always entails existence as an indispensable property of being. Moreover, the recognition that God exists comes intuitively in the human mind, regardless of scientific proof, since rational creatures have been endowed from creation with a *sensus divinitatis* (sense of the divine).¹⁸² Nevertheless, the older divines acknowledged that belief in the existence of God was foundational for any coherent theological claim given that existence is that which logically precedes any other claim about the divine nature: 'We cannot pay God a due and regular homage unless we understand him in his perfections, what he is; and we can pay him no homage at all unless we believe that he is.'¹⁸³

Exegetical Foundation

Like his peers in the Reformed scholastic tradition, Charnock establishes the foundation of the discussion on the Existence of God in the testimony of Scripture. The classical *locus* ever since the Reformation and thus Charnock's chosen text for treating the problem of unbelief (i.e. practical atheism) is Ps. (14:1): *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They*

¹⁸² In contrast, Thomas concludes, while admitting that the proposition 'God exists' is '*per se nota est*' (evident in itself), that 'because what it is to be God is not evident to us', the proposition is then '*non est nobis per se nota*' (not evident by itself for us). In Aquinas, *ST*, 2: 1a. 2, 1; p. 7. See also Gilby's editorial comments, in *ibid.*, 6, n. c. Though the majority of the Reformed affirmed the self-evidential nature of the proposition 'God is', there were some, such as Thomas Barlow (1609-1691), who denied it. See Dolf te Velde, *The Doctrine of God in Reformed Orthodoxy, Karl Barth, and the Utrecht School: A Study in Method and Content*, ed. Eddy Van der Borgh, Studies in Reformed Theology (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 127; Sebastian Rehnman, "The Doctrine of God in Reformed Orthodoxy," in *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 368.

¹⁸³ In Charnock, *Works*, 1: 129.

*are corrupt: they have done abominable works; there is none that doth good.*¹⁸⁴

Charnock dismantles verse 1 in different clauses and offers a discursive analysis framed by familiarity with the original language and philological prowess. Charnock pays attention to the use of Ps. (14:1) elsewhere in Scripture and uses a variety of biblical passages to provide textual evidence for the exegetical points he tries to make, by doing so he evidences a commitment to the hermeneutical principle of *analogia fidei*. Charnock seeks support in the tradition as he interacts with biblical commentators such as Calvin, Hebraists like Siméon Marotte de Muis (1587-1644), and even by appealing to counter-Reformation figures such as Old Testament scholar Augustinus Steuchus Eugubinus (1496-1548).¹⁸⁵

The exegesis of Ps. (14:1) is preceded by a theological observation about the universal scope of sin and the moral corruption of humanity after the Fall.¹⁸⁶ This is important because it provides the basis for a biblical anthropology wherein an emphasis on the absolute necessity of divine grace for salvation is required.¹⁸⁷ Further theological claims flow out of Charnock's

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 126. Cf. Andreas Hyperius, *Methodi Theologiae, Siue Praecipuorum Christianae Religionis Locorum Communium Libri Tres* (Basel: Ioannem Oporinum, 1567), I, p. 74; Musculus, *Loci Communes*: I/i, p. 1; Turretin, *Institutes*: III/2, ix; 1:179.

¹⁸⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 127. The similitudes between Charnock and Calvin on the exegesis of Psalm (14:1) are worth noting. See *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* in John Calvin, *Commentaries of John Calvin*, 22 vols. (Edinburgh: Calvin's Translation Society, 1844-1855; repr., Baker Books House: Grand Rapids, 1979), IV:188ff.

¹⁸⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 126.

¹⁸⁷ In his discourse on 'The Necessity of Regeneration', Charnock observes that '[n]atural men have no delight in anything but secular concerns, love nothing but their own advantage; admire not any true spiritual worth...' Idem., *Works*, 3: 84.

exegesis of Psalm (14:1); for instance, the moral state of the ‘fool’ (i.e. the unbeliever) is that of pervasive corruption and albeit the faculties of the soul (i.e., will and intellect) remain active in him, these do not operate in accordance to the original imprint given by God in creation and thus he cannot have a ‘right notion of God and divine things.’¹⁸⁸ Thereby, the plight of humanity is the result of an spiritual state that is manifested in lack of wisdom, rather than resulting from an intellectual impediment.¹⁸⁹ The result of this spiritual condition is scepticism, one that is manifested in atheistic tendencies, unworthy practices, and the misuse of reason; this in turn results in the rejection of God’s existence and in an attempt to blot out the moral implications arising from acknowledging the sanctity of God.

Interestingly for Charnock, what the psalmist describes in Ps. (14:1) is not the absolute denial of the existence of God (speculative atheism), but the denial of God’s governing power over creation: *non potestas Domini*.¹⁹⁰ The incredulity of the ‘fool’ (*nâvâl*) in Psalm (14) is not a direct attack on the divine essence (understood as divine existence), but a repudiation of the providence of God.¹⁹¹ Yet, the denial of God’s participation in the sustenance of

¹⁸⁸ Idem., *Works*, 1: 126. Charnock holds to the faculty psychology and thus he understands the faculties of the soul to be the *intellectus* (intellect: the reflective principle) and the *voluntas* (will: the active principle and the seat of all the affections). Idem., *Works*, 4: 275.

¹⁸⁹ For Charnock, the ‘fool’ is ‘not one who wants reason, but [one who] abuses his reason’, in Idem., *Works*, 1: 126. Thus, Muller summarises that for Charnock ‘[t]he problem of atheism is not primarily philosophical but hamartiological.’, in Muller, *PRRD*: 3:180.

¹⁹⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 127.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Michael J. Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 9-10.

creation suffices to reckon the ‘fool’ as an atheist.¹⁹² This is the case, Charnock explains, since the scepticism of the ‘fool’ ultimately leads to a rejection of the reality of God, ‘for [by denying the providence of God] they strip him [God] of that wisdom, goodness, tenderness, mercy, justice, righteousness, which are the glory of the Deity.’¹⁹³

Incidentally, the Reformed scholastics had identified three forms of unbelief: (1) an absolute form of atheism wherein the actuality of God is entirely rejected, this is atheism *quoad existentiam*, (2) a form of atheism that is manifested by the rejection of God’s caring and governing power over creation, this is atheism *quoad providentiam*, (3) a sort of atheism that rejects one or more of the essential attributes of God, this is atheism *quoad naturam*.¹⁹⁴ In this discourse, Charnock does not aim at repelling atheism in its *quoad existentiam* (absolute or sceptical) form, but in rebutting the foundations of practical atheism, namely, those atheistic impulses manifested

¹⁹² Contrary to the post-Enlightenment significance of ‘atheism’ wherein the term was specifically understood as the denial of the existence of God. This form of atheism formally appeared until the mid-eighteenth-century in the work of French philosopher Denis Diderot (1713-1784). *Ibid.*, 249-250. From late medieval period, all the way through up to the beginning of post-Reformation times, the word ‘atheism’ was used as a generic term for deviance or, in some cases, as a form of religious abuse; thus, to confess oneself as an *atheus* (atheist) is *blasphemia* (blasphemy) and implies also *infidelitas* (faithlessness), *diffidentia* (unbelief), *incredentia* (distrust), and *incredulitas* (incredulity). See Gavin Hyman, "Atheism in Modern History," in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, ed. Michael Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). This is not to say, however, that Charnock’s use of the word ‘atheist’ is improper or that his charge of ‘atheism’ is unfounded insofar as he is appealing to the legit meaning of the word as established by its semantic range during the seventeenth-century. See Trueman, "Reason and Rhetoric," 33.

¹⁹³ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 127.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

in licentious living arising from creating a caricature of the divine to replace the biblical God.¹⁹⁵

Charnock concludes the exegetical part of this discourse by summarising the thrust of the text, a depiction of humanity's moral condition after the Fall. In the end, atheism is a form of moral corruption that affects the faculties of the soul, a spiritual ailment caused by lack of spiritual life. This moral corruption is pervasive as it impedes wisdom (i.e. good judgement) to operate properly in the light of natural revelation, that is, it is a moral problem with cognitive repercussions affecting the intellect by impeding human reason to acknowledge the reality of a creator. Additionally, this moral state compromises also the will as it acts—by commission or by omission—in ways that defy God's moral law.¹⁹⁶

Doctrinal Formulae

Atheism is irrational

Charnock renders his concluding judgement in a simple proposition: 'It is a great folly to deny or doubt of the existence or being of God'.¹⁹⁷ The folly of atheism is so evident that even those who reject the authority of Scripture as a legitimate source testifying about the reality of God are without excuse since

¹⁹⁵ This is better understood within Charnock's polemics against other theological trends and in response to his political opponents—Arminianism and Socinianism, on the one hand, and cavaliers and royalists, on the other. See Trueman, "Reason and Rhetoric," 33-34.

¹⁹⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 128.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

reason itself points toward the existence of God.¹⁹⁸ Yet again, one needs to keep in mind Charnock's comments concerning the limitations of natural revelation for redemptive purposes: general revelation cannot inform one about the gravity of sin and the necessity of redeeming grace.¹⁹⁹

Charnock uses an assorted number of *a posteriori* arguments in his case for the existence of God. The arguments include aspects of method, style, and content, which in turn incorporate rhetorical points, metaphysical assertions, and the use of logical syllogisms.²⁰⁰ In what follows, this study analyses Charnock's arguments for the existence of God by following four main reasons given to prove this claim:

Reason (1): The Universal Sense of God

For Charnock, the irrationality of the sceptic is manifested by his denial of what is common sense to universal reason; the fool is one who goes in opposition to the dictates of his own will and intellect. In his denial of God, the sceptic suppresses the truth by ignoring the testimony given by the natural order in creation. In the end, atheism—in its various presentations—entails a form of human deprivation, a kind of dehumanisation.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 130. *Contra* Socinians who deny the possibility of acquiring natural knowledge of God; they argued that the existence of God can only be established via special revelation. Ibid., 131.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ For the role of reason in Puritan scholasticism, wherein philosophical categories, deductive reasoning, and syllogisms were part of the technical argumentation used in the exposition of the Christian faith, consult Knapp, "Revealing the Mind of God," 542-543.

²⁰¹ *Works*, 1: 128.

The foregoing assertion prompts serious questions concerning Charnock's anthropology; for example, is Charnock arguing that the atheists have lost that which makes someone a human? What is the extent of the ontological 'degradation' that an atheist experiences by his atheism? Though it is not possible to offer a straightforward answer to such inquiries since Charnock neither expands on these points nor has he dealt with anthropology as an independent theological *locus* at any point in the *Discourses*, this study suggests a response that is inferred from Charnock's own thought.

In the first place, it is significant to note that this 'dehumanisation' is neither permanent nor an irreversible state. The moral corruption of the sceptic is transformed in imputed righteousness in the divine act of regeneration.²⁰² Second, Charnock speaks of the atheist undressing 'himself of humanity' not of God dispossessing the sceptic from his human nature.²⁰³ This means that this 'dehumanisation' takes place when someone refuses to recognise the very source (i.e. God) from which his humanity is derived. In other words, it is a self-imposed 'dehumanisation', a refusal to use wisely (ethical impairment) the rational faculties (epistemological inability) that make someone a human.²⁰⁴ In the end, the 'dehumanisation' that Charnock attributes to the atheist has more to do more with a rhetorical emphasis on the moral and mental condition of the unbeliever than with an ontological

²⁰² Volume III is dedicated in its entirety to the theme of regeneration and reconciliation. Charnock, *Works*, 3.

²⁰³ *Idem.*, *Works*, 1: 128, 142.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 132.

degradation. This seems to be a plausible explanation considering that it is unlikely that Charnock regards the sceptic as having a non-human ontology.

The argument from the collective awareness of the reality of God must not be discarded by the fact that many believe in a multiplicity of deities (polytheism) or by those who make the created order indistinguishable from the creator (pantheism). On the contrary, this suggests that humans are naturally prone to look for something transcendental beyond themselves, even if in doing so they ended up worshipping an idol. The point is that the designation 'god' could not have been attributed to anything unless the concept of the divine had not been already assumed in the human mind.²⁰⁵ This leads Charnock to indicate that absolute atheism was an exceptional occurrence before the seventeenth-century.²⁰⁶ By itself, this suggest an *argumentum ad populum* and hence not very compelling insofar as the truth value of a proposition cannot be confirmed or rejected exclusively upon the number who affirm it or reject it. In Charnock's case, however, the appeal to the collective notion of God is just but one piece of a composite grand argument which includes others line of reasoning. For example, the notion that there is a God is buttressed by observing the constant presence of theism throughout human history. Charnock notes that the acknowledgement of the divine has been consistently present in every civilisation despite of all the changes that the world has experienced ever since its creation. Besides, if the

²⁰⁵ Charnock follows Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655), the Roman Catholic philosopher and mathematician. *Ibid.*, 132-134.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Jan N. Bremmer, "Atheism in Antiquity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, ed. Michael Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 11-12; Gavin Hyman, "Atheism in Modern History," *ibid.*, 29-33.

acknowledgement of God is just the by-product of human imagination, Charnock wonders, why man has not been able to root the notion of the divine out of his mind and with it be freed from the emotional angst caused by the belief in a perfectly holy and just deity?²⁰⁷ Additionally, Charnock adds another piece to the grand argument, namely, the sense for religious matters that has been fixed in every human being. The knowledge that God *is* belongs to those innate principles that have been sealed in the human soul ever since creation: '[to know that God exists] is as natural as anything we call a common principle.'²⁰⁸ What is more, since all people have been endowed with a law of nature that guides them to do commendable things, indistinctively of race or culture, the universal existence of this law presupposes the notion of a common lawgiver that transcends those to whom the law has been given.²⁰⁹

For Charnock, the widespread notion of God cannot be explained by unbroken communication, neither by indoctrination, nor by psychological reasons. If someone attempts to account for the collective notion of God by saying that it is the result of constant communication ever since the first human generation, she would still have to explicate the innate sense of the divine in the first human being.²¹⁰ If the idea of God is the result of a political scheme propagated by rulers and other authorities to keep the masses under

²⁰⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 136.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 137.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* Charnock underlines the inadequacy of presenting an infinite regress of causes as an explanatory principle for the existence of something. Some scholars have noted the similitude between Charnock's objection and the arguments from mechanical causation. See Trueman, "Reason and Rhetoric," 34.

control, then it must be explained how this practice became universal and how is it that there is no record anywhere of a legislation prohibiting the belief in God. Finally, if one attempts to explain the existence of God by considering the fear of divine judgement, it must be argued that man was created with an inherent habit to sin and that the fear of judgement was contemplated even before the Fall, but this cannot be for the object of fear must be prior to the act of provoking fear. In other words, the fear of divine judgement presupposes the existence of a being who executes the sentence that is being feared.²¹¹

Reason (2): The Testimony of the Natural Order

It is worth noting that the primary piece of evidence to which Charnock appeals to justify the claim that general revelation points to the existence of God is special revelation. For Charnock, Rom. (1:19-20) reveals that God has made known his eternal power through the natural order in creation. The magnificent glory of God is seen in every perfection contained in the creaturely realm and since this is so evident, man is without excuse in his denial of the existence of God.²¹² This is significant for, if Trueman is correct in identifying Charnock's account of universal manifestation of the divine as the 'metaphysical heart' of the discourse on the existence of God, it would be

²¹¹ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 142. It is not that mere existence would excite affections such as love or fear, but it is the way those affections are related to us that makes God the object of those feelings.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 142-143. Charnock also appeals to Gen. (1:24), Psalms (8:1; 19:1-2; 54:2), and Job (31:25, 27).

responsible to affirm that Charnock's metaphysics (at least in this case) are primarily driven by Scripture and not simply by philosophical reasoning.²¹³

Besides its epistemic foundation in special revelation, the study of the existence of God in Charnock's theology falls under the physical and the metaphysical realms.²¹⁴ For Charnock, the order in the universe testifies for the existence of God in at least four ways, namely, production, harmony, purpose, and preservation.²¹⁵

The appeal to production seeks to demonstrate that things came into existence (i.e. production) through divine *fiat*, that is, that God is the ultimate cause of the universe. Charnock accomplishes this by considering Aquinas's *quarta via*, namely, the argument from the gradation of properties such as goodness and truth.²¹⁶ The argument points to the necessity of an archetypal (primary) source of absolute perfection to explain the existence of ectypal (derivative) forms of perfection.²¹⁷ Arguing *a posteriori*, the reasoning

²¹³ Trueman, "Reason and Rhetoric," 35.

²¹⁴ Cf. Francisco Suárez, *The Metaphysical Demonstration of the Existence of God: Metaphysical Disputations 28-29*, edited and translated by John P. Doyle (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2004), XXIX.1.6, p. 55.

²¹⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 145-171.

²¹⁶ Charnock does not use the Five Ways in the same order as Thomas presents them in the *Summa*, rather Charnock includes the Ways indiscriminately according to what the argumentation requires.

²¹⁷ In the context of theological prolegomena, *theologia archetypa* (archetypal theology) stands for the natural knowledge of God about himself, his decree, and his works in relation to his infinite wisdom whereas *theologia ectypa* (ectypal theology) is creature's derivative wisdom concerning God, his providence, and his works. See Willem J. van Asselt, "The Fundamental Meaning of Theology: Archetypal and Ectypal Theology in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Thought," *Westminster Theological Journal* 64, no. 2 (2002): 322. A more succinct formula is that of Junius: 'Archetypal theology is the divine wisdom of divine matters'; conversely, ectypal theology is 'the wisdom of divine matters, fashioned by God from the archetype of Himself, through the communication of grace for His own glory.' In Junius, *Treatise*: 152, 158.

continues by indicating that all the effects in the universe (i.e. finite things) require of an explanation for their occurrence given that the ultimate cause for any effect cannot be explained by entertaining an infinite series of causes because a *processus in infinitum* is impossible.²¹⁸ Infinite regressions are not possible to a series of causes of second order (i.e., dependent causes) for these exist accidentally (*per accidens*), namely, in subordination to a first cause.²¹⁹

Several arguments are presented in support of the claim that the reality of a First Cause accounts for the existence of the universe. Charnock anchors his theological reasoning on Gen. (1), Psalm (89:14-15), and Heb. (11:3) from which he indicates that the world and all the creatures in it are finite beings.²²⁰ This, in turn, signifies that there was a time when the universe was not and as such its existence and causal origin must be attributed to the willing and creative power of God: ‘He gives being to them [the world and everything in it] now as the fountain of all being, though the several modes of being are from the several nature of second causes.’²²¹ In addition to the claim that everything came into being through divine *fiat*, Charnock adds that God did not require

²¹⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 144.

²¹⁹ On the one hand, Charnock builds upon the metaphysical principle found in Aquinas’s *prima via*, the proof of the existence of a first unmoved mover based on motion/change: ‘*Prima autem et manifestior via est quae sumitur ex parte motus.*’ See Aquinas, *ST*, 2: 1a. 2, 3; p. 12. On the other hand, Charnock’s rejection of *processus in infinitum* resembles Suárez’s comments in §§ 25-40 of Disputation 29. See Suárez, *Metaphysical Disputations*: 68-79.

²²⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 144.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

of any pre-existent matter to bring into being the universe, therefore, creation is said to be *ex nihilo* (out of nothing).²²²

Charnock shifts his line of reasoning; he transitions from the evidence provided by Scripture to the evidence derived from reason. Drawing from the principle of efficient causality, Charnock explains that given that the universe has a beginning and considering that nothing finite can exist without having a cause then everything must have a cause other than itself.²²³ That the universe is finite can be proven by noting the metaphysical impossibility of ascribing eternal existence to anything but God.²²⁴ This is the case given that infinite regressions are actually impossible, so to invoke a cause in an infinite series of causes as the causal explanation for the existence of the universe is to endorse a metaphysical *cul-de-sac*.²²⁵ What is more, matter cannot be eternal due to its mutability given that eternal things are immune to change.²²⁶

²²² Ibid.

²²³ This is a variation of the cosmological argument for the existence of God, more specifically the *secunda via* in Aquinas, *ST*, 2: 1a. 2, 3; p. 15.

²²⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 144-146. Elsewhere, Charnock explains that if creatures were eternal, their own existence would have hinged on eternal propagation rather than on a First Cause; however, this cannot be since time is finite and thus it is impossible to have an infinite sequence of propagation. Ibid., 145.

²²⁵ Ibid. In modern times, some philosophers have objected to the cosmological argument arguing that it is possible to have infinite regressions; they have argued that infinities are present in complex theories of infinitesimal calculus, see Graham Oppy, *Philosophical Perspectives on Infinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Defenders of the cosmological argument have replied that the existence of *potential* infinite sets in mathematics do not prove the existence of *actual* infinities, consult William Lane Craig, "Graham Oppy on the Kalam Cosmological Argument," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2011).

²²⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 145. Cf. Aquinas, *ST*, 2: 1a. 10, 1; pp. 134ff. Interestingly, Mairich describes eternity as something of endless, indivisible, and independent duration, something 'devoid of all imperfection and change.' Quoted in Heinrich Heppel, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set out and Illustrated from the Sources*, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: Allen, & Unwin, 1950), 65.

Once it has been established that nothing in creation is eternal, Charnock introduces a series of six propositions wherein he attempts to demonstrate that the universe owes its existence to an external cause that transcends creation.²²⁷ The first three propositions form a logical syllogism that can be expressed as follows:

P1= Self-creation is not possible

P2= Creatures are not capable of creating the world

P3= Therefore, there must be a creator that transcends creation

P1 is supported by the testimony found in Psalm (100:3), *The Lord he is God: he hath made us, and not we ourselves.*²²⁸ This entails Charnock to affirm, on the one hand, that God is the ultimate cause of human existence and, on the other, that it is impossible for the creature to be his own cause. If special revelation identifies God as the almighty creator, human reasoning provides the rationale to claim that self-creation is impossible: since finite things (X) require a beginning, it may be inferred that there was a time when X was not, but if at one point in time X did not exist, how could X exist now given that something that once was no-thing could not have acted without being, much less it could have brought into existence its own being.²²⁹ Therefore, no logical explanation can be provided to account for the self-causality of finite things considering that there was a time when finite things were deprived of an objective ontology and, thus, could create nothing.²³⁰

²²⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 146-172.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 146-147.

²³⁰ This objection has retained its force throughout the ages as it is indicated in the work of contemporary philosophers and theologians: 'It is absurd to suppose that something is *explanatory prior to itself*. (An obviously absurd case of something's being explanatory

Charnock wants to stress the fact that it would be logically contradictory to assert that something can create itself because this would involve the affirmation of two antithetical claims, namely, that something is and is not at the same instant and in the same relation.²³¹

P2 is supported by a reasoning that conflates logical, metaphysical, and scriptural elements. Charnock notes that if a 'creature' has the power to create something *ex nihilo*, she in fact is not a creature but a higher being given that creatures are by definition deprived of omnipotence (the power required to create something out of nothing).²³² Furthermore, if a creature made the world, she must own in her being all the perfections of the thing created; however, this is evidently not the case as no creature possesses all the perfections of the world at once.²³³

P3 contains the logical conclusion of the syllogism, which is inferred from P1 and P2. Unless the creator is a supreme being in the order of nature, namely, God, the existence of the universe could not be satisfactorily explained. Competing accounts encounter the insolvable problem of explaining the origin of the so-called 'creator' by appealing to the notion of

prior to itself is *something's creating itself*); 'When pressed, the concept [self-causation] soon shows itself incoherent and dogmatically precarious.' See respectively in Joshua Hoffman and Gary S. Rosenkrantz, *The Divine Attributes*, Exploring the Philosophy of Religion (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 91; John B. Webster, "Life in and of Himself: Reflections on God's Aseity," in *Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 117.

²³¹ Basically, the same objection is used to reject that man is self-created, note the explanation in Charnock, *Works*, 1: 147-149.

²³² *Ibid.*, 149.

²³³ Charnock reinforces P2 by noting that Scripture itself (Isa. 65:6-7; Deut. 4:35) testifies about the existence of an infinite, eternal, an independent being who is responsible for the existence of the universe. *Ibid.*, 150.

self-creation and that of the world by invoking an infinite regress of causes, but these scenarios end up being logically incoherent or metaphysically impossible.²³⁴

Those who deny the existence of God by saying that reality is just an illusion must believe that they exist, otherwise they would not be able to think, but they evidently think, so their existence must be ultimately explained by a first cause.²³⁵ Furthermore, this cause must exist necessarily because nothing can precede that which is the ultimate cause. To be the first cause is to be without beginning and, thus, it must exist in and from itself, it must eternally subsist *à se*.²³⁶ This is to say that divine existence does not require a causal explanation because God eternally and necessarily subsists by the power of his own being.²³⁷ Furthermore, this first cause must be infinitely perfect since the absence of total perfection in creation presupposes the existence of an archetypal perfection, i.e., God, of whom no greater perfection can be

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Charnock seems to operate under the same principle that prompted René Descartes (1596-1650) to write: 'I am thinking therefore I exist, *was so secure and certain* that it could not be shaken by any of the most extravagant suppositions of the sceptics, I judged that I could accept it without scruple, as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking.*' In René Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, trans. Ian Maclean, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4.32, p.28.

²³⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 151. It is significant to note the role of divine aseity ('self-existence') in Charnock's theology of the divine attributes. The aseity of God explains that he requires of nothing else than himself to be or, to put it differently, that God does not require of a cause to explain his own existence.

²³⁷ A caveat is due: while God exists *à se*, he is not *causa sui*; to assert that God is his own cause is contrary to logic and repugnant to divine perfection. See Muller, *PRRD*: 3:238-240; William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, ed. Alan W. Gomes (Philipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2003), 276.

conceived.²³⁸ It is worth noting that Charnock here appeals to a variant of the classical *a priori* argument for the existence of God known as the *ratio Anselmi*. Anselm (1033-1109) stated, in what would be known as the ontological argument, that if God is something *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit* [‘than which nothing greater can be thought’], then he cannot be a fixture of the mind but it must exist objectively.²³⁹

Charnock also argues that the natural order testifies of God by appealing to the congruence of the universe, an argument based upon the harmony exhibited in the created order (effect) as evidence to know God (cause). For Charnock, atheistic explanations of the natural world fail to provide a satisfactory answer as to why the universe displays such order and beauty in its structure.²⁴⁰ The argument from harmony is buttressed by three major claims: the equilibrium of contrary qualities, the mutual subordination of created beings, and the stability of the order established (regularity, uniformity, and constancy).²⁴¹

In the first place, Charnock says that created things are made of properties (sometimes contrary in nature) which co-exist for the benefit of the

²³⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 151. Trueman believes that the invocation of a divine archetype accounting for the notions of perfection residing in the human mind might be ‘Platonic’ in its origins. Trueman, "Reason and Rhetoric," 35.

²³⁹ See "Proslogion," in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. G. R. Evans and Brian Davies, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 87-88. Cf. Augustine, *Catholic and Manichaeian Ways of Life*, trans. Donald A. Gallagher and Idella J. Gallagher, vol. 56, *Fathers of the Church* (Baltimore: Catholic University of America Press, 1966), II. 11. 24, p. 82.

²⁴⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 151. Charnock employs a variation of the teleological argument or argument from design. The *quinta via* in Aquinas's Five Ways, Aquinas, *ST*, 2: 1a. 2, 3; p. 17.

²⁴¹ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 152-158.

thing composed. He adds that no harmonious composition could have taken place unless these elements had been ordered by a supreme, wise being. Instead of assigning creatures' ultimate purpose and their suitability for reciprocal service to mindless occurrences in nature or to chance, Charnock asserts that these features must be explained by the existence of a transcendent intelligent cause. Furthermore, while everything in the natural order has a definite function for the communal benefit, there is a notable orientation in the structure of the universe to favour the human race given that it is the pinnacle of God's works: creation is, thus, not ordered *propter se* (for itself) but *propter aliud* (for another).²⁴² Finally, Charnock argues that the regularity, the uniformity, the constancy, and the variety of the composition displayed in creation lead to the postulation of two possible explanations to account for such characteristics of the universe: (1) a natural order that is intrinsically intelligent and, thereby, divine, or (2) the existence of a transcendental, intelligent, and all-powerful being.²⁴³ Ultimately, Charnock argues that the regularity, the uniformity, the constancy, and the variety of the composition displayed in creation lead to the postulation of two possible explanations to account for such characteristics of the universe: (1) a natural order that is intrinsically intelligent and, thereby, divine, or (2) the existence of a transcendental, intelligent, and all-powerful being.²⁴⁴

Intended purpose is the following piece in the argument for the existence of God upon the natural order. The thesis here is teleological in

²⁴² Ibid., 154.

²⁴³ Ibid., 155-156.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 155-156.

nature, that is, that creation has an ultimate meaning, a goal to achieve, and since non-rational creatures are incapable of providing meaning into their own existence this purpose must come from an infinitely superior rational being equipped with a complete understanding of nature and, thereby, capable of providing existential meaning to creation. Though rational beings may pursue some end while ignoring the mechanics of the natural order to achieve their objectives, only God, a being with a transcendental nature and a superior understanding, must be the one determining creation's ultimate *telos*.²⁴⁵

From the notion of preservation, Charnock infers that nature's sustenance depends on a self-subsisting and self-preserving first cause given that something that is unable to subsist by its own power is incapable of preserving itself. Moreover, just as a transcendental cause is required to account for the preservation of the created order, the universe's order, goodness, and beauty entails the existence of a self-sufficient and wholly independent principle.²⁴⁶ In fact, had not the universe been preserved by the operation of the same power required for its creation, everything would have entered in a state of chaos, thus Charnock: 'Though the matter of the world after creation cannot return to that nothing whence it was fetched, without the power of God that made it (because the same power is as requisite to reduce a

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 158-160.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 161.

thing to nothing as to raise a thing from nothing), yet without the actual exerting of a power that made the creatures they would fall into confusion.’²⁴⁷

Reason (3): The Composition and Superiority of the Human Nature

This line of reasoning involves a discussion of the architecture and excellence of humanity that leads Charnock to deduce the existence of God.²⁴⁸ The structure of this section, therefore, focuses on a discussion involving the physical (body) and metaphysical (soul) constitution of man and the implications thereof for the existence of God.²⁴⁹

Charnock affirms that human beings are the highest form of creation, the zenith of finite beings; this claim is justified by noting: (1) the cognitive ability of human beings to reason, and (2) the intrinsic ability of humanity to reflect many of the perfections that are found in nature: ‘Man is the epitome of the world, contains in himself the substance of all natures and the fullness of the whole universe, not only in regard of the universalness of his knowledge, whereby he comprehends the reasons of many things, but as all the perfections of the several natures of the world are gathered and united in man for the perfection of his own, in a smaller volume.’²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 162.

²⁴⁹ This dual classification of the constitutive elements of man indicates that Charnock holds to what is called anthropological dichotomy, that is the notion that contends that man is constituted by body and soul. In contrast to the dichotomic view, other contend that man is composed not by two, but by three parts: body, soul, and spirit. It must be noted, however, that most theologians of the Reformed orthodox era rejected trichotomic anthropology in favour of a dichotomic approach. See Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 221. Cf. Velde, *Synopsis*, 317-318; n. 5.

²⁵⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 162. The idea of man embodying a microcosm in himself is echoed by other divines, ‘to recapitulate all created things so speak in one man and to present

That God exists can be inferred from observing the composition of the human body and the nature of the soul: 'He [God] shines in the capacity of our souls and the vigour of our members.'²⁵¹ As God is the one who bestows humanity to mankind, to deny his existence is to strip men and women of the very fabric that makes them humans.²⁵² To prove his point, Charnock notes the order, fitness, and usefulness of the body; he describes different parts of the human anatomy to illustrate the 'signature and mark [and wisdom] of God' in the biological organization of the body.²⁵³

Charnock points out also to the nature of the soul, particularly he observes (following Cocceius) the operations and reflections of the human conscience as elements leading to the existence of God.²⁵⁴ The human soul is the centre of all cognitive operations, the link that connects the individual with the realm of things that are not perceived by the senses: 'We know that we have an understanding in us: a substance we cannot see, but we know it by its operations, as thinking, reasoning, willing, remembering, and as operating

the sum of his vast universe in a stupendous work of art in such tiny compass and as a sort of μικροκοσμοζ'. In Maastricht, *Theoretico-Practica*: III/ ix, 4; p. 367. Translation taken from Heppel, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 220.

²⁵¹ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 162.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid., 162-163. Charnock's knowledge of the human anatomy and physiology is explicated by his attraction for the medical sciences, as indicated in some biographical accounts. See M'Cosh, "Introduction," xiii, xxiv.

²⁵⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 164-170. Cf. Johannes Cocceius, *Summa Theologiae Ex Scripturis Repetita* (Geneva: Samuelis Chouët, 1665), II/viii, 50-51; pp. 108. Significantly, when it comes to decide whether the soul originates by an act of divine creation *ex nihilo* (i.e., creationism) or by an act of human propagation *ex traduce* (i.e., traducianism), Charnock remains nonpartisan not without indicating that the excellencies of the soul cannot be *ex traduce*. See Charnock, *Works*, 1: 165; n. §. Most theologians in the Reformed orthodox tradition, however, favoured creationism whereas Lutherans preferred traducianism. Heppel, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 227-231.

about things that are invisible and remote from sense.’²⁵⁵ Therefore, the possession of an *anima rationalis* (rational soul) is an exclusive feature of humankind given that only humans have the ability of performing superior cognitive and volitional acts.²⁵⁶ In this sense, it can be assumed that the soul is understood as a personal substance.

In terms of its uniqueness, Charnock notes concerning the human soul (mind and will): (1) its ability to retain vast amounts of information, (2) its capacity to move from one subject to another with incredible speediness, (3) its role in constituting a human being by its union with a human body, and (4) its ability to act consciously.²⁵⁷ Some of these features serve as the basis upon which the existence of God is deduced. For instance, thoughts move from one place to another almost instantaneously without considerations of space and this cannot be produced by any material cause since matter, by nature, is unable to transfer reason and will.²⁵⁸ Furthermore, nature alone could not produce an effect that surpasses its own nature, yet mind and will surpass nature’s excellency; therefore, Charnock infers, the cause of the soul must be a supreme, immaterial, intelligent being.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 164. The significance of the soul is that it incorporates to its nature a unique number of metaphysical features: ‘The soul is a spiritual, incorporeal, invisible, intangible, and immortal personal entity adorned with intellect and will.’ Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*: 1:310.

²⁵⁶ In contrast to animals and plants, which have ‘souls’ though essentially different than the human soul. Animals, for instance, are endowed with *anima sensitiva* (sensitive soul) whereas plants possess *anima vegetativa* (vegetative soul). See Idem., *Christian’s Reasonable Service*: 1:310-311.

²⁵⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 165-166.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 165.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 165-166.

Considering that some contemporary philosophers of atheistic persuasion have identified human consciousness as the biggest obstacle for holding a purely materialistic cosmology, it is important to explain in detail Charnock's insights on the operations of the human conscience and its import in the discussion concerning the existence of God.²⁶⁰ In his line of reasoning, Charnock notes that the fear of punishment and the hope for future rewards are universal operations of the human conscience that presuppose the existence of an archetypal form of justice, whose origin cannot be accounted by any other being but God.²⁶¹ As there is an innate law imbedded in the human conscience whereby a person becomes cognisant of the existence of objective good and evil, and since these moral absolutes cannot be explained by the individual (for he cannot guarantee objectivity but arbitrariness) nor by natural generation (for nature by itself does not establish objective morals), then a transcendental moral lawgiver must exist from whom absolute morality is derived.²⁶²

A variation of the so-called 'moral argument' is that which supports the argument above. The rationale behind reveals that the objective value inherent in a moral action (X) requires of an objective moral lawgiver, otherwise the moral content of X would be entirely subjective, if not illusory.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 35-70. Charnock, *Works*, 1: 166-170.

²⁶¹ Idem., *Works*, 1: 166.

²⁶² This indicates a limitation of the physical (material) world to communicate an immaterial property such as morality, much less one that is universal in scope and objective in its value. Ibid., 167. Cf. Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 71-74.

²⁶³ Charnock's moral argument is a modified form of Aquinas's Fourth Way, though other variations of the moral argument can be observed in the thought of Plato, Aristotle,

Charnock assumes an archetypal form of absolute goodness whereby all other forms of goodness are measured and since this archetypal goodness cannot be simply hypothetical, a being in whose nature this supreme goodness resides must exist.²⁶⁴

There is a logical (not ontological) correlation between the existence of God and the reality of consciousness: if there were no God, conscience would be redundant. The fact that man fears punishment when he breaks the natural law supposes the actuality of a sovereign judge, who as a perfect law-giver, must exercise his punitive justice when required, but if there is no such being, fear for transgressing the law becomes unfounded and, hence, conscience turns out to be of no use.²⁶⁵ Furthermore, if human conscience were not informed by a set of objective moral values, it would not be constant in experiencing fear in acting evil, particularly by acts done in secret.²⁶⁶

In sum, Charnock believes that just as human existence is demonstrated by the ability of man to think (Descartes' dictum: *ego sum, ego*

Augustine and Anselm. Consult Thomas Gilby's 'Appendix 9' in Aquinas, *ST*, 2: 204, n. 1-4. Cf. Rik van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to Medieval Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 179.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Aquinas, *ST*, 2: 1a. 2, 3; p. 17.

²⁶⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 169.

²⁶⁶ Similarly, Turretin notes: 'For how comes it that the conscience is tormented after a crime committed (even in secret and with remote judges), where no danger threatened from men... unless it is affected by a most intimate sense of deity...?' In Turretin, *Institutes*: III/1, xiv; 1:173.

existo), the existence of God is supported by the presence of a ‘natural principle’ (i.e. conscience) in every person.²⁶⁷

Reason (4): Extraordinary Occurrences

The last piece of evidence in Charnock’s cumulative case for the existence of God involves the occurrence of extraordinary events in the world, which, it is claimed, have no convincing explanation apart from divine providence.²⁶⁸

In the first place, Charnock notes that the concatenation of actions leading to the proper punishment of heinous crimes cannot be unintentional.²⁶⁹ That the punishment of the transgressor arrives by the succession of unexpected circumstances presupposes the action of a righteous power capable of intending and delivering due justice for violations against the natural law, ‘...it is observable how often everything contributes to carry on a judgment intended, as if they rationally designed it. All those loudly proclaim a God in the world; if there were no God, there would be no sin; if no sin, there would be no punishment.’²⁷⁰

Second, Charnock points out to of miracles, that is, the occurrence of nonconformities in nature. Charnock does not conceive miraculous

²⁶⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 170. Interestingly, the operations of the conscience and man’s innate knowledge of objective moral values have been used as evidence for the existence of God by other Reformed scholastic divines. See Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 48-49.

²⁶⁸ These events include the occurrence of special judgments, miracles, and the fulfilment of prophecies, in Charnock, *Works*, 1: 171-173.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 171.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 172.

occurrences as violations of the laws of nature; instead, he reckons miracles as acts wherein the natural order of the universe is guided out of its normal course by a power infinitely superior to nature itself, namely, by a supernatural cause.²⁷¹ Since these extraordinary occurrences cannot be produced by natural causes, a transcendental cause must be invoked to account for these events.²⁷² Similarly, the fulfilment of biblical prophecies can only be explained by the existence of ‘a mind infinitely intelligent’.²⁷³ The comprehensive and infallible knowledge of future events, which are purely contingent and unknown to the human mind, cannot be explicated apart from the activity of a providential power, an infinite intelligence that directs history and transcends the natural realm.

²⁷¹ Ibid. During the eighteenth-century, the significance of miracles as reliable evidence for the existence of God was under heavy scrutiny. *Contra* Charnock, David Hume (1711-1776) explained that ‘[a] miracle is a violation of the laws of nature... [miracles] may be accurately defined, a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent.’ In David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 83, 127.

²⁷² Charnock, *Works*, 1: 172.

²⁷³ Ibid., 173.

CHAPTER IV

QUID SIT DEUS: CHARNOCK ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE FIRST ORDER

Introduction: Divine Perfections *per essentiam Dei*

Given that the being of God is utterly transcendent and, thus, beyond the cognitive reach of the human mind, the Reformed divines concluded that a comprehensive explanation of what entails God essentially was impossible. Instead, they suggested that one may know what God is *not*.²⁷⁴ Based upon what God has revealed about himself in Scripture (*theologia supernaturalis*) and through his works (*theologia naturalis*), the older theologians aimed at describing the divine essence rather than explaining it.²⁷⁵

Emulating his medieval predecessors and contemporaries in the scholastic tradition, Charnock recognises two ways of describing God: the way of affirmation (eminence) and the way of negation.²⁷⁶ The former takes place when one predicates of God that which is excellent in the creature whereas the latter comes from removing all imperfections that are found in the creature

²⁷⁴ Leigh, *Treatise*: 1-4; Maastricht, *Theoretico-Practica*: II/3, iii; p. 77; Turretin, *Institutes*: III/1, i; 1:169.

²⁷⁵ The Reformed acknowledged, however, that natural theology was secondary to supernatural theology in soteriological matters. See Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*: 38.

²⁷⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 263. Interestingly, Charnock refers to Johann Gerhard (1582-1637), whose work on the divine attributes is the first comprehensive discourse on the subject from a Lutheran perspective. Robert Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), 2:54. The reference to Gerhard is noteworthy considering the significant differences between Lutheran and Reformed orthodox concerning the classification of the divine attributes. Muller, *Dictionary*: 49-50.

when predicating something of God.²⁷⁷ For Charnock, the way of negation is the simplest of the two approaches when it comes to understand the nature of God considering that finite minds are better suited to comprehend what God is not than what God is, 'as when we say God is infinite, immense, immutable, they are negatives; he hath no limits, is confined to no place, admits no change.'²⁷⁸ What is more, Charnock adds, the way of negation is the medium whereby most of the knowledge of God is communicated to the creature.²⁷⁹

Scholars have recently noted that from its early uses in Christian theology negative theology has never represented a single set of beliefs. For instance, in its moderate version negative theology included positive affirmations about God, whereas in its stronger version it denied altogether the possibility of describing God by means of human categories.²⁸⁰ The use Charnock gives to the way of negation is in accord with the use given to it by those who consider that positive affirmations concerning the nature of God are possible but restricted by the limitations of human discourse in representing God adequately due to the ineffability of the divine essence. Nowhere in the *Discourses* there is an indication of the *via negativa*

²⁷⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 263. Charnock's omission of the way of causality in his explanation of the divine attributes may be explained by the fact that he appeals to the knowledge of God by *via causalitatis* when answering the *An sit Deus* question. Other orthodox divines, however, recur to the way of causality to infer the relative attributes. For instance, Turretin, *Institutes*: III/2, viii; 1:179.

²⁷⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 263. Cf. Augustine, *On the Trinity: Books 8-15*, trans. Stephen McKenna, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 8.2; p. 6. Also, Aquinas, *ST*, 2: 1a. 2; p. 19.

²⁷⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 263.

²⁸⁰ Lewis Ayres and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, "Doctrine of God," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 877.

functioning as the controlling principle to describe the divine essence in such way as to impede the ascription of notions such as ‘goodness’ or ‘being’ to God.²⁸¹ The foregoing caveat prefaces the discussion of the attributes of first order, divine perfections that are exclusively predicated of God.

Spirituality (*De Spiritualitate Dei*)

The discourse on the spirituality of God begins with the exegesis of John (4.24), ‘*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth*’. It is from the interpretation of this biblical passage whence Charnock lays out the foundation for the doctrinal content and practical application of the doctrine ahead.²⁸²

Contrary to Remonstrant theologian Simon Episcopius (1583-1643), who rejected John (4.24) as biblical evidence for God’s spirituality indicating that it was God’s will, not his essence, that was the foundation of worship, Charnock affirms that the nature of God is the foundation of worship and his will the rule thereof.²⁸³ In this sense, the act of worship should not exclude the nature of the object that is being revered, which in the case of God is his spiritual nature: ‘*God is a Spirit, therefore must have a spiritual worship.*’²⁸⁴ To

²⁸¹ For the origin of this insight, consult Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 262, n. 26.

²⁸² Charnock, *Works*, 1: 248-282. The exegesis of John (4.24) follows the pattern established by puritan hermeneutics of the seventeenth-century in which in-depth exposition of the text interwoven with mastery of the biblical languages was common practice. For a focalized analysis on Reformed puritan exegesis, consult Knapp, "Revealing the Mind of God."

²⁸³ Charnock’s preference for John (4.24) in dealing with the subject of divine spirituality echoes both the mainstream evangelical tradition preceding him (e.g., Calvin, Musculus) and the exegetical work of several of his contemporaries. See Neele, *Van Mastricht*: 222-227.

²⁸⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 260.

put it succinctly, Charnock moves from revelation: John (4.24), to exegesis: the nature of God and the duty of man, then into doctrinal formulae and practical use: God is a purely spiritual being and spiritual worship is required and expected from his creatures.

The schematics above prefaces Charnock's definition of the spirituality of God. Following Melancthon, Charnock maintains that to ascribe God with spirituality means that 'he hath nothing corporeal, no mixture of matter; not a visible substance, a bodily form. He is a Spirit, not a bare spiritual substance, but an understanding, willing Spirit; holy, wise, good, and just.'²⁸⁵ For Charnock, the proposition 'God is a spirit' is communicated to the human mind by way of negation, namely by asserting that 'he [God] is not a body'.²⁸⁶ To say that God is a spirit is to deny that the divine essence is constrained by the physical limitations existing in a material being.²⁸⁷ Most Christian theologians have claimed that God is devoid of a material body because corporeality is incompatible with absolute perfection and Charnock represents this conviction well: 'God were not the most excellent substance if he were not a Spirit. Spiritual substances are more excellent than bodily'.²⁸⁸

The usage of the adjective 'spiritual' to qualify the noun 'substances' in the quote above is significant in relation to the seventeenth-century's debate

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 263.

²⁸⁷ Charnock states, 'So God is called a Spirit, as being not a body, not having the greatness, figure, thickness or length of a body, wholly separate from anything of flesh and matter.' In *ibid.*

²⁸⁸ In *ibid.*, 264.

over divine spirituality and invisibility.²⁸⁹ The spirituality of God indicates that the divine nature cannot be discerned through physical observation considering that there is no material composition in the divine essence. Or, to put it briefly: to uphold that God is spirit is to affirm, concomitantly, that the divine nature is one, invisible, and simple.²⁹⁰ Furthermore, the affirmation ‘God is a pure spiritual being’ conveys much more than a blank metaphysical description of the divine essence and as such it should not be understood purely in abstract terms as if God were a spiritual substance voided of affections, cognitive faculties, and intrinsic goodness. On the contrary, God is a living spirit; one who is driven by the holiness, wisdom, justice, and goodness of his own mind and volition. Though Charnock explicitly acknowledges that the spirituality of God involves primarily the nature of the divine essence, there is a clear determination not to exclude Trinitarian considerations in the discussion of the divine attributes: ‘So that our Saviour would render a reason, not from any one person in the blessed Trinity, but from the divine nature, why we should worship in spirit; and therefore makes use of the word God, the being a spirit being common to the other persons with the Father.’²⁹¹

Charnock takes some time to explain what it means to say that God is invisible in relation to his spiritual nature. To assert the invisibility of God

²⁸⁹ For details about this debate, consult Amos Funkenstein, "The Body of God in 17th Century Theology and Science," in *Millenarianism and Messianism in English Literature and Thought, 1650-1800*, ed. Richard H. Popkin (Leiden: Brill, 1988).

²⁹⁰ It is common to find in the Christian scholastic tradition that divine spirituality is included in the *loci* dedicated to the study of the doctrine of divine simplicity. E.g., Aquinas, *ST*, 2: 1a. 3, 1; Heidegger, *Medulla*: III/6, xxi-xxiii; p. 48.

²⁹¹ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 260.

requires further clarification since invisibility is not an exclusive predication of incorporeal realities.²⁹² An earthly element like the air, whilst invisible to the human eye, is nevertheless a corporeal thing as far as it occupies a spatial place and, thereby, it is subject to mathematical quantification.²⁹³ The invisibility of God, then, should not be apprehended solely as a phenomenological description concerning the divine nature, but as an affirmation mediated by revelation and theological reflection about the ontology of the divine nature: “If he [God] be invisible, he is also spiritual’.²⁹⁴

Though Charnock affirms God’s invisibility, he is cognisant of some exegetical and doctrinal problems. For example, the invisibility of God seems to contradict passages such as Dan. (7.9), Ps. (11.4, 34.15), Isa. (31.3, 51.9), Luke (24.39), and similar, where corporeal forms and human actions are ascribed to God. Charnock accounts for such cases by appealing to the notion of divine accommodation and by attending to the implications arising from it; thus: ‘We must not conceive of God [when revealed in Scripture in the form of a visible Deity] according to the letter, but the design of the metaphor.’²⁹⁵ Similarly, Charnock tackles the problem posed by the incarnation of the Son and the spirituality of the divine essence. The metaphysical claims comprised in the proposition ‘God is a spirit’ (i.e., incorporeity and invisibility) demand

²⁹² It is noteworthy that Charnock’s understanding of what entails for something to be spiritual is not primarily the outcome of speculative metaphysics or scholastic intricacies, but rather it comes as a result of a lexical survey concerning the usage of the term ‘Spirit’ in Scripture. See, *ibid.*, 262-263.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 265-266.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 266.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 269, 276. For Charnock’s complete response, see pages 270-271 in *ibid.*

an explanation given some divergent features existing in the theanthropic person (i.e., corporeity and visibility). Though Charnock does not engage in an in-depth analysis of how the physicality of Christ can be reconciled with the spirituality of God, he asserts that the divine essence remains hidden even in the awareness of the physicality of the Son, the very *Deus figuratus* (God-shaped).²⁹⁶ Charnock explains elsewhere that '[t]hough God hath manifested himself in a bodily shape, Gen. xviii. 1, and elsewhere Jehovah appeared to Abraham, yet the substance of God was not seen, no more than the substance of angels was seen in their apparitions to men.'²⁹⁷

Noteworthy, Charnock claims that the doctrine of divine simplicity ascertains the uniqueness of the spiritual nature of God and that it supports the case for it.²⁹⁸ In this line of reasoning, the primacy of God as a spiritual being is established: (1) by acknowledging that God's spiritual nature is infinitely superior to that of other incorporeal beings, and (2) by considering that the divine essence eternally subsists devoid of all composition.²⁹⁹

Interestingly, Dolezal has stated in his study on divine simplicity that the terms 'simple' and 'spiritual' are interchangeable for Charnock 'most likely' indicating that the invisibility of God involves divine simplicity and by

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 271, 276.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 266.

²⁹⁸ For Charnock, the structural character of simplicity is not contradictory to the theological importance of divine spirituality: 'God's spirituality is the root of his other perfections.' In *ibid.*, 282.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 263-264.

inference God's incorporeity.³⁰⁰ On the one hand, Dolezal correctly notes the foundational role of divine simplicity for the recognition of God's invisibility; on the other, however, it is not altogether clear that simplicity and spirituality are transposable concepts in Charnock's doctrine of God.³⁰¹ A detailed observation of the textual evidence would indicate that simplicity and spirituality are not all the time exchangeable predications in Charnock's doctrine of the divine attributes, even though the terms appear to be synonymous in some instances. Though Charnock recognises that some created substances (e.g., angels, soul) have a spiritual nature, he forcefully declares that these substances are not metaphysically simple in their essence, and because of it they are ontologically inferior to God.³⁰² This is an indication that spirituality is not necessarily an indicator of simplicity and, therefore, distinct from it. Moreover, in some cases Charnock tacitly assumes a distinction between spirituality and simplicity as when, in treating the perfection of the divine essence, he describes God as a 'Spirit without parts', or elsewhere when he states 'the more spiritual and simple' something is 'the more perfect' that particular thing is.³⁰³ This suggests that it would be more in tune with the textual evidence to say that, generally, Charnock thought of divine simplicity as another way to convey the notion of God's absolute perfection and, thus, distinct from spirituality while in some instances he

³⁰⁰ Dolezal, *God without Parts*: 44, n. 48.

³⁰¹ Dolezal does not qualify his statement more precisely, so it is possible to interpret his words as if they intended to convey the idea that for Charnock 'simple' and 'spiritual' were *always* interchangeable terms; if so, the correction indicated above is due.

³⁰² Charnock, *Works*, 1: 264, 268.

³⁰³ See respectively *ibid.*, 279, 268.

establishes a direct relation between spirituality and simplicity wherein the two properties appear to be one and the same.

Concerning the case for the spiritual nature of God, Charnock takes eight subjunctive conditionals wherein the antecedent (p), ‘*if God were not a Spirit*’, remains constant for every variation of the consequent (q) ‘*he could not be... [creator, one, invisible, infinite, independent being, immutable and unchangeable, omnipresent, and most perfect being]*’.³⁰⁴ It must be noted that the underlying assumption in almost every proposition is that God is simple. This is significant in the sense that indicates that the case for the doctrine of divine spirituality presupposes the notion of divine simplicity just as most of the divine predications named in the independent clauses of the conditionals would not be were God not the simplest being.³⁰⁵

Eternity (*De Aeternitas Dei*)

Before diving into Charnock’s exposition on divine eternity, it is important to indicate that even though Charnock does not treat the *infinitas Dei* (infinity of God) as a separate attribute in his theological sermons, the immeasurable nature of the divine essence is the doctrinal backdrop that runs behind the discussions on divine eternity and omnipresence: ‘An infinite power, an infinite wisdom, an infinite duration, must needs speak an infinite

³⁰⁴ Thus, the structure goes, if it were the case that p , then it would be the case that q . Or, in the idiom of propositional logic, conditionals connected by the relation $p \rightarrow q$.

³⁰⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 265-269.

essence, since the infiniteness of his attributes is grounded upon the infiniteness of his essence.’³⁰⁶

The text from which Charnock builds up the doctrinal formulae for the eternity of God is Ps. (90.2), ‘*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hast formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou are God.*’³⁰⁷ Two main inferences are provided from reading Ps. (90.2): (1) the greatness of God’s creative power, and (2) the boundlessness of God’s duration. Charnock expands on the latter point by noting that when it comes to time (i.e., that whereby the duration of a being can be measured) God infinitely transcends creation in the sense that the divine essence is beyond any categorisation dictated by successions or temporal limits, whereas everything else in creation is marked by temporality.³⁰⁸ Ps. (90.2) contains direct references to the eternity of God supported by noting that the text affirms the existential priority of the being of God and the infinite extension of God’s duration. Further propositions are inferred from the same text: (1) that the universe had a beginning, (2) that the world depends on God’s creative power for its existence, (3) that the being of God precedes creation, (4) that the being of God has existed from eternity, (5) that the being of God sustains eternity, and (6) that there is one eternal God.³⁰⁹ The style of argumentation in support of these propositions follows a logical

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 434.

³⁰⁷ In Charnock’s analysis, Psalm 90 is divided in two acts; one in which the psalmist complains about man’s frailty (ver. 3-6) and about the situation of the church (ver. 8-10); the other one in verse 12, a prayer elevated to God. Ibid., 345.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 346-347.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 347.

order and a subsequent consequence that reflects the influence of the scholastic way of argumentation wherein Charnock employs biblical exegesis and logic in the procurement of his doctrinal insights. In this line of reasoning, Charnock anchors his discourse primarily in the biblical text, which serves as the exegetical justification for his doctrinal exposition. This doctrinal formulation, in turn, includes inferences derived from syllogisms framed and tested by the laws of logic.³¹⁰

In addition to what it has been inferred from Ps. 90, Charnock argues that the self-identification of God as *I am* in Ex. (3:14) reveals God's proper name and it justifies some ontological claims concerning the divine nature, being divine eternity one of them. Charnock explains:

This description being in the present tense, shews that his essence knows no past nor future. If it were he was, it would intimate he were not now what he once was; if it were he will be, it would intimate he were not yet what he will be; but I am: I am the only being, the root of all beings; he is therefore at the greatest distance from not being, and that is eternal; so that is signifies his eternity, as well as his perfection and immutability.³¹¹

Divine eternity is inferred from the divine name *I am* as it implies, among other things, that God is possessor of infinite, constant, and immutable life in himself: God *semper est* [always is].³¹²

Charnock is aware of the cognitive difficulties posed by the notion of eternity, but the complexity of the subject does not become an obstacle for its

³¹⁰ The method of drawing 'good and necessary consequences' from the biblical text was a well-known and accepted interpretative tool in Reformed circles during the post-Reformation era. For a representative defence of this exegetical device during the seventeenth-century, consult George Gillespie, *A Treatise of Miscellany Questions: Wherein Many Usefull Questions and Cases of Conscience Are Discussed and Resolved*. (Edinburgh: Patrik Gillespie, 1649), 238-245.

³¹¹ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 355.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 349.

study. On the contrary, Charnock frames the discourse on divine eternity under the linguistic and conceptual categories of the *via negativa*: ‘So may I say of eternity; it is easy in the word pronounced, but hardly understood, and more hardly expressed; it is better expressed by negative than positive words.’³¹³ In this sense, divine eternity entails the denial of all measures of time when attempting to determine the duration of the divine essence.³¹⁴ At first sight, Charnock’s reliance on negative theology could be taken as a tacit permission for using all kinds of metaphysical abstractions to describe the nature of God. However, a more judicious assessment is possible if Charnock’s commitment to Scripture as the *principium cognoscendi theologiae* is considered.³¹⁵

It is worth noting that the concepts of time and eternity, though conceptually related, are contrapose to one another and, in some instances, even deemed quasi-antithetical in Charnock’s theology: ‘Eternity is contrary to time... We must consider eternity contrary to the notion of time... Eternity and time differ as the sea and rivers’.³¹⁶ This distinction is not superfluous considering that Charnock argues that eternity is something that cannot be encompassed by any category of time and, consequently, divine eternity comprehends and infinitely excels all times and durations.³¹⁷

³¹³ Ibid., 348.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 349.

³¹⁵ See pp. 34-35 above in this study.

³¹⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 348. In modern times, theologians of the significance of Karl Barth have also distinguished between time and eternity, see Barth, *CD*: II/1, 608.

³¹⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 349. This mode of thinking explains why Charnock and most of the Reformed orthodox affirmed that eternity was a corollary of infinity and that divine

In any case, the Reformed portrayal of divine eternity should not be understood exclusively in terms of timelessness. This tendency is common amongst those who are conversant (and even sympathetic) with the work of the Reformed orthodox. Take for instance, philosopher Paul Helm, who in his monograph on divine eternity writes: ‘To say that God is eternal is thus to say that he is not in time.’³¹⁸ While Helm’s depiction of the eternity of God is not at odds with the mainstream of Reformed scholasticism, Charnock would qualify Helm’s statement by saying that divine eternity also informs one about the perpetual duration of the divine essence. To be more precise, Charnock ascribes duration to God and his creatures, yet he explains that God’s duration is deprived of temporal succession whereas that of the creature is marked by successive events: ‘The being of creatures is successive, the being of God is permanent, and remains entire with all its perfections, unchanged in an infinite duration.’³¹⁹ What is more, most of the Reformed orthodox argued that there was an exceptional relation between divine eternity and time wherein the divine essence remained immune to the mutations and detriments innate to non-eternal beings.³²⁰

Ryan Mullins has depicted Charnock as if the price for espousing the classical notion of divine eternity were the rejection of Scripture as the

infinity was the basis upon which other attributes such as immensity and omnipresence were drawn up. See Velde, *Synopsis*, 167. Cf. Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 65-67. In like manner: ‘As the nature of time consists in the succession of parts, so the nature of eternity in an infinite immutable duration.’ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 348.

³¹⁸ Paul Helm, *Eternal God: A Study of God without Time*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23.

³¹⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 351.

³²⁰ Velde, *The Doctrine of God*: 158. Cf. Muller, *PRRD*: 3:348.

epistemic foundation for theology or, in scholastic lingo, as if Charnock had abandoned Scripture as the *principium cognoscendi theologiae* to accommodate a concept of divine eternity wherein God is depicted as eternally infinite but also as without successions and thus eternally immutable.³²¹ Mullins proves his case by saying that Charnock himself ‘notes that the Bible does not teach that God exists without succession... but because of the weakness of our concepts the Holy Spirit describes eternity in the Bible simply as without beginning and without end.’³²²

In principle, the noted problem in Charnock’s method and the negative implications thereof for the understanding of divine eternity seem to be valid; after all, Mullins’ assessment relies on what it is presented as Charnock’s incriminating admission of theologising without the warrant of Scripture. However, an examination of the theological method observed in Charnock’s theological sermons on the divine attributes indicates that far from arguing *a priori* that some metaphysical beliefs are to be favoured over the testimony of Scripture, Charnock is simply acknowledging that certain claims about the nature of God are deduced (not *explicitly* taken) from Scripture.³²³

³²¹ R. T. Mullins, *The End of the Timeless God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 85, 203.

³²² *Ibid.*, 203.

³²³ This is nothing else but the Reformed principle of ‘good and necessary consequence’ in practice, the basis for a theological reading of the Bible. See McGraw, *By Good and Necessary Consequence*.

Mullins points out to two references in Charnock's discourse on divine eternity to support his claim.³²⁴ In the first allusion, Charnock speaks of the Spirit revealing the concept of divine eternity as in two stages to accommodate revelation to the cognitive limitations of the human mind.³²⁵ In the second, Charnock explains that the Spirit deigns in Scripture to fit creature's capacity of understanding to communicate the notion of eternity in temporal terms. Yet, this divine temporality should be interpreted in similar manner as when some body parts are ascribed to God: just as anthropomorphisms do not imply a material body for God, temporal language to describe eternity do not imply that the divine essence is liable to succession or variation.³²⁶ It must be noted that Charnock nowhere says that the Bible does not teach that God subsists without succession just that the notion of divine eternity (without succession) is accommodated to suit the capability of the human mind. Charnock infers from Ps. (90.2) that since God remains the same being eternally, he must never experience variation, change, or succession.³²⁷ Therefore, rather than an admission about the lack of biblical justification for the claim 'there is no successions in God', Charnock is recognising that this theological assertion,

³²⁴ In *Timeless God*: 210, n. 26, Mullins refers to pages 181 and 186 from the 1682's edition of *Several Discourses*.... In this study, the foregoing pages correspond to Charnock, *Works*, 1: 347-348, 353-354.

³²⁵ Charnock reiterates that the notion of divine eternity is complex and hence difficult to explain; yet, rational creatures are at the least capable to understand that God is eternal. *Idem.*, *Works*, 1: 348.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 347.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 351. It is worth noticing how Charnock deduces that just as there is no succession in the being of God, there is no succession in his knowledge or in his decrees. See *ibid.*, 351-352.

while not *explicitly* rendered in Scripture, is a necessary inference from Scripture and hence one that is biblically justified.

The first major doctrinal claim based upon the exegesis of Ps. (90.2) is that the being of God is of eternal duration.³²⁸ This assertion carries with it implications involving God both in relation to himself (i.e., his subsistence *ad intra*) and in relation to everything other than himself (i.e., his subsistence *ad extra*).³²⁹ Following Calvin, Charnock affirms that divine eternity has a direct repercussion for the covenantal relationship between God and humanity given that the ‘covenant can have no foundation but in his duration before and after the world.’³³⁰ This is to say that the certainty of what has been established in the covenant finds its perfect assurance in God’s everlasting and immutable duration. This concurs with the claims of other prominent federal theologians of the Orthodox era who affirmed that eternity and covenant were concepts mutually interconnected.³³¹

In Charnock’s theology, eternity is classified under the non-communicable attributes. This is explained by noting that to ascribe eternity to something is to say that it has no beginning, no end, and no temporal

³²⁸ Ibid., 347ff.

³²⁹ Interestingly, some modern theologians have emphasised a similar relation between the divine attributes and the *ad intra/ad extra* operations. For example, John Webster explains in an essay concerning divine aseity: ‘But God is from himself not only in his inner life but also in the external works which correspond to his inner life.’ In Webster, “Life in and of Himself,” 119.

³³⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 347.

³³¹ For example, Willem van Asselt notes that in the theology of Cocceius the notion of the covenant incorporates the movements of history and the concept of eternity. Van Asselt, *Federal Theology*: 297. For Asselt’s explanation on the relation between covenant and eternity in Cocceius’ theology, see *ibid.*, 299-300.

succession, and since no other being has perpetually existed by itself, eternity must be an exclusive predication of God.³³²

Furthermore, it is worth noting how the notion of eternity shapes Charnock's understanding of the divine attributes. That God is eternal signifies that every perfection in the divine essence is also eternal; in fact, Charnock argues, if any of the divine attributes were not eternal God himself could not be eternal.³³³ What is more, eternity is a necessary condition for affirming other divine perfections.³³⁴ For example, to ascribe God the attribute of immutability requires of him to be eternal considering that, if finite, God must have a beginning, but if God began to exist he has experienced the greatest mutation, namely, the transition from non-being into being, but this cannot be for God could not be who he is if there were either beginning, ending, or succession in him.³³⁵

While infinity is the implicit backdrop out of which divine eternity logically follows, divine aseity explicitly testifies of it: 'He that hath life in himself, and is from himself, cannot but be', to which Charnock later adds, '[s]ince he [God] had life in himself, and that there was no cause of his existence, he can have no cause of his limitation, and can no more be

³³² Charnock, *Works*, 1: 360.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 354.

³³⁴ Charnock explains by using a series of conditional clauses that God could not be immutable, perfect, omnipotent, the first cause, if he were not eternal. In *ibid.*, 357-358.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 357. Charnock follows Calvin's exegesis on Mal. (3.6) and Job (37.23) wherein the Reformer distinguishes between God's unchangeable nature from his immutable purpose. Thus Charnock, 'Had he not been eternal, there had been the greatest change, from nothing to something. A change of the essence is greater than a change of purpose.' In *ibid.*

determined to a time than he can to a place.’³³⁶ For Charnock, then, God subsists *a se* (from himself) and *in se* (in himself), which in metaphysical idiom is to say that the existence of God is constitutive of his essence—God is *actus purus*, i.e., his being has full and unrestricted actuality. Consequently, since life is an essential—not a derivative—property in the divine ontology, God must be a necessary and, therefore, an eternal being: ‘God is life; it is in him originally, radically, therefore eternally. He is pure act, nothing but vigour and act.’³³⁷

The constancy of the being of God is contrasted with the successive nature of his creatures: while God remains everlastingly unaltered with all his perfections, humanity subsists temporarily and in constant change.³³⁸ Echoing Jean Daillé (1594–1670) and his *Melange de Sermons*, Charnock expounds: ‘God possesses a firm and absolute being, always constant to himself; he sees all things sliding under him in a continual variation; he beholds the revolutions in the world without any change of his most glorious and immoveable nature.’³³⁹

In the end, Charnock’s ideas might be arranged in such a way as to compose a definition of divine eternity highlighting both the rejection to

³³⁶ Ibid., 356.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Here the noun ‘constancy’ is not used as a substitute for ‘immutability’ as it is found in modern dogmatics, such as in Barth, *CD*: II/1, 490 ff. Scholars have recognised that the differences between modern accounts on divine constancy and the orthodox view of divine immutability transcends the realm of semantics. See Robert B. Price, *Letters of the Divine Word: The Perfections of God in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics*, Studies in Systematic Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 129–130.

³³⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 352.

ascriptions to God of any temporal limitation and the perpetual plenitude of his mode of subsistence. Consequently, divine eternity is, negatively, that aspect of the divine nature whereby God is said not to experience temporal succession and, therefore, that which rejects any temporal categorisation in accounting for the duration of the divine essence. Positively, divine eternity means that God subsists in an enduring and immutable state of perfect possession of life.³⁴⁰

Immutability (*De Immutabilitas Dei*)

From the very early stages of the development of Christian theology until the doctrinal codification observed in the dogmatic systems of the seventeenth century, divine immutability enjoyed almost universal acceptance. After the advent of German Idealism (1780s-1840s), however, immutability began to lose its doctrinal status and became a concept of problematic implications for systematic theology.³⁴¹ In the history of the doctrine of immutability, Charnock represents those pre-Kantian theologies that affirmed that '[t]he essence of God, with all the perfections of his nature, are pronounced the same, without any variation from eternity to eternity.'³⁴²

³⁴⁰ It is worth noting the striking resemblance between Charnock's 'positive' view of eternity with the definition provided by Boëthius, who writes: 'Eternity, then, is the whole, simultaneous and perfect possession of boundless life, which becomes clearer by comparison with temporal things.' In Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. S. J. Tester, Loeb Classical Library (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1973), V/vi; p. 423.

³⁴¹ Isaak Dorner (1809-1884) arguably penned the most important work on divine immutability during the nineteenth-century. For an English translation of Dorner's two-parts essay, consult I. A. Dorner and Robert R. Williams, *Divine Immutability: A Critical Reconsideration*, trans. Robert R. Williams and Claude Welch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

³⁴² Charnock, *Works*, 1: 379.

Charnock begins this discourse by providing a summary of the most substantial elements of the text under consideration.³⁴³ This allows him to follow the conceptual flow of Ps. (102) in preparation for the doctrinal, metaphysical, and practical inferences derived from verses 26-27, particularly to the declaration: '*but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.*'³⁴⁴

Once more, Charnock refers to the significance of the divine name *I am* in the exegesis of Ps. 102. The allusion to the proper name of God by the psalmist seeks to emphasize the unchangeable nature and the ontological supremacy of the divine being: 'His wisdom and power, his knowledge and will, are always the same. His essence can receive no alteration, neither by itself nor by any external cause.'³⁴⁵ Charnock returns to Ex. 3:14 in search of textual ammunition for the defence of divine immutability, there he argues that '[t]he very name *Jehovah* bears, according to the grammatical order, a mark of God's unchangeableness... *I am*, that is, I receive from no other what I am in myself. He depends upon no other in his essence, knowledge, purpose, and therefore hath no changing power over him.'³⁴⁶ The theological use that Charnock gives to the divine name is in accord with the way the Reformed tradition has understood the proper name of God.³⁴⁷ In fact, it was customary amongst the Reformed theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

³⁴³ Ibid., 374-379.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 374.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 380.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 391-392.

³⁴⁷ Muller has traced back the inference of divine immutability from Ex. (3.14) to the theology of Augustine. See Muller, *PRRD*: 3:308.

to make doctrinal inferences from the name *Jehovah* in support for their metaphysical claims about the divine nature.³⁴⁸ Parenthetically, one must take notice of a renewed interest amongst some contemporary dogmaticians to embrace a reading of Scripture wherein the biblical text provides the epistemic foundation to formulate metaphysical claims about God.³⁴⁹

That God does not change with respect to his essence, his nature, and his perfections is presented as the major doctrinal claim in Charnock's discourse on divine immutability.³⁵⁰ Divine immutability is almost axiomatic given the perfect nature of the divine essence: God must be immune to change for his subsistence requires of nothing but himself: 'He [God] wants nothing, he loses nothing, but doth uniformly exist by himself, without any new nature, new thought, new will, new purpose, or new place.'³⁵¹

It is worth noting here that the doctrine of simplicity is invoked to affirm the immutability of God by arguing that change and simplicity are antithetical: '[God] is an absolutely simple Spirit, not having the least particle

³⁴⁸ Pictet represents well the whole tradition when he writes, "This name [Jehovah] is frequently found in the sacred record... and [it] properly signifies these three things:—1. An eternal Being, who is self-existent and independent; hence he is simply called he that is. 2. A Being, from whom everything else has its being. 3. A Being unchangeable, and faithful to his promises.' In Bènedict Pictet, *Christian Theology*, trans. Frederick Reyroux (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications), II/ii; p. 72.

³⁴⁹ For instance, John B. Webster, "One Who Is Son," in *God without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology. Volume I: God and the Works of God* (London: T&T Clark, 2016). In this essay, the author makes substantial claims about the nature of God the Son based upon the exordium found in Heb. 1. This is not to say, however, that Scripture must be taken as the raw material from which the theologian obtains a doctrinal by-product exclusively by means of human reasoning. Instead, sacred scripture and doctrinal formulation must be understood as organically related in a way wherein doctrines elucidate, in theological categories, what the Spirit has already revealed in biblical idiom.

³⁵⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 380.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

of composition, [then] he is not capable of those changes which may be in created spirits'.³⁵² Or in more unequivocal terms: 'Mutability is absolutely inconsistent with simplicity, whether the change come from an internal or external principle.'³⁵³ A change to the essence of God would imply that he is not God given that change suggests the enhancement or the lessening of something accidental or essential, but nothing can be added to or subtracted from the divine nature because God is the simplest being.

Charnock supports divine immutability by noting the close correlation between the attributes of eternity and that of immutability. These perfections are said to be so interlocked in the divine nature that one is tantamount to the other: 'true eternity is true immutability'.³⁵⁴ It is important to note that immutability and eternity, while one and the same in the being of God (as *per* divine simplicity), differ conceptually in the human mind: the former refers to God's mode of existence whereas the latter explains the extent of such mode of being.³⁵⁵ In scholastic idiom, the conceptual difference is one of *ratio ratiocinatae*, though one *cum fundamentum in re*: a distinction determined by reason but with a foundation in reality. To say that God is eternal is, then, to affirm that he is immutable since no eternal being, i.e., one who enjoys the 'possession of an immutable life', can experience change over time.³⁵⁶

³⁵² Ibid., 382.

³⁵³ Ibid., 393.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 380.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ In *ibid.*

The case for divine immutability continues as Charnock argues that God is essentially immutable by virtue of the constitution of his own being: ‘God is the first being, an independent being; he was not produced of himself, or of any other, but by nature always hath been, and therefore cannot by himself, or by any other, be changed from what he is in his own nature’.³⁵⁷ In other words, the ontological primacy of God, in addition to the absolute self-sufficiency of his being and the fact that he subsists *in se* and *a se*, prevents God from enduring an essential change brought either by internal or external causes.

Interestingly, Charnock explains that immutability is not a perfection by itself, that is, not in isolation from other divine virtues.³⁵⁸ Divine immutability is understood as a perfection only when it operates in relation to the other attributes that reside essentially within the divine being. What is more, immutability secures the constancy of the divine operations as far as ‘[it] is the centre wherein they [the attributes] all unite... [it is] a thread that runs through the whole web, it is the enamel of all the rest; none of them will appear so glorious without this beam, the sun of immutability, which renders then highly excellent without the least shadow of imperfection.’³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 382.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 381. Charnock illustrates his point by indicating the immutable wickedness of the devil and the fallen angels. In *ibid.* Charnock does not mention it but the illustration remains valid only if one assumes that in the examples offered ‘immutability’ is not understood in absolute but in derivative terms. For neither the devil nor the demons are immutable (or eternal) by nature but became so after they rebelled against God.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

That the immutability of God encompasses his knowledge signifies that God knows from eternity everything possible for him to know and also that the nature of the divine knowledge is not susceptible to transitions from ignorance to understanding for that would be contrary to the perfection of the divine essence and particularly inconsistent with divine wisdom and omniscience.³⁶⁰ God immutably owns perfect knowledge of himself and of everything else given that the operative faculty of his knowledge is his own essence: the knowledge of God is no other than *Deus intelligens* [God understanding].³⁶¹ Consequently, Charnock positively infers '[i]f his understanding then be his essence, his knowledge is as necessary, as unchangeable, as his essence' and, negatively concludes, '[i]f his understanding and his essence were not one and the same, he were not simple, but compounded; if compounded, he would consist of parts: if he consisted of parts, he would not be an independent being, and so would not be God.'³⁶² Furthermore, as the being of God is not susceptible to temporal successions, the operation of knowing in the divine mind is instantiated by a single instinctive act meaning that changes according to past and future information have no effect in the way God perfectly knows all possible things.³⁶³

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 384.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 387.

³⁶² Ibid., 385.

³⁶³ Ibid., 385-386.

Just as the knowledge of God is immutable, his will and purposes are also immune to change.³⁶⁴ This is the case, since there is no distinction between the divine essence and the divine will in the being of God, that is to say that there is no difference between the will of God and the act of God willing: *voluntas Dei est Deus volens*.³⁶⁵ In the same way, as God wills all things to be by one eternal act of volition, he knows everything by a single and eternal act of his mind: ‘Again, as God knows all things by one simple vision of his understanding, so he wills all things by one act of volition... He wills nothing to be in time, but what he willed and nilled from eternity.’³⁶⁶ Finally, Charnock asserts that there is no place in God for volitional changes since the perfect nature of the divine being prevents those mutations to take place. Contrary to the will in non-perfect creatures, the will of God is not susceptible to alterations prompted by lack of knowledge of future events, inherent volitional unsteadiness, or the desire of accruing personal power.³⁶⁷

Two provisos need to be mentioned to understand the way that Charnock conceives the relation between immutability and the divine will. In the first place, Charnock explains that though the will of God is immutable, the object thereof remains susceptible to change: ‘As a decree from eternity doth not make the thing decreed to be eternal, so neither doth the

³⁶⁴ Although Charnock speaks of ‘will’ and ‘purpose’ as two distinct features, in most cases he uses the terms interchangeably if not synonymously.

³⁶⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 387. The Augustinian trend is worth noting: ‘For the essence of God, whereby He is, has nothing changeable, neither in eternity, nor in truth nor in will’. In Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna, Fathers of the Church (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press), IV; p.130.

³⁶⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 388.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 388-389.

immutability of the decree render the thing so decreed to be immutable.’³⁶⁸ Charnock explains that alterations of things divinely willed (e.g., the duration of the Mosaic rites and Christ’s sufferings) are not caused by a subsequent decree wherein the antecedent pronouncement is overruled for that would entail a volitional change in God; instead, these changes are part of the eternal decree itself.³⁶⁹ In second place, though the will of God is eternally immutable, the volitional act that brings about the divine purpose remains always free and independent: ‘The liberty of God’s will consists with the necessity of continuing his purpose.’³⁷⁰ It must be noted that the language of ‘necessity’ here is not assumed *de facto* to be in conflict with the notion of divine freedom: ‘God is necessarily good, immutably good; yet he is freely so, and would not be otherwise than what he is.’³⁷¹ This allows Charnock to affirm both the necessity of God to act in accord with the divine nature and the self-government of the divine will. In other words, God is absolutely free in willing what he wills, yet he necessarily wills that which remains consistent with the moral mandates arising from a morally perfect being.³⁷²

For God to be immutable in his essence, he must be also unchangeable in relation to space, namely, God cannot experience change brought by

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 390.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 389-390.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 390.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Charnock’s position on this matter echoes the position of other scholastics in the Reformed tradition: ‘Will in God, is that whereby God freely and unchangeably willeth his owne glory, as the end, and all other things as the meanes unto this end, this will... is the first and supreme cause of things, comprehending with all other causes in itself, and subordinating them to that first cause.’ In Lucas Trelcatius, *A Briefe Institution of the Common Places of Sacred Divinitie*, trans. John Gawen (London: Francis Burton, 1610), 71.

transitions from one spatial location to another.³⁷³ To account for the foregoing claim, the notions of immensity, ubiquity, and omnipresence are being considered. Since God is ubiquitous, it is impossible for him to occupy a place *now* that he has not occupied *before* given that his presence eternally fills—in the fullest of his being—all possible places at all times: ‘[God] is substantially in all space, real and imaginary; there is no part of the world that he doth not fill... he was always in himself by his own eternal *ubi*.’³⁷⁴

That God is immutable is proven by responding to several propositions contrary to the notion of divine immutability.³⁷⁵ The first objection asserts that by creating the universe, God must have experienced a change considerable enough to impair his immutability and, thus, the objection goes, absolute immutability cannot be ascribed to the divine nature.³⁷⁶ In response, Charnock acknowledges that though creation entails a real alteration, this change affects subjectively only the creature not the creator. Creation brings a massive transformation for temporal beings (not for infinite beings) given that only finite beings began to be what they were not before.³⁷⁷ Furthermore, though creation is enacted in time, the temporal execution of the decree does not necessarily bring change in the subject decreeing, but only in the object

³⁷³ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 390-391.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.* Like the doctrine of divine simplicity, the ubiquity of God (*ubiquitas Dei*) is accepted, though not treated separately, throughout Charnock's discourses on the divine attributes. See *ibid.*, 269.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 397-406. Though not mentioned by name, Johannes Crellius (1590-1633), minister of the Racovian church, Conradus Vorstius (1569-1622), Beza's former student in Geneva, and the Socinians, were probably the theologies Charnock opposes here. Cf. Turretin, *Institutes*: 1:205.

³⁷⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 397.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

decreed.³⁷⁸ Therefore, since creation is not the consequence of a subsequent act of the will with respect to the eternal decree, God is said to be immutable with respect to the temporal actualisation of creation given that the will remains always eternal while enacting the act of creation.³⁷⁹

Similarly, it is argued that the command to bring the universe into existence does not require the use of new power in God and, thus, no change is entailed in the divine nature. The underlying argument is the notion of the eternal state of God as *actus purus*, that is, everlastingly devoid of potentiality: ‘So when God is the author of a new work, he is not changed, because he works it by an eternal will and an eternal power.’³⁸⁰ Finally, Charnock argues that creation does not impair the immutability of God given that the existence of the universe brings no new relationship to him: ‘God gained no new relation of Lord or Creator by the creation; for though he hath created nothing to rule over, yet he had the power to create and rule though he did not create and rule.’³⁸¹ It is pivotal to understand this assertion that Charnock is not rejecting altogether the idea of divine relationality. Charnock discards the idea of a new relation to God inaugurated by creation, yet without excluding the reality of an eternal way of relationality that is independent of the act of creation itself. Charnock explains:

[T]he name Creator and Lord belongs to God from eternity, because he could create and rule though he did not create and rule. But howsoever, if there were

³⁷⁸ Ibid. In fact, a separate volitional act to actualize creation would have entailed a moral change in God wherein he wills one thing he did not will before. Ibid., 398.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 398-399. By ‘new power’, Charnock means an additional faculty disposed for the act of creation that was absent in God before the conception of the universe. Ibid., 398.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 399.

any such change of relation, that God may be call Creator and Lord after the creation and not before, it is not a change in essence, nor in knowledge, nor in will; God gains no perfection nor diminution by it, his knowledge is not increased by it; he is no more by it than he was and will be if all those things ceased.³⁸²

The second objection to divine immutability is grounded on the incarnation of the Son.³⁸³ Critics argue that by assuming a human nature, the eternal Son suffers an essential change for he becomes something he was not before. In Chalcedonian terms, Charnock replies to this objection by explaining that the incarnation is not about the transformation of the divine nature becoming human nor the human nature becoming divine, but about the union of two distinct natures in one (theanthropic) person wherein the divine and the human natures remained distinguishable and in possession of their own properties.³⁸⁴ Charnock elucidates that the hypostatic union does not entail variation in God for he has own from eternity all the excellencies of the human nature ‘eminently in a nobler manner than they are in themselves, and therefore could not be changed by a real union.’³⁸⁵ In other words, Charnock argues that since the incarnation is not brought by a change in the

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Similar objections to divine immutability are frequently found in modern theological movements such as in Open Theism and Process Theology. Contemporary unease for the doctrine of immutability is explained primarily by an increasing sensibility to human suffering and by the acceptance of the idea of divine passibility wherein God is depicted as experiencing pain in loving solidarity with his creation. See for instance Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1974); Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

³⁸⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 399. Cf. Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity: Contained in Sermons Upon the Westminster Assembly's Catechism* (London: Banner of Trust, 1692; repr., 1965), 67.

³⁸⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 401.

ontology of the eternal *Logos*, but rather by the *assumptio carnis* [adoption of flesh], divine immutability stands as a divine predication.

It is timely to analyse here what appears to be a deviation from confessional Reformed theology. After maintaining that the incarnation does not bring change in the divine nature, Charnock explains that '[t]he humanity [of Christ] was changed by a communication of excellent gifts from the divine nature, not by being brought into an equality with it; for that was impossible that a creature should become equal to the Creator.'³⁸⁶ At first sight, this can be taken as if Charnock were in contradiction with the Reformed stance on the *communicatio idiomatum* [communication of attributes]³⁸⁷ However, a more detailed analysis indicates that Charnock is not advocating for a view wherein the human nature of the incarnated Son is said to receive properties exclusively belonging to the divine nature, but he is considering a particular effect of the *unio personalis* (personal union) wherein the human nature is endowed with gifts of eminence.³⁸⁸ Generally, the Reformed scholastics spoke of a threefold *effectus* (outcome) resulting from the union between the human and divine natures in the one theanthropic person: the *communicatio*

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 399.

³⁸⁷ Historically, Reformed theology has fundamentally maintained that the communication of attributes brought by the *unio personalis* (personal union) takes place from each nature into the theanthropic person whereas Lutheran theology has favoured a view of the *communicatio* wherein the attributes are said to be transmitted between the human and the divine natures reciprocally and between the two natures and the person of Christ. For the Reformed and Lutheran views during the seventeenth-century, see respectively Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 439-447; Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs, 3 ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 305-317.

³⁸⁸ Known also as *unio hypostatica*, namely, the communication of the Son's hypostasis to the human nature and the union thereof with the divine nature in one theanthropic person. Cf. Charnock, *Works*, 2: 58-62.

idiomatum, gratiarum et operationum [communication of attributes, graces and operations].³⁸⁹ The *communicatio idiomatum* accounts for the concurrence of properties from each nature (human and divine) in the person of Christ, the *communicatio gratiarum* speaks of the excellencies (habits, graces, honours, and gifts) with which Christ's human nature is adorned from the moment it began to exist, and the *communicatio operationum* denotes the operational consonance between the two natures in accomplishing the redemptive work of Christ.³⁹⁰ Consequently, it would be better to interpret the statement 'communication of gifts from the divine nature [to the human nature]' as the endowment of eminent charismata not as the transmission of divine attributes.³⁹¹

Charnock also addresses those who reject divine immutability under the conviction that Scripture contradicts it when God is said to repent and when other variable affections are ascribed to him.³⁹² The objection is tackled by contrasting the perfection of the divine nature against the implications of an actual act of repentance: if God repents, then he could not be perfect given

³⁸⁹ Johannes Wollebius, *The Abridgment of Christian Divinitie*, trans. Alexander Ross (London: T. Mabb for Joseph Nevill 1660), 121-122; Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*: 1:506; Johannes à Marck, *Compendium Theologiae Christianae Didactico-Elencticum* (Amsterdam: Douci & Paddenburg, 1749), XIX/xxii, pp. 382-383, who speaks of a fourfold (quadruplex), instead of a threefold, effect from the hypostatic union.

³⁹⁰ The Reformed orthodox believed that the excellencies of Christ's human nature were exceedingly greater than that of humans and angels, but not infinite given the conviction that *finitum non capax infiniti* [the finite is not able to (contain) the infinite].

³⁹¹ In response to *Quod est effectum unionis illius Personalis?* [What is the effect of this personal union?], Bucanus (d. 1603) answers that the *effectum* consists in a *donorum collatio* (combination of gifts) including wisdom, goodness, holiness, power, majesty, and glory. This effect, Bucanus adds, is what the church fathers called *carnis deificationis* (divinization of the flesh) while the schoolmen refer to it as *gratiam habitualem* (habitual grace). In Bucanus, *Institutiones Theologicae*: II/xxiii; 21.

³⁹² Charnock, *Works*, 1: 400.

that true repentance necessarily implies an imperfection, in this case, demonstrated by insufficient knowledge or by lacking good judgement at a particular instance.³⁹³ Charnock, therefore, interprets Scripture's depictions of divine repentance as a form of divine accommodation whereby God 'frames his language to our dullness, not to his own state, and inform us, by our own phrases, what he would have us learn of his nature, as nurses talk broken language to young children.'³⁹⁴ Furthermore, Charnock adds to his response the necessity of discriminating between the external operations of God and the operations within the Godhead. Biblical accounts of divine repentance indicate a change in God *extra se* (outside himself), that is, an alteration according to God's perfect knowledge of future events and his immutable decree in the way he deals with creation, but not a transformation within the divine being: 'He changes the way of his providential proceeding according to the carriage of the creature, without changing his will, which is the rule of providence.'³⁹⁵ Similarly, Charnock rejects those who ascribe changeability to God based upon unfulfilled predictions in Scripture, as in the stories narrated in 2 Kings (20) or Jonah (3). In the first place, it is noted that the nature of promises and threats that are included in the covenantal relation between God and humanity differ one from the other. God is primarily responsible for enacting his promises while the creature is right in demanding the fulfilment

³⁹³ Ibid., 400-401.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 401. This strategy in defence of divine immutability suggests Aquinas's use of analogical language as a category of predication and, manifestly, Calvin's notion of divine accommodation. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* edited and translated by Thomas Gilby, 61 vols., vol. 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), Ia, 13; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. John T. McNeill, 2 vols., Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), I. 13. 1; pp. 1:120-121.

³⁹⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 401-402.

of what has been assured upon satisfying the conditions of the pact. In the case of the threats, the obligation lies with the creature while God holds the right to punish offences against his sanctity.³⁹⁶ In this manner, Charnock asserts that unfulfilled promises in Scripture are to be assumed as interlocutory verdicts, an idea brought from civil law signifying an interim rule given during an ongoing legal action, ‘so the promises of God are to be understood with the condition of perseverance in well-doing, and threatenings with a clause of revocation annexed to them, provided that men repent.’³⁹⁷ In similar manner, divine immutability suffers no alteration when God expresses emotions of opposite nature to his creatures, this is so because the changes taking place are not actual in the divine being but in the object of his affections. The variation is due to a new stance of the creature in relation to God in the understanding that ‘an innocent creature is the object of his [God’s] kindness, an offending creature is the object of his anger.’³⁹⁸ Besides, God ensues no change when Scripture speaks of the abrogation of certain ordinances during the old covenant neither after the instatement of other principles in the new covenant because these modifications are not alterations in the divine will but different ways wherein God executes his will in time.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 402.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 404.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 405.

Omnipresence (*De Omnipraesentia Dei*)

Divine omnipresence is a derivative from the notion of divine infinity: just as divine eternity denotes the infinity of God with respect to time, omnipresence signifies the boundlessness of the divine essence spatially considered. Charnock explains: ‘As eternity is the perfection whereby he hath neither beginning nor end, immutability is the perfection whereby he hath neither increase nor diminution, so immensity or omnipresence is that whereby he hath neither bounds nor limitation.’⁴⁰⁰ In addition to the relation between the concept of infinity, eternity, and omnipresence, Charnock suggests that the mental acknowledgement of omnipresence comes to the creature through the mediation of the *via negativa* given that omnipresence primarily denies that God is constrained by any spatial limitation: ‘As the infiniteness of God is a denial of limitation of being, so immensity, or omnipresence, is a denial of limitation of place.’⁴⁰¹

The text to expound the doctrine of omnipresence is Jer. (23.24), ‘*Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.*’ From the text context of the text, Charnock explicates that omnipresence is greater than those acts of divine understanding and divine will, and more transcendental than the

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 423. In addition to ‘omnipresence’, other terms like ‘ubiquity’ and ‘immensity’ were used by Reformed orthodox theologians to describe the same divine property. Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 65-66; Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*: 66. In modern times, confessional Reformed theologians, while agreeing with the orthodox in the equivalence between ‘immensity’ and ‘omnipresence’, have noted a distinction wherein, properly speaking, ‘immensity’ indicates the absolute freedom of the divine essence whereas ‘omnipresence’ emphasizes the universal presence of God in the entirety of his being, thus ‘[t]he former emphasizes the transcendence, and the latter, the immanence of God.’ In Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*: 65. Cf. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson, 1871), 1:383-384.

⁴⁰¹ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 425.

acknowledgement of God's authority and power in the world.⁴⁰² Though it is possible for a being to be present 'by knowledge', by itself knowledge lacks of the ontological nature to encompass a place and, thus, it cannot 'constitute a presence.'⁴⁰³ The gist in Charnock's argument lies in the distinction between the constitutive properties of the knower and the knowledge he might have vis-à-vis his own spatial capabilities. In other words, Charnock grants that a knower is capable of being 'present' by means of his knowledge, yet he denies that knowledge alone is metaphysically able to fill a spatial location.⁴⁰⁴ To conclude this point, Charnock sustains that the presence of God is always substantial, that is, it encompasses the entirety of the divine being. This pervasive presence of God is observed in the activity of his power, in the testimony of his operations, and in the infinitude of his knowledge, though always involving the reality of the divine essence.⁴⁰⁵

The wording in Jer. (23.24) does not preclude Charnock from reading the text in a way where the divine presence is not understood as strictly confined to the 'heavens and earth'; instead, God's presence transcends every place considering that 'his [God's] essence is not straitened in the limits of any

⁴⁰² Ibid., 422. *Contra* Socinians, who limited God's presence to his dominion, power, wisdom, and providence. See *The Racovian Catechism*, trans. Thomas Rees (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1818), 32.

⁴⁰³ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 422.

⁴⁰⁴ In response to Vorstius' teaching on omnipresence wherein God is said to be universally present by means of the divine virtue (*virtute*) and power (*potentia*), but not by means of the divine essence. See Watson, *Body of Divinity*: 51.

⁴⁰⁵ This insight is recognised even amongst pagans; thus, Seneca's *De Beneficiis*, from which Charnock quotes, '*Ipse opus suum implet*' (He [Mercurium] himself fills his own works). In Charnock, *Works*, 1: 423. Cf. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Moral Essays: Volume III*, trans. John W. Basore, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1928), IV/viii; pp. 218-219.

created work, he is not contained in the heavens, *i.e.*, in the manner that he is there; but he is there in his essence, and therefore cannot be contained there in his essence.⁴⁰⁶ Charnock justifies such metaphysical claim by noting, on the one hand, that references in Scripture pointing to God's spatial location are anthropomorphic in nature and the consequence of divine accommodation and, on the other hand, he takes into account the self-subsistence of God, which in turn hints of divine eternity, entailing divine immensity, and from there leading to omnipresence.⁴⁰⁷ Therefore, omnipresence is an predication restricted only to God given that 'no creature can be eternal and immutable, so no creature can be immense, because it cannot be infinite; nothing can be of an infinite nature, and therefore nothing of an immense presence but God.'⁴⁰⁸

Following the scholastics, Charnock asserts that the presence of God in the universe must be always *repletivè*, filling all places, rather than *circumscriptivè*, limited to one spatial location or *definitivè*, limited to one non-spatial point.⁴⁰⁹ To prove that the *repletivè* presence of God is real, Charnock argues from the constitutive nature of the divine essence. In this manner, divine infinity becomes the foundation for affirming the universal presence of God whilst divine simplicity accounts for the assertion that God is everywhere in the entirety of his being: 'for in regards of his infinite he has no

⁴⁰⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 431-432.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 432. Following Denis Pétau (1583-1652), the French Jesuit theologian, Charnock asserts, 'Innumerable worlds cannot be a sufficient place to contain God; he can only be a sufficient place to himself'. In *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 433.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 422, 424. Charnock adds that a *repletivè* presence is an exclusive property of God while a *circumscriptivè* and a *definitivè* presence belongs to material bodies and finite spirits, respectively. In *ibid.*, 424.

bounds; in regards of his simplicity, he has no parts'.⁴¹⁰ Furthermore, given that God is essentially infinite, his presence must be also infinite in nature since 'the infiniteness of his attributes is grounded upon the infiniteness of his essence' and, by virtue of divine simplicity, 'his perfections are his essence'.⁴¹¹ In fact, to think of a divine being who is concurrently infinite in its essence and finite in its attributes is clearly contradictory inasmuch as such metaphysical disproportionality would lead to irrational notions of the God.⁴¹²

Another piece of evidence supporting the omnipresence of God is observed in the continuous operations of the works of God. The argument is simple: given that God preserves everything, he must be, therefore, in everything.⁴¹³ Since the presence of God in the universe is *repletivè*, his work of preservation cannot be accomplished simply by the diffusion of divine virtues throughout the created order, but through the influence of God's essential presence in the world: 'As his [God's] presence was actual with what he created, so his presence is actual with what he preserves, since creation and preservation do so little differ; if God creates things by his essential presence, by the same he supports them.'⁴¹⁴ In other words, God's essential presence in

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 433.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 434, 435.

⁴¹² Ibid., 434.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 436.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

the act of creation (*creatio*) remains alike in the act of preservation (*continuata creatio*) since the latter is an extension of the former.⁴¹⁵

Omnipresence is also proven by the inferences drawing from other attributes such as perfection, immutability, and omnipotence. First, since a perfect being is not bound by external restrictions of any kind, God's presence cannot be confined to one place because such spatial restriction would entail an ontological imperfection.⁴¹⁶ Second, God's presence must be universal for otherwise a motion would be required for God to be in more than one location, but to move from one location to another is to experience a spatial change, something that God cannot undergo for he is immutable.⁴¹⁷ Lastly, a correlation between the power of God to act and his presence is established upon the basis of the notions of infinity and immensity: given that the divine essence is not less than his power and his power is not an extension of his essence, Charnock states that: 'God is wheresoever he hath a power to act, but he hath a power to act everywhere in the world, everywhere out of the world; he is therefore everywhere in the world, everywhere out of the world.'⁴¹⁸ It is worth noting the import of divine simplicity as a theological concept in Charnock's theology of the divine attributes, which in this particular case allows Charnock to claim that the divine presence is universally extensive since, by virtue of God's infinity and immensity, there is no place wherein the divine power is inactive: 'Where his essence is, his perfections are, because

⁴¹⁵ Cf. *A Discourse of Divine Providence* in *ibid.*, 9.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 437-438.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 438.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 439.

they are one with his essence; yea, they are his essence, though they have their several degrees of manifestation.’⁴¹⁹

Significantly, Charnock does not make divine power contingent on creation and preservation. Clearly, for Charnock, the reality of the divine life *ad intra* (i.e., God’s power) is independent from the actuality of the divine operations *ad extra* (i.e., God’s economy).⁴²⁰ This is important for at least two reasons: (1) it rejects that God’s infinite power, and by derivation God’s infinite presence, is bounded by the finitude of creation, and (2) it preserves divine aseity by acknowledging the absolute freedom of God with respect to creation.

Though the term ‘pantheism’ was coined after Charnock’s death (1680), some embryonic forms of it existed during the seventeenth-century.⁴²¹ Charnock’s doctrine of omnipresence responds to the challenge posed by such nascent forms of pantheism by describing how his *repletivè* presence permeates the universe:: ‘So is the essence of God in the whole world, not by diffusion as air or light, not mixed with any creature, but remaining distinct from the essence of any created being.’⁴²² Thus, while the presence of God fills everything substantially, it does not do so by dispersing or dividing the divine essence nor by the concoction between the creator and his creation.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 453.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 439.

⁴²¹ It is believed that John Toland (1670-1722) formally introduced the term ‘pantheism’ for the first time in his 1720’s *Pantheisticon: or The Form of Celebrating the Socratic Society*. Pantheistic ideas, however, antecedes Tolland. See Michael P. Levine, *Pantheism: A Non-Theistic Concept of Deity* (London: Routledge, 1994), 1-22.

⁴²² Charnock, *Works*, 1: 425.

Explanations about omnipresence that appeal to diffusion and mixture are inadequate. If God's present is accounted by the diffusion of his being, the divine essence is said to be divided, an impossibility due to God's simplicity and his spiritual nature. If God's presence is accounted by conflating the divine being with creation, there would be no meaningful distinction between God and creation; thus, Charnock: 'God is so in his essence as a Creator different from the creature, preserving their nature, not communicating his own. His essence touches all, is in conjunction with none. *Finite* and *infinite* cannot be joined.'⁴²³ Neither omnipresence can be satisfactorily explained by the multiplication of the divine essence given that God is infinite and therefore undividable.⁴²⁴

Interestingly, Charnock devotes some time to ponder about the significance of the doctrine of omnipresence in some Christological themes. For example, there is a concern involving the way whereby omnipresence is communicated to Christ. While affirming the *unio personalis* and the full divinity of the incarnated Son, Charnock rejects that the ubiquity of Christ results from having the omnipresence of the deity communicated to the humanity of Christ.⁴²⁵ For Charnock, the communication of attributes from the divine to the human is unattainable given the unsurmountable ontological difference between divinity and humanity: 'It is as impossible that the meanness of the humanity can receive the impressions of the Deity, so as to be changed into it; and a creature be metamorphosed into the Creator, and

⁴²³ Ibid., 442.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 430.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 433.

temporary flesh become eternal, and finite mount up into infinity.’⁴²⁶ In other words, one should not speak of communication of attributes between the two natures of the theanthropic person but to discriminate between concrete claims describing the person and abstract claims describing each nature in the person.⁴²⁷

Charnock indicates that the presence of God in creation is active as his providential acts of power and wisdom testify: ‘He is present with all things by his authority, because all things are subject to him; by his power, because all things are sustained by him; by his knowledge, because all things are naked before him... [He is] providentially present with all, since his care extends to the meanest of his creatures. His power reacheth all, and his knowledge pierceth all.’⁴²⁸ The omnipresence of God is, then, not limited to a passive observance of creation’s affairs, but, on the contrary, it is operative, and morally discernible, in the acts of sustenance, providence, and judgement. In this sense, Charnock links the doctrines of omnipresence, creation, and providence by noting the actual presence of God in all creatures, as the foundation for their ontological constitution, attest for the influence of God’s power and goodness: ‘As everything in the world was created by God, so everything in the world is preserved by God; and since preservation is not wholly distinct from creation, it is necessary God should be present with everything while he preserves it, as well as present with it when he created

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 2: 59.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 1: 433. Similarly, Wollebius concludes: ‘Therefore I say rightly, “God is man,” and “Man is God,” but not “Deity is humanity,” or “humanity is Deity.”’ In Wollebius, “Compendium,” 92.

⁴²⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 425.

it',⁴²⁹ Paradoxically, Charnock restricts the revelation of the presence of God to those creatures that are 'capacitated for it'.⁴³⁰ This conundrum (i.e., God is everywhere but not with everyone) is explicated by alluding to God's special presence whereby he providentially assists specific individuals for specific tasks. While God is present with all creatures by means of his divinity, the divine presence as 'gracious efficacy' is reserved exclusively for his people.⁴³¹ In sum, God's essential presence, though universal, it is manifested in different manners; for example, the divine glory is an expression of his presence in heaven just as the divine wrath it is so in hell. Charnock adds to this point, '... in heaven he is a God spreading his beam of light; in hell, a God distributing his strokes of justice; by the one he fills heaven, by the other he fills hell; by his providence and essence he fills both heaven and earth.'⁴³²

Pars Practica: Practical Application of the Doctrine

Charnock ends his treatment of the spiritual nature of God by presenting ten inferences in the form of antecedent/consequent clauses wherein each consequent seeks to highlight a practical element of the doctrine of divine spirituality.⁴³³ These factual conditionals are clustered according to their homiletical objective into two major categories: (1) exhortation/sanctification, and (2) reassurance.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 426.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid., 271-282.

To acknowledge the spirituality of God is a recognition that the human spirit finds no real comfort but in the Father of spirits. It is an admonishment against idolatry because it is abhorrent to fashion the divine essence in earthly or heavenly forms. It is an encouragement to trust in God when one seeks for spiritual blessings.⁴³⁴ In sum, one may say that to understand that God is spirit is an exhortation to offer the proper worship that is due to him (i.e., spiritual worship).⁴³⁵ These inferences are rich in theological substance for pedagogical instruction whilst remaining homiletical in character: to know God as a pure spiritual being is: (1) to assume he is that ‘which nothing can be imagined more perfect, more pure, more spiritual’, (2) to affirm that God is permanently active and communicative, and (3) to say that ‘he is indefatigable in acting.’⁴³⁶

Knowing about the doctrine of divine eternity accomplishes three tasks for the personal edification of the saints: (1) it provides crucial information for strengthening one’s faith, (2) brings comfort to one’s soul, and (3) incites exhortation for the sake of personal sanctification.⁴³⁷ Consequently, eternity informs the church about Christ’s divine status inasmuch as the Son is

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 272, 279-280.

⁴³⁵ Worship is a spiritual act that requires the engagement of one’s cognitive and volitional faculties. Charnock explains (in *ibid.*, 298.) that ‘[w]orship is an act of the understanding, applying itself to the knowledge of the excellency of God, and actual thoughts of his majesty, recognizing him as the supreme Lord and governor of the world, which is natural knowledge; beholding the glory of his attributes in the Redeemer, which is evangelical knowledge, this is the sole act of the spirit of man.’ The emphasis that Charnock makes on the spiritual aspect of worship should not be understood as a rejection of the bodily element that is involved in the adoration of God. See *ibid.*, 296-298. For the particulars qualifying spiritual worship, see *ibid.*, 299-305.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 275, 280.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 360-373.

ascribed with eternity, an exclusive predication of God.⁴³⁸ Acknowledging divine eternity brings comfort to one's soul for it immutably secures God's ultimate promises of redemption in the face of trials, persecution, and distress.⁴³⁹ Finally, divine eternity exhorts the faithful to meditate on the false expectations of worldly pleasures. Eternity is also a reason for the creature's devotion: 'He [God] is more worthy of our affections because he is eternal God, than because he is our Creator; because he is more excellent in his nature than in his transient actions.'⁴⁴⁰

It is worth noting that a significant number of 'uses' for the attributes of the second order are directly related to one another. For instance, Charnock believes that divine spirituality can be inferred from omnipresence: God is said to be essentially present everywhere thus he must subsist not in bodily form but as a spirit considering that it is impossible for a corporeal entity to be in the plenitude of his being in more than one place at the same time.⁴⁴¹ Similarly, omniscience is directly related to omnipresence insofar as the universal presence of an infinitely intelligent being (God) entails an infinite knowledge of everything external to him just as much as of a boundless knowledge of its own being for in God the knowledge of the world cannot be

⁴³⁸ Charnock appeals to the testimony of the New Testament in passages such as John 16.28, 17.5; Col. 1.16; Heb. 7.3, 13.8; and Rev. 1.8. In *ibid.*, 360-361.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 365.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 373.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 446.

greater than the knowledge of himself.⁴⁴² Particularly, omnipresence

highlights the unsurpassable gap between God and creation:

[H]e [God] is in the world, yet not confined to it; he is out of the world, yet not debarred from it; he is above the world, yet not elevated by it; he is below the world, yet not depressed by it; he is above all, equalled by none; he is in all, not because he needs them, but they stand in need of him; this, as well as eternity, makes a vast disproportion between God and the creature.⁴⁴³

To know that God is immutable enlightens one about the status of Christ's divinity because immutability, as a divine prerogative, is equally predicated of the Son (Heb. 1.11) as it is of the Father (Ps. 102.26-27). Also, divine immutability brings comfort to the believer since by its constancy rests secure for God's actions of deliverance and redemption. What is more, immutability comforts the mind and soul by the recognition that salvation reposes in the unchangeable character of the principles that compose the eternal decree, viz., election and the covenant of grace.⁴⁴⁴ Finally, to know that God is immutable urges the church: (1) to grow in the virtue of patience knowing that the providence of God is a reflection of his immutable will; (2) to imitate God by aiming at a state of permanent goodness; and (3), to reach out for God's deliverance in moments of spiritual darkness for the creator is able, by virtue of being the one who always remains the same, to provide the stability the unstable creature requires.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴² Ibid., 447.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 448.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 412-413.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 418-419.

CHAPTER V

QUID SIT DEUS: CHARNOCK ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE SECOND ORDER (I)

Introduction: Divine Perfections *per intelligentia Dei*

The present and the subsequent chapter describe Charnock's theology of the so-called communicable attributes. The decision to split the exposition of Charnock's lectures on the attributes of the second order in two chapters is not arbitrary; on the contrary, it obeys to considerations of method seeking to consider a taxonomy founded in the scholastic distinction between attributes according to the divine intellect (knowledge and wisdom) and attributes according to the divine will (power, holiness, goodness, dominion, and patience). In what follows, this study discusses the attributes of the second order that reveal an aspect of the intellect of God: *per intelligentia Dei*.

As the attributes of the first order are characterised by the rejection of any limitation in the divine nature (*via negativa*), the attributes predicated of God in the following two chapters are ascribed to him in the most excellent manner (*via eminentiae*). Contrary to the ones discussed in the previous chapter, the properties inferred from the way of eminence are said to be communicated to the creature analogically, that is, by resembling something real of the divine essence in the creature, though only by participation.

Knowledge (*De Scientia Dei*)

Though in most cases the Reformed systems included *de scientia Dei* as part of the so-called 'communicable attributes', Charnock classifies it

differently in his theological sermons. To understand this variance, one may note that the Reformed scholastics understood the term *scientia* as an *actus simplicissimus* (simplest act), that is, an act wherein nothing precedes or follows the divine act of knowing.⁴⁴⁶ This is to say that God eternally knows all that it is possible to know in one single instant given that the divine essence requires of no potentiality for the acquisition of new knowledge since God is *actus purus*: ‘God is all act in the knowledge of himself, and his knowledge of other things.’⁴⁴⁷ In contrast, *scientia* when predicated of the creature implies a gradual process, a disposition, a faculty, or a *habitus* of the mind in the acquisition of understanding. By underscoring the immeasurable gap between divine knowledge and the knowledge of the creature, Charnock indicates that the former is always superordinate over the latter and hence incommunicable.⁴⁴⁸ Though Charnock does not use this language, ectypal forms of knowledge are eclipsed by considerations about the one archetypal knowledge residing in God.⁴⁴⁹ It is worth noting that the quality of ‘incommunicable’ is not limited to descriptions of divine omniscience alone; in fact, Charnock asserts that the whole knowledge of God is ‘incommunicable’ as

⁴⁴⁶ See Muller, *Post-Reformation*: 3:398. Also ‘scientia’ in *Idem.*, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek*: 274.

⁴⁴⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 466. Cf. Cocceius, *Summa*: III.x.8; p. 144, where he notes: *Intelligentia in Deo non habet se ut potentia, sive ut facultas... sed ut actus* [In God there is no intelligence itself as potency... but as an act].

⁴⁴⁸ Incommunicable in the sense that knowledge resides in the creature only by participation not essentially.

⁴⁴⁹ While Charnock does not address the archetypal-ectypal classification *per name*, all indicates that he was cognisant of it. Charnock was aware of the systems that included the distinction in their theological prolegomena: Polanus’ *Syntagma*, Gerhard’s *Loci Theologici* (by inference Junius’s *De vera theologia*), and Turretin’s *Institutio*. What is more, the terms were used by some of Charnock’s fellow puritans in England. See Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen’s Trinitarian Theology*: 54-64.

far as it indicates the possession of an exclusive perfection of the divine essence.⁴⁵⁰

Ps. (147.5), '*For great is the Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite*', is the text that accounts for the transition from biblical exegesis to the doctrinal formulae in this discourse.⁴⁵¹ The text provides the biblical foundation to make claims concerning the essence, the power, and the knowledge of God. Charnock orders these claims sequentially to say that 'as God is almighty, so he is omniscient; and as there is no end of his power, so no account can exactly be given of his understanding.

The discussion begins by noting that divine knowledge is identified differently according to its objects. For instance, in reference to God's understanding of past, present, and future things, divine knowledge is respectively known as 'remembrance', 'knowledge', and 'foreknowledge' or 'prescience'. Concerning the simple understanding of things, Scripture identifies divine knowledge merely as 'knowledge'; yet, when this knowledge involves the universality of objects it is called 'omniscience'. Finally, when divine knowledge considers the way wherein God acts, it is recognised as 'wisdom' or 'prudence'.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 461. He treats the doctrine of omniscience as an essential aspect of divine knowledge, see *ibid.*, 457-536.

⁴⁵¹ Charnock makes some preliminary claims concerning the ontology of God based upon the assertion of the psalmist: God is immense, his power and wisdom are infinite. See *ibid.*, 459.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 461.

Though in one sense it is impossible for the human mind to grasp the knowledge of God, it is possible to know something about it by way of analogy, that is, by means of the *via negativa* and the *via eminentiae*. According to Charnock, one may grasp (though not exhaustively) what divine knowledge is by removing from it (negative way) all the imperfections prevailing in creaturely knowledge, while ascribing the most excellent way of understanding to God (eminent way). This manner of making the incomprehensible accessible to the human mind is a gift from God whereby he reveals the greatness of his nature in a way that meets the limitations of the creature's cognitive faculties.⁴⁵³

In harmony with the Reformed scholastic tradition and with the history of the doctrine, Charnock follows the classification of the modes of divine knowing according to their objects. These ways of knowing are clustered in pairs: (1) *scientia visionis et simplicis intelligentiae* (knowledge of vision and simple intelligence and knowledge of simple intelligence).⁴⁵⁴ In this account, the knowledge of vision stands for God's knowledge of himself and the knowledge of all things yet to come.⁴⁵⁵ This way of knowing derives ultimately from a free act of the divine will that logically (not temporarily) precedes and enables the decree to be effected: 'If we could suppose any first or second in

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Andreas J. Beck, "Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676)," in *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise*, ed. Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 222, n. 50. The two distinct ways of knowing noted in the set above indicated are equivalent to the *scientia libera sive voluntaria* and the *scientia necessaria sive naturalis* respectively. The use of one set of terms over the other is explained by either the voluntaristic impulse found in Scotism or the intellectualistic tendency prevailing in some forms of Thomism. See Muller, *PRRD*: 3:407.

⁴⁵⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 461-462.

God's decree, we might say God knew them as possible *before* he decreed them; he knew them as future *because* he decreed them.⁴⁵⁶ In this account, then, a denial of *scientia visionis* entails a rejection of God's sovereign control over his creation given that ignorance of the things created is inconsistent with God's absolute dominion over creation.⁴⁵⁷

Surprisingly, Charnock includes God's understanding of himself as an object of the *scientia visionis Dei*.⁴⁵⁸ This seems incorrect given that the knowledge of vision is logically consequent to the divine will: if God knows himself by a determination of his will, his existence would be contingent not necessary. It seems more consistent, then, to assert that God's knowledge of himself entails a necessary/natural mode of divine knowing, this on the basis that God is a necessary being and as such his existence does not depend on any act of his will.⁴⁵⁹ Furthermore, since God necessarily knows himself by his essence, that is, through the awareness of his own eternal existence, this knowledge must (logically) precede the divine will.⁴⁶⁰ Thereby, this investigation reckons more sensible to affirm that God primarily knows his own being by means of a mode of knowing that is necessary and natural not

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 462.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 463.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 461. More intriguing is that elsewhere Charnock takes side with those who affirmed that God's knowledge of himself belongs to *scientia speculativa*. In *ibid.*, 463.

⁴⁵⁹ Paradoxically, Charnock himself is aware that God's knowledge of himself comes by God's own essence and therefore not by an act of the divine will. In *ibid.*, 465-466.

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. Gisbertus Voetius, *Disputationes Selectae Theologicae: Pars. I-V* (Utrecht: s.n., 1648-1669), 1:246. Quoted in Antonie Vos, "Reformed Orthodoxy in the Netherlands," in *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 148. Voetius' claim is something that Charnock indirectly acknowledges: 'The knowledge of vision follows the act of God's will, and supposeth an act of God's will before, decreeing things to be.' In Charnock, *Works*, 1: 462.

one that is free and voluntary as Charnock appears to affirm. In the end, it is difficult to suggest a definite explanation as to why Charnock believes that God knows himself by means of his *scientia visionis*. On one side, it seems that he favours those who locate God's knowledge of himself as an object of *scientia speculativa*; on the other side, it is possible that Charnock conflates or confuses the objects of knowledge contained in two different modes of divine knowing.⁴⁶¹

The *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* or knowledge of simple intelligence denotes God's knowledge of things that are within the realm of logical possibilities but that never will be actual.⁴⁶² This mode of knowing presupposes a necessary knowledge (*scientia necessaria*) in God whereby he necessarily knows the objects of his understanding. This must be the case since the knowledge of possible things imply the consciousness of the objects that, if decreed, would be actual. In contrast to the knowledge of vision, the knowledge of simple intelligence is not directly linked to the divine will; instead, it is derivative of God's sentience of his power. In other words, God knows possible things by means of the power to create them for whatever possible for him to create, he necessarily knows it.⁴⁶³ Since God necessarily

⁴⁶¹ Idem., *Works*, 1: 462.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ In the case of knowledge of vision, though God knows things primarily as an act of his will he also knows them through his power for he is able to make the object of his knowledge real. Ibid.

knows his own power, a denial of this mode of knowing would be a dismissal of God's very being and thus a rejection of his deity.⁴⁶⁴

(2) The second set in the classification of the modes of divine knowledge is composed by the *scientia speculativa* (speculative knowledge) and the *scientia practica* (practical knowledge).⁴⁶⁵ The former, also known as *scientia theoretica* (theoretical knowledge), is the knowledge one has of something irrespective of its means of operation or production, which in the case of God refers to the knowledge of all things possible (i.e., *scientia visionis*).⁴⁶⁶ More precisely, divine speculative knowledge is the knowledge of possible things considered consequent to the divine decree. The latter is the divine understanding of everything that has been eternally decreed and things directed towards creation, that is, God's all-encompassing knowledge (in concurrence with the divine decree) of everything that is under his governance.⁴⁶⁷ It can be argued that practical knowledge must be predicated of God given that it determines the existential status of the creature considering that his actualisation depends on the divine decree, not as *causa sui* [its own cause] but in the sense that 'we are the fruits of his discretion

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 463.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 462. This parallel set of modes of divine knowing is a further classification of the *scientia visionis* in relation to the divine decree. Accordingly, God's speculative knowledge concurs with the eternal decree whereas practical knowledge is consequent with it. See Muller, *PRRD*: 3:408.

⁴⁶⁶ In Charnock, *Works*, 1: 462, Charnock notes that for some God's knowledge of himself is only speculative. Thomas concurs: 'Accordingly, we must say that God's knowledge of himself is speculative only: he himself cannot be produced [*ipse enim operabilis non est*] ... Thus in his speculative knowledge of himself he has knowledge both speculative and practical of all other things.' In St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, trans. Thomas Gornall, 61 vols., vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 1a. 14, 16; pp. 59, 61.

⁴⁶⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 463.

discovered in creation.’⁴⁶⁸ Finally, Charnock adds that the scope of practical knowledge extends, not only to things that are or will be actual according to the divine decree, but to those possible things that God might actualize though never will.⁴⁶⁹ This is why God’s *scientia practica* is also known as *scientia libera sive voluntaria* (free or voluntary knowledge), because it ultimately rests on the free determinations of the divine will.

(3) The final set of terms used to explain the divine knowing includes the *scientia approbationis* (knowledge of approbation) and the *scientia reprobationis* (knowledge of apprehension).⁴⁷⁰ Charnock explains that the nature of the knowledge of approbation is often represented in Scripture by ‘acts of affection’.⁴⁷¹ *Scientia approbationis* is directly linked to the divine will, though it fundamentally remains in the divine understanding as an affection that presupposes the knowledge of the thing already approved by the mind.⁴⁷² This manner of knowing concerns God’s positive knowledge of things in their inherent goodness, or as Barth puts it, the knowledge of things ‘in their genuine being’.⁴⁷³ In contrast, God is said to have knowledge of apprehension (reprobation) in the absence of positive knowledge. The knowledge of apprehension, then, may be understood as the negative knowledge of evil, not

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 463-464. Though the content of the two seems to be virtually the same, Charnock prefers the term ‘apprehension’ over the more literal ‘reprobation’.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 463.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Barth, *CD*: II/1, 567.

in the sense of divine ignorance, but as the refusal to acknowledge evil as an object of divine affection.⁴⁷⁴

It is worth pausing for a moment to evaluate what others have said concerning the absence of the language of ‘free’ and ‘voluntary’ in relation to the ways of divine knowing in Charnock’s material. Significantly, Lee has asserted that this is indicative of the ‘intellectualistic character of his [Charnock’s] scholasticism.’⁴⁷⁵ In response, this study argues that while Charnock’s linguistic preference for *scientia visionis* over *scientia libera sive voluntaria* may be an indicator of the intellectualism prevailing in the Thomistic tradition of seventeenth-century’s Protestantism, it is simply not the case that the language, much less the concepts, of freedom and volition are absent from Charnock’s discourse on the knowledge of God. In fact, Charnock directly relates the divine will—and by inference the divine freedom—with *scientia visionis* in several instances.⁴⁷⁶ Unless one believes that the acts of the divine will are not free by nature, it must be recognised that the knowledge of vision necessarily imply a free act on God’s part. It is also worth noting that in recent times scholars have expressed their scepticism against the rather loose use of categories such as intellectualism and voluntarism to categorise the

⁴⁷⁴ While commenting on Matthew (7.23; 25.12), Charnock explains: ‘[F]or while he [Jesus] saith he never knew them, he testifies that he did know them, in rendering the reason of his disapproving them, because he knows all their works.’ In Charnock, *Works*, 1: 463.

⁴⁷⁵ Lee, "Theology and Piety," 147.

⁴⁷⁶ For example, consider the following statement: ‘The knowledge of vision follows the act of God’s will and supposeth an act of God’s will before decreeing things to be.’ In Charnock, *Works*, 1: 462.

entire view of an author.⁴⁷⁷ Lee's claim, therefore, is ultimately an unjustified conjecture considering that the argument does not reflect the data derived from the textual evidence contained in Charnock's own material. For this reason, this study concludes that Charnock seeks to maintain a delicate balance between the divine will and the divine freedom in his formulation of the doctrine of the divine perfections precisely with the intention of evading hard forms of voluntarism and intellectualism.

Following the explanation on the different manners whereby God knows things, Charnock adds that the knowledge of God must be universal in its scope. This is to say that *scientia Dei* encompasses the knowledge of himself and the knowledge of everything real and possible, including the knowledge of all things that will be or could be. God must have knowledge of himself as it is essential for the divine life itself and for the enacting of the divine operations. Without perfect knowledge of himself God could not be said to be perfect since ignorance of his own being would contradict his perfect nature considering that 'ignorance of one's self is a greater imperfection than ignorance of things without.'⁴⁷⁸ Moreover, had God been ignorant of himself, he could not have created the universe because he would be ignorant of the power residing in his own being. Ignorance of his own righteous nature, as expressed in his holiness and justice, would make God unable to discriminate good from evil and, thus, he would not be able to dictate laws of governance:

⁴⁷⁷ See, for instance, Tobias Hoffman, "Intellectualism and Voluntarism," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau and Christina van Dike (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 414.

⁴⁷⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 465.

‘If he did not know himself, he did not know what to punish, because he could not know what was contrary to himself.’⁴⁷⁹

The second part of the discourse on the knowledge of God is dedicated to the object and the scope of the divine knowledge.⁴⁸⁰ In the first place, Charnock reiterates that the most distinctive feature of divine knowledge, one whereby all creaturely knowledge is exceeded, is God’s unique understanding of his own being.⁴⁸¹ For Charnock, the infinite nature of divine knowledge is not the result of maintaining an absolute comprehension of everything (actual or possible) apart from the knowledge God has of himself, but the corollary of possessing unqualified knowledge of the divine perfections. Having the notion of divine simplicity in the background, Charnock concludes that since God is essentially infinite, his knowledge must be infinite also.⁴⁸²

Since the knowledge of his own being is essential for the life of God and for the governance of the created order, Charnock infers that God’s knowledge of himself takes precedence over the knowledge of all other things, ‘He [God] is the first truth and therefore the first object of his own understanding.’⁴⁸³ Yet, this order must be understood logically, from the creature’s conception, considering that in the strictest terms God knows the divine being and

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 464-496.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 465, 483.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 466.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 465.

everything else in one single act of knowing.⁴⁸⁴ Moreover, God does not know himself from the effects of his power since his knowledge is from eternity; nor does this knowledge depend on any external cause to God since he is a necessary being and thus his existence requires no causal explanation, nor does this knowledge arise from a separate faculty in God implying composition in the divine being. God knows himself naturally and necessarily by and from his own essence.⁴⁸⁵ As God's knowledge involves the knowledge of himself, whose nature is infinite, the same knowledge must include a comprehensive understanding of every finite thing. In other words, God knows everything else besides his own being precisely because he knows himself.⁴⁸⁶

That God knows all possibilities is justified by the nature of the divine being: God is infinite in essence and hence infinite in power on the basis that there is no real distinction between essence and being in the divine being. This is to say that since God can do everything possible he must know everything he is able to do because '[i]f he knows not all things possible, he could not know the extent of his own power, and so would not know himself as a cause sufficient for more things than he hath created.'⁴⁸⁷ Accordingly, the knowledge God has of all possible things is a derivative from the infinite nature of the divine power or more specifically from the relation between divine power and its objects. In causal idiom, God knows in himself all possible things (those

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 465-466.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 466-467.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 468.

that never will be) only as their sufficient cause, i.e., he knows them as having in himself the creative power for bringing possible things into existence whereas things that are to be actual according to the divine decree, God knows them in himself as their efficient cause and in their immediate instrumental causes.⁴⁸⁸ In other words, God's comprehensive knowledge of possible things depends on knowing all potentialities as contained in God's creative power, not in the determination of God's will: '[H]e [God] understands them [possible things] as able to produce them [sufficient cause], not as willing to effect them [efficient cause].'⁴⁸⁹

Though Charnock asserts that God knows everything essentially by one single act of intuition that is independent, distinct, infallible, immutable, and perpetual, he still discriminates amongst divine knowledge of past, present, and future events.⁴⁹⁰ That God owns a comprehensive knowledge of past and present occurrences has been hardly contested; however, significant disputes erupted over God's foreknowledge and its implications for human freedom.⁴⁹¹ To understand better the position of the Reformed orthodox divines (Charnock's in particular) on divine foreknowledge and human freedom it is necessary to preface the discussion by some introductory remarks on the

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 469.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid. Cf. Ames, *Marrow*: I/vii, 27; pp. 29-30.

⁴⁹⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 469-486, 496-505.

⁴⁹¹ For a detailed history of the debate until the sixteenth century, see William Lane Craig, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988).

context that prompted the discussion over the so-called middle knowledge during Reformation and post-Reformation times.⁴⁹²

After the Reformation, several disputes took place at the inside of Protestant and Catholic churches over the relation between divine sovereignty and human free will. On one side of the debate, the Dominicans led by Domingo Báñez (1528-1604) defended the Thomistic view that upheld God's infallible knowledge of future contingents whereas, on the other side, the Jesuits, headed by the Spaniard Luis de Molina (1535-1600), introduced the notion of *scientia media* (middle knowledge), a theory later adapted by Remonstrants and Socinians during the seventeenth-century.⁴⁹³ Molina's writings became the epicentre of the debate and thus the moniker of 'molinism' ever since to identify those theologies aligned with Molina's notion of middle knowledge, although in many cases Molina's followers departed from his ideas.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹² For literature treating middle knowledge's medieval background, including Okham, Scotus, and Thomas, refer to Eef Dekker, *Middle Knowledge*, Studies in Philosophical Theology (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 4, n. 14.

⁴⁹³ Domingo Báñez, *Scholastica Commentaria in Primam Partem Summae Theologicae S. Thomae Aquinatis (Tomus Primus)*, 4 vols. (Douai: Petri Borremans, 1614), 206-217. Luis de Molina, *Liberi Arbitrii Cum Gratia Donis, Divina Praescientia, Providentia, Praedestinatione Et Reprobatione Concordia*, ed. Johannes Rabeneck (Oña: Societates Iesu, 1953). For a translation of disputations 47-53 in Molina's *Concordia*, consult Luis de Molina and Alfred J. Freddoso, *On Divine Foreknowledge (Part IV of the Concordia)*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). Báñez's direct response to Molina's *Concordia* is a joint work with two fellow Dominicans, Pedro Herrera and Diego Alvarez, *Apologetica Fratrum Praedicatorum in Provincia Hispaniae Sacrae Theologiae Professorum, Adversus Novas Quandam Assertiones Cujusdam Doctoris Ludovici Molinae Nuncupati* (Madrid: s.n., 1595). Cf. Turretin, *Institutes*: III/12, vii; 1:208.

⁴⁹⁴ Francesco Piro, "The Philosophical Impact of Molinism in the 17th Century," in *A Companion to Luis De Molina*, ed. Matthias Kaufmann and Alexander Aichele (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 367. In modern times, molinism has resurfaced in some philosophical circles primarily as a foundational concept for the defence of libertarian free will vis-à-vis divine sovereignty and the problem of evil, as in Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974). In other instances, molinism has been motivated by a rejection of Reformed theology and its purported 'theological fatalism', this is the case of William Lane Craig, *The*

Basically, molinism introduces a third way of divine knowing (next to that of necessary and free knowledge) named *scientia media* (middle knowledge) to reconcile the concept of divine efficacious grace with future contingents involving the motions of the human will. This middle knowledge is located prior to the divine will, that is, in between the knowledge containing all possibilities (*scientia simplicis intelligentiae sive necessaria*) and the knowledge comprising all realities (*scientia visionis sive scientia voluntaria*). Molinists assert that neither the knowledge of simple understanding nor the knowledge of vision are suitable ways to explain God's knowledge of future contingents inasmuch as the object of this knowledge, which comprises both all possibilities and all actualities, neither determines nor grasps them in the indeterminacy that is implied in future conditional contingencies.⁴⁹⁵ In other words, the notion of middle knowledge seeks to do justice to future conditionals not exclusively in consideration of the divine decree but upon the free (independent) act of the creature.⁴⁹⁶

The Reformed orthodox responded to this variety of molinism through their polemic writings against Jesuits, Remonstrants, and Socinians.⁴⁹⁷

Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987). For a glance as to where the current debate stands, including a useful bibliography (mostly philosophical) on the subject, see Kenneth J. Perszyk, ed. *Molinism: The Contemporary Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴⁹⁵ Eef Dekker, "Was Arminius a Molinist?," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 27, no. 2 (1996): 338-340. Elsewhere, Dekker refers to this indeterminacy when he stresses that contingent knowledge, at least in Molina's account, implies that what God knows as a fact might have been otherwise. In Idem., *Middle Knowledge*: 6.

⁴⁹⁶ Craig, *Divine Foreknowledge*: 175-177.

⁴⁹⁷ Turretin, *Institutes*: III/13, iv; 1:213. For the most part, the Reformed orthodox rejected *scientia media* in its different versions (Velde, *The Doctrine of God*: 184.) Nevertheless, there were some Reformed divines (e.g., Alsted, Gomarus, Heidegger, and

Interestingly, these rejoinders reflected the same Augustinian-Thomistic tone deployed by Domingo Báñez in his response to Molina's views.⁴⁹⁸ The Reformed opposed the notion of *scientia media* by rejecting the Remonstrants' doctrine of predestination and by repudiating the Socinians' understanding of God's knowledge of future contingencies. *Contra* the former, the Reformed objected that the so-called middle knowledge of God had taken the place of the divine will as the foundation for the doctrine of election. Against the latter, the Reformed argued that molinism led to the conclusion that divine foreknowledge was limited by the indeterminacy of the creature's volitional acts. The arguments posed by the Reformed orthodox against molinism varied in form but generally zeroed on: (1) the superfluous character of *scientia media* as a category of divine knowing, (2) the problem of locating *scientia media* logically prior to the divine decree, and (3) the implications of *scientia media* for the understanding of the divine being.⁴⁹⁹

Though Charnock does not tackle middle knowledge by name, his understanding of divine knowledge leaves no space for a way of divine knowing that is fixed in something different than God's perfect understanding of himself, particularly in the knowledge of his power and the determination

Walaeus) who adapted some notion of middle knowledge in their own theologies. Heppel, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 79.

⁴⁹⁸ Christopher Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen* (London: Routledge, 2016), 41. One may mention, for instance, the conceptual likeness of Báñez' notion of physical preemption and the Reformed concept of divine concurrence. See Charnock, *Works*, 2: 234-235. Cf. Robert Joseph Matava, *Divine Causality and Human Free Choice: Domingo Báñez, Physical Preemption, and the Controversy De Auxiliis Revisited* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 37-72. Also worth noting is Charnock's explanation of the relation between human will and divine sovereignty in the efficacy of regeneration, in Charnock, *Works*, 3: 284-289.

⁴⁹⁹ Turretin, *Institutes*: III/13, ix-xvi; 1:214-216; Maresius, *Collegium*: II/xli-xliv; pp. 54-56; Voetius, *Disputationes*.

of his will: 'Certainly, if God knows all things possible, which he will not do, he must know all things future, which he is not only able, but resolved to do, or resolved to permit. God's perfect knowledge of himself, that is, of his own infinite power and concluding will, necessarily includes a foreknowledge of what he is able to do, and what he will do.'⁵⁰⁰ This means that everything God knows is contained within the categories of possible and (actual) future things.⁵⁰¹ More to the point, Charnock asserts that divine omniscience is the biblical name for the knowledge of God in regards to the universality of objects to be known; so, God knows in himself whatsoever is knowable either through his knowledge of simple understanding, which is necessary and indefinite, or by means of his knowledge of vision, which is voluntary and definite.⁵⁰² Consequently, one may infer from Charnock that since nothing escapes the realms of possibility or actuality, it would be redundant to come up with a new way of divine knowing (*scientia media*) to account for God's knowledge of conditioned future events.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 478. Other concur with the contention made in this study about Charnock's (implicit) rejection of *scientia media*. See for instance, Hoek, "Charnock on Divine Attributes," 3; Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*: 70-71.

⁵⁰¹ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 461. This universality includes the comprehension of all objects known *via* speculative knowledge, knowledge of simple intelligence, practical knowledge, and knowledge of vision. *Ibid.*, 463.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 461-462. Cf. Turretin, *Institutes*: III/13, 1; 1:212-213.

⁵⁰³ Charnock infers, from Heb. (4.13), that all things are accessible to the knowledge of God, and since contingent events are included amongst the nature of things, then all contingencies are disclosed to God. Charnock, *Works*, 1: 485. Cf. Turretin, *Institutes*: III/13, ix; 1:214. Voetius also argues that since the division of divine knowledge into *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* and *scientia visionis* exhausts all nature of knowable objects (*exhaurit totam naturam objecti scibilis*), there is no need to ascribe a third way of knowing (i.e. *scientia media*) to God. In Voetius, *Disputationes*: I: 309.

An objection concerning the ontological status of conditional contingencies is also inferred from Charnock's account of divine knowledge. As conditional future events are assumed to be more than possibilities but less than absolute actualities, it is disputed how these conditionals are known by God considering that propositions prior to the divine decree are deprived of truth-value, contrary to what molinists have argued. Besides, if the outcome of conditional future contingencies ultimately rests upon creature's free will, rather than upon the determination of the divine will (which is established by the divine decree), how is it possible for God to know these contingencies in actuality, being that these are assumed to be ontologically indeterminate? Moreover, how these conditionals become actual given that contingent propositions are void of metaphysical constitution and as such are incapable of transitioning from a quasi-actual *modus enti* (mode of being) into an absolute actuality.⁵⁰⁴ Leonard van Rijssen (1636-1700?), Charnock's contemporary, encapsulates well the substance of the objection: *Quae vera non sunt, non possunt praesciri ut vera; at futura conditionata non sunt vera, seclusâ voluntatis divinae determinatione, quia nullus effectus potest intelligi futurus absque Dei Decreto.* [Anything that is not true cannot be known earlier as true; but yet conditional future is not true, having been excluded by the determination of the divine will because it is understood that the future is capable of no effect apart from the divine decree.]⁵⁰⁵ Charnock would concur with this rationale in the understanding that Rijssen asserts that

⁵⁰⁴ Turretin, *Institutes*: III/13, ix; 1:214; William Twisse, *A Discovery of D. Jackson's Vanity* (Amsterdam: s.n., 1631), 334-336.

⁵⁰⁵ In Leonard van Rijssen, *Compendium Theologiae Didactico-Elencticae* (Amsterdam: Apud Georgium Gallet, 1695), III/xxiv, argumenta 2; p. 30.

everything included as an object of God's knowledge of vision has been at one instance future and, thus, has been known eternally to God through his will and power.⁵⁰⁶ Furthermore, Charnock would add that God can know future contingencies apart from *scientia media* since all things are 'present' to him by virtue of the eternal subsistence of the divine essence.⁵⁰⁷ This is to say that divine eternity suggests that God knows by a perpetual act of the divine knowing.⁵⁰⁸ As divine eternity encompasses the possession of perfect life without temporal succession, all things must be known to God in an instant, that is, in one, eternal, indivisible motion of divine intellect.⁵⁰⁹ Or, in its briefest form, foreknowledge is the *scientia nunquam deficientis instantiae* [knowledge of a never fading present].⁵¹⁰

Things are said to be always 'present' in the knowledge of God not as if the objects of divine knowledge were eternally endowed with an actual ontology for this would mean that things would be coeternal with the divine essence. Moreover, had the objects of divine knowledge been eternal, they could have never been future since futurity presupposes the transition from non-actuality into actuality: 'Thus all things are present to God's knowledge, though in their own nature they may be past or future, not *in esse realis* [in

⁵⁰⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 478.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 484.

⁵⁰⁸ It is hard to ignore the import of the doctrines of divine simplicity and divine aseity in Charnock's theology of the divine attributes, something that is implicit in the argument above.

⁵⁰⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 505.

⁵¹⁰ In *ibid.*, 484. Here, Charnock approvingly cites Boëthius' words as found in *Philosophiae Consolationes*: V/6.

real existence], but *in esse intelligibili* [in being realised], objectively, not actually present'.⁵¹¹

Ironically, by placing the knowledge of conditional future contingents prior to the determination of the divine decree, seventeenth-century defenders of middle knowledge tumbled into theological fatalism, the very inference they wanted to eradicate from the Reformed view of divine foreknowledge.⁵¹² In the theory of middle knowledge, divine causality (God's decree) is replaced with natural necessity (free will) as the ultimate cause for events that involve conditional contingencies. Since molinists believe that it is God's ultimate prerogative to decide which set of circumstances are to be actualised, the events preceding the actualisation of future conditional contingents become causally necessary and, thereby, by the same logic, it would leave the door open to another form of fatalistic determinism.⁵¹³ On the contrary, by securing divine knowledge of actual things in the divine decree and the divine knowledge of possible things in God's creative power, Charnock does not require to invoke middle knowledge to explain God's understanding of contingent occurrences.⁵¹⁴ This suggests that the transition from the realm of possibility into the state of actuality requires a prior determination of the divine will as far as '[n]othing can pass out the rank of things merely possible

⁵¹¹ Ibid. See also the explanation in *ibid.*, 353.

⁵¹² Mastricht, *Theoretico-Practica*: III/ii, 17; p. 275.

⁵¹³ Velde, *The Doctrine of God*: 184, n. 34. Cf. Barth, *CD*: II/1, 574. It is important to consider that the concept of free will in the molinist's theory is understood in terms of freedom of indifference, a view rejected by most Reformed theologians during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

⁵¹⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 467.

into the order of things future, before some act of God's will hath passed for its futuration.'⁵¹⁵ More to the point, Charnock argues (following Cocceius) that God's foreknowledge ultimately comes directly from what has been eternally established by the divine decree, 'his [God's] declaration of things to come is founded upon his appointment of things to come.'⁵¹⁶

For Charnock, to say that something is contingent is to imply a form of 'accidental' causality, that is, to affirm that something is the effect of an unintended action.⁵¹⁷ These contingencies are said to be mixed and absolute wherein the former takes place when the contingency is composed by necessity and chance and the latter occurs when the contingency is independent of a necessary cause—or is not obtained by logical necessity—as in the free actions of a moral agent.⁵¹⁸ This explanation prefaces an important theological point in Charnock's account of divine knowledge, namely, that contingencies while accidental concerning their secondary causes are infallible concerning their first cause.⁵¹⁹ This ultimately means that there is no possible state of affairs—including absolute contingencies—that can escape God's foreknowledge. For this reason, the logical conundrum arising from affirming two seemingly irreconcilable assertions, namely, God's infallible knowledge of

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 481.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 486.

⁵¹⁸ It is the second kind of contingency that becomes relevant in Charnock's discussion of divine foreknowledge and human free choices. Some speak of diachronic and synchronic contingencies: the former is the kind of contingency that becomes fixed at the moment of its actualization whereas the latter refers to the contingency that remains uncertain even at the moment of its execution in actuality. For an explanation on how the Reformed orthodox understood these kinds of contingencies, consult, Velde, *The Doctrine of God*: 181-182.

⁵¹⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 486.

future contingents and creature's free choices, is not ultimately an unsurpassable difficulty in Charnock's doctrine of divine knowledge simply because there is no contradiction in upholding both propositions.⁵²⁰ On the one hand, God understands from eternity all contingencies, both mixed and absolute, since his knowledge of the future is infallible not simply hypothetical.⁵²¹ Moreover, had God been ignorant of contingent occurrences, he could not have been able to exercise absolute dominion over creation. In such scenario, God would be forced to govern according to the determinations of the human will rather than by virtue of the dictates of his own being, which would result in 'an unworthy conceit of the infinite majesty of heaven',⁵²² On the other hand, Charnock is persuaded that human freedom is not infringed by God's foreknowledge of conditional future contingents.⁵²³ Reformed theologians distinguished between the potency of simultaneities [*potentia simultatis*], an active and subjective notion of indifference in the operation of the will, and a simultaneity of potencies [*simultas potentiae*], a passive and objective concept of indifference in the will itself.⁵²⁴ The Reformed rejected the indifference of the will understood as *potentia simultatis* but accepted it as suggesting *simultas potentiae*; in contrast, opponents of Reformed theology

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 485-486, 488ff.

⁵²¹ Ibid., 487.

⁵²² Ibid., 488.

⁵²³ At this point, it is worth remarking that, while Charnock neither expounds on all the theological and philosophical technicalities comprising the concept of 'free will' nor does he explain at length the distinctions made by other Reformed scholastics concerning the intellectual and volitional aspects of the *liberum arbitrium* [free choice], his understanding of the freedom of the will clearly contradicts that of the Jesuits, Remonstrants, and Socinians, who affirmed that the essential nature of the *liberum arbitrium* rested in the freedom of indifference.

⁵²⁴ Turretin, *Institutes*: X/3, iv; 1:665-666.

determined that freedom of (absolute) indifference speaks of one's ability to will two contradictory objects simultaneously. This implies, then, that the freedom of the will is maintained when, given all the circumstances for a volitional motion to occur (i.e., God's concurrence, rational judgement, divine decree, etc.), the will remains 'indifferent' to act or not to act. One immediate problem with this interpretation of free will involves the impossibility of any moral agent (earthly or heavenly) to will two contradictory objects simultaneously at the instance when all the conditions for the will to act are given.⁵²⁵ Charnock seems to object to this notion of indifference when he states that 'the liberty of the will doth not stand in indifference to this or that thing, for then the will would lose its liberty every time it hath determined itself to any one thing, because after the determination it would be no longer indifferent to the other.'⁵²⁶

In particular, Charnock believes, in harmony with most of his Reformed colleagues, that every moral creature has been endowed with free will from the moment of creation, that is, Adam and Eve were originally created in a state of holiness and with the moral ability not to disobey the divine command or, to put it in positive terms, they were created with the freedom to obey God.⁵²⁷ After the Fall, Adam and Eve retained their free will as part of their essential constitution as human beings but lost their freedom

⁵²⁵ For an insightful analysis of Turretin's view on free choice, including Turretin's rejection of free will as freedom of absolute indifference, consult Eef Dekker et al., "Beyond Indifference: An Elenctic Locus on Free Choice by Francesco Turretini (1623-1687)" in *Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology*, ed. Willem J. van Asselt, et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

⁵²⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 3: 287.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 171-172, 211-212.

(ability) to choose what pleases God.⁵²⁸ In this sense, a post-lapsarian moral agent is understood to have free will not in the sense of having freedom of indifference but in the understanding that her volitional acts are free from both necessity of compulsion and from physical necessity.⁵²⁹

Briefly put it, Charnock argues that God is not violating the creature's freedom of choice in foreknowing her voluntary actions because God does not necessitate the concurrence of the creature's will. This claim is explained and defended by using six interrelated propositions wherein concepts such as necessity, coercion, causality, and inscrutability coalesce.⁵³⁰ The initial proposition asserts that not all necessity opposes freedom.⁵³¹ Charnock justifies this claim by discriminating between what the scholastics called *necessitas coactionis* (compulsive necessity), that is, the necessity derived from imposition or coercion against the will from an external cause, and *necessitas infallibilitatis* (necessity of infallibility), namely, the necessity of supposition based upon God's absolute foreknowledge.⁵³² The former is incompatible with the agent's freedom whereas the latter, by imposing no absolute or physical (coercive) necessity, preserves creaturely freedom. Conceptually, Charnock's argument rests on a more foundational distinction

⁵²⁸ Ibid., 211.

⁵²⁹ Charnock affirms that the events foretold by Isaiah concerning Cyrus and the capture of Babylon, though infallibly foreknown by God, were brought by 'a free inclination and resolve of his [Cyrus'] own will'. In Idem., *Works*, 1: 488. Significantly, freedom of the will is essential for the constitution of humanity, without it human nature simply cannot be. Likewise, liberty of choice is thought to be essential for the constitution of the human will, without it the will is effaced. Ibid., 2: 118; Idem., *Works*, 3: 211.

⁵³⁰ Idem., *Works*, 1: 492-496.

⁵³¹ Ibid., 492.

⁵³² Ibid. Cf. Turretin, *Institutes*: X/2, vi; pp. 662-663.

found in scholastic theology, one that distinguishes between *necessitas consequentis* (necessity of the consequent) and *necessitas consequentiae* (necessity of the consequence).⁵³³ In this scheme, the *necessitas consequentis* explains the relation between two states of affairs in which the consequent (conditional) is necessary or, in other words, that the consequent cannot be other than what it is. In contrast, the *necessitas consequentiae* defines the necessary relation between two states of affairs wherein the necessity is not absolute but logical (hypothetical) since it arises out of contingent causes.

The second proposition argues that no compulsion can be claimed when one is acting voluntarily.⁵³⁴ For Charnock, the correspondence reason-choice explains the correlation action-intention for every free act. Freedom of choice involves the concurrence between the intellect, freely consenting to do something, and the will, freely choosing one thing over another according to its strongest inclination.⁵³⁵ As the will is a rational faculty, every human action must involve the intellect as much as the will; consequently, a free choice would result from the judgement of reason and the subsequent volitional motion with respect to a logically antecedent intent, so '[n]o man acts anything but he can give an account of the motives of his actions; he cannot father it upon a blind necessity; the will cannot be compelled, for then it would

⁵³³ See 'necessitas consequentiae' and 'necessitas consequentis' in Muller, *Dictionary*: 200. Cf. Willem J. Van Asselt et al., "Introduction," in *Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology*, ed. Willem J. van Asselt, et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2010), 35-37.

⁵³⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 492.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 493; *ibid.*, 2: 201.

cease to be will.’⁵³⁶ This does not mean that the will succumbs to the judgements of reason during the process of choosing for that would entail another form of determinism; instead, it means that reason recognises and evaluates the instruments employed when reaching a determined goal and then the will freely moves according to its own inclination.⁵³⁷

The third proposition denies that God’s foreknowledge has causative effects.⁵³⁸ Contrary to Thomas, who asserts that God’s knowledge is the cause of things, Charnock argues that divine knowledge by itself is deprived of creative power.⁵³⁹ Instead of being the cause of things, divine foreknowledge is the ‘directive of the actions’ that are logically consequent from the divine will.⁵⁴⁰ Knowledge apprehends things by means of the divine decree but it is not the principle of things, hence, divine foreknowledge carries no ontological necessity to the things pending for their actualisation. In relation to sin, for example, it is the will of the offender, not the foreknowledge of the offense, that causes sin.⁵⁴¹ The sort of cause attributed to human sin is not *causa efficiens* (efficient cause) but *causa instrumentalis* (instrumental or secondary

⁵³⁶ Idem., *Works*, 1: 493. In speaking about the compatibility between the divine initiative and the freedom of the will in the act of regeneration, Charnock writes ‘God changeth the inclination of the will, but doth not force it against its inclination; the will, being a rational faculty, cannot be wrought upon but rationally.’ In Idem., *Works*, 3: 287.

⁵³⁷ That the will determines itself in the act of free choice is certainly affirmed by Charnock, more explicitly when it comes to explain God’s foreknowledge of sin and the liberty of the will. Idem., *Works*, 3: 190-191.

⁵³⁸ Idem., *Works*, 1: 493.

⁵³⁹ See Aquinas, *ST*, 4: 1a. 14, 8; pp. 29-35. It can be noted in passing that this may well be one of those instances wherein the Reformed scholastics welcome the beliefs of their medieval sources with a critical mind rather than simply accepting their teachings as theological axioms.

⁵⁴⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 493.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 495.

cause): ‘God hath no manner of immediate efficiency in producing sin... but only ceased to act, and therefore could not be the efficient cause of man's sin.’⁵⁴²

In fourth place, Charnock argues that the proposition ‘God foreknows things because they will come to pass’ is not biconditional, that is, it is unidirectional in meaning and thus its order cannot be reversed. In other words, to say that God’s foreknowledge has its object in the things to come does not validate the inverse inference, viz., that the things to come are because God knows them. Charnock’s argument rests on a principle founded in Aristotelian logic called ‘affirming the antecedent’ and on the rejection of an invalid logical inference from it known as ‘affirming the consequent’.⁵⁴³ To observe this, one may convert this proposition into a conditional if-then phrase: (1): ‘*if* God foreknows things, *then* they will come to pass’. From (1), the antecedent clause (*if*) cannot be commutable with the consequent clause (*then*), for otherwise one would be affirming the consequent, which is a logical fallacy. Besides, Charnock explains that God’s foreknowledge of the events brought by free will concatenates three elements: (1) the determinations of the divine will (permissive or definite), (2) the concurrence of primary and secondary causes, and (3) the conjunction of (1) and (2) for the purpose of exalting God’s perfect nature in everything he does.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² Ibid., 28; *ibid.*, 2: 225.

⁵⁴³ William T. Parry and Edward A. Hacker, *Aristotelian Logic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 373-382.

⁵⁴⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 495. Clearly, there is a methodological pattern in the theological argumentation that Charnock offers, one wherein God is the principle to which everything else is subordinated and whose exaltation is the aim of every discourse.

In proposition five, Charnock asserts that the scope of divine knowledge is not restricted exclusively to the understanding of the creature's future actions, but it encompasses also the freedom whereby these actions take place.⁵⁴⁵ What is more, given that divine foreknowledge does not change the nature of things, God knows the objects of his knowledge in accordance to their own nature, that is, God understands possible things as possibilities, contingent things as contingencies, and free agents as acting freely, 'so that', Charnock concludes, 'liberty is rather established by this foreknowledge than removed.'⁵⁴⁶

In the final proposition, Charnock acknowledges the limitations arising from a finite mind in its attempt to comprehend fully the relation between divine foreknowledge and free will.⁵⁴⁷ By acknowledging one's cognitive boundaries when discoursing about the divine nature, Charnock is aware of the possibility of facing an indissoluble mystery, yet this recognition is not done at the expense of God's absolute foreknowledge neither by denying the creature's freedom of choice. Albeit there is an awareness that a flawless explanation concerning the relation between divine foreknowledge and human freedom is beyond human competence, Charnock sees no justifiable reason to purge any of these principles from the doctrine of God's knowledge. In fact, a rejection, either of God's knowledge of conditional future contingents or of man's freedom of choice, would tarnish the perfection of the

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

divine nature: if the former, God is made less than perfect by making him ignorant of the things to come, if the latter, God becomes immoral by convicting those whose deeds are the result of irremediable necessity.⁵⁴⁸

Wisdom (*De Sapientia Dei*)

In many cases, the Reformed orthodox treated the *sapientia Dei* as an appendix to the knowledge of God or as equivalent to it.⁵⁴⁹ In other instances, wisdom was placed under the so-called intellectual attributes of God regulating the operation of the divine attributes including the knowledge of God.⁵⁵⁰ In Charnock's material, divine wisdom is discussed separately from the divine knowledge, yet without ignoring the conceptual proximity between the two concepts: 'He [God] must have knowledge, otherwise he could not be wise; wisdom is the flower of knowledge, and knowledge is the root of wisdom.'⁵⁵¹

Charnock understood divine wisdom as the knowledge of God viewed from an operational or practical perspective: as the infinite knowledge is called omniscience and the simple knowledge is called universal knowledge, the divine knowledge in regards of acting is called wisdom or prudence.⁵⁵² The

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 496.

⁵⁴⁹ Perkins, *Golden Chaine*: 13; Wollebius, "Compendium," 38-39; Velde, *Synopsis*, 170-173. Like in Charnock's discourses on the divine attributes, wisdom and knowledge are discriminated in Leigh, *Treatise*: 60-65.

⁵⁵⁰ *Sapientia Dei essentialis complectitur intelligentiam, scientiam, artem & prudentiam* [The wisdom of God embraces the essential properties of intellect, knowledge, arts, and prudence], in *Synopsis Libri II* of Polanus, *Syntagma*.

⁵⁵¹ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 461. Cf. Leigh, *Treatise*: 60-65; Watson, *Body of Divinity*: 40-43.

⁵⁵² Charnock, *Works*, 1: 461.

decision to treat divine wisdom as an independent subject within the divine attributes has to do with the conviction that knowledge and wisdom differ conceptually from the perspective of the creature.⁵⁵³ Furthermore, these set of divine perfections may be discriminated by considering the logical correlation between the two attributes; in this sense, divine wisdom is said to be erected upon the content of divine knowledge given that the act of knowing logically antecedes the act of being wise or prudent: ‘Knowledge is the foundation of wisdom, and antecedent to it; wisdom, the superstructure upon knowledge.’⁵⁵⁴

Charnock seeks first to establish the biblical and exegetical support for the definition of divine wisdom, the establishment of the doctrinal frame, and the practical uses of the doctrine. The chosen text is found in Paul’s epistle to the Romans (16.27), ‘*To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.*’⁵⁵⁵ Charnock demonstrates his acquaintance with the biblical material and with the biblical scholarship of the time as he exhibits dexterity in the application of the methods of biblical interpretation commonly employed in Reformed Puritanism, particularly on how tradition understood the interconnection between the Old and New Testaments.⁵⁵⁶ It is worth noting that Charnock’s exegesis of Rom. (16.27) is framed by a kerygmatic tone wherein Jesus Christ is presented as the divine vehicle by which God discloses himself, as such Christ is presented as the proper ground for divine

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 2: 10.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 4.

adoration.⁵⁵⁷ Furthermore, by appealing to a more literal rendering of the Greek text, Charnock argues that it is through Christ that God has revealed his wisdom to the world, yet Christ is more than just God's chosen mode of revelation, he is the wisdom of God in and by himself and consequently he is worthy of the same glory that it is ascribed to God.⁵⁵⁸ This christological emphasis resonates with what Charnock says elsewhere in the *Discourses* about the divine attributes and their theological import for asserting the divinity of Christ.⁵⁵⁹

During the exegesis of the text, Charnock makes an important remark about the interconnectedness between the attributes of power and wisdom: 'Power is no ground to expect stability, without wisdom interesting the agent in it, and finding out and applying the means for it. Wisdom is naked without power to act, and power is useless without wisdom to direct.'⁵⁶⁰ This is important for it indicates an understanding of the perfections of God whereby each divine attribute operates in synchronic harmony with one another in

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ The point above might be observed clearly in Charnock's discourse on *The Knowledge of God in Christ* wherein he sustains that all the perfections of God are harmonically comprised in the person of Christ. In Idem., *Works*, 4: 138-154. For Charnock on the divinity of Christ as derivative from the divine perfections, including eternity, immutability, omnipresence, knowledge, wisdom, power, and holiness, see respectively Idem., *Works*, 1: 360, 406, 445, 508; *ibid.*, 2: 74, 164, 255. This list does not include other instances wherein the divinity of Christ is affirmed regardless of the inferences resulting from the doctrine of the divine attributes, being perhaps the comments on the hypostatic union throughout the *Discourses* a solid case in point.

⁵⁶⁰ Idem., *Works*, 2: 5. This trend is observed also in the manner Charnock understands the role of power and wisdom in conversion. See In *ibid.*, 46.

God's being. An absence of this congruous coexistence between the attributes would result in an imbalance in the divine ontology.

The key point Charnock wants to communicate on the subject of divine wisdom is the uniqueness of it when predicated of God. Thereby, one may theologially interpret this discourse as asserting that the archetypal wisdom of God surpasses in quality any ectypal form of wisdom as to 'wisdom is a transcendent excellency of the divine nature.'⁵⁶¹ For Charnock, wisdom comprises three major aspects: (1) it is to act for a right end, (2) it is to observe all circumstances for action, and (3) it is to will and act according to the right reason, according to a right judgement of things.⁵⁶² In this construction, wisdom is related to the power of the intellect and to the motions of the will in acting thoughtfully and ethically for an intended end. Concerning God, wisdom is conceived, then, not as a static property residing in the divine intellect but as a dynamic quality that guides the motions of the divine will for the actualisation of a righteous action.

Charnock discriminates between the essential and the personal wisdom of God by noting that the former relates to the divine nature itself whereas the latter is associated with the Son of God.⁵⁶³ The purpose here is to narrow down the study of the subject to wisdom as a property of the divine essence leaving aside the Christological aspect of wisdom for another treaty. Charnock explains the intrinsic character of wisdom vis-à-vis the divine being by

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁶² Ibid., 11-12.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

presupposing the notion of simplicity. Consequently, it is argued that wisdom is not a disposition appended to the being of God considering (*per* divine simplicity) that there is no real distinction between the wisdom and the essence of God.

That wisdom is said to be (in the sense referred above) an exclusive predication of God does not mean that it is not present in the creatures, but rather that divine wisdom—as being the archetypal in nature—excels any ectypal manifestation of creaturely wisdom: ‘By his wisdom, as much as by anything, he infinitely differs from all his creatures, as by wisdom man differs from a brute.’⁵⁶⁴ This unique aspect of divine wisdom allows Charnock to expand on a series of essential distinctions between creator and creature. For example, since no other being but God is wise necessarily (for his wisdom is his essence), divine wisdom is thought as the pristine form of wisdom from which all the remaining wisdom emerges. Accordingly, it must be that only God is perfectly, integrally, eternally, and incomprehensively wise.⁵⁶⁵

That God is wise is plainly indicated in Scripture, from which Charnock understands divine wisdom as the virtue that clothes all the remaining perfections. In this sense, wisdom is the guiding principle by which all the divine operations are regulated, yet without violating the sovereignty of the divine will: ‘Though he [God] acts all things sovereignly by his will, yet he acts all things wisely by his understanding; and there is not a decree of his will, but

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 13-17.

he can render a satisfactory reason for in the face of men and angels.’⁵⁶⁶ Charnock goes further by claiming that the perfection of God necessitates wisdom as the latter is reckoned the most eminent of virtues and a perfection greater than power. Furthermore, divine wisdom is necessary for the government of creation because apart from it providence is reduced to a chaotic set of actions without an intelligent foundation.⁵⁶⁷ This signifies that wisdom functions as the regulative principle within the divine being that guarantees the approval of what is good and the actualisation of what is always right.

Divine wisdom is illustrated by observing the outward operations of God [*opera Dei ad extra*], that is, by beholding the acts of creation, government, and redemption.⁵⁶⁸ The fact that everything in creation has been endowed with particular gifts seeking a specific end testify of God’s wisdom for ‘God could never have had a satisfaction in the review of his works, and pronounced them good or comely, as he did, Gen. i. 31, had they not been agreeable to that eternal original copy in his own mind.’⁵⁶⁹ In sum, Charnock develops an argument in which the origin, the nature, the order, and the *telos* of the universe are understood as indicators of the existence of a rational principle (wisdom) whereby God governs creation according to the stipulations dictated by the eternal decree.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 18-19.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 21-74.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., 21. See also the explanation in *ibid.*, 22-27.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., 27-51. The analysis of the relation between providence and wisdom is limited for methodological reasons to the governance of man as a rational, sinful, and restored

In similar manner, Charnock asserts that the reality of the moral law manifests the wisdom of God since the comprehension of it falls within the faculties of the human soul. In other words, divine wisdom is observable in the fact that God designed a creature cognitively able to understand the content of the divine commands while able to choose freely between good and evil; so, Charnock expounds: ‘It had not been agreeable to the wisdom of God to propose any moral law to them [non-rational, amoral creatures], who had neither understanding to discern, nor will to choose’ because ‘[t]he wisdom of God commanded nothing, but what was very easy to be observed by him [Adam], and inferior to his natural ability.’⁵⁷¹

Divine wisdom is manifested also in the manner whereby God governs fallen creatures and sinful actions.⁵⁷² Charnock engages this theme by specifically defining the competence of divine wisdom in the government of sin. While divine sovereignty, by consenting the existence of sin, and divine justice, by penalising it, are involved in the governing of sin, divine wisdom participates in it by ordering sin for a greater good and for a righteous end.

Sin in itself is a disorder, and therefore God doth not permit sin for itself; for in its own nature it hath nothing of amiableness, but he wills it for some righteous end, which belongs to the manifestation of his glory, which is his aim in all the acts of his will; he wills it not as sin, but as his wisdom can order it to some greater good than was before in the world, and make it contribute to the beauty of the order he intends.⁵⁷³

creature. For a comprehensive discussion on providence including the significance of wisdom for the proper government of creation, refer to *ibid.*, 1: 6-120.

⁵⁷¹ *Idem.*, *Works*, 2: 27-28.

⁵⁷² For a more detailed treatment of the problem of evil in Charnock’s theology, see the discussion on divine holiness below in this study (pp. 199-225).

⁵⁷³ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 33.

Specifically, the activity of wisdom is manifested in the restrictions that God imposes on sin considering that evil cannot displayed its wickedness in full because the activity of sin in the world is restricted by God's wise ordering of affairs. Paradoxically, it is divine wisdom the principle that makes sin a suitable instrument for the exaltation of God's glory in the plan of redemption, as the incarnation and the sufferings of the Son indicate.⁵⁷⁴ What is more, by ordering the entrance of sin into the world, wisdom engineers the disclosure (not the genesis) of attributes such as justice, mercy, and even some aspects of wisdom itself which otherwise would have remained unknown to humankind.⁵⁷⁵ At this juncture, it is worth pondering whether Charnock's line of reasoning on this matter is driven by a variation of the medieval argument of the *felix culpa*.⁵⁷⁶ In this view, the Fall is thought of as an event that is logically necessary for the displaying of divine mercy. The *felix culpa* clause also implies that humankind would have been deprived of the blessedness of redemption had the Fall never occurred.⁵⁷⁷ While in most cases those who adhere to the doctrine of the *felix culpa* have favoured supralapsarianism

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 34-35.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., 34-38. Cf. Idem., *Works*, 5: 23. Cf. Idem., *Works*, 1: 22.

⁵⁷⁶ The concept of the *felix culpa* is taken from the lyrics of the *Exultet*, a fourth-century hymn which was sung during the Easter Vigil of the Roman liturgy. See Victor Yelverton Haines, *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, s.v. "Felix Culpa." The *Exultet* reads at one stanza, *O certe necessarium Adae peccatum, quod Christi morte deletum est! O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!* [O certainly necessary sin of Adam, which has been crushed by the death of Christ! O happy fault, which have gained for us so excellent and so great Redeemer!]

⁵⁷⁷ Paul Helm, *The Providence of God*, ed. Bray Gerald, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 213-215. For a philosophical application of the *felix culpa* clause in relation to the problem of evil, see Alvin Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa'," in *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*, ed. Peter Van Inwagen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 11-12. For a critique of this form of theodicy, consult Marilyn McCord Adams, "Plantinga on 'Felix Culpa'," *Faith and Philosophy* 25, no. 2 (2008).

(over infralapsarianism) to explain the logical sequence of the *ordo decretorum Dei* [order of the divine decrees], it is not altogether clear whether Charnock himself was a supralapsarian.⁵⁷⁸ The difficulty in identifying Charnock's final stance on the debate over the logical order of the divine decrees lies in the fact that he remains silent on this matter and that the evidence gathered is conjectural and inconclusive. There are statements in the *Discourses* that may be interpreted as if election were logically subsequent to creation and thus infralapsarian in nature, yet in other instances Charnock may be read as espousing supralapsarianism as for example when he asserts that creation's chief meaning is the actualisation of the decree of election.⁵⁷⁹ Furthermore, considering that Charnock repeatedly refers to Amyraut's *de praedestinatione* in matters concerning the doctrine of election, it is worth asking to what extent, if any, Amyraut's theology of election influences Charnock's understanding of the *ordo decretorum*.⁵⁸⁰ In any case, it is advisable not to press too much on Charnock's doctrine of the divine decree in the quest for a highly developed 'order of salvation' considering that the

⁵⁷⁸ In defending the doctrine of predestination against Armimius' claims, the Reformed proposed two views (infra & supra lapsarianism) to explain the logical order within the one eternal decree of God. Briefly stated, supralapsarianism affirms that the decree of election (and that of reprobation) logically antecedes the decree of creation and the decree to permit the Fall respectively whereas infralapsarianism believes that the logical sequence begin with the decree of creation which is followed by the decree to permit the Fall and the decree of election. For a detailed description of the infra/supra lapsarian views, consult Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*: 128-135.

⁵⁷⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 3: 359.

⁵⁸⁰ While the analysis required to assess this inquiry transcends the scope of this study, the subject invites to further engagement on this matter. For a complete description of the Amyraldian position on the order of the divine decree, consult Turretin, *Institutes*: XVIII/18, xiii-xx; 1:422-428. Cf. Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition*: 150-160. Muller offers a description of Amyraldus' view from the perspective of Pierre du Moulin (1568-1658), Amyraldus' opponent.

technical use of the *ordo salutis* emerged in the early eighteenth-century, years after Charnock's death in 1680.⁵⁸¹

Ultimately, wisdom is revealed in the manner God brings goodness out of evil: 'Even the sins of the world his will permits them, his power assists in the act, and his wisdom orders the sinfulness of the act for holy ends... Thus, divine wisdom doth both sharpen and brighten us by the dust of sin, and ripen and mellow the fruits of grace by the dung of corruption'⁵⁸² While divine wisdom emerges as the guiding principle in the works of creation and providence, it is in the work of redemption where wisdom shines the most. Christology becomes the motif from which Charnock explains the operations of wisdom in the work of redemption.⁵⁸³ Consequently, themes like the nature, the manner, and the end of the hypostatic union are explained in covenantal terms evidencing the operation of divine wisdom in the work of redemption: 'Thus the wisdom of God is apparent in annexing such a condition to the covenant, whereby man is restored, as answers the end of God for his glory, the state, conscience, and necessity of man, and had the greatest congruity to his recovery.'⁵⁸⁴

A pause on the descriptive analysis of the material concerning this investigation is expedient here to address Colin Gunton's assessment about

⁵⁸¹ For more on the origin of the *ordo salutis* in Protestant Orthodoxy, consult Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition*: 163-167.

⁵⁸² Charnock, *Works*, 2: 43.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

the method and content found in Charnock's discourse on divine wisdom.⁵⁸⁵ While Gunton acknowledges 'Charnock's biblical orientation' in the treatment of attributes such as holiness, he expresses serious doubts about the claims involving divine wisdom.⁵⁸⁶ Basically, Gunton complains that the scholastic leanings exhibited in Charnock's lecture on divine wisdom have allowed the method of presentation to define the theological content of the discourse.⁵⁸⁷ Specifically, the claim is that Charnock's material reflects a flaw proper of the post-Reformation theological systems, namely, the appeal to negative theology and the return to a so-called form of 'Aristotelian conceptualism'.⁵⁸⁸ To eliminate this problem, Gunton proposes a solution that consists in recovering the significance of the economic Trinity for shaping of the doctrine of God in Christian Dogmatics. This is accomplished, says Gunton, by favouring the biblical narrative that depicts the Triune God in act over the abstractions derived from negative theology.⁵⁸⁹ For Gunton, the structural shortcomings in Charnock's exposition are fundamentally caused by embracing the methodological approach taken by Johannes Wollebius (1586-1629), who contrasted the absolute properties of the divine essence with the relative properties of the divine persons to distinguish the divine perfections.⁵⁹⁰ This

⁵⁸⁵ Gunton, *Act and Being*: 89-93.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., 90. Interestingly, similar protestations against Charnock are noted in the introductory remarks of the 1864's edition of the *Complete Works*. See M'Cosh, "Introduction," xxvii.

⁵⁸⁷ Gunton, *Act and Being*: 91.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., 76-87.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., 94-104.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 88-89. In the course of doing this study, only one reference to Wollebius' *Compendium* was found throughout Charnock's *Discourses*; interestingly, it is not located in

manner of distinguishing the divine attributes assumes that the being of God is effectively dislocated from his modes of subsistence and hence it produces a theology proper wherein the divine essence is thought of as an inaccessible impersonal abstraction.⁵⁹¹ In the final analysis, Charnock is criticised for ignoring that the biblical narrative portrays Jesus as ‘the wisdom of God in action’; moreover, the destabilising influence of negative theology is proven by the virtual absence of Christological and pneumatological participation in the exposition of divine wisdom.⁵⁹²

Gunton’s critique may be understood as a broader concern that involves the doctrinal claims derived from the scholastic method in the theological material of the Protestant orthodox.⁵⁹³ While inventive in their own manner, the reservations noted by Gunton about the theology of the Reformed scholastics reflects the influence of Karl Barth, who expressed similar reservations about the theological role of the doctrine of the Trinity in the doctrinal systems of the Protestant scholastic tradition.⁵⁹⁴ In addition, Barth

the volumes dedicated to the examination of the divine attributes but elsewhere. See Charnock, *Works*, 4: 40; n. †.

⁵⁹¹ Gunton, *Act and Being*: 92.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, 91-92.

⁵⁹³ For a historico-theological response to those who associate scholasticism with a specific content rather than with a particular method of dissertation, consult Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition*: 24-34.

⁵⁹⁴ Barth is unambiguous on the matter: ‘We stand here before the fundamental error which dominated the doctrine of God of the older theology and which influenced Protestant orthodoxy at almost every point.’ In Barth, *CD*: II/1, 261. Cf. *Ibid.*, II/1, 288. For a critical assessment of Barth on Polanus, the Leiden theologians, and Cocceius, as representatives of Reformed Orthodoxy, consult Rinse H. Reeling Brouwer, *Karl Barth and Post-Reformation Orthodoxy*, Barth Studies (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), 35-147. Cf. Colin Gunton, *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (London: SCM, 2001). In his *Concluding Scientific Postscript*, Gunton summarizes in one phrase his findings on Barth’s doctrine of God, ‘The greatness of Barth is first all to be found in the content of his dogmatics, an above all in what he had to write about God.’ In *ibid.*, 244.

holds that the doctrine of the divine attributes must be grounded in the reality of God as it is revealed in his works of creation, reconciliation, and redemption.⁵⁹⁵ Though Barth moderates his concerns about the appeals to negative theology, he remains apprehensive of using the *via negativa* as a means of classification for the perfections of God.⁵⁹⁶

Given that Barth and Gunton fundamentally share the same ground in their objection towards the scholastics, Gunton's critique may be assessed by considering the rejoinders given to Barth on matters equally agreed by both theologians. For instance, it has been noted recently that the alleged absence of the doctrine of the Trinity for determining the content of the doctrine of God is an unwarranted generalisation considering that in most cases the older dogmatists established their dissertations on God by emphasising his Trinitarian nature.⁵⁹⁷ Furthermore, Barth's explanation as to the methodological reasons prompting some of the Protestant orthodox to place the doctrine of the Trinity after the doctrine of the divine attributes within the *locus de Deo* has been questioned.⁵⁹⁸ *Contra* Barth, it has been said that in locating the Trinity after the discussions over the nature and attributes of God, the Reformed scholastics were following the order dictated by central claim

⁵⁹⁵ Barth, *CD*: II/1, 259-260. Barth skilfully argues this point while avoiding, on the one hand, the disjunction between God *in se* and God *extra se* allegedly present in the Reformed scholastic tradition and, on the other hand, without succumbing to modern impulses wherein the being of God becomes dependent on his works in creation.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, II/1, 347-348.

⁵⁹⁷ Velde, *The Doctrine of God*: 356, n. 54.

⁵⁹⁸ Reeling Brouwer, *Karl Barth and Post-Reformation Orthodoxy*: 46-47. According to Muller, Barth's negative reading of the older theologians is explained by the fact that the argument offered on this particular issue seeks more the validation of Barth's interpretation of the scholastics than their true affirmations. See Muller, *PRRD*: 3:155.

concerning the divine nature, namely, that God is one divine being subsisting in three distinct persons.⁵⁹⁹ The foregoing assertion is not grounded, however, upon an *a priori* assumption but rather it is inferred from the biblical testimony vis-à-vis the gradual disclosure of the oneness and the threeness of God in Scripture.⁶⁰⁰ What is more, the treatment of the doctrine of the divine attributes preceding the doctrine of the Trinity does not necessarily entails a disjunction between essence and persons in God as far as the Reformed orthodox did not considered the divine attributes in isolation from God's modes of subsistence. On the contrary, the relatedness of the different themes within the orthodox doctrine of God indicates that the theme of the divine attributes and that of the Trinity were two indissoluble subjects under the *locus de Deo*.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁹ Rehnman, "Doctrine of God," 386. The formulation of the claim above is in tune with the mode of inquiry determined by the *quaestio*.

⁶⁰⁰ Muller, *PRRD*: 3:158-159. It must be noted, however, that Muller's impressive response to the critics of the Reformed scholastic tradition has not been immune to criticism either. See, for example, Gijsbert van den Brink, "Reformed Scholasticism and the Trinitarian Renaissance," in *Scholasticism Reformed: Essays in Honour of Willem J. Van Asselt*, ed. Marcel Sarot Marteen Wisse, Willemein Otten (Boston: Brill, 2010), 335-339. While this is not the place for testing the forcefulness of Van den Brink's comments, it is important to indicate that many of the contributions made by the members of the Utrecht School for the reappraisal of the doctrine of God in Reformed Orthodoxy include elements of continuity and discontinuity with the confessional creeds and theological systems of the Reformed tradition during the seventeenth-century. In some cases, these discontinuities are explained by an emphasis on philosophical methodologies whereby rationality plays a pivotal role in assessing doctrine. For the normative features required for 'responsible theological discourse' according to representatives of the Utrecht School, consult Gijsbert van den Brink and Marcel Sarot, "Contemporary Philosophical Theology," in *Understanding the Attributes of God*, ed. Gijsbert van den Brink and Marcel Sarot, Contributions to Philosophical Theology (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999), 18-28. In turn, for an in-depth study on the doctrine of God in the Utrecht School, consult Velde, *The Doctrine of God*: 481-692; esp. 655-692.

⁶⁰¹ Beck, "Voetius," 213. Beck finds support for his thesis in the work of Gisbertus Voetius, a former delegate of the Synod of Dort (1618-1619), whose thoughts on *De Utilitate & praxi[s] hujus dogmatis* [Concerning the Usefulness and Practice of this Doctrine] are significant for the discussion above. Under the foregoing heading, Voetius concludes *Iam verò solum dogma de Trinitate tradit, quis sit verus Deus* [In reality, only the doctrine of the Trinity recounts who is the true God]. In *Disputationes*: I:478. Voetius is not the only Reformed theologian of the seventeenth-century displaying this Trinitarian awareness while discussing the doctrine of God. See, for example, Wollebius, "Compendium," 37, 40-45.

Ultimately, this investigation rejects Barth's—and by derivation Gunton's—protestation against the older divines regarding their alleged indifference towards the doctrine of the Trinity in determining the content of the doctrine of God. This study justifies the foregoing assessment in consideration of the evidence introduced by modern reappraisals on Reformed scholasticism and in light of the conclusions reached by an independent research on the doctrine of God in the Reformed scholastic tradition.

It must be noted that further analysis is required for addressing appropriately Gunton's critique against Charnock, even if one concurs in rejecting Barth's evaluation of the Reformed scholastic tradition on the basis foregoing explained. Gunton believes that it is precisely because of the influence of the absolute-relative scheme over Charnock's theology that the *Discourses* on the divine attributes exhibit, in many instances, a structural deterioration whereby the essence of God is dislocated from the persons of the Trinity.⁶⁰² While it is true that in some occasions throughout the *Discourses* Charnock alludes to what it seems to be an absolute-relative distinction within the divine attributes, a detailed examination of Charnock's theology contradicts the substance of Gunton's criticism. *Contra* Gunton, this study argues that neither the ways of knowing the perfections of God by means of the *triplex via* nor the recognition of the absolute-relative method for classifying the divine attributes imply necessarily an actual severance of the divine essence from the divine persons. Though Charnock never provides a

⁶⁰² Gunton, *Act and Being*: 92.

detailed explanation on the precise meaning of the terms ‘absolute’ and ‘relative’ in reference to the divine attributes, the evidence available indicates that he would have echoed his Reformed peers on this matter and thus he would have defined the absolute attributes as those properties that described God as he is *in se*, apart from any relation to other beings and the relative attributes as those qualities depicting God as he is in his relation to his works *ad extra*.⁶⁰³ If this assumption is correct, the result of accepting the absolute-relative scheme is not necessarily that of splitting the divine essence from the divine persons, but to discriminate the divine perfections according to the object to which God refers: himself and creation.

Serious problems could arise from adopting the absolute-relative mode of categorising the divine attributes, as when, in what constitutes the basis of Gunton’s concern, the knowledge of God’s essence (absolute attributes) is thought of as if it were accessible in complete isolation from God’s works in creation (relative attributes).⁶⁰⁴ However, there are reasons to believe that this is not the epistemic assumption from which Charnock develops his doctrine of the divine attributes. Facing the problem of divine predication, while treating the divine perfections, Charnock indicates that there are two ways of describing God, that is, the way of affirmation and the way of negation: ‘the

⁶⁰³ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 380, 412.

⁶⁰⁴ The remedy for this problem is, according to Gunton, to take up ‘the biblical teaching according to which *Jesus* is the wisdom of God in action’, see his explanation in Gunton, *Act and Being*: 92, 94-96. To put it differently, Gunton advocates for a methodological approach whereby the divine attributes are described through a resolute emphasis on the biblical narrative depicting the Triune God in action and not by an *a priori* appeal to metaphysical categories as Wollebius *et al.* Reformed orthodox do. A critical evaluation of this so-called ‘narrative Trinitarianism’ is found in Francesca Aran Murphy, *God Is Not a Story: Realism Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). According to Murphy, ‘God is [actually reduced to] a story’ as a consequence of ‘the driving force of narrative theology’ inherent in this method. In *ibid.*, 1.

first ascribe to him [God] whatsoever is excellent [*via eminentiae*], the other separates from him whatsoever is imperfect', to which Charnock adds, '[t]his way of negation is more easy; we better understand what God *is not*, than what he *is*, and most of our knowledge of God is by this way.'⁶⁰⁵ What is crucial to note here is that both of these ways of knowing God presuppose an understanding of the divine being that is grounded in an ectypal form of theology, that is, in an understanding of God 'fashioned by God from the archetype of Himself, through the communication of grace for His own glory.'⁶⁰⁶ This signifies that the different ways of knowing God presuppose the existence of an pedagogical relation whereby the God freely chooses to communicate knowledge of himself to the creature. Furthermore, Charnock explicitly expresses that the knowledge of God *in se* does not reside in the human mind as if it were in direct relation to the divine essence, but instead it is mediated by the works of God *ad extra*.⁶⁰⁷ This is not to say, however, that in having a comprehensive understanding of the divine works one procures also an inclusive knowledge of God *in se*, given that it is through the knowledge of God, mediated by the Son not by the divine operations *ad extra*, that the excellences of God are principally revealed.⁶⁰⁸ Furthermore, the mediation of special revelation and the renewal of the mind are the *sine qua non* for

⁶⁰⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 263.

⁶⁰⁶ Junius, *Treatise*: 151. While Charnock nowhere discusses, at least not systematically, the epistemic and metaphysical foundations of his theology, he is certainly committed to a particular set of beliefs on these matters.

⁶⁰⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 4: 38.

⁶⁰⁸ Idem., *Works*, 1: 509; Idem., *Works*, 4: 112-113.

acquiring knowledge of things divine, including the knowledge of God.⁶⁰⁹ Thereby, the existence of an epistemological foundation for knowing God, prompted by christological motives, in addition to the import of supernatural revelation and the necessity of a regenerated intelligence, indicate that for Charnock the knowledge of God is not thought as something abstracted from the divine operations but as something communicated to the creature's mind through the revelation of God in the life of the Son; thus: 'We do not only know in Christ what we know by creation, but more that can possibly be known of God by the works of his hands.'⁶¹⁰

Gunton zeroes on Charnock's doctrine of divine wisdom as, it is argued, it depicts a contradistinction between the absolute and relative attributes in God. This leads to a bifurcation of the eternal wisdom of God (i.e., the divine essence) with respect to the personal wisdom of God (i.e., the person of the Son).⁶¹¹ Gunton's apprehension would have been well founded, had Charnock thought of the essential wisdom of God as a metaphysical abstraction subsisting in isolation from the personal wisdom of God (i.e., the Son). However, this construal is inaccurate as Charnock asserts throughout the *Discourses* that the Son is not just the personal but the actual manifestation of the divine attributes. In the first place, Charnock states that the Son participates, in relation to his divinity, of the same divine essence of that of the

⁶⁰⁹ Idem., *Works*, 4: 155. Cf. Webster, "Omnia... Pertractantur in Sacra Doctrina Sub Ratione Dei: On the Matter of Christian Theology," 3-7.

⁶¹⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 4: 137. For bolder claims about the role of christology in framing Charnock's epistemology, consult Jae-Eun Park, "Stephen Charnock's Christological Knowledge of God in a Discourse of the Knowledge of God in Christ," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 10 (2014).

⁶¹¹ Gunton, *Act and Being*: 91.

Father, 'Christ is "the image of the invisible God," Col. i. 15... [he] is like God the Father; he hath the same essence, the same attributes, the same operations.'⁶¹² Second, Charnock ascribes to Christ infinite wisdom, an essential predication of the divine nature: 'If wisdom be an excellency of the divine nature, then, Christ's deity may hence be asserted', and since '[a]ll his attributes are alike essential to him' then the Son partakes on the eternal wisdom of God.⁶¹³

Pars Practica: Practical Application of the Doctrine

The concluding part of the knowledge of God is a lengthy section discussing the practical application of the doctrine.⁶¹⁴ Normally, this segment is divided into three major headings covering the different uses of the doctrine, namely, the use of information or instruction, comfort, and exhortation. In the case of the doctrine of divine knowledge, however, Charnock adds an extra category by which the believer is urged to humble herself before God considering that no wicked action will go unnoticed to God.⁶¹⁵

Significantly, the doctrine of God's knowledge functions as a pedagogical device to instruct the church about the divinity of Christ. The argument begins with the proposition, 'if God hath all knowledge, then Jesus Christ is not a mere creature', then it moves into an explanation of the features

⁶¹² Charnock, *Works*, 4: 126.

⁶¹³ Idem., *Works*, 2: 74; Idem., *Works*, 5: 210.

⁶¹⁴ Idem., *Works*, 1: 508-536.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., 530-533.

that support the validity of the previous assertion, finally it ends with the confirmation of Christ's divine nature based upon an exact replication of the knowledge of God residing in the person of Christ.⁶¹⁶ However, for some reason, Charnock circumscribes the previous application only to the instruction about the divinity of Christ, notwithstanding the same type of application could have been used to make an instructive case about the divinity of the Holy Spirit.⁶¹⁷

The chief point under the practical uses of the doctrine of the divine wisdom emphasises the fact that sin of any sort is detrimental towards the wisdom of God for it disfigures the *imago Dei*, which in turn means that by ruining humankind's original concreated perfection 'all reproaches of God must imply either a weakness or unrighteousness in God. If unrighteousness, his holiness is denied; if weakness, his wisdom is blemished.'⁶¹⁸ Besides, sin attacks the wisdom of God by rejecting the content of the divine command. The derision of the divine law implies a disregard for divine wisdom as far as the commands of God, who is *summa ratio* [highest reasoning], springs forth divine *intelligentia*, the principle whereby the content of the moral law is established.⁶¹⁹ In particular, sin defaces divine wisdom by inserting modes of worship that have not been instituted by God. By enforcing non-sanctioned modes of adoration, the creature is assigning to himself a prerogative that

⁶¹⁶ See *ibid.*, 508-512.

⁶¹⁷ Whatever the explanation for this omission could be, it is not the result of a heterodox view of the Godhead. An investigation at Charnock's theology will easily indicate a commitment to classical Trinitarian theology.

⁶¹⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 79.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*

belongs exclusively to God and by doing so he is neglecting the divine wisdom that frames the forms of worship authorised in Scripture.⁶²⁰ Similarly, the neglect of the means instituted by God for the sake of the church entails a denial of divine wisdom characterised by the improper administration of the sacraments, by the omission of prayer, and by the censuring of God's revelation and providence (including the prescription of modes of acting to God).⁶²¹ Finally, murmuring against God's designs, pride of spirit for the offices God has given to the believer, and distrust in the divine promises confabulate a serious affront to the wise acting of God in the government of his creation.⁶²²

⁶²⁰ Ibid., 82-83.

⁶²¹ Ibid., 83-85.

⁶²² Ibid., 85.

CHAPTER VI

QUID SIT DEUS: CHARNOCK ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE SECOND ORDER (II)

Introduction: Divine Perfections *per voluntas Dei*

This chapter contains a description of the attributes of the second order that are related to manifestations of the divine will. In addition to the attributes treated in the previous chapter, the divine perfection *per voluntas Dei* account for a faculty psychology that is broadly covered by the so-called attributes of the divine life.⁶²³ It is worth noting that the order of exposition found in the published collections of Charnock's theological sermons on the divine attributes is determined by the same pattern of classification found in many of the scholastic material discussed in this monograph.

Power (*De Potentia Dei*)

Episcopal theologian Katherine Sonderegger has noted, in what may be considered an oddity in contemporary theological circles, the importance of using scholastic distinctions for achieving a better understanding of the doctrine of divine omnipotence.⁶²⁴ While Sonderegger's remarks refer to the work of the medieval schoolmen, particularly to that of Thomas Aquinas'

⁶²³ Muller, *PRRD*: 3:219-220.

⁶²⁴ Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1, the Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 175.

Summa Theologiae, her assessment would have equally stood had she chosen any representative of the Reformed orthodox tradition.⁶²⁵

Although Sonderegger finds some of the distinctions made by the medieval schoolmen necessary and useful, her overall estimation of scholastic theology is rather negative. Sonderegger complains that the notion of divine power in scholastic theology ends up being 'highly abstract and all too tame'.⁶²⁶ It is worth noting that in Charnock's discourse on divine power, the shortcomings brought by the highly speculative nature that prevailed in certain late medieval theologies are counterbalanced by a careful qualification of the terms involved in the most controversial scholastic distinctions; in addition, Charnock deliberately emphasises the *usus practicus*, namely, the practical use of the doctrine, whose subjective application served as a buffer against the objectivistic idiom proper of the scholastic tradition.⁶²⁷

Charnock grounds the doctrinal exposition of his discourse on the power of God in the book of Job (26.14): *Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?*⁶²⁸ In Charnock's reading of the text, Job defends the

⁶²⁵ An investigation of the primary sources indicates that the Reformed scholastics were as adept as their medieval forerunners in applying the scholastic method for theological purposes. Like their predecessors, the Reformed divines were prone to define and distinguish different concepts in their systems while exhibiting a resolution for arranging the doctrinal exposition of the Christian faith in different *loci*. See Van Asselt and Rouwendal, "Distinguishing and Teaching."

⁶²⁶ Sonderegger, *The Doctrine of God*: 174.

⁶²⁷ Cf. Muller, *PRRD*: 3:524-525.

⁶²⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 99. The exegesis of the text includes a contextual analysis of the verses immediately preceding verse 24. As Bildad's remarks in chapter 25 are insufficient for expounding the power of God, Job seizes the opportunity to correct his opponent by

magnificence and pervasiveness of the power of God by an argument in crescendo that begins by observing the activity of divine power in the lower parts of the earth (i.e. hell) and by acknowledging the works of God in creation, including his acts of sustenance and providence.⁶²⁹ Charnock identifies three main features from the text: (1) that the power of God is evidenced by the works of creation and providence, (2) that creation and providence do not exhaust divine power, which in scholastic idiom is to say that the *potentia Dei* extends beyond what is observable in the *opera Dei ad extra*. This is so, since the power residing in God is, *per* divine simplicity, as infinite as the divine essence and, (3) that the power of God transcends human understanding.⁶³⁰

In developing the doctrinal formulae for this particular discourse, Charnock asserts initially that power is a necessary property of the divine nature: '[I]t is a certain and undoubted truth, that power is essential to the divine nature', so essential that 'no acts of mercy, or justice, or wisdom can be exercised by him [God] without power.'⁶³¹ Charnock claims that there is such relation of reciprocity and indissolubility between God and his power (*δυναμις*) that the latter might be taken as a designation of God.⁶³² This is significant for a rejection of the power of God would simultaneously entail a

offering a more comprehensive explanation (verses 5-13). *Ibid.*, 99-103. Though Charnock makes one ancillary reference to Bildad's discourse in Job (25). *Ibid.*

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, 100-102.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁶³² *Ibid.*

denial of God's very existence: 'If we imagine him restrained in his power, we imagine him limited in his essence.'⁶³³

Charnock unfolds the content regarding the nature of divine power by indicating the importance of discriminating between power in terms of 'strength' and 'authority'.⁶³⁴ The point here is to make a case for the theological suitability of the notion that stresses divine strength when one ascribes power to God. While strength is intrinsically necessary in any display of power, it is possible to exercise power without authority, as in tyrannical forms of government, just as to have authority while being void of power, as in the case of an exiled king.⁶³⁵ Consequently, Charnock defines divine power as 'that ability and strength whereby he [God] can bring to pass whatsoever he please, whatsoever his infinite wisdom can direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of his will can resolve.'⁶³⁶

Elsewhere, Charnock offers a succinct definition of divine omnipotence that is demarcated by the doctrinal content of divine simplicity as it correlates the power of God, the divine essence, and the divine operations out of the Godhead: '[O]mnipotence is nothing but the divine essence efficacious *ad extra*.'⁶³⁷ Other scholars have correctly noted that simplicity functions, not

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 105.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 106.

⁶³⁷ Ibid., 110. Maastricht concurs: *Ex dictis tandem, potentia Dei est: 1. ipsa eius essentia, seu deitas potens; in Deo enim, non est res & res* [From [what] has been said at length, the power of God is: 1. God's very essence, or mighty deity; for in God there is not thing and thing.] In Maastricht, *Theoretico-Practica*: II/20, xiv; p.211.

only as a key to explain the relation amongst the divine attributes and the attributes in relation to the divine essence, but as a conceptual tool to demonstrate divine omnipotence.⁶³⁸ Consequently, Charnock expounds on a theological axiom wherein simplicity, unity, and power are integrated to say: ‘Where there is the greatest simplicity, there is the greatest unity; and where there is the greatest unity, there is the greatest power.’⁶³⁹

By identifying divine simplicity as the foundational principle for understanding the divine attributes, Charnock can make other significant theological and metaphysical claims. For instance, he asserts that the power of God must be of an infinite nature considering that the divine being is essentially infinite: ‘Therefore, since the essence of God is unquestionably infinite, his power of acting must be so also. His power... is one and the same with his essence.’⁶⁴⁰ It is worth noting that the foregoing assertion follows from the metaphysical dictum *operationes sequuntur essentiam*, an explanation of being affirming that acts are anteceded by being, from which Charnock concludes, following Aquinas, that just as every ontological limitation (essence) would result in a limitation of power (act), an infinite ontology would imply a boundless power to act.⁶⁴¹ Charnock clarifies that the basis upon one can argue for the infinitude of divine power must not be the objects of God’s power since they are finite; instead, the argument should rely

⁶³⁸ Lee, "Theology and Piety," 170-171.

⁶³⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 124.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.* Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, edited and translated by Thomas Gilby, 61 vols., vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 1a. 25, 2; p. 156-161.

upon God's ability to produce an infinite number of individual and distinct effects.⁶⁴²

The aforementioned definition comprises some significant qualifications aiming at presenting a view of divine power that is both biblically responsible and theologically sound.⁶⁴³ Charnock wants to avoid a philosophical overemphasis on the understanding of divine power whereby the content of the doctrine is primarily dictated by metaphysical concerns rather than by what Scripture reveals, this while presenting a definition that is internally coherent and doctrinally persuasive. For Charnock, though to act is to be powerful, divine power is not primarily an act but the capacity to bring a thing into act since '[p]ower notes the principle of the action, and therefore is greater than the act itself.'⁶⁴⁴ In other words, the case for divine power does not require of the act of creation to be proven considering that God's power (i.e., his strength) is eternal in duration and hence it must precede the existence and the motions of everything but God.

Charnock also links the notion of divine freedom and that of divine infinity to say that the operations of God are executed in complete independence from external necessity.⁶⁴⁵ To avoid the problems derived from extreme forms of medieval voluntarism, Charnock qualifies the primacy of

⁶⁴² Charnock, *Works*, 2: 111-112.

⁶⁴³ For a succinct summary of the conceptual problems involved in defining divine power (i.e., omnipotence), consult Gijsbert van den Brink, "Capable of Anything? The Omnipotence of God," in *Understanding the Attributes of God*, ed. Gijsbert van den Brink and Marcel Sarot (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999), 148-158.

⁶⁴⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 106.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1113-114.

God's will in the operations of divine power. In this context, the freedom of God is not to be conceived as if the divine will arbitrarily decides to actualise *A* instead of *-A*, but rather it signifies that God freely resolves to execute his will to determine *A* instead of *-A* in *concurrence* with the perfection of his entire nature: 'His power is not the rule of his will, but the will is the disposer of his power, according to the light of his infinite wisdom, and other attributes that direct his will'.⁶⁴⁶

Charnock argues that the power of God is infinite in regard of action, signifying with it that God could have created an infinite number of objects in addition to those he has created. This claim seeks to underscore two aspects concerning divine power: (1) that God owns the ability to create a numberless set of objects and, more importantly, (2) that God does not operate at the level of exhausting his power completely.⁶⁴⁷ Incidentally, this means that the power of God does not require of any instrumental (secondary) cause to be effective in the execution of his will. The assigning of different levels of excellency to creation suggests a distinction between infinite power as *extensivè*, that is, power in relation to the number of objects that can be created, and infinite power as *intensivè*, namely, power in regards to the mode of operation.⁶⁴⁸ Besides, divine power is said to be (*per* divine simplicity) infinite in regards to duration since power must fit the eternal existence of the divine essence; thus,

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., 114.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁸ Cf. Martin Becanus, *Summa Theologiae Scolasticae*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Paris: Francisci Iacquin, 1622), XVII/iii, 3; pp. 403-404. Also Aquinas, *On the Power of God: Quaestiones Disputatae De Potentia Dei*, trans. English Dominican Fathers (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1932), 1. 2; p. 12.

God's power must have no beginning, no end, and cannot be liable to change.⁶⁴⁹ The foregoing account of divine power is better comprehended by considering Charnock's use of the scholastic distinction between the *potentia absoluta Dei* (absolute power of God) and the *potentia ordinata Dei* (ordained power of God).⁶⁵⁰

From the early stages of the Middle Age, theologians were compelled to reassess previous accounts concerning the nature of divine power as they were not satisfied with defining omnipotence exclusively in light of the divine will, that is, to describe omnipotence as God's ability to do what he wills.⁶⁵¹ This hesitation to accept such limitations in the concept of divine power paved the way for inquiries on whether omnipotence should be understood as surpassing the divine will or as being limited by it.⁶⁵² In addressing this problem, medieval theologians came up with a conceptual distinction within the single power of God; on the one hand, they introduced the notion of *potentia dei absoluta* to denote the ability to effect whatsoever God chooses to do or, more succinctly, to describe divine power regardless of the divine choice; on the other hand, they identified the *potentia dei ordinata* to signify the power bound to the act of creation and sustenance of the universe vis-à-vis

⁶⁴⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 117.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁶⁵¹ For a description of the absolute-ordained distinction during the Middle Ages and its reception during the Reformation, consult Gijsbert van den Brink, *Almighty God: A Study of the Doctrine of Divine Omnipotence*, Studies in Philosophical Theology (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993), 68-92.

⁶⁵² 'Surpassing', not in the sense of being ontologically superior to the divine will, but as power (omnipotence) not being exhausted by the things actualised by the divine will.

the dictates of the divine will.⁶⁵³ There were some extreme cases during the late medieval period in which theologians such as Gabriel Biel pressed the notion of *potentia absoluta* to claim that God could have done things contrary to his nature had he willed to do so based on his omnipotence.⁶⁵⁴ These radical views prompted the negative reaction of the magisterial reformers. Calvin adamantly disdained the notion of *potentia absoluta* since he considered it a ‘profane’ speculation that turns God in an arbitrary lawgiver.⁶⁵⁵ In exegeting Calvin’s theology on this matter, scholars have debated whether the reformer must be interpreted as dismissing the concept of *potentia absoluta* in its entirety or whether he must be understood as rejecting, not the *potentia* distinction *per se*, but the fanciful speculations arising from it.⁶⁵⁶ Regardless of which interpretation is correct, it is worth noting that Charnock welcomed the *potentia* distinction not without carefully qualifying the meaning of the terms seeking to circumvent the abuses noted during the late medieval era,

⁶⁵³ Brink, *Almighty God*: 73. Cf. *Responsio* I in Aquinas, *ST*, 5: 1a. 25, 5; pp. 170-174. Though controversial for many, these distinctions should not be taken purely as rationalistic attempts to harmonize the power and the will of God. Thus, Barth correctly notes that ‘the distinction [*potentia absoluta* and *ordinata*] is simply a description of the freedom of the divine omnipotence.’ In Barth, *CD*: II/1, 539.

⁶⁵⁴ Brink, *Almighty God*: 83-84. van den Brink gives notice of a notorious case in the 1330 at Oxford where some followers of William of Ockham attempted to make a case for the ‘hypothesis of the divine lie’ based upon a radical version of the *potentia absoluta*. In *ibid.*, 84-85.

⁶⁵⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*: III. xxiii. 2; 2:950. In his essay on Calvin and the *potentia absoluta*, Steinmetz notes three other contexts, besides the one cited from the *Institutes*, wherein the reformer rejects the notion of absolute power: miracles, the goodness of providence, and predestination. For more, consult David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 45-48.

⁶⁵⁶ The former interpretation is defended by Steinmetz in *Idem.*, *Calvin in Context*: 48-52. whereas the latter is advocated in Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 324-333. Though his concerns are not exactly those of Calvin’s, Cocceius exemplifies one exceptional case amongst the Reformed orthodox in rejecting the notion of absolute power: *Neque enim agnoscimus potentiam absolutam, quae separet a rerum possibilium essentia eorum respectum ad finem*. [Indeed, we do not admit the absolute power, which it may divide the essence of possible things with respect to their end.] In *Summa*: III/ix, 75; p. 154.

particularly those promoted by some forms of nominalism. Equally significant is the reappraisal of the *potentia* distinction during the Post-Reformation era, which led some systems (Maccovius' *Loci communes*) to conclude that the assessment of Calvin on this matter was incorrect.⁶⁵⁷

Firstly, Charnock describes the *potentia absoluta* as the 'power whereby God is able to do that which he will not do, but is possible to be done'.⁶⁵⁸ This definition is tempered by saying that the object of such power includes all things possible, that is, things that do not entail a contradiction, not only a logical level, but also things that are congruent with the nature and the perfections of God.⁶⁵⁹ What is significant to note is that these qualifications sought to prevent the abuses concerning omnipotence previously indicated: Charnock explains: 'Some things are repugnant to the nature and perfections of God, as it is impossible for his nature to die and perish, impossible for him, in regard of truth, to lie and deceive'.⁶⁶⁰ While the use of the term 'impossible' denotes a restriction in the things God can do, these impossibilities do not entail a limitation of the divine nature, precisely because by not being able to do things that are repugnant to his own nature God is said to be omnipotent.⁶⁶¹ Charnock presents a final qualification whereby he explains that the things that are possible for God to do are possible in nature signifying with it that their transition from possibility to reality does not depend on an intrinsic

⁶⁵⁷ Velde, *The Doctrine of God*: 237, n. 235.

⁶⁵⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 105.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 105-106.

⁶⁶¹ Turretin, *Institutes*: III/21, ix; 1:246.

strength residing on the thing itself but on the power of God given that possibilities lack of ontological substance prior to their actualisation and thus, as mere possibilities, they are void of any intrinsic strength.⁶⁶²

Secondly, Charnock defines the *potentia ordinata* as ‘the power whereby God doth that which he hath decreed to do, that is, which he hath ordained or appointed to be exercised.’⁶⁶³ Correspondingly, Charnock adds to the prior definition that the object of such power consists of all things that have been divinely ordained to be, that is, things that are or will be actualised according to the eternal determination of God’s decree and since the divine decree is immutable in what it has determined to accomplish, the nature of the things that belong to the decree are by definition necessary rather than merely possible.⁶⁶⁴ While Charnock adheres to the absolute-ordained distinction, he rejects the conclusion that it implies a form of composition within the power of God: ‘[Absolute and ordinate] are not distinct powers, but one and the same power: his ordinate power is a part of his absolute’.⁶⁶⁵ It is noteworthy that Charnock believes that the *potentia* distinction is directly supported by Scripture’s testimony from which he interprets Matt. (26.53-54) as containing a clear reference to the absolute (v. 53) and the ordained (v. 54) power of God.⁶⁶⁶ So, it can be said that Charnock does not restrict the discussion to the theoretical; instead, he seeks to explain the relation between

⁶⁶² Charnock, *Works*, 2: 106.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.

the absolute and the ordinate power of God by using some aspects of the incarnation as a biblical motif in an effort to make the topic accessible to his audience: ‘The absolute power of God could have prepared a body for Christ as glorious as that he had after his resurrection, but that had not been agreeable to the end designed in his humiliation; and therefore God acted most perfectly by his ordinate power in giving him a body that wore the livery of our infirmities.’⁶⁶⁷

In the end, Charnock ends up framing his understanding of the *potentia* distinction in concomitance with other features of the divine nature, viz., freedom, will, and wisdom.⁶⁶⁸ This is to say that the *potentia dei absoluta*, by being essential for the divine nature, is necessary for God whereas the *potentia dei ordinata*, by depending on the divine will, depends on God’s freedom for its execution. Contrary to the claims made by late medieval nominalists and also in contradistinction with seventeenth-century Cartesianism, whose understanding of divine omnipotence based upon the *potentia absoluta* was of an undefeatable power only restrained by the divine will in isolation from the remaining divine attributes, Charnock offers a more stable view of divine power whereby omnipotence and freedom are preserved under the control of the guiding principle of divine knowledge: ‘So that the power of God is a perfection (as it were) subordinate to his understanding and will, to execute the results of his wisdom and the orders of his will; to his wisdom, as directing, because he works skilfully; to his will, as moving and

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., 116.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., 106.

applying, because he works voluntarily and freely.’⁶⁶⁹ Thereby, divine omnipotence know of no restrictions besides those imposed by the divine wisdom and the divine will, that is, in ordering and guiding the execution of the *opera Dei*.

Charnock is cognisant of the problems that arise from taken the power of God in isolation from the remaining perfections of the divine being, that is, simply as a pure force. Thus, Charnock offers several reflections seeking to explain the manners wherein omnipotence, though infinite and boundless *in se* and *per se*, is exercised in concurrence with God’s wisdom and God’s will.⁶⁷⁰ Significantly, Charnock does not see these considerations as an essential restriction to the power of God, but as necessary qualifiers to avoid imputations of weakness to the divine nature. These limitations are better understood as impossibilities in the things themselves rather than deficiencies in God.⁶⁷¹ For example, God cannot make a contradiction true for this would falsify God himself or, in other words, divine omnipotence cannot make *A* and *-A* simultaneously true. Given that a contradiction is a logical impossibility (i.e., a nonentity), it cannot be the object of God’s power for it has only possible things (i.e., entities) as its objects. These contradictions extend beyond the realm of logic and include things that entail a detriment to the being and the perfections of God. Following Augustine, Charnock states that God is not susceptible to death for ‘God is almighty in doing what he will, not

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., 107.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid., 117-121.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., 117.

in suffering what he will not', to which he later adds, 'He cannot will any unrighteous thing, and therefore cannot do any unrighteous thing.'⁶⁷²

As it has been noted, Charnock describes God in scholastic terms as 'a pure act, nothing but vigour and act', which is equivalent to say that God is full and unrestrictive actuality—*actus purissimus*.⁶⁷³ By being pure act, God is said to have no *potentia passiva* (passive potency), which is to say that no unrealised power resides in the divine being or that God is not subject to be acted upon by an outward potency. Instead, *potentia* is said to be always *activa* (active) in God, a potency that is perpetually in act. Accordingly, God's acts of power demands no effort for his power is his ability to act, but since God is *actus purus* he is in perfect completion of himself and therefore it is concluded that, '[a]s he [God] can do all things possible in regard of the object, he can do all things easily in regard of the manner of acting.'⁶⁷⁴

Predictably, Charnock understands divine power to be archetypal and an essential property of the divine being. This is to say, on the one hand, that divine power is derived from nothing but God himself and, alternatively, that the power of God is identical to the divine essence. In view of these exclusive features of the *potentia Dei*, Charnock stresses the distinction between divine and creaturely power: creatures can exercise power in great measure, yet their power is always ectypal and derivative whereas divine power is archetypal and

⁶⁷² Ibid., 118-119.

⁶⁷³ Ibid., 1: 356. While Charnock does not deploy a technical explanation concerning the differences between active and passive potency, he seems to be cognisant of the distinction. For instance, Charnock writes: 'To die is not an active, but a passive, power; a defect of a power.' In *ibid.*, 2: 118.

⁶⁷⁴ *Idem.*, *Works*, 2: 107.

intrinsic to the being of God. Charnock acknowledges the massive power contained in nature and in secondary causes, yet he also notes that this form of power is unable to account for the act of creation. A thing can be multiplied or transformed by the forces of nature but its existence can only be attributed to the power of God. To prove this point, Charnock notes that the word translated as ‘creation’ in Gen. (1.1) is never ascribed to secondary causes but to God alone.⁶⁷⁵ In this context, divine power, as omnipotence, is said to be a non-communicable property given that ‘[t]o be omnipotent is to be essentially God.’⁶⁷⁶ The Christological implications of the foregoing claim serve Charnock to reject the Lutheran view of the *communicatio idiomatum*. Had the communication of the divine attributes been directly transmitted from the divine nature to the humanity of Christ, the latter would not be human but divine as the communication of the divine attributes implies the communication of the divine essence.⁶⁷⁷

That God is omnipotent is proven by appealing to the existence of creaturely power, the perfection and the simplicity of God, and by the reality of miracles.⁶⁷⁸ Interestingly, Charnock begins his case by pointing out to the testimony of Scripture as a preface for his case on divine omnipotence.⁶⁷⁹ First, omnipotence is observable in creation. Since divine power cannot be other

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., 128.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., 110.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., 121-125.

⁶⁷⁹ For Charnock, Scripture is full of instances whereby the greatness of God’s power is noted (e.g., Ps (65.3), Gen. (18.14), Num. (11. 22-23), Dan (11.36), and Rom. (1.20) amongst others).

than archetypal and essential, all creaturely power needs to be ectypal and derived, which is to say that it is finite and endowed by a source of infinite and eternal power. Thus, Charnock:

The power of the Creator must far surmount the power of the creature, and must needs be infinite; for if it be limited, it is limited by himself or by some other; if by some other, he is no longer a Creator, but a creature; for that which limits him in his nature did communicate that nature to him; not by himself, for he would not deny himself any necessary perfection.⁶⁸⁰

Second, omnipotence is drawn from the perfection and the simplicity of God.⁶⁸¹ Since God is *actus purus*, he is fully actualised in himself and, thus, ontologically supreme; therefore, God must lack of nothing but himself to act for otherwise he would be essentially wanting, but this cannot be since such ontological weakness is antithetical to God's perfect nature.⁶⁸² Lastly, God's providential acts in the form of miracles are another reason to believe that God is omnipotent. In Charnock's theology of providence, a miracle entails an action that does not rely on natural means for its causation suggesting with it that miracles are not natural but supernatural occurrences that presuppose the operation of a power capable of transcending the physical laws established for the natural order.⁶⁸³ Furthermore, while arguing that Christ's ability to perform miracles is due to the power endowed by his divine nature, Charnock points out that creation in general and humanity in particular is incapable to

⁶⁸⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 122.

⁶⁸¹ For an analysis on divine simplicity and its significance in Charnock's understanding of the power of God, see pp. 180-182 above in this study.

⁶⁸² Charnock, *Works*, 2: 122-123.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, 124.

do the supernatural since ‘God “alone doth wonders,” Ps. cxxxvi. 4, excluding every other cause from producing such things.’⁶⁸⁴

Charnock endeavours to explain how the divine attributes are manifested in God’s works *ad extra*.⁶⁸⁵ Biblically, the textual evidence supporting the manifestation of divine power in the act of creation is indisputable. Doctrinally, Charnock reasons that just as the framing of the world takes precedence over its sustenance and governance, then divine power precedes wisdom and kindness in the order of creation: ‘It was by this name of Power and Almighty that he was known in the first ages of the world, not by his name Jehovah: Exod. vi. 3, “And I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them.”’⁶⁸⁶ The fact that God created the universe *ex nihil* [out of nothing] demonstrates that a power greater than the power required for the sustenance the universe exists.⁶⁸⁷ This does not mean, however, that as greater the power demanded to accomplish an action, greater is the effort required for God to actualise it. On the contrary, God does not require of secondary or instrumental causes to execute his will in creating the universe, rather he creates the universe out of nothing without any exertion: ‘He does not hereby put his omnipotence to any stress... But in creation there is nothing necessary

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., 125.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., 125-164.

⁶⁸⁶ As it might be expected, Genesis (1) becomes the *locus classicus* to be informed about the creative acts of the almighty God of Israel. Charnock demonstrates his exegetical skills by noting that the Hebrew text refers to God by using a name of power in no less than thirty-two times in the first chapter of Genesis. See *ibid.*, 126. Additionally, Charnock would later use Genesis 1 (*ibid.*, 129-131.) to support his assertion about God requiring no instrumental cause to bring the universe into existence.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., 128.

to God's bringing forth a world but a simple act of his will, which is both the principal cause and instrumental.'⁶⁸⁸

Just as the providence of God in governing creation necessitates the guiding principle of divine wisdom and the determinative participation of the divine will, providence also requires the influence of his power for its execution. The power of God is manifested by different acts of divine providence that comprise the modes of natural, moral, and gracious (judicial) government.⁶⁸⁹ The point in describing these modes of divine government is to indicate that the governance of creation would not be possible apart from the assistance of divine power. Charnock notes, for instance, that creation lacks the ability, in and by itself, of self-preservation as far as created things came into being through the agency of an external act of power (i.e., divine *fiat*).⁶⁹⁰ Similarly, had not been for the intervention of God, manifested through the execution of his will, the physical and moral impact of evil, in any of its manifestations, would be worse than it is. Though a detailed discussion about the problem of evil in Charnock's theology of the divine attributes takes place elsewhere, it suffices to note here that the restrictions God imposes on evil are not explained by a passive determination of the divine will. This signifies that in permitting and limiting the effects of sin, God exercises his Lordship—*via*

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., 125, 130.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., 133-145. The natural government of the universe stands for the preservation and the multiplication of all things, and for leading all things to their proper ends. The moral government involves the enabling and/or the restoration of the human faculties for restraining evil and moral corruption. Finally, the gracious and judicial government concerns the deliverance of the church and the divine judgements.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 134. Charnock is consistent in the way he understands the metaphysics of being vis-à-vis the concept of self-preservation. Cf. Ibid., 1: 160-161.

divine power—over creation, yet without causing harm to his own holiness: ‘The holiness of God could never intend sin as sin. But the wisdom of God foreseeing it, and decreeing to permit it [executing his will], intended the making it subservient to his own honour.’⁶⁹¹ Furthermore, just as divine power is responsible for restraining the devastating power of evil, power is also the strength that enables the moral faculties of a rational agent to do what it is righteous before God, thus: ‘The restraint of the destructive qualities of the creatures argues as great a power as the change of their nature, yea, and a greater.’⁶⁹²

Redemption is the last item manifesting the activity of divine power in God’s works *ad extra*. For Charnock, redemption is God’s ‘most admirable work’ considering that it requires both the ability to recreate and, unlike creation, the strength to defeat the stratagems of the devil and the opposing forces of sin and death.⁶⁹³ More significantly, redemption demands the offering of a perfect sacrifice for the satisfaction of God’s justice, so this section begins with a point that it is decidedly Christological in content: Christ is identified as the power of God (1 Cor. 1.24).⁶⁹⁴ Accordingly, Charnock explains that the power of God makes itself evident in the supernatural conception of the Son, the agent of redemption (Luke 1.35). It is through the infinite power of God the Holy Spirit that the humanity of Christ is framed

⁶⁹¹ *Idem.*, *Works*, 1: 29.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*, 2: 144. This includes the manifestation of divine power in the execution of God’s punitive justice.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 145.

and united to the divinity of the eternal Word.⁶⁹⁵ That redemption is an act of which only God should be thought as its efficient cause is highlighted by defining Mary's role in the conception of Christ as instrumental. Her participation is passive in disposition not active in power: 'The matter [the conception of Christ] was natural, but the manner of conceiving was in supernatural way, above the methods of nature.'⁶⁹⁶ The second act of power in the person redeeming is the union between the human and the divine natures in the person of Christ. While divine wisdom is responsible for the design of the incarnation, it is through the agency of divine power that such union becomes possible; so, in this manner, it is correct to say that the incarnation is indeed an act of divine power.⁶⁹⁷

Additionally, the power of God is also evident in the publication, the propagation, and the application of the doctrine of redemption.⁶⁹⁸ The fact that the Christian *kerygma*, whose content is contrary to common reason and goes against the habits of the world, is capable of overcoming the sinfulness of the human heart points to something preternatural to explain the sinner's acceptance of the gospel: 'How impossible was it that a crucified Lord and a crucifying doctrine should be received in the world, without the mighty operation of a divine power upon the hearts of men!'⁶⁹⁹ Finally, the

⁶⁹⁵ Charnock calls Christ's conception and the hypostatic union, the first and second acts of power in the person redeeming. In *ibid.*, 146, 148.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 148. Charnock expands on some theological details regarding the hypostatic union, including the terms of the union, the relation between simplicity and incarnation, and the implications of the incarnation in relation to divine impassibility. See *ibid.*, 147-151.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 151-164.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 154. The power of God is also manifested in the efficiency whereby the gospel is disseminated. Interestingly, Charnock contrasts the means whereby the gospel was

manifestation of divine power in the application of redemption is explained by discussing three features resulting from redemption: the planting of grace, the forgiveness of sin, and the preservation of the gift of grace.⁷⁰⁰ Charnock recognises the presence of divine power in the proclamation of the good news and while the gospel is explained as the instrumental cause that brings a sinner into a state of saving grace, it is the ‘almightiness of God’ that which is ultimately singled out as the efficient principle in prompting the sinner to recognise his moral decadence.⁷⁰¹

For Charnock, divine power is conspicuous in God’s prerogative to forgive the creature’s sins. In this case, the power of God excels other instances since it is exercised primarily to control the execution of judgement demanded by the violation of God’s moral law: ‘God was to exercise a power over himself, to answer his justice and pardon the sinner, as well as a power over the creature to reduce the runaway rebel.’⁷⁰² Finally, Charnock argues that just as the power of God is manifested in the sustenance of creation, divine power is equally established in the sustenance of the repented sinner. The former understood as an act of power for the preservation of creation whereas the latter thought as an act of power for the preservation of saving grace.⁷⁰³

propagated with the manner Islam disseminated its message: ‘Mahomet’s horse hath trampled upon the heads of men, to imprint an *Alcoran* in their brains’. In *ibid.*, 155.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 158-164.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, 162.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*, 163.

Holiness (*De Sanctitate Dei*)

Charnock's in-depth treatment of the holiness of God is significant in at least two correlated ways. On the one hand, it indicates that the Reformed scholastics were concerned with more than the so-called metaphysical attributes of God (i.e., simplicity, eternity, immutability, omniscience, etc.).⁷⁰⁴ Alternatively, it illustrates the centrality of the notion of divine holiness in Charnock's understanding of the divine nature.⁷⁰⁵

Exodus (15.11) is the biblical text supporting Charnock's discourse on the holiness of God, *Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders*. Charnock submits two doctrinal points prefacing the analysis ahead: (1) the mercies and the judgements of God are equally worth of praise, and (2) divine holiness is a glorious perfection of God, a name given in Scripture that denotes the essential purity of the being of God.⁷⁰⁶ Though (1) may be connected to (2) in relation to the holiness of God, it is the latter proposition that gets Charnock's attention. That Scripture depicts holiness as one of the names by which God is known, that is, the 'Holy One', indicates that this name is more than a majestic title, it denotes that God is naturally 'pure and unmixed light, free from all

⁷⁰⁴ This is consistent with Charnock's methodological commitment to Scripture as the epistemic foundation (*principium cognoscendi*) for doctrinal formulation. For 'Methodological Considerations' in Charnock's theology, see pp. 32-46 above in this study.

⁷⁰⁵ It is worth noting that, in contrast to the second-generation reformers, several of the Reformed orthodox (British and continental) included a separate discussion of the holiness of God. See, for example, John Owen, *Pneumatologia: Or; a Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit* (London: Nathaniel Ponder, 1674), V/i; pp. 498-520; Watson, *Body of Divinity*: 82-87; Johannes Cloppenburg, *Exercitationes Super Locos Communes Theologicos* (Amsterdam: Gerardus Borstius, 1684), II/iv; pp. 743-746; Mastricht, *Theoretico-Practica*: II/xix; pp. 202-209.

⁷⁰⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 188-190.

blemish in his essence, nature, and operations.⁷⁰⁷ In other words, God is said to be holy, not simply because the doctrine of divine holiness can be properly inferred from Scripture, but precisely because God names himself holy. This emphasis on God's self-revelatory name as the basis for speaking theologically about the divine attributes has been explicitly advocated in some contemporary dogmatic discussions on the holiness of God, significantly in an effort for confessing God rather than for categorising what sort of being he is.⁷⁰⁸

While Charnock affirms that all the divine perfections belong to God essentially, that is, God is what he is in himself, by himself and of himself, yet in this discourse one sees an impulse to communicate this point emphatically. Holiness is so intrinsic to God's nature that it would be less detrimental to deny his existence than to make of him an immoral deity by denying the purity of his nature.⁷⁰⁹ The significance of this attribute is further highlighted by qualifying holiness as 'superior' in relation to the other divine perfections.⁷¹⁰ The proposal of any hierarchical taxonomy within the divine attributes may suggest the idea of composition in the divine being, one manifested by a

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., 190.

⁷⁰⁸ Cf. John B. Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 37. Webster expands further on the significance of confessing God's name for doctrinal formulae, 'Theological talk of the divine attributes is... a repetition of God's name, a conceptual expansion of that name which does not add to it or go beyond it... the attributes of God are conceptual glosses of God's name, indicators of God's identity.' In *ibid.*

⁷⁰⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 191.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.

metaphysical disparity amid the perfections of God.⁷¹¹ However, Charnock frames his statement in the conditional form suggesting a hypothetical scenario limited by the clause ('If any'). Therefore, it would be better to read Charnock's sentence rhetorically, that is, as seeking to emphasise the unique ability of divine holiness to function as the ethical principle by which the other perfections of God operate. In support of this reading, one may point to Charnock's own words explaining the significance of holiness for the life of God: 'Without it [holiness] his patience would be an indulgence to sin, his mercy a fondness, his wrath a madness, his power a tyranny, his wisdom an unworthy subtilty... [Holiness is] the crown of all his attributes, the life of all his decrees, the brightness of all his actions.'⁷¹²

Holiness is understood in two ways: (1) negatively, holiness is the attribute by which God is completely free from all evil, (2) positively, holiness is that which denotes the perfect integrity of the divine nature.⁷¹³ This negative-positive explanation of holiness draws from the *via negativa* and from the *via positiva sive eminentiae*. Negatively defined, Charnock emphasises on the concept of God's freedom to explain the notion of divine holiness; in this sense, holiness has to do with God's ability to remain morally perfect or, as Charnock puts it, 'estranged from all shadow of evil, all

⁷¹¹ This interpretation is irreconcilable with Charnock's commitment to the doctrine of divine simplicity, which is illustrated repeatedly throughout the *Discourses* on the attributes of God.

⁷¹² Charnock, *Works*, 2: 193.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*, 194. Though the 1864 edition of the *Discourses* reads, '*negatively* [holiness] is a perfect and polluted freedom of all evil' (*Ibid.*), context and logic warrant the replacement of the word 'polluted' with any of its semantic antonyms.

imaginable contagion.⁷¹⁴ Positively understood, Charnock conceives the holiness of God as the concurrence between the sanctity of the divine being and the determinations of the divine will.

Conceptually, divine holiness is distinguished from divine righteousness: ‘Holiness is a perfection absolutely considered in the nature of God; righteousness, a perfection as referred to others, in his actions towards them and upon them.’⁷¹⁵ In this sense, divine righteousness is seen as an expression of divine holiness, a form of holiness primarily directed to the rational creature.⁷¹⁶ Additionally, holiness is understood as the perfection whereby God acts according to the moral excellency of his being, the attribute from which God expresses satisfaction and detestation for those acts he willingly approves or rejects.⁷¹⁷ While voluntaristic in tone, this emphasis on the divine will is tempered by noting the problems resulting from severing the divine essence from the divine will:

His holiness is not solely an act of his will, for then he might be unholy as well as holy, he might love iniquity and hate righteousness, he might then command that which is good, and afterwards command that which is bad and unworthy; for what is only an act of his will, and not belonging to his nature, is indifferent to him... But what is moral and good in its own nature is necessarily willed by God, and cannot be changed by him, because of the transcendence eminency of his nature and righteousness of his will.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., 194.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid. This is not the case for all the Reformed orthodox, however. Some conceived divine holiness and divine justice (righteousness) functionally the same perfection: ‘*Iustitia & sanctitas Dei est, qua Deus sine ulla iniquitate est omne quod est.*’ [It is the justice and the holiness of God, whereby God is all that he is without any iniquity] In Rijssen, *Compendium*: III/xxxviii; p. 33.

⁷¹⁶ This conviction is reiterated by Charnock in his discourse on the goodness of God, ‘The holiness of God is manifest in his rational creatures... his holiness beams most in his law’. In Charnock, *Works*, 2: 283.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid., 194.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid., 195.

That God is essentially holy is more than to assert that he is the holiest amongst others; holiness is not simply a steady representation of a moral quality, but ‘the essential glory of his[God’s] nature... the peculiar glory of his nature.’⁷¹⁹ God is essentially holy aside from creation, that is to say that God is necessarily holy as he does not require an object other than himself to be morally perfect, ‘the acts of those *ad intra*, or those within himself are necessary... Being infinitely holy, an act of holiness in infinitely loving himself must necessarily flow from this perfection.’⁷²⁰ Two significant points are to be highlighted here: (1) that divine holiness is just as necessary in God’s acts *ad extra* as it is in the operations *ad intra*, and (2) that holiness is necessary, not by simple inevitability, as the natural effect of a particular cause, but by a free inclination of the divine will.⁷²¹

From these considerations, it is concluded that God alone must be essentially holy considering that all creatures reflect some derived form of holiness. This means that holiness is accidental, not an essential property, in the human constitution implying that the being of the creature does not depend on being holy in contradistinction of God in whom holiness cannot be but an intrinsic property of the divine nature. Since holiness impedes God to approve evil in any of its forms (Hab. 1.13), it is also the basis upon which God freely decides to hate that which is sinful.⁷²² It would be an irremediable

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., 194, 195. Cf. John B. Webster, "The Holiness and Love of God," in *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 116-117.

⁷²⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 195.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² Ibid., 197-200.

contradiction to assert that a God loves evil for that would be tantamount to affirm that God hates himself as to the 'love of holiness cannot be without a hatred of everything that is contrary to it.'⁷²³ In this manner, the love of God for his own holiness becomes the basis upon which God loves the holiness residing in the creature (Psalm 11.7). This expression of love does not assume a divine obligation towards the creature but God's natural affection directed at all that represent his image in creation for 'He cannot but be delighted with a copy of himself; he would not have a holy nature, if he did not love holiness in every nature'.⁷²⁴ Finally, though Charnock holds to a robust notion of divine providence whereby God is said to order all things (including sinful actions) according to the eternal counsel of his will, God is not the cause of sin *efficaciter*, as if ordering it through an act of efficient causality, but *permissivè*, as ordering it through an act of active permission.⁷²⁵

By being holy, God is said to be unable to do at least three things with respect to human sin: (1) to demand unrighteousness from his creatures since that would be to command hate of himself, (2) to infuse evil directly into the creature's heart for that would entail a moral contradiction in God, one in which he would simultaneously delight in his own holiness while inspire impurity in others, and (3) to compel man to transgress his moral code for the

⁷²³ Ibid., 197.

⁷²⁴ Ibid., 200.

⁷²⁵ In *ibid.*, 1: 26. For a more detailed discussion of the problem of evil in Charnock's theology, see *ibid.*, 25-37. In accord with Charnock's explanation, the Reformed orthodox generally distinguished between God's government by *actio Dei (mediata & immediata)* and by *permissio divina*: the former in reference to God's effectual act of ordering the good through direct mediation or by means of secondary causes while the latter in relation to God's sovereign decision in allowing the creature to sin. Cf. Polanus, *Syntagma*: VI/vii; p. 346.

act of sinning involves a voluntary act, either by a direct act of the will or by the natural inclination of it.⁷²⁶ These limitations, instead of being defects of the divine nature, are indicators of possessing the most excellent power, the most comprehensive wisdom, and of being clad by the most perfect holiness.⁷²⁷

As a preface to the second division in this discourse, Charnock states that the blessedness of God (i.e., the possession of an eternal, infinite, self-sufficient, and imperturbable state of absolute delight and contentment) is that without which the holiness of God cannot be affirmed inasmuch as these facets—perfect blessedness and absolute holiness—are inseparable and necessary for the divine life.⁷²⁸ God would not be blessed forever were he not be absolutely holy, for a moral imperfection would render him miserable, but to say that God might be disturbed psychologically is to say that he is not entirely and relentlessly blessed.⁷²⁹

The scriptural references about the holiness of God are abundant and definite; God is called the *Holy One* repetitively in both the Old and the New Testaments. Accordingly, Charnock proposes three lines of reasoning in support for his case: (1) the concreated holiness of man, (2) the reality of an

⁷²⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 200-203.

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*, 203-204.

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*, 204, 309. Interestingly, Muller notes that contrary to their predecessors in the Middle Ages, the reformers did not discuss the blessedness of God (*beatitudo Dei*) as an independent attribute within the doctrinal exposition of the divine perfections, though they treated it exegetically. Meanwhile, the Reformed scholastics included the theme in their highly elaborated seventeenth-century doctrinal systems (*systema*), though they left it away from their less comprehensive pieces, such as the *compendia* and the *medullae* or, as in Charnock's case, the theological sermon (*sermo*). See Muller, *PRRD*: 3:371-372, 381-385, 541.

⁷²⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 204.

objective moral code, and (3) the judgement of creation.⁷³⁰ Since God cannot act in ways that are contrary to his own nature, he could not have created something that is intrinsically evil for that would be repulsive to his infinite goodness, that is, positively, that God only creates things that are inherently good.⁷³¹ This does not mean, however, that God created man necessary holy as if he had been indebted to act in this way towards the creature. Instead, God's decision to include holiness as part of the human constitution is the result of a sovereign act rooted in 'the excellency and diffusiveness of his own nature, and his own glory, the end for which he formed it, which would have been obscure, yea, nothing, without some degrees of his bounty.'⁷³² In this sense, the attribute of holiness is observable in man's moral constitution in his pre-lapsarian state as humankind bears the *imago Dei*. This is to say that man is originally holy (not naturally but by derivation) as creatures are endowed with holiness at the moment of creation.⁷³³

The holiness of God is also observable in the disclosure of the natural law.⁷³⁴ The existence of an objective and universal law to which all moral

⁷³⁰ Ibid., 203-215.

⁷³¹ Ibid., 196, 289. Though God creates man necessary holy, this is not based upon an obligation with the creature, but upon God's sovereign act rooted in 'the excellency and diffusiveness of his own nature, and his own glory, the end for which he formed it, which would have been obscure, yea, nothing, without some degrees of his bounty.'

⁷³² Ibid., 289.

⁷³³ Ibid., 192. After the Fall, holiness is restored in the creature to its original form once she has experienced the efficacious work of regeneration, see Idem., *Works*, 3: 87-88. Interestingly, while speaking about regeneration and the restoration of the *imago Dei*, Charnock singles out in the attribute of holiness by saying, 'This likeness to God consists principally in a likeness to him in holiness.' In *ibid.*, 128.

⁷³⁴ Charnock includes as part of his argument the ceremonial law. In this case, he explains, the law reveals the necessity of continual sacrifices for the atonement of sin and thus evidence the holiness of God. Idem., *Works*, 2: 208.

agents are accountable reveals the holiness of God insofar as the dictates of the divine law indicates God's complete abhorrence of sin, which is to say that the moral law forbids all forms of evil while concurrently prescribes all that is good.⁷³⁵ Besides, divine holiness is manifested in the eternal nature of the moral law given that the law does not rely on a temporal and mutable set of ethical demands, but on the eternal goodness of its precepts as they flow from the eternal will of God: 'Can he [God] ever abrogate the command of love to himself, without showing some contempt of his own excellency and very being?'⁷³⁶ In recompensing the righteous and penalising the evil doer, Charnock presupposes a notion of divine justice whereby God determines which deeds are to be rewarded or castigated according to the dictates of the moral law. In turn, the infallible execution of God's judicial ruling evidences the holiness of God as sovereign judge and ruler.⁷³⁷

Charnock's theology on divine punishment requires some particular attention considering the debate that took place during the High Orthodox era over what has been described as 'the necessity of God's judicial activity'.⁷³⁸ Briefly stated, the genesis of the dispute can be traced back to the theology

⁷³⁵ Ibid., 205.

⁷³⁶ Ibid., 208.

⁷³⁷ Ibid., 210-211.

⁷³⁸ Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 96. There were some Reformed orthodox divines such as William Twisse (1578-1646) and Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) who argued, from the concept of *potentia absoluta*, that God's vindictive justice was contradictory to divine freedom. William Twisse, *Vindiciae Gratiae, Potestatis, Ac Providentiae Dei...* (Amsterdam: Ioannem Ianssonium, 1632), I/ii, 25 (Digr. 8); pp. 198-207; Samuel Rutherford, *Disputatio Scholastica De Divina Providentia* (Edinburgh: Georgii Andersoni, 1649). For a detailed response to Twisse and Rutherford from a fellow Reformed theologian, consult John Owen, *The Works of Jown Owen*, 24 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1850-1855), 10:583-618. For a historical-theological account involved in the debate, consult Muller, *PRRD*: 3:490-496; Velde, *The Doctrine of God*: 219-230.

theologian Faustus Socinus (1539-1604), whose views on the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction included a rejection of God's avenging justice, a tenet that was later promoted and defended by his followers during the seventeenth-century.⁷³⁹ The Socinians argued that God's feats of *justitia vindicatrix* (vindictive or vindicatory justice), rather than essential to the nature of God, were temporal determinations of the divine will, that is, they were voluntary (not necessary) acts.⁷⁴⁰ In response, the Reformed orthodox claimed that God's judicial acts were intrinsic to divine justice (in its relational connection to the creature); thus, they conceive that punitive justice is: (1) essential to the nature of God and, (2) necessary for the satisfaction of creature's moral transgressions.⁷⁴¹ The necessity to punish evil is not the result of an external cause urging on God an irrevocable moral obligation. Instead, punitive justice emerges from God himself and it is performed freely and instinctively.⁷⁴²

Though Charnock does not address the affairs of the dispute directly, everything indicates that he would side with those who appraise Twisse's and Rutherford's views to be mistaken. By affirming that vindicatory justice is

⁷³⁹ For Socinus' arguments against justice as essential to God's nature, see Faustus Socinus, *De Iesu Christo Servatore*, Fausti Socini Senensis Opera Omnia in Duos Tomos Distincta (Amsterdam: s.n., 1656), I/i, III/iii-vi; pp. 121-124, 195-206.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., I/i, III/i; pp. 121-125, 186-188. Turretin summarizes Socinus's view by citing the latter in his *Praelectionis theologicae*, 'Nor is there any justice in God obliging him to punish sin altogether, from which he cannot abstain... That which is commonly called justice as opposed to mercy is not a quality of God, but only the effect of his will'. Quoted in Turretin, *Institutes*: III/19, viii; 236.

⁷⁴¹ Cocceius, *Summa*: III/x, 55-56, pp. 151; Leigh, *Treatise*: 92; Owen, *Works*: 10:499-500; Turretin, *Institutes*: III/19, 1:234-241; Watson, *Body of Divinity*: 87-93.

⁷⁴² Turretin explains that God's freedom in acting punitively is not freedom of indifference as if God were apathetic as to whether sin should be punished or not. In Turretin, *Institutes*: III/19, v-vi, 1:236. Cf. Owen, *Works*: 10:509-510. After proposing a series of arguments (in chapter II of *Dissertation on Divine Justice*), Owen believes he has proven his thesis, namely, that '*punitive justice is natural to God, and necessary to its egresses respecting sin.*' In *ibid.*, 10:512. (Italics in the original)

essential to God's nature, Charnock notes that the punishment of evil is necessary in compensating God's honour.⁷⁴³ Interestingly, Charnock clusters the notions of divine justice, satisfaction, punitive necessity, and redemption under one christological leitmotif, the necessity of Christ's death: 'That he[Christ] might suffer, justice was to impute our sins to him; that his sufferings might be advantageous, mercy and justice were to impute his sufferings to us.'⁷⁴⁴ What is more, by asserting that 'Divine holiness is the root of divine justice, and divine justice is the triumph of divine holiness', Charnock suggests that God's judicial actions are inescapable corollaries derived from the holiness and the justice of God.⁷⁴⁵ This is to say that holiness necessarily demands the execution of divine judgement when confronted with the wicked deeds of the creature: 'When men will not own the holiness of God in a way of duty, God will vindicate it in a way of [vindictive] justice and punishment.'⁷⁴⁶ Additionally, one may add that the evidence (here and elsewhere) indicates that Charnock avoids leaning towards a voluntarist understanding of God just as he takes some distance with the late medieval nominalism that remained influential in some post-Reformation theologies.

⁷⁴³ Charnock, *Works*, 5: 47.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 17. The significance of connecting the justice of God and the expiatory work of Christ is that it indicates that God's punitive acts are never in isolation from his mercy. See *Idem.*, *Works*, 4: 151.

⁷⁴⁵ *Idem.*, *Works*, 2: 209.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.* In this context, 'vindictive' (*vindicativa* or *vindicatrix*) should not be understood as rancorous or spiteful but as vindication, satisfaction, and punishment for the transgression of the law. John Owen, cognisant of this problem, explains in his *Dissertation on Divine Justice*, 'By "vindicatory justice," then, we are to understand that perfection of the Deity which disposes him to vindicate his right by punishing its violators.' In Owen, *Works*: 10:495, n. 2.

The restoration of the unbeliever is the last illustration manifesting the holiness of God. No other judicial action but the Son being the object of divine wrath demonstrates better God's detestation of sin.⁷⁴⁷ The death of Christ as satisfaction for the creature's sin is the pinnacle of the operations of divine justice and hence of the holiness of God, 'In this his purity did sparkle, and his irreversible justice manifested that all those that commit sin are worthy of death; this was the perfect index of his righteousness, Rom. iii. 29, that is, of his holiness and truth.'⁷⁴⁸

As noted before, Charnock includes a section specifically dedicated to defend the holiness of God in view of the existence sin and the reality of evil. The argumentation exhibits a notable degree of sophistication and an in-depth knowledge of the Reformed theological tradition and of other schools of thought of the time.⁷⁴⁹ The makeup of this unit includes eight individual propositions confronting a variety of objections against the holiness of God. All of these claims are countered by a combination of biblical, theological, logical, and philosophical arguments.⁷⁵⁰ It is worth noting that Charnock's *apologia* is prefaced by a recognition of the perils when, out of curiosity, one conjectures about the relation between the providence of God and the

⁷⁴⁷ Charnock underscores this point by noting the dignity of the person redeeming and the value of his holiness to make the sacrifice effective, the relation of the redeemer to the Father, and God's estimation of his own holiness in the punishment of sin. In Charnock, *Works*, 2: 212-214.

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 211-212. Charnock argues that the manifestation of divine holiness in God's detestation of sin is also apparent in the regeneration, the justification, and the glorification of the one redeemed. In *ibid.*, 214-215.

⁷⁴⁹ See 'Literary Sources' in Chapter II above in this study.

⁷⁵⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 215-242.

existence of sin in the world.⁷⁵¹ This admonition acknowledges the limitations of the human intellect and the inscrutability of the mind of God, yet it does so without precluding the intellectual aspiration of theology, viz., the procurement of ‘wisdom concerning divine matters’.⁷⁵²

One common claim surfaces in all of Charnock’s propositions, namely, that divine holiness is irreproachable. The reliability of this master assertion is tested by presuming a contradiction between the latter and a series of doctrinal principles: (1) the mutable nature of humanity, (2) the impossibility of fulfilling law, (3) the decree of reprobation, (4) the will of God and the entering of sin into the world, (5) divine concurrence in the material aspect of a sinful act, (6) God-given instruments exploited for unrighteous ends, (7) the withdrawal of grace, and (8) the divine command of things apparently contrary to nature. These objections are analysed according to their theological *loci*; consequently, the arguments found in (1-2) are treated under the leitmotif of theological anthropology, the claims made concerning (3-5) are understood to be generally related to the divine decree, whereas (6-8) are thought to fall under the *locus* of theology proper.⁷⁵³

⁷⁵¹ Ibid., 215-216. Interestingly, Charnock uses the term ‘curiosity’ to denote a disorder, not a virtue, of the intellect. For more on this approach, see Augustine, *Confessions: Volume II (Books 9-13)*, edited and translated by Carolyn J. B. Hammond, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016), X/v, 54-58; pp. 160-169. Cf. John B. Webster, “Curiosity,” in *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T&T Clark, 2012).

⁷⁵² Junius, *Treatise*: 143.

⁷⁵³ Though it would be possible to organize the propositions under a different theological pattern, this would not ultimately affect the outcome of this study as the chief advantage for the categorization above is methodological not analytical.

In what concerns the claims made in propositions (1-2), Charnock emphasises that man's concreated righteousness should not be taken as if he had been created essentially immutable. This is the case since immutability does not belong to the essential nature of the creature but that of the creator. On the contrary, moral agents were originally created susceptible to change and thus able to sin as they were endowed with liberty of choice, 'Man had an ability to stand, as well as a capacity to fall; he was created with a principle of acting freely, whereby he was capable of loving God as his chief good'.⁷⁵⁴ This means that, in his pre-lapsarian state, Adam was able to obey God law by means of the righteousness conferred to him during creation.⁷⁵⁵ However, Adam lost the ability to do what is good before God as a result of an ill motion of his will: Adam willed to sin.⁷⁵⁶ This original transgression brought with it, among other things, an impairment of the faculties of the human soul ever since, so now, in his unregenerate state, man does not know God nor he does want to know him.⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 217. Cf. 'Man by creation had a freedom of will to choose that which was really good, yet had a mutability, and could choose evil', in Idem., *Works*, 3: 211. Charnock's line of reasoning here resonates with Augustine's theological anthropology concerning Adam's moral state of innocence; in this condition, Augustine explains, the creature is *posse peccare, posse non peccare* (able to sin, able not to sin). Augustine, "On Reprimand and Grace," in *On the Free Choice of the Will, on Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, edited and translated by Peter King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 12.33 ; pp. 213-214. Following this Augustinian notion, similar accounts on Adam's moral pre-lapsarian state are common in the Reformed orthodox tradition. See, for instance Turretin, *Institutes*: VIII/1, i-vii ; 1:569-570; Wollebius, "Compendium," 65; Watson, *Body of Divinity*: 137.

⁷⁵⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 3: 223-224.

⁷⁵⁶ This is important for Charnock's apologia of divine holiness as he argues that man alone is responsible for losing his original righteousness, that is, his moral ability to keep the law. See *ibid.*, 224-225. Cf. Idem., *Works*, 2: 219-220.

⁷⁵⁷ Idem., *Works*, 3: 233; Idem., *Works*, 5: 465.

The gain of such theological anthropology is that it allows Charnock to maintain the holiness of God, even though it is objected that man's original mutability and his moral inability (after the Fall) to obey the law entail a contradiction. Charnock's response is grounded in the conviction that man was created good and free to choose, though not immutably, that which is righteous.⁷⁵⁸ In the first place, Charnock argues that man could not have been created evil since God, being good *per essentiam*, could not have created but that which is essentially good.⁷⁵⁹ Second, he asserts that freedom is intrinsic to the will just as the will is essential to being human: 'Liberty is of the essence of the will, and cannot be taken away without extinction of the nature of man'.⁷⁶⁰ What is more, man must act freely in all his operations if he is to be held responsible for his wrongdoings. If moral transgressions are not voluntary actions, but the effect of coercion or physical necessity, these would not be imputable to the person who acted them since these would be the result of a cause external to the transgressor.⁷⁶¹ Therefore, Charnock concludes, the holiness of God is not tarnished by the sins of a changeable creature neither by the creature's inability to keep the law or by the fact that God knew about this in advance. Still in possession of his original righteousness, man voluntarily neglected his ability not to sin; Adam disobeyed God not because the law was beyond his strength but because 'he neglected the dictates and resolves of his

⁷⁵⁸ *Idem.*, *Works*, 2: 217. Cf. *Idem.*, *Works*, 3: 211.

⁷⁵⁹ *Idem.*, *Works*, 2: 288-289.

⁷⁶⁰ *Idem.*, *Works*, 3: 211. See also p. 227 above in this study.

⁷⁶¹ See *ibid.*, 214.

own understanding.’⁷⁶² In his corrupted state, the creature no longer holds the ability not to sin; instead, he is not able not to sin; notwithstanding he still retains the essential freedom of the will. Charnock notes that ‘though man hath lost this liberty to good, he retains his freedom to the commission of sin, under the necessity of sinning’.⁷⁶³ This means that ever since the Fall the creature determines the will to sin, yet he does so freely given that a moral necessity does not impose a necessity that is inconsistent with the agent’s freedom.⁷⁶⁴ Neither does God’s foreknowledge of man’s failure in keeping the law presents a challenge to the holiness of God. The foregoing assertion is supported by two principles: (1) that divine foreknowledge is not the cause of the creature’s weakness, and (2) that divine foreknowledge does not coerce the will to act one way or another. In the first place, Charlock argues, the foreknowledge of God infallibly secures the occurrence of sin, but it does so without being the effective cause of it since ‘[n]othing is because God knows it, but because God wills it, either positively or permissively.’⁷⁶⁵ Second, God’s foreknowledge of Adam’s sin did not necessitate his will; instead, Adam voluntarily sinned according to the determination of his own will, ‘God’s foreknowledge did not make Adam guilty or innocent; whether God had

⁷⁶² Idem., *Works*, 2: 219. Like Turretin, Charnock’s understanding of freedom of the will comprises two features: choice and willingness. The former refers to acting upon the judgment of reason (‘practical judgement’) while the latter implies acting voluntarily. See Idem., *Works*, 3: 287. Cf. Turretin, *Institutes*: X/1, v; 1:662.

⁷⁶³ Charnock, *Works*, 3: 212.

⁷⁶⁴ Cf. Turretin, *Institutes*: X/2, viii; 1:663.

⁷⁶⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 1: 493. For Charnock on the permissive will of God with respect to sin, refer to the following discussion concerning proposition 4 below.

foreknown it or no, he was guilty by a free choice, and a willing neglect of his own duty.’⁷⁶⁶

Propositions (3-5) point out to the problems for the doctrine of God that arise from affirming the doctrine of divine providence vis-à-vis the existence of sin. Particularly, the integrity of divine holiness is questioned when thought in allusion to sin and the latter’s relation to the decree of reprobation, the will of God, and divine concurrence.⁷⁶⁷ The first protestation refers to an apparent injustice on God’s part in his dealings with the reprobate, how a just God can irredeemably condemn someone from eternity? In the second place, Charnock faces the problem posed by the recognition of the existence of sin, on the one hand, and the sovereign will of God, on the other. More precisely, the dilemma lies in explaining how the holiness of God remains unstained given that sin could not have been without the resolve of the divine will. Finally, since Christian theology asserts that there is a concurrence between God (first cause) and the creature (secondary cause) with respect to sinful acts, God is imputed with being the provenance of sin.

Charnock’s response begins in scholastic style, that is, by providing a precise definition of the meaning of reprobation. Thus, in its first sense, he explains, reprobation might be taken as an act of passing over or ‘preterition’, that is, an act by which God determines to restrain the dispensation grace indiscriminately. Second, it might also signify an ordination to punishment, a decree directed, not towards the commission of the offence, but towards the

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid., 2: 220.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., 221-235.

condemnation thereof.⁷⁶⁸ Charnock's explanation is crucial, as the first notion indicates that the decree of reprobation is not symmetrical with the decree of redemption; in the latter, God directly intervenes in dispensing saving grace for the justification of the elect whereas in the former God refrains himself from doing the same for the reprobate. In other words, while redemption implies a divine action, a positive motion of God, reprobation refers to a divine inaction, a negative motion of God, 'God acts nothing, but withholds his power; he doth not enlighten their minds, nor incline their wills so powerfully as to expel their darkness, and root out those evil habits which possess them by nature.'⁷⁶⁹ The second aspect of the definition is equally significant for it denotes that the decree of reprobation operates in consideration of the reprobate's sin. This is to say that it is the sin of the reprobate ensuing from his own corrupted nature the effective cause of his condemnation as opposed to God's preterition.⁷⁷⁰

In countering the second objection, Charnock appeals to the scholastic distinctions used by the Reformed orthodox in their discussions on the *voluntas Dei* (will of God) wherein a division between the will of God in reference to himself (*ad intra*) and in relation to his works (*ad extra*) is considered.⁷⁷¹ In this manner, sin is not willed by God according to his preceptive will (*voluntas praecipiens*), nor by his approving will (*voluntas*

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., 221.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid., 222.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid. This may be interpreted as Charnock leaning towards an infralapsarian view of the *ordo salutis*.

⁷⁷¹ Muller, *PRRD*: 3:453-473; Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 85-92.

approbans), but by a determination of his hidden will (*voluntas arcana*) whereby God wills to suffer the entrance of sin into the world.⁷⁷² This signifies at least two things: (1) God does not command sin to be by a positive motion of the divine will, as in the creation of the world, and (2) neither does God will sin as if it were an object of divine approval since sin is abhorrent to the divine nature. What is more, God does not will sin as an end in itself (*amabile propter se*) for to do so would be repugnant to his being; instead, God permits sin to be by reason of a higher goal (*honestatur ex fine*).⁷⁷³ Therefore, God allows sin to be through a permissive resolve of his will (*voluntas permissiva*), one in which the will of God does not act directly to bring sin into existence, but one in which God positively wills to permit sin to be.⁷⁷⁴ Significantly, this permission does not carry with it a moral validation, that is, it does not legalise sin neither exonerates those who act at will on it.⁷⁷⁵ Neither does God resolve evil by his efficient will (*voluntas efficiens*) since the determination to permit evil is a ‘privative decree’ by which God acts nothing and thus no efficient causality can be established between the divine will and sin.⁷⁷⁶ This permission of God in reference to sin, however, is better understood as a suspension of God’s influence, a cessation of God’s sustaining grace. In this manner, the privative decree that permits sin does not imply a passive motion

⁷⁷² Charnock, *Works*, 2: 222.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1: 17. Cf. *Ibid.*, 2: 223. Particularly, Charnock explains that God permits sin for the exaltation of his own glory and for the *majus bonum* (the greater good). See for instance *ibid.*, 1: 29-30; *ibid.*, 2: 35-43, 228-229.

⁷⁷⁴ *Idem.*, *Works*, 2: 223-224.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 224-225.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 223, 225. Cf. *Ibid.*, 1: 28. Besides, as sin is the absence of a something good, a negative rather than a positive thing, then its cause cannot be efficient (*causa efficiens*) but deficient (*causa deficiens*). See *ibid.*, 2: 239.

of the divine will; in fact, the *voluntas permissiva*, in this context, comprises an active and positive resolve to tolerate the entrance of sin into the world, '[f]or as God acts nothing in time, but what he decreed from eternity, so he permits nothing in time, but what he decreed from eternity to permit.'⁷⁷⁷

The last objection concerns the doctrine of divine concurrence, specifically in its relation to sin. In his discourse on divine providence, Charnock asserts that no motion transpires in isolation from the prescriptive or permissive will of God.⁷⁷⁸ This commitment to an absolute notion of divine providence inexorably begs the question, does divine concurrence includes the sinful actions of the creature? Charnock answers is unequivocal: 'Even the sins of the world his will permits them, his power assists in the act, and his wisdom orders the sinfulness of the act for holy ends.'⁷⁷⁹ The theological claim stated in the second clause of the foregoing sentence contains the opening elements for Charnock's idea of divine concurrence (*concursum divinum*), which is the theme to which the following analysis refers.

Charnock believes, under a notion of divine providence wherein sin itself cannot be outside of divine control, that God must sustain, somehow, the creature in the act of sinning. Though in the outlook the claim is theologically counterintuitive, Charnock decisively maintains it while acknowledging that further explanation is required:

Some, to free God from having any hand in sin, deny his concurrence to the actions of the creature; because, if he concurs to a sinful action, he concurs to the sin also: not understanding how there can be a distinction between the act

⁷⁷⁷ Idem., *Works*, 2: 224.

⁷⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, 1: 6-93.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

and the sinfulness or viciousness of it, and how God can concur to a natural action, without being stained by that moral evil which cleaves to it.⁷⁸⁰

Nowhere, in Charnock's *Complete Works*, one finds a theological definition of concurrence (*concursum divinum*), not at least one in explicit terms. However, the concept is clearly assumed when the topics of providence, divine causality, and human agency are intermingled in one way or another with the problems posed by the existence of sin and evil.⁷⁸¹ Based upon those instances, one might well depict Charnock's understanding of the *concursum divinum* as God's particular and immediate acts in correlation with all the motions of the creature and, simultaneously, as the enabling power that makes possible all of the creature's motions.⁷⁸² Drawing from Suárez's metaphysics, Charnock speaks about the causal relation between the acts of divine providence and the creature.⁷⁸³ Both Charnock and Suárez assert that the providence of God is that which endows the creature with being and with the ability to act, for '[a]ll created things depend upon God as agents, as well as beings, and are subordinate to him in a way of action, as well as in a way of

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., 2: 229. Contemporarily to Charnock, several of the Continental Reformed divines fervently defended the notion of divine concurrence and secondary causality in their polemics against Socinians, Arminians, Jesuits, and Cartesians concerning divine foreknowledge and man's free will. Consult, J. A. van Ruler, "New Philosophy to Old Standards: Voetius' Vindication of Divine Concurrence and Secondary Causality," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 71, no. 1 (1991).

⁷⁸¹ In addition to the references listed in this section, Charnock refers to divine concurrence, in relation to providence, in plenty of instances. Charnock, *Works*: 1:12, 28, 214; 2:137, 139; 3:88, 190, 291, 294, 529; 4:229.

⁷⁸² At one point, Charnock writes: 'Our being we owe to his power, our well-being to his care, our motion and exerting of every faculty to his merciful providence and concurrence; "in him we live, and move, and have our being," Acts xvii. 28. He frames our being, preserves our life, concurs with our motion.' In Idem., *Works*, 1: 12.

⁷⁸³ Cf. Disputation 22, section 1 in Francisco Suárez, *On Creation, Conservation, & Concurrence: Metaphysical Disputations 20-22*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2002), 149.

existing.⁷⁸⁴ This underscores the fact that the act creation and that of concurrence are the *condicio sine qua non* for, respectively, the creature's existence and motion.⁷⁸⁵ By discriminating between the act of sinning and the wickedness of the act in itself, Charnock vindicates the sanctity of God inasmuch as the *concursus* between God and the act of sin is not said to be moral in nature, but natural or physical.⁷⁸⁶ In other words, God enables and sustains the faculties of the creature in the act of sin, yet he does so without concurring with the immorality of the sinful action itself, Charnock explains: 'God assists in that action of a man wherein sin is placed, but not in that which is the formal reason of sin, which is a privation of some perfection the action ought morally to have.'⁷⁸⁷ This means that divine concurrence should not be blamed for the creature's sin for at least two reasons: (1) it is the creature's corrupt nature which effectively causes sin to be not the divine concurrence in enabling the understanding, the willing, and the execution of a sinful act.⁷⁸⁸ Since one action may have two different causes, the cause moving one to act sin is said to be righteous (divine concurrence), while the cause of the inherent evil in sinning is unrighteous (creature's corruption),⁷⁸⁹ and (2) divine

⁷⁸⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 230, also n.*.

⁷⁸⁵ In causal lingo, this emphasises the idea that secondary causes never act exclusively by their own power, but they do so by the power of a first cause: 'Nothing can act without the almighty influx of God, no more than it can exist without the creative word of God.' In *ibid.*, 137. This was an accepted conviction amongst the Reformed orthodox; for example, Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*: 1:336.

⁷⁸⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 229, 231-233. Cf. Turretin, *Institutes*: VI/5, ii; 1:505.

⁷⁸⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 232.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1: 27-28.

⁷⁸⁹ 'In second causes, one and the same action, proceeding from divers causes, in respect of one cause, may be sinful; in respect of the other, righteous.' In *ibid.*, 26. Cf. *Ibid.*, 2: 232-233, 239-240.

concurrence does not necessitate the human will to sin since the creature always sins freely: ‘Indeed, sin cannot be committed by force; there is no sin but is in some sort voluntary; voluntary in root, or voluntary in the branch; voluntary by an immediate act of the will, or voluntary by a general or natural inclination of the will.’⁷⁹⁰ In concurring with the faculties of the creature, God providentially moves everything according to the nature of the creature, thus ‘we owe our creation to God, our corruption to ourselves.’⁷⁹¹ Finally, Charnock notes that the concurrence of God and the sinful action of the creature have two different ends; the former is directed always towards the ultimate good whereas the latter aims at evil.⁷⁹² The theological and practical import of noting this double objective is that it corroborates the comprehensive scope of divine providence and underscores the immeasurable nature of God’s wisdom while pointing towards the renewal of the believer’s faith by knowing that divine providence is that which would immutably secure the well-being of the church.

In the final section of Charnock’s apologia, the sovereignty of God surfaces as the common denominator in the background of each one of the objections listed in propositions (6-8).⁷⁹³ In the first instance, the integrity of divine holiness is questioned by God’s sovereign decision of presenting an object to the creature that would be used for evil purposes. In the first instance, the integrity of divine holiness is questioned when God presents an

⁷⁹⁰ Idem., *Works*, 2: 201.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., 1: 27. Cf. Idem., *Works*, 3: 190-191.

⁷⁹² Idem., *Works*, 2: 234-235.

⁷⁹³ Ibid., 235-242.

object to the creature which is used for evil purposes. Hypothetically, the argument implies that God could have prevented sin to occur had he not presented the object that the creature would make use to sin. Charnock offers a threefold response: (1) Given that God presents objects to every person for their use, this act by itself cannot violate the liberty of the creature since, otherwise, no creature could have acted freely ever, (2) objects in themselves are good, they do not necessitate the creature to sin; instead, they become corrupted once the creature, out of his corrupt nature, uses them to sin, and (3) God can bring good in allowing the creature to misuse the object presented to him.⁷⁹⁴ Therefore, Charnock concludes that in no instance the holiness of God should be blemished for God's sovereign decision of presenting objects that would be used for unrighteous purposes when in fact '[i]t is not from the nature of the object that men do good or evil, but from the disposition of the person; what is good in itself is made bad by our corruption.'⁷⁹⁵

Neither does God's sovereign determination of removing the benefits of common grace from a sinful creature diminish his holiness, nor it does it when God commands things that seem in the outset contrary to nature or against the divine law.⁷⁹⁶ In the first place, Charnock argues that the withdrawal of grace is a negative act, this is to say that the hardening of the sinner's heart is not the result of God working new evil in the creature, but instead it is an act in which the creature is left to act according to his own desires, which in the case of the unregenerate are always evil: 'If hardness follows upon God's

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid., 235-238.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid., 236.

⁷⁹⁶ Here are included the objections found in propositions 7-8.

withholding his softening grace, it is not from any positive act of God, but from the natural hardness of man.⁷⁹⁷ Noteworthy, Charnock brings into the discussion the distinction between efficient (*efficientes*) and deficient (*deficiens*) causality to declare that God's abstraction of his grace is not a positive act but rather an act of cessation and, as such, the result of a non efficient cause (*causa deficiens*).⁷⁹⁸ This is the case considering that sin possesses no metaphysical substance and thus it is better defined by what it lacks not but what it is: 'Sin is the privation [*privatio*] of the rectitude due to an act'.⁷⁹⁹ Then, conceived as a *privatio*, sin is a negative thing in terms of its ontology and hence it 'cannot have an *efficient*, but a *deficient* cause'.⁸⁰⁰ Alongside, Charnock indicates that sin has two causal explanations with respect to the Fall; on the one hand, during the pre-lapsarian era, sin is explained by Adams's free will whereas, on the other hand, after the Fall, sin is said to be caused by the inherent corruption of man's nature. This is significant for by locating sin's efficient cause in the Fallen nature of the creature rather than in God's withdrawal of his grace, Charnock is able to maintain the holiness of

⁷⁹⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 238.

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 216, 222, 238-239. This distinction can be traced back to Charnock's discourse on divine providence wherein he explains that God has no efficient participation (*causa efficiens*) in producing sin. See *ibid.*, 1: 27-28.

⁷⁹⁹ *Idem.*, *Works*, 1: 476. In identifying the cause of an evil will, Augustine explains that it cannot be of an effective nature 'for the cause is not one of efficiency but of deficiency [*non enim est efficiens sed deficiens*] even as the evil will itself is not an effect but a defect.' In Augustine, *City of God: Volume IV (Books 12-15)*, trans. Philip Levine, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1966), 12.7; 32-33. Thomas discriminates between 'absence' taken as privation, and 'absence' as in the sense of negation; he argues, evil is always the result of the former but not of the latter. In Aquinas, *ST*, 8: 1a. 48. 1, 3; p. 109.

⁸⁰⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 3: 190. In modern times, there has been some apprehension to defining sin exclusively as privation, and to ascribing deficient causality to God. G. C. Berkouwer, *Sin*, *Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 61-65.

God.⁸⁰¹ Second, Charnock addresses a potential objection against the holiness of God proceeding from the divine command of things seemingly contrary to nature or hindering other divine precepts.⁸⁰² This is illustrated, for example, in the command involving the killing of Isaac as described in Gen (22.2); Charnock indicates that, despite the severity of the command, there is nothing unjust or immoral in it as far as ‘God hath a sovereign dominion over the lives and beings of his creatures, whereby as he creates one day he might annihilate the next’.⁸⁰³ In defending his argument on the matter here discussed, Charnock asserts that God ‘hath the power to dispense with his own law’ as universal lawgiver, which indicates God’s ability and authority to command things that apparently would do away with previous provisos of the divine law.⁸⁰⁴ Charnock’s argument may be seen as the returning of certain forms of medieval voluntarism wherein the divine will, in establishing the moral law, considers that the power of God is not limited by anything but logic in imposing changes upon the divine law.⁸⁰⁵ Though critics have noted that this view would make the divine law ultimately subjected to change and hence arbitrary, Charnock’s line of reasoning should be assessed considering a caveat to his initial claim wherein he says that while there is nothing unholy in

⁸⁰¹ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 239-240. Additionally, Charnock notes two additional points: (1) God never removes his grace before the creature deserts him first either by ignoring or by abusing God’s common grace, and (2) there is no moral obligation on God’s part to dispense his grace. In *ibid.*, 240-241.

⁸⁰² In contemporary terms, this problem may reflect in some aspects the objection posed against what is called the divine command theory of ethics.

⁸⁰³ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 240.

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 242.

⁸⁰⁵ Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 92-93, 96.

God by ‘disposing of the lives and goods of his creatures’, God cannot command that which is inherently evil.⁸⁰⁶ This qualification is significant for it indicates two coexisting aspects in the divine life: (1) that God is ontologically independent and hence always acts free from any limitation external to his own being, and (2) that God is self-restrained to act according to his own nature. In the end, however, one wonders whether Charnock’s theology {or ‘God’} here is losing some of its stability by emphasising too much on the power and the sovereignty of God at the peril of minimising the immutable nature of the decree.⁸⁰⁷

Goodness (De Bonitate Dei)

While it is true that the *Discourses* are not explicitly concerned with presenting the divine attributes according to a specific pattern of classification, it would not be without sensible justification to assert that goodness is a perfection better understood by Charnock as an expression of the divine will.⁸⁰⁸

Charnock finds in Mark (10:18), ‘*And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God*’, the *locus classicus* for his exposition of the doctrine of divine goodness.⁸⁰⁹ The exegesis of this text indicates Charnock’s familiarity with various trends in biblical

⁸⁰⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 242.

⁸⁰⁷ Paradoxically, Charnock abandons any voluntaristic impulse when, while lecturing on the goodness of God, deals with the metaphysics of moral goodness.

⁸⁰⁸ Cf. Turretin, *Institutes*: III/20, i-iv; 1:241; Wollebius, "Compendium," 40; Polanus, *Syntagma*: II/xx; p. 162.

⁸⁰⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 275.

scholarship; he refers, for instance, to the interpretation given by those like Augustine, Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536), Calvin, Juan Maldonado (1533-1583), and John Lightfoot (1602-1675).⁸¹⁰ Ultimately, Charnock follows the interpretation provided by the German scholar David Paraeus (1548-1622), who synthesises Lightfoot's explanation with that of Calvin.⁸¹¹

Goodness is considered vis-à-vis the attributes of the first order such as simplicity, aseity, immutability, infinity, and perfection. First, God alone is originally good of himself, this is to say that God's goodness comes from nothing external to him: he is good *in se* and *a se*. Second, as everything is good by participation, only God is infinitely good. Third, from the infinity of divine goodness, Charnock deduces that only God is perfectly good: 'As in him is the whole nature of entity, so in him is the whole nature of excellency.'⁸¹² Finally, Charnock declares that God alone is immutably good: the argument assumes that there is no distinction between the divine essence and the divine attributes and since God is essentially immutable, then he must be immutably good.

The doctrinal thesis in this discourse underlines two chief aspects of divine goodness. On the one hand, it emphasises God's royal prerogative to be the sole possessor of pure and perfect goodness; on the other hand, it notes

⁸¹⁰ Ibid., 275-276.

⁸¹¹ Lightfoot argued that the line of questioning in Mark (10:28) sought to underscore Christ's divine status whereas Calvin believed that Christ wanted to affirm his divine mission from God. In *ibid.*

⁸¹² Ibid., 277.

that goodness is a prime characteristic of the divine being.⁸¹³ The former establishes a distinction between the essential goodness of God and the derivative goodness of the creature: God is good *per essentiam*, the creature is good *per participationem*.⁸¹⁴ Goodness, then, must be predicated of God since '[h]e is good, he is goodness, good in himself, good in his essence, good in the highest degree, possessing whatsoever is comely, excellent, desirable; the highest good, because the first good; whatsoever is perfect goodness is God, whatsoever is truly goodness in any creature is a resemblance of God.'⁸¹⁵ Charnock seeks to communicate that goodness is more than a quality of the divine being; in fact, goodness is God's very essence: 'God is good as he is God, and therefore good by himself, and from himself, not by participation from another.'⁸¹⁶ Furthermore, to say that God is the first good is to affirm that he is the highest good, the *summum bonum*, the origin, substance, and end of all good.⁸¹⁷ In identifying God as the *summum bonum*, Charnock makes an indispensable assertion about the divine nature, namely, that God is goodness itself.⁸¹⁸ Consequently, it is safe to conclude that there are metaphysical and teleological reasons, in addition to the fact that God always acts for the sake of

⁸¹³ Ibid., 280.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid., 285.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid., 280.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid., 285.

⁸¹⁷ Cf. Aquinas, *ST*, 2: 1a. 6. 2; pp. 84-87; Leigh, *Treatise*: 78-79.

⁸¹⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 281.

his people and for the manifestation of his glory, to characterise God as the highest good.⁸¹⁹

In defining the attribute of goodness, Charnock discriminates between the goodness of being (*bonitate*), which refers to the inherent perfection of a thing, the goodness of will (*benevolentia*), namely, the moral excellency of a being, and the goodness of the hand (*beneficentia*), the acts of liberality for the benefit of others.⁸²⁰ The purpose of the discourse is to elaborate on the goodness of God as *bonitas Dei*, that is to say goodness in reference to the divine essence.⁸²¹

By arguing that all good convenes in the divine nature, Charnock follows a theological axiom existing in patristic, medieval, and Reformation theologies. In it, God is characterised as the *fons omnium bonorum* [fountain of all good things].⁸²² This suggests that divine goodness comprises all the

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., 284. Leigh gives details of five characteristics which make God alone the highest good: (1) *summum bonum est tantum bonum*, that there is no mixture of evil in God; (2) *summum bonum est bonum universale*, that God contains all good in himself; (3) *summum bonum est bonum proprium*, that God is goodness itself; (4) *summum bonum est bonum incommutabile*, that God's goodness is eternal and unchangeable; and finally, (5) *summum bonum est appetitus quietativum*, that God is the object of an all-satisfying desire. In Edward Leigh, *A Systeme or Body of Divinity* (London: A.M. for William Lee, 1654), II/xv; p. 203.

⁸²⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 282. Some have asserted that Charnock's threefold division above draws, at least implicitly, from another threefold distinction in scholastic theology wherein the divines classify the voluntary love of God (*amor voluntario*) in three groups: (1) love of benevolence (*amor benevolentiae*), (2) love of beneficence (*amor beneficentiae*), and (3) love of complacency or friendship (*amor complacentiae sive amicitiae*). In Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*: 78. Though it is not altogether clear that love and goodness were the same in Charnock's theology, the foregoing assertion gains some justification by noting that, at least in some cases, the Reformed orthodox identified the love of beneficence as divine goodness; for example, in Pictet, *Christian Theology*: II/v; p. 85.

⁸²¹ Although, as it would be clear below, Charnock includes the notions of benevolence and beneficence while expounding goodness.

⁸²² Cf. Charnock, *Works*, 2: 286. The *fons omnium bonorum* principle is also observed in various of the doctrinal systems, sermons, and ecclesiastical confessions of the Protestant orthodox era. See, for instance, *Confessio Belgica*, art. I in Philip Schaff, *The*

divine perfections: ‘All the acts of God are nothing else but the effluxes of his goodness, distinguished by several names, according to the objects it exercised about.’⁸²³ In making this claim, Charnock expresses that goodness is a cardinal property of both the acts of God *ad intra* and of the operations of God *ad extra*.⁸²⁴ In other words, goodness is a perfection that, while essentially owned by God alone, flows from him upon the whole of creation.⁸²⁵

Specifically, Charnock contrasts divine goodness (*bonitas*) with other attributes that are commonly treated under the category of the divine will such as holiness (*sanctitas*) and, also, with attributes involving the divine affections such as mercy (*miser cordia*).⁸²⁶ Divine goodness is defined as ‘the efflux of [God’s] will’, not the ‘rectitude of the divine nature’, which properly describes the holiness of God.⁸²⁷ Additionally, divine goodness differs in scope from divine holiness: the extent of the former is universal whereas that of divine holiness is limited to the rational creature.⁸²⁸ Neither divine goodness should be confused with divine mercy for, although the second is a natural corollary

Creeds of Christendom, 3 vols., vol. 3, *The Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), 383; Leigh, *Treatise*: 83.

⁸²³ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 284.

⁸²⁴ This coincides with more explicit assertions on the matter in the Reformed orthodox tradition. For example, ‘[c]ommunicat Deus bonitatem suam duobus modis: (1) *ad intra* (2) *ad extra*.’ [God communicates his own goodness in two manners: (1) *ad intra* and (2) *ad extra*] In Marcus Friedrich Wendelin, *Christianae Theologiae Libri II* (Amsterdam: Ioannem Ianssonium, 1650), I/i, x (ii); p. 102.

⁸²⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 282.

⁸²⁶ Cf. Thomas Ridgley, *A Body of Divinity*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1855), 109. Charnock’s concern for presenting precise definitions of the subject under analysis is a common feature shared by other theological works influenced by scholastic methodology. See Muller, *PRRD*: 1:34.

⁸²⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 283.

⁸²⁸ *Ibid.*

of the first, the two differ in scope and may vary in their manner of manifestation. In regards to scope, goodness extends to all of God's works *ad extra* whereas the object of mercy are those things or beings that lack true blessedness.⁸²⁹ Concerning their mode of manifestation, the act of creation and that of the incarnation became the chosen means to illustrate the differences between the goodness and the mercy of God. For instance, creation is the result of an act of divine goodness, not of divine mercy, since goodness is that which prompts God to bring something into existence out of nothing whereas mercy already presumes the existence of something, though in a state of misery, and in need of succour.⁸³⁰ In the end, drawing from the definitions of other theologians, Charnock understands goodness to be that perfection of the divine essence whereby God is incline to act for the sake of his creatures, an inclination of his will for his own glory by which being is communicated to something else besides himself.⁸³¹

Being cognisant of the created goodness residing in everything that exists, Charnock is lead to conclude that all moral creatures enjoy of a concreated goodness; Satan himself, whose being is divested from any moral goodness, still retains some form of goodness as a creature of God: 'When he

⁸²⁹ Ibid. Since the operations of divine mercy presupposes a state of misery caused by sin wherein God acts in favour of the sinner by granting her saving grace, one may say that ultimately mercy has the elect as its chief object. See *ibid.*, 108-109, 229. Cf. Polanus, *Substance*: 3.

⁸³⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 283, 306. Cf. Cocceius, *Summa*: VI/xv, 40; p. 215.: '*Bonitas igitur Dei est [proegumena] causa creationis.*' [Goodness is, therefore, the [*intercedent*] cause of creation.] For Charnock, the argument remains the same when speaking of the incarnation: 'Some think Christ had been incarnate, had not man fallen; had it been so, there had been a manifestation of goodness to our nature, but not of mercy, because sin had not made our nature miserable', in Charnock, *Works*, 2: 283.

⁸³¹ *Idem.*, *Works*, 2: 284. Cf. Cocceius, *Summa*: III/ix, 40; p. 148; Perkins, *Golden Chaine*: 12.

[the devil] fell from God, he retained his natural goodness as a creature, because he did not cease to be, he was not reduced to that nothing from whence he was drawn; but he ceased to be morally good, being stripped of his righteousness by his apostasy.’⁸³²

The nature of divine goodness is explained by arguing in favour of the following assertions: (1) God is good by his own essence, (2) God is the most excellent manifestation of goodness, (3) the goodness of God is communicative, (4) God is necessarily good, (5) God is freely good, (6) God takes great delight in the communication of goodness, and (7) the manifestation of goodness is the basis of creation and the aim of providence.⁸³³

Since all the propositions listed above had already been hinted, in one way or another in the material covered up to this point, the following analysis primarily focuses on commenting and complementing on information yet not considered.⁸³⁴ In proposition (1), Charnock reiterates the claim that God is good *per essentiam*, signifying that he is not good by participating from any source of goodness but his own nature. God is pure goodness itself: ‘He [God] is not first God, and then afterwards good; but he is good as he is God, his essence being one and the same, is formally and equally God and good.’⁸³⁵ It is

⁸³² Charnock, *Works*, 2: 282. Interestingly, Velde has noted a couple of instances wherein other Reformed divines have called the devil ‘good’ (*bonum*) under the assumption that he is ‘a created being and ornated with various gifts.’ See Velde, *The Doctrine of God*: 206. Cf. Jerome Zanchi, *De Natura Dei* (Heidelberg: Jacob Mylius, 1577), IV/I; p. 295.

⁸³³ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 285-293.

⁸³⁴ It is worth noting that Charnock’s definition of divine goodness suggests many of the features included in the propositions just listed. Cf. *Ibid.*, 280.

⁸³⁵ *Ibid.*, 285-286.

worth underscoring the doctrinal import of the notion of divine simplicity for the formulation of divine goodness: God is not good as if goodness were something added to the divine being; instead, God is goodness itself since in the divine nature there is no real distinction (*distinctio realis*) between attributes and essence.⁸³⁶ The fact that God is simple and independent warrant the assertion that he is essentially good, which in turn justifies a derivative claim, namely, that God is infinitely and eternally good.⁸³⁷

The argument in proposition (2) reflects an underlying conviction wherein God is conceived as being ontologically superior and sovereign over creation.⁸³⁸ As God is thought to be the prime and chief existence, one whose nature is but *esse tantum* (pure being/existence), he must be also the supreme and highest goodness, one whose essence is but *summum bonum* (highest good): ‘He [God] is only good without capacity of increase; he is all good, an unmixed good—none good but God’.⁸³⁹

⁸³⁶ For a detailed information on the significance of divine simplicity in Charnock’s doctrine of God, see pp. 148-153 above in this study.

⁸³⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 286.

⁸³⁸ Not in the sense of comparing one amongst many, but in the sense of exalting one above all.

⁸³⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 286. Cf. *Responsio* in Aquinas, *ST*, 2: 1a. 6, 2; pp. 84-87. Charnock, *Works*, 2: 123. ‘Pure being’ does not refer to being in the sense of existing beyond the physical universe, neither does it mean to convey an abstract notion of being; instead, it refers to complete actuality, viz., perfection of being. For a detailed description of the different ways wherein ‘pure being’ vis-à-vis God may be interpreted in Aristotelian thinking, consult Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Clarendon Press, 1977), 103-109. Some modern defenders of the traditional system of Thomistic metaphysics have argued that the notion of *esse tantum* leads, not necessarily to an abstract notion of the divine but to a concrete and individual concept of God. See the argument, including objections and rejoinders, in Gaven Kerr, *Aquinas’s Way to God: The Proof in De Ente Et Essentia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 150-172.

Propositions (3) and (6) speaks about the diffusive character of the goodness of God and of God's delight in communicating it to his creation.⁸⁴⁰ In Charnock's theology, the conveying of goodness is something God does necessarily, not in the sense of dependence or as a result of external coercion, but precisely because he is pure goodness.⁸⁴¹ In other words, since God is good, that is, he creates and acts for the benefit of the object made, and since goodness is a quality, not a defect, for it comprises personal holiness and righteousness, then God, as the *summum bonum*, cannot but impart his goodness to others.⁸⁴² That goodness is imparted with the greatest pleasure is a natural corollary of the explanation provided in proposition (3). Charnock summarises the argument in one sentence, '[s]ince he [God] doth not delight in the unhappiness of any of his creatures, he certainly delights in what may conduce unto their felicity', viz., the communication of his own goodness.⁸⁴³

At first, proposition 4 and 5 seem to contradict each other: on the one hand, proposition (4) affirms that God is good necessarily while, on the other hand, proposition (5) maintains the freedom of God.⁸⁴⁴ Charnock reiterates that goodness is an essential attribute of the divine being, '... goodness is not a quality in him, but a nature, not a habit added to his essence, but his essence itself', which is to say that God cannot but be good since goodness constitutes

⁸⁴⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 287, 291.

⁸⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 287-288. Later, Charnock explains that 'God is not necessarily communicative of his goodness' indiscriminately, this is to say that God freely chooses the objects to which he would impart his goodness. See *ibid.*, 290.

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, 288.

⁸⁴³ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁸⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 288, 290.

the divine ontology.⁸⁴⁵ Therefore, God is necessarily good (as he is necessarily holy, eternal, immutable, almighty, etc.) in the sense that goodness is inherent to what he is essentially.⁸⁴⁶ That God is necessarily good does not mean that he is not good freely considering that there are different kinds of necessity, some of which are not antithetical to freedom.⁸⁴⁷ Since God is said to be necessarily good by *necessitas naturae* (necessity of nature), viz., a necessity that arises from that which is intrinsic to the essence of the divine nature, God's freedom to act according to the nature of his being, viz., his *libertas naturae* (liberty of nature), does not get abolished.⁸⁴⁸ Furthermore, Charnock differentiates between God's *matter* of acting and his *manner* of acting.⁸⁴⁹ The former prompts no necessity in God, as it refers to his consideration to act or not to act, whereas the latter is concurrently necessary and free, as it denotes God's desire to benefit others than himself; thereby: 'He created the world and man freely, because he might choose whether he would create it; but he created them good necessarily, because he was first necessarily good in his nature, before he was freely a creator.'⁸⁵⁰ In the end, God is said to be necessarily good

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid., 285.

⁸⁴⁶ The concept of necessity, understood in the sense above noted, is included in almost every theological sermon dealing with the different attributes of God in Charnock's *Discourses*.

⁸⁴⁷ Van Asselt et al., "Introduction," 38-39.

⁸⁴⁸ Muller, *Dictionary*: 176, 200.

⁸⁴⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 290.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid.

in relation to his essence, though freely good in relation to the diffusion of his goodness towards its objects.⁸⁵¹

Finally, proposition (7) suggests that goodness (or more exactly the display of it) is the causative means and the ultimate *telos* from which and whereby God actualises his works *ad extra*. Charnock explains that as the acts of God cannot be isolated from the divine nature, the end that prompted creation has to be of equal distinction as God himself.⁸⁵² What is more, since there was nothing before creation but God, ‘nothing can be the ultimate end of God but himself and his own goodness.’⁸⁵³ Therefore, as wisdom and power are, respectively, the rule and the principle upon which God acts, goodness is identified as the intended motive whereby wisdom and power are aroused to act.⁸⁵⁴ This means that goodness takes precedence in the motions involving the divine will, at least in that which concerns the act of creation. The precedence of divine goodness in the act of creation is logical, not ontological, given that goodness is identical with the essence of God and hence identical with the remaining perfections.⁸⁵⁵ Finally, Charnock explains that God gains nothing in bringing creation into existence for by being sufficient in himself he is, therefore, in need of nothing else than his own being to be fully blessed:

⁸⁵¹ In the context above, Charnock qualifies the manner of necessity as *affectivè* (i.e., the natural disposition of a thing) and that of freedom as *effectivè* (i.e., making or bringing something into effect). Ibid. Cf. Adam Littleton, *Linguae Latinae Liber Dictionarius Quadripartitus*, s.v. "*Affectatio*", "*Effectio*."

⁸⁵² Charnock, *Works*, 2: 292.

⁸⁵³ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁵ For the Reformed scholastics on the multiplicity of the divine attributes and the doctrine of divine simplicity, refer to pp. 51-52 above in this study.

In this regard, God is good above all creatures, because he intends only to communicate his goodness in creation, not to acquire any goodness or excellency from them, as men do in their framing of things. God is all, and is destitute of nothing, and therefore nothing accrues to him by the creation, but the acknowledgment of his goodness. This goodness, therefore, must be the motive and end of all his works.⁸⁵⁶

‘God is good’ is the leitmotif that concerns the third section in Charnock’s discourse on the goodness of God.⁸⁵⁷ The aim of this unit is twofold: on the one hand, it aims to expound on the reasons supporting the claim that God is good; alternatively, it answers to potential objection that might be elevated against the goodness of God.⁸⁵⁸

In support of the claim that God is by nature pure goodness, two major propositions are presented: (1) there is a direct proportionality between being excellent and goodness of being, and (2) God is the causal explanation of all created goodness and, hence, the highest manifestation of goodness.⁸⁵⁹ The former claim emphasises reason and rationality as the determinative principle for excellence, so the argument notes that rational creatures are able to manifest a greater inherence of goodness, compared with other non-rational creatures, since the former are endowed with a more excellent being than that of the latter. Therefore, God, whose being is the most excellent in nature, cannot but be the supreme manifestation of goodness.⁸⁶⁰ The latter assertion assumes that no other being but God is good by nature; he is the archetypal

⁸⁵⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 293.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 293-306.

⁸⁵⁸ It must be noted, however, that in this segment Charnock’s main interest is to defend divine goodness, rather than to explain the reasons thereof, as it is seen by the much longer analysis dedicated to respond to the objections against the goodness of God.

⁸⁵⁹ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 293.

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

form of pure goodness. This means that since all creatures are good by participation, the goodness of God ‘must be infinitely supreme and super-eminent’ in relation to the goodness of creation.⁸⁶¹

Common objections against divine goodness during Charnock’s time included the entrance of sin in the world, the inequality in the distribution of goodness over creation, the punishment of the transgressor of the divine command, and the afflictions of the faithful. Charnock responds to these protestations by indicating, in the first place, that Adam’s misery after his original disobedience exhibits, rather than negates, the goodness of God as far as it denotes that Adam was created with an ability to experience happiness under the condition of obedience to God. Charnock adds: ‘God’s goodness furnished Adam with a power to stand; was it contrary to his goodness to leave Adam to a free use of use of that power?’⁸⁶² Incidentally, in allowing the entrance of sin into the world, God also determines the way of redemption, which is the greatest manifestation of divine goodness.⁸⁶³

As the goodness of God is not broken by the permission of sin, neither does the unequal distribution of goodness is contrary to the claim that God is good. This is to say that one should not expect God’s liberality to be expressed in an equal distribution of goodness amongst all the objects of creation.⁸⁶⁴ In fact, that God does not distribute goodness in equal measure may be better

⁸⁶¹ Ibid.

⁸⁶² Ibid., 294.

⁸⁶³ Ibid., 295. Once again, Charnock suggests that the Fall is the means whereby the manifestation of God’s goodness, mercy, and grace takes place.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid., 296.

understood as a sign of divine freedom given that '[h]ad he [God] been alike good to all, it would have looked like a necessary, not a free act; but by the inequality, it is manifest that he doth not do it by a natural necessity, as the sun shines, but by a voluntary liberty'.⁸⁶⁵

Divine goodness is not injured by the punishment of the offender neither by the sufferings of the righteous. The suggestion is that vindictive justice and goodness are not incompatible but complementary properties within the Godhead; in fact, the execution of divine punishment is a property of divine goodness since for God to be good he has to be just and, thus, to act justly.⁸⁶⁶ Furthermore, punitive actions do not necessarily entail a moral evil in the agent that execute them (God), though they do entail a natural evil in the agent that endures them (sinners).⁸⁶⁷ Conversely, were God apathetic to vindicating of his justice by ignoring the transgressions against his law, divine goodness would be seriously injured given that God could not be good to himself if he would not care for vindicating his honour.⁸⁶⁸ By being infinitely good, God necessarily acts in accordance to that which is always righteous, hence, his vindictive or avenging justice, i.e., the punishment over the evildoer, must be always a virtuous act since '[t]he goodness of God could never have permitted justice to exercise itself upon an innocent creature, that

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid., 297.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid., 298. Cf. Pictet, *Christian Theology*: II/vi; p. 90.

⁸⁶⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 298. In Charnock's usage above, 'natural evil' refers to the dreadful consequences brought upon the transgressor by breaking the divine command. This is to say that natural evils of this kind are always preceded by falling into some form of moral evil. Cf. Ibid., 1: 212., '[a]s grace is the union of the will of God and the will of the creature, so sin is the opposition of the will of self to the will of God. "Leaning to our own understanding" is opposed as a natural evil to "trusting in the Lord," a supernatural grace, Prov. iii. 5.'

⁸⁶⁸ Idem., *Works*, 2: 301.

was not guilty either personally or by imputation: Ps. xi. 7'.⁸⁶⁹ Interestingly, Charnock argues that the primary intention in establishing the rules of moral conduct and the admonitions against the law-breakers is not punishment, but the encouragement of creaturely goodness.⁸⁷⁰ This is the case for the goodness of God extends over the sinner as far as he still is the object of common grace. Negatively put it, divine hate does not extend to the sinner himself, but only to the transgression perpetrated against God's honour, yet by executing the transgression the sinner becomes the object of God's wrath.⁸⁷¹

Finally, the sufferings of God's people do not contradict the operations of divine goodness as far as personal afflictions, which are divinely appointed, ultimately aim at temporal or eternal goodness for the church.⁸⁷² In many cases, these afflictions are pedagogical in nature seeking to promote a holy living at individual and communal level. In fact, chastisement based upon divine goodness is part of the provisos established in the covenantal relation between God and his creation.⁸⁷³

The penultimate segment of this discourse is a lengthy section dedicated to explain the manifestation of divine goodness in the works of creation, redemption, and providence.⁸⁷⁴ In what follows, this study focuses on

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid., 34.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid., 302.

⁸⁷¹ Ibid. Charnock draws from Francisco Suárez, *Prima Pars Summa Theologiae De Deo Uno & Trino* (Lugduni: Horatij Cardon, 1617), I/iii, 7; p. 156.

⁸⁷² Charnock, *Works*, 2: 305.

⁸⁷³ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid., 306-364.

the most significant aspects of this section, particularly on those elements that are new to what has been already discussed. Beginning with the act of creation, Charnock argues that to bring something out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) is the result of an act of divine goodness. Since creaturely being is by participation, more precisely by the efflux of divine goodness as the interceding cause of creation, nothing could have been created good were God not perfectly good, as ‘nothing but goodness could have communicated to things an excellency, which before they wanted. Being is more excellent than nothing.’⁸⁷⁵ This implies that goodness, not the communication of being, is the chief end of creation. In support of this claim, Charnock considers the creation account in Gen. 1 from which he indicates that God rests of his work of creation after things were declared to be good, not simply after he conferred them being.⁸⁷⁶ In fact, creation is the first manifestation of the goodness of God *extra se*, beyond himself. Creation, however, does not add anything to the divine ontology since God perfectly subsists by and for himself and thus he did not require of creation to achieve a full state of blessedness for ‘[h]e was

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid., 306. God is most desirable precisely because all things desirable get their goodness by participating of divine goodness, see *ibid.*, 392.

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid., 306. In other words, divine goodness mediates the creation of beings that are endowed with a form of concreated goodness, not simply with a bare ontology. Some have offered two related approaches to explain creaturely goodness in the Christian tradition. On the one hand, the participation view wherein creaturely goodness is accounted by the participation into that which is the *summum bonum*, namely, God. On the other hand, the nature view wherein things are said to be good based upon the purpose determined for the nature of things, that is, by the actualisation into that which is intrinsic to the essence of a thing. For more on the metaphysics of goodness, consult Scott MacDonald, "Introduction: The Relation between Being and Goodness," in *Being and Goodness: The Concept of the Good in Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[before creation] incomprehensibly rich in the possession of an unstained felicity.’⁸⁷⁷

The material and spiritual constitution of a human being is another way whereby the goodness of God is manifested in creation. This includes the human body and the ability of it to accomplish a great variety of tasks, it also encompasses the soul as it reflects understanding and freedom of the will. More importantly for evidencing the goodness of God in the creation of man is that both male and female are unique amongst the created order as far as they were created in the image of God and as such reflect in a mediated way the nature of God.⁸⁷⁸ Similarly, divine goodness manifests itself in the fact that creation was made for the sake of humankind, including not only the ornaments for the nourishment, shelter, and care of the human body, but also in the establishment of the divine law for the satisfaction of the human soul.⁸⁷⁹ As the divine laws are the most rational for they are the device of divine wisdom—as wisdom cannot but order those things in agreement with divine goodness—so the laws of God are the most excellent for they are the device of divine goodness. Hence, the laws of God are not simply ‘the acts of his sovereign authority, but the effluxes of his loving-kindness, and the conductors of man to an enjoyment of a greater bounty.’⁸⁸⁰

⁸⁷⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 306-307, 309. The quote above follows the editor’s correction of what it seems to be a misspelling in the original text. See *ibid.*, 307, n. *.

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 310-313.

⁸⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 313.

Like creation, the act of redemption also displays the goodness of God; in fact, the goodness manifested in redemption is claimed to surpass that of creation. This is the case as redemption suggests a higher difficulty to effect, a higher cost to pay than that required for creation. In creating *ex nihilo*, nothing is subjugated whereas in redeeming the sinner, God had to overcome man's hostility; moreover, in creating the universe God does not give up anything whereas in redemption he surrenders his only-begotten Son as sacrifice for the sins of his church.⁸⁸¹ The goodness of God is also seen, not only in the act of redemption, but in the effects thereof. These effects include the relieve of the sinner's spiritual and moral needs, the restoration of his dignity, the rescue of his understanding from ignorance, the deliverance of his will from his evil inclinations, and the assurance of eternal life.⁸⁸²

Furthermore, since God was not under any compulsion to redeem humanity, redemption must result from the pure goodness of God considering that creation does not impose any moral obligation on God to restore the effects of the Fall. Thus, Charnock: 'It had not been unbecoming the divine goodness or wisdom to have let man perpetually wallow in that sink wherein he had plunged himself, since he was criminal by his own will, and therefore miserable by his own fault; nothing could necessitate this reparation.'⁸⁸³

Significantly, Charnock notes that redemption is an act of divine goodness involving the Trinity. He explains that there is a functional

⁸⁸¹ Ibid., 319-323.

⁸⁸² Ibid., 319.

⁸⁸³ Ibid., 318.

distinction within the divine persons according to the work each mode of being accomplishes in the restoration of a sinner.⁸⁸⁴ Along these lines, the Father is said to be initiator of redemption by an act of grace, the Son merits it through his perfect obedience, while the Spirit effects it by means of his regenerative power. In covenantal terms, the Father promises redemption, the Son seals it by his death, and the Spirit applies it by his influence. Finally, the Father adopts the sinner into his family, the Son cleanses him to be a child of God, and the Spirit renews him to dwell on it.⁸⁸⁵ By noting this distinction, Charnock is adopting two axioms of classical Nicene trinitarian theology: the doctrine of inseparable operation and the doctrine of appropriation. The former dictates that all the external works of the Trinity are indivisible [*omnia opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*] whereas the latter attributes to *one* of the divine persons an operation (or an attribute) that is common to *all* the divine persons.⁸⁸⁶ Thus, Charnock argues that the goodness manifested in redemption is unique in the sense that, though redemption is the single work of the Triune God, it is also the particular work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit individually. In this trinitarian account, the distinction of the operations *ad extra* of the Trinity points back to the order of being of the Trinity *ad intra* whilst also insists on affirming a functional distinction in the works of the Godhead without denying their essential unity.⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid., 319.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁶ Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*: 296-297.

⁸⁸⁷ Some of the Reformed scholastics expounds on the unity and diversity in the operations of God *ad extra* 'For although the external works are undivided and equally common to the single persons (both on the part of the principle and on the part of the

Interestingly, Charnock ties the manifestation of divine goodness and the covenant of grace.⁸⁸⁸ The point argued here is that the goodness of God is seen in the abrogation of the strict terms of the covenant of works and of by the replacement of such conditions by a more gracious means of keeping a covenantal relationship with God.⁸⁸⁹ Following Turretin, Charnock indicates that '[t]he language of one [covenant] was, Die if thou sin; that of the other, Live if thou believest.'⁸⁹⁰ Goodness is that which freely prompted God to establish the covenant of works in the first place and that which freely moved him to replace it with the covenant of grace.⁸⁹¹ What is more, the goodness of God clearly emerges in the covenant of grace by noting the mediatorial role of Christ and the condition of the covenant, which is, faith. Nothing else but pure goodness could have been the motive behind God's decision to offer himself, through the vicarious sacrifice of the Son, to seal and confirm the covenant of grace.⁸⁹² Instead of demanding perfect obedience (as in the covenant of

accomplishment), yet they are distinguished by order and by terms. For the order of operating follows the order of subsisting.' In Turretin, *Institutes*: III/27, xx; 1:281.

⁸⁸⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 331-335.

⁸⁸⁹ Though Charnock does not use the term 'abrogation' in this context, the notion of it is not alien to him. In *Idem.*, *Works*, 4: 565. It is important to note that abrogation is used here to speak about the provisos stipulated in the covenant of works, not about rejecting the moral law or the righteousness required for the fulfilment of the promises of the covenant of grace. Cf. Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*: 1:375-376.

⁸⁹⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 332. Interestingly, at one point Charnock compares God's methods of dealing with humankind under the Christian notion of the covenant of grace with that exhibited in Islam: '[God] carrieth not on the gospel by force of arms; he doth not solely menace men into it, as worldly conquerors have done; he doth not, as Mahomet, plunder men's estates, and wound their bodies to imprint a religion on their souls...', in *ibid.*, 339.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 331-332.

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*, 333-335.

works), the condition of the covenant of grace rests upon an act of assertive trust in the promises of God, namely, faith.⁸⁹³

Divine goodness is particularly linked to the Lord's Supper as part of the sacramental stipulations established in the covenant of grace.⁸⁹⁴ The inclusion of the Lord's Supper in the covenant of grace manifests the goodness of God in that the provision given to the redeemed also includes the permanent nourishment of his soul by participating of the elements of the sacrament. In the context of the manifestation of divine goodness in redemption, Charnock specifies the benefits of the Lord's Supper in what evidently denotes an influence of covenant theology,

The covenant itself was confirmed by the death of Christ, Heb. ix. 15, and thereby made unchangeable both in the benefits to us and the condition required of us; but he seals it to our sense in a sacrament to give us strong consolation; or rather the articles of the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, agreed on from eternity, were accomplished on Christ's part by his death, on the Father's part by his resurrection... The covenant of grace, founded upon this covenant of redemption, is sealed in the sacrament; God owns his standing to the terms of it, as sealed by the blood of the Mediator, by presenting him to us under those signs, and gives us a right upon faith to the enjoyment of the fruits of it... whereby he gives us assurance of his reality, and a strong support to our confidence in him.⁸⁹⁵

Finally, God is said to display his goodness in the manner he governs the universe.⁸⁹⁶ Providence is a corollary of the goodness of God as far as creation testifies of the preservation of all things (Ps. 36.6), animals and mankind alike.⁸⁹⁷ The underlying argument is that to do good to an evil person

⁸⁹³ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid., 341-345.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid., 343.

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid., 349-364.

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid., 349-353.

exhibits a greater goodness than having an innocent as the object of divine goodness.⁸⁹⁸ Furthermore, the goodness of God is observed in the preservation of human society, particularly in the prescription of rules for communal living, in the appointment of magistrates to maintain civil order, and in the effects of common grace, both by setting boundaries for the passions of men and by encouraging moral goodness in the world.⁸⁹⁹ Charnock adds the provision of Scripture—as the rule of conduct for all people—to the list of features that demonstrates the goodness of God in providence.⁹⁰⁰ Divine goodness explains why God decreed to reveal something about himself rather than nothing after the Fall; it provides a justification for God’s actions in preserving through ages his written revelation.⁹⁰¹ Similarly, divine goodness is manifested in the response to intercessory prayers by considering that their efficacy does not rest in the nature of the request, neither in the character of the one who prays, but in God alone.⁹⁰² Evidently, divine goodness shines in the patience of God while dealing with people’s infirmities and their imperfect obedience: ‘His omniscience knows their sins, but his goodness doth not reject their persons.’⁹⁰³ Finally, the gains brought by afflictions, persecutions, and temptations reveal the goodness of God for through them the believer is instructed in the faith, grows in character, and becomes better equipped to prevail against evil passions and thus to serve Christ’s church: ‘By afflictions

⁸⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 352.

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 353-356.

⁹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 356.

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 357.

⁹⁰² *Ibid.*, 359.

⁹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 360.

he often snaps asunder those chains which fettered us, and quells those passions which ravaged us. He sharpens our faith, and quickens our prayers.'⁹⁰⁴

Dominion (*De Dominium Dei*)

In the concluding remarks of his massive volume on the doctrine of God, Velde informs his readers of three theological concepts (viz., simplicity, sovereignty, and perfection) that shaped the method of structuring the *locus de Deo* for Reformed scholastics.⁹⁰⁵ If Velde is correct, one may ask whether this fact concurs with Charnock's thoughts on the dominion of God.⁹⁰⁶ In preparation for the following analysis, it must be noted that some Reformed divines have understood the dominion of God—and those features closely related to it such as majesty or sovereignty—not as a divine attribute *per se*, but as God's rightful entitlement derived from the Lordship and Kingship of God.⁹⁰⁷ In this sense, Charnock speaks of the dominion of God as a 'relative attribute', that is, one which God exercises in his works *ad extra*.⁹⁰⁸

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid., 361, 364.

⁹⁰⁵ Velde, *The Doctrine of God*: 716. For Velde's conclusive thoughts on methodology and on the relation between method and content in the theological systems of the Reformed orthodox tradition, consult *ibid.*, 104-106, 242-243, 253-255.

⁹⁰⁶ Some have located Charnock's doctrine of divine dominion under the theme of divine sovereignty. Drayson, "Divine Sovereignty in the Thought of Stephen Charnock".

⁹⁰⁷ Leigh, *Treatise*: 52. In other cases, the notion of dominion is included under the *locus* of divine power, as in Watson, *Body of Divinity*: 77; Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*: 1:130. Cf. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*: 1:440; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2004), 2:228.

⁹⁰⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 412. See also pp. 288-289 above in this study.

Charnock begins his explanation with the exegesis of Psalm (103.19): *The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.*⁹⁰⁹ In his style, by now customary, Charnock introduces the focal text after locating it within its immediate context from which he specifies some biblical and theological observations concluding with an exhortation to obey God and with an admonition to recognise his kingship.⁹¹⁰ For Charnock, the psalm transitions from divine mercy to divine dominion by reflecting on the greatness of God and on divine providence.

Ps. (103.19) is exegeted according to three clauses following the syntactical structure of verse 19: (1) *the Lord hath prepared*, (2) *his throne in the heavens*, and (3) *his kingdom ruleth over all.*⁹¹¹ Interestingly, Charnock's exegesis serves as the foundation for an interpretation that is decisively theological in character. Take for instance (1), from which Charnock highlights the notion conveyed by the word 'prepared' or 'established' to speak about the distinctive nature of God's authority, viz., that it is essential to the divine essence and hence infinite, immutable. Or from (2), which Charnock reckons as a metaphor for divine authority, wherein he notes the glory and the peculiarity of God's dominion, the supremacy and the vastness of his empire, and the duration of his government.⁹¹²

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid., 400.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid., 400-403.

⁹¹¹ Ibid., 403-407.

⁹¹² Ibid., 403-406.

The consideration of Psalm (103.19) in its immediate context, complemented by a theological interpretation of the text based upon an exegetical analysis, become the substrata from which Charnock elaborates the doctrinal formula that frames the discourse on God's dominion: 'God is sovereign Lord and King, and exerciseth a dominion over the whole world, both heaven and earth.'⁹¹³ This doctrinal claim suggests that the titles of Lord and King necessitate the sovereignty of God, which in turn is the basis for God's right of governing all and everywhere. The dominion of God can be distinguished in three modes of operation according to its object and regarding to its foundation. There is, in the first place, a natural dominion whereby God exercises absolute command over creation, this is founded upon God as creator. In second place, God oversees his church by means of his spiritual or gracious dominion, which is based upon the covenant of grace. Finally, there is a kingdom dominion whereby God exercises authority over both his saints, through his grace, and over the demons and unredeemed humanity, through his justice.⁹¹⁴

In regards to general propositions, Charnock indicates the differences between divine power and divine sovereignty (expressed by its theological cognates of authority and dominion).⁹¹⁵ While divine power refers to the strength whereby God effects his purposes, divine authority denotes God's

⁹¹³ Ibid., 406. Cf. Turretin, *Institutes*: III/22, ii; 1:250.

⁹¹⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 407.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid., 407-408. The power of God is not to be understood of his authority and dominion, but his strength to act'. In *ibid.*, 105.

legal *ius* (right) to do as he pleases.⁹¹⁶ More particularly, omnipotence describes the physical power of God in accomplishing what he wills whereas divine dominion denotes God's moral ability to do what it is legitimate for him to do.⁹¹⁷ For Charnock, then, the notion of divine dominion is framed by a condition of ethics and legitimacy, that is, dominion is understood as God's moral ability sanctioning the execution of the divine decree: 'This dominion is a right of making what he pleases, of possessing what he made, of disposing of what he doth possess.'⁹¹⁸

The notion of dominion is a referent about which all the divine attributes testify. For example, divine goodness safeguards the moral exercise of God's sovereignty while divine wisdom secures the correct use of his right to rule and divine power actualises what has been sovereignly prescribed by the divine will.⁹¹⁹ Consequently, Charnock infers that sovereignty and divinity are equally essential for the notion of God: 'He cannot be conceived as God, but he must be considered as the highest authority in the world. It is as possible for him not to be God, as not to be supreme.'⁹²⁰ Dominion is such an intrinsic feature of the deity that God cannot renounce to his prerogative of exerting absolute sovereignty over all of creation, including Christ's life.⁹²¹ This should not be taken, however, as detrimental towards the divine status of the

⁹¹⁶ Ibid., 407. Cf. Ibid., 1: 228, 519.

⁹¹⁷ Idem., *Works*, 2: 407. Cf. Leigh, *Treatise*: 52; Turretin, *Institutes*: III/22, ii; 1:250-251.

⁹¹⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 407-408.

⁹¹⁹ Ibid., 408.

⁹²⁰ Ibid.

⁹²¹ Ibid., 409, 457.

incarnate Son, but rather as a distinction in the economy of the Triune God vis-à-vis the divine missions wherein it is asserted that the Father takes precedence in the divine operations *ad extra* on the basis that he is identified as the *fundamentum* or *fons* [foundation or source] of the Godhead and of the divine persons.⁹²² This is consistent with the Reformed understanding of the trinitarian *ordo personarum sive relationum* [order of persons and relations] whereby the order of the divine persons *ad intra* reflect the order in the operations *ad extra*.⁹²³ Thus, Charnock explains, ‘as the order of the works, so the order of the persons is preserved in their several operations... According to the order of these works [creation, redemption, and governance] is the order of the operations of the three persons.’⁹²⁴ What is more, while asserting that Christ’s dominion is a corollary from his mediatorial role, Charnock equally affirms that this dominion is an essential property of Christ and hence absolutely free in its dispensation and necessary for his existence.⁹²⁵ It is in this manner, as connatural and absolute, that dominion cannot be communicated to other creatures, even though Charnock acknowledges that to some extent mankind manifest analogically and by participation in the *imago Dei* some form of dominion over other creatures.⁹²⁶

⁹²² Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 115-116.

⁹²³ Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*: 91-93.

⁹²⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 56, 57. Cf. Velde, *Synopsis*, 204-205; Gomarus, *Disputationes*: VII/xiv-xv; p. 25.

⁹²⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 3: 440-442.

⁹²⁶ Idem., *Works*, 2: 409-410. Cf. *Ibid.*, 1: 272; *ibid.*, 2: 130, 205.

The second unit in this discourse treats the elements upon which divine dominion is established. Dominion is founded upon the excellency of God's nature, the act of creation, the fact that God is the ultimate end of all, and the preservation of things.⁹²⁷ The natural order dictates that the more excellent should rule over the less excellent and since God retains a plethora of intellectual and moral abilities infinitely superior to that of any creature, then God has in himself the primary foundation of dominion: 'His incomparable and unparalleled excellency, as well as the greatness of his works, attracts the voluntary worship of him as a sovereign Lord.'⁹²⁸ Sovereignty and creation are indivisible insofar as creation results from the free motion of the divine will whereby, by means of divine omnipotence, God decrees to bring into existence something out of nothing and to endow it with life and motion.⁹²⁹ In other words, creation is completely dependent on the sovereign determination of the divine will and the execution of divine power. By being the ultimate and principal end of that exists, God is said to be the rightful sovereign of creation. The argument is that dominion comes by the fact that all things have their ultimate end and origin in God as he is, respectively, their final and first cause.⁹³⁰ Finally, Charnock supports his doctrine of divine dominion based upon the preservation (*preservatio* or *manutenentia*) of the universe according to an ultimate purpose.⁹³¹ Since preservation is an expansion of the

⁹²⁷ Idem., *Works*, 2: 410-414.

⁹²⁸ Ibid., 410.

⁹²⁹ Ibid., 411.

⁹³⁰ Ibid., 412-413.

⁹³¹ Ibid., 413.

work of creation (*continuata creatio*) and since the power to create out of nothing is the only suitable power to preserve, Charnock infers that the same dominion exerted in the act of creation is manifested in the act of preservation: ‘God is the Lord of all, as he is the sustainer of all by his power, as well as the creator of all by his word.’⁹³²

In the third segment, Dominion is said to be independent, absolute, not oppressive, universal, and eternal.⁹³³ The underlying assumption in this section is derived from the notion of divine simplicity, which established a relation between the divine essence and the divine dominion.⁹³⁴ Accordingly, Charnock argues that God’s dominion should be regarded to be independent, just as the divine essence is thought to be independent, that is, eternally subsisting *per se* (by himself) and *a se* (from himself) considering that God ‘receives his essence from none, so he derives his dominion from none’.⁹³⁵ Since the doctrinal foundation for affirming the independence of God’s dominion rests upon an emphasis over the absolute autonomy of the divine essence, God cannot have an external rule to himself as nothing transcends the supremacy of his being and existence.⁹³⁶ Furthermore, given that the dominion of God is independent, it follows that it must be also absolute for

⁹³² Ibid., 1: 9; *ibid.*, 2: 413.

⁹³³ *Idem.*, *Works*, 2: 414-427.

⁹³⁴ It is also worth noting that Charnock grounds his explanation on explicit or implicit suggestions to divine attributes of the first order, e.g., independence, absoluteness, perfection, and infinitude.

⁹³⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 414. Charnock has already established that divine dominion comes from the excellency of God’s own being, see the discussion on divine dominion above, pp. 247-263.

⁹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 415.

divine dominion cannot be restricted by anything but God himself: 'His actions are not regulated by any law without him, but by a law within him, the law of his own nature.'⁹³⁷ The absoluteness of God's dominion can be seen in the nature of his works *ad extra*: (1) in creating the universe, God acted freely not under compulsion of any kind; (2) in redemption, rather than being bounded by a moral duty to act, God saves some sinners and preserves some angels by an efflux of his sovereign prerogative to act in behalf of the creature; (3) in allowing trials, permitting afflictions, which are not brought by due penalty for sins, God rules according to his absolute sovereignty; (4) in the asymmetrical dispensation of his grace, God sovereignly distributes his blessings; and (5), in the suggestion that God may inflict torment on an {?} innocent person (not caused by the operation of divine justice) simply on the basis of his absolute dominion.⁹³⁸

At face value, the assertion in (5) reveals a common problem inherited from medieval theologies prone to a strong form of theological voluntarism, specifically those linked to the notion of the absolute power of God wherein the divine action in establishing the moral law is thought to be constrained only by the laws of logic.⁹³⁹ However, as it has been shown before in this investigation, while there are occasional statements in the *Discourses* that taken in isolation from Charnock's overall thought may sound as if he were a

⁹³⁷ Ibid.

⁹³⁸ Ibid., 415-418.

⁹³⁹ The resemblance with Ockham's theology is noteworthy: 'The scope of God's options matches the range of His omnipotent power whose boundaries are defined only by the principle of noncontradiction.' In Marilyn McCord Adams, "William Ockham: Voluntarist or Naturalist?," in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. John F. Wippel (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1987), 241.

voluntarist, his theology does not fit into that particular categorisation. In any case, Charnock's doctrine of divine dominion becomes liable to serious objections in regards to (5) by not providing a theological counterpoise for what it seems to be an unbalanced view about divine dominion, even though Charnock does not go as far as others in stressing the absolute sovereignty of God.⁹⁴⁰ In fact, Charnock asserts that God exercises his dominion over creation not by way of his absolute sovereignty, but in accord with the rule of his morally perfect nature: 'In all the exercises of his sovereign right, he is never unattended with those perfections of his nature' and hence 'we cannot imagine a God without a law in his own nature, unless we would fancy him a rude, tyrannical, foolish being, that hath nothing of holiness, goodness, righteousness, wisdom.'⁹⁴¹ In assessing this matter, one needs to consider the significance of other divine attributes for the operation of divine sovereignty in Charnock's theology of the divine attributes. Particular attention is demanded to those occurrences wherein Charnock frames the operation and scope of divine dominion in light of the perfections of the divine intellect such as wisdom, goodness, and holiness: 'Nor could God, without wisdom, exercise a just dominion in the world' and those of the divine will such as goodness and holiness... Any dominion which is exercised without the rules of goodness is not a true sovereignty, but an insupportable tyranny... It is lawful for God to

⁹⁴⁰ Maccovius, for instance, argues, based upon God's absolute Lordship over creation, that justice would not be forfeit had God subjected innocent people to infinite torture, in Johannes Maccovius, *Loci Communes Theologici* (Franeker: Ioannis Arcerii, 1650), XVIII/ii; p. 149. Velde has attempted to attenuate Maccovius' views on the absolute sovereignty of God by placing them within the context of the polemics concerning the doctrine of eternal reprobation and by comparing Maccovius' argument here with the explanation offered about the punitive justice of God. Consult Velde, *The Doctrine of God*: 241, n. 250.

⁹⁴¹ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 418-419.

do what he will, but his will being ordered by the righteousness of his nature, as infinite as will, cannot do but what is just'.⁹⁴² This is closely related to the qualification made by some Reformed scholastics in reference to God's *absolutum ius* (absolute right) wherein they indicated that in the absolute mode 'right' stood for the divine prerogative to determine at will everything concerning the affairs of creation, yet always in harmony with what is morally good necessarily.⁹⁴³

The dominion of God is universal in extension, that is, it encompasses all creatures (particularly over men's spirits and hearts), and all places (earth, heaven, and hell).⁹⁴⁴ Charnock operates under the metaphysical assumption that renders God's being supreme over creation, from which it is inferred: (1) that everything depends on God at an ontological level and hence that all things must be under his dominion, and (2) that God's nature is infinite and as such his dominion must extend without any limitation.⁹⁴⁵

Following the mainstream of the Reformed tradition, Charnock includes the inclinations of the human will under the scope of God's dominion.⁹⁴⁶ Though Charnock affirms both the dominion of God over the human will and the creature's freedom of choice, he does not expound (at this point) on any form of compatibilism to account for these two seemingly

⁹⁴² In *ibid.*, 19, 209, 420.

⁹⁴³ Turretin, *Institutes*: III/22, v-vi; 1:251.

⁹⁴⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 422-427.

⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 422.

⁹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 425-426.

contradictory claims. Without delving at length into the intricacies involved in theological theories of compatibilism, Charnock presupposes no contradiction between God's sovereignty and human freedom: 'He [God] is the father of spirits, and therefore hath the right of a paternal dominion over them... when he made man a free agent, and lord of the acts of his will, he did not divest himself of the sovereignty.'⁹⁴⁷ Furthermore, acquainted with the difference between immediate and mediate agency, Charnock asserts that a creature is not capable of persuading the will to act without the intervention of some sort of mediation, which it may come in the form of arguments for the understanding to grasp and subsequently to prompt the will to act in a determined manner.⁹⁴⁸ On the contrary, God needs no mediation to move the creature's heart (i.e. understanding, will, and emotions) for he effects his will on others by means of the efficacy of his sovereign dominion.⁹⁴⁹ Similarly, arguing from the ontological distinction between first (*prima*) and second (*secunda*) causes and from the hierarchical order implied by it, Charnock asserts that God (*prima causa*) takes precedence over the creature's will (*secunda causa*) in every contingent effect and because of it God can change the inclination of the human will one way or another without inflicting any compulsion on it.⁹⁵⁰

In the last proposition, Charnock asserts that the dominion of God is eternal, not in the sense of its operation since the objects of God's sovereignty

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid., 425. Cf. Turretin, *Institutes*: X/1, i; 1:659.

⁹⁴⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 425.

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid., 426.

are not eternal, but in the sense of its foundation since the essence of God is eternal.⁹⁵¹ The presupposition here is the doctrine of divine simplicity from which Charnock assumes no ontological distinction in the being of God between his essence and his attributes.

The dominion of God is manifested in at least four ways: (1) the giving of the law, (2) the decree of election, (3) the government of creation, and (4) the stipulations for the act of redemption.⁹⁵² The making of the law is the first act of divine sovereignty, and this an exclusive prerogative of God for no law can be compulsory had it not been preceded by the agreement of the divine law. Following Suárez, Charnock asserts that the dominion of God is more conspicuous in the divine command than in the divine promise since the latter suggests God being compelled by himself to himself whereas the former indicates God compelling the creature to obey his precepts.⁹⁵³ This suggest, among other things, the supremacy (in excellency and extend) of the law of God over any other form of legislation.

The dominion of God with respect to his law includes the power of dispensing with what Charnock names ‘ordinary laws of nature in the inferior creature.’⁹⁵⁴ This implies that God’s sovereignty involves the supersession of the regular course of action of nature (miracles and wonders), changes with respect to God’s commands about ceremonial practices, and the elimination of

⁹⁵¹ Ibid.

⁹⁵² Ibid., 427-461. Since the theme of divine providence and government has been included in other sections in this research, special attention is given to (1), (2), and (4).

⁹⁵³ Ibid., 427.

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid., 431.

the law of works as part of his covenantal demands. This suggests that there is an important distinction within the laws of God for although he, by a sovereign act, may overcome or modify certain established laws, there are other divine precepts such as the moral law, ‘which have an eternal reason in themselves and their own nature’, that cannot be displaced.⁹⁵⁵

Since God is Lord over all of creation, his sovereignty extends to electing some for salvation and to the right of passing over (preterition) others for condemnation.⁹⁵⁶ That salvation is exclusively the result of God’s sovereignty can be observed in the fact that election is neither based on human merits (contrary to Roman Catholicism) nor in the foreseeing of works (contrary to Arminianism), but in the eternal determination of the divine will according to his good pleasure.⁹⁵⁷ What is more, the decree of predestination takes place in eternity before any transgression of the law and hence it excludes any efficient causation excerpted upon the decree by the temporal actions of the creature: ‘The redemption of the world is after the creation of the world, but the decree whereby the world was created, and whereby it was redeemed, was from eternity.’⁹⁵⁸ It is precisely for this reason that the merits of Christ are not considered to be the *fundamentum electionis* (foundation of election) since ‘[t]he decree of sending Christ did not [logically] precede, but

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid., 430.

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid., 433.

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid., 435, 436. This line of reasoning remains constant in Charnock’s soteriology, as it can be observed, for instance, in the monergistic understanding of the act of regeneration: ‘God’s good pleasure is the original cause of this work upon the will, not the will’s good pleasure. The work then depending on God’s good pleasure, excludes any dependency on the will of man; it is therefore called a creation, to shew God’s independence upon anything as to this work.’ In Idem., *Works*, 3: 437.

⁹⁵⁸ Idem., *Works*, 1: 353.

followed in the order of nature, the determination of choosing some.’⁹⁵⁹ In consensus with others in his tradition, Charnock believes that the decree of God is absolute on the basis that no other medium or secondary cause take precedence over it.⁹⁶⁰ This in turn implies that the divine decree manifests the sovereignty of God as far as it involves all creaturely affairs by being the efficient cause of all good and the permissive (yet active) cause of evil.⁹⁶¹

Divine dominion also reveals the role of God as redeemer in the work of redemption: dominion is manifested in the sovereign acts of providence whereby God determines the salvation of the elect. To explain this point, Charnock turns to Christ to indicate that, though divine by nature, he also was the object of God’s dominion.⁹⁶² This dominion has been eternally established according to the provisos of the covenantal relation between Father and Son. In it, Christ is said to be ‘under the legal covenant, having subjected himself to it, and covenanted to fulfil the conditions of it’.⁹⁶³

In similar manner, God’s dominion is shown in the appointment of Christ as satisfaction for sin.⁹⁶⁴ That the Son subjects to the Father is, in this instance, a matter of divine ownership for it is argued that the Father

⁹⁵⁹ Ibid., 2: 434.

⁹⁶⁰ Cf. Muller, *Christ and the Decree*: 153; Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 143.

⁹⁶¹ Also, the dominion of God is demonstrated, among other things, in the restrictive manner whereby saving grace is bestowed upon sinners, in the different effects of the means of grace, in the determination of when and how God dispenses his blessings. For details on each of these ways of manifesting God’s dominion in the decree of election, see Charnock, *Works*, 2: 441-449.

⁹⁶² Ibid., 457.

⁹⁶³ Idem., *Works*, 3: 357.

⁹⁶⁴ Idem., *Works*, 2: 458.

‘possesses’ the Son by an act of eternal generation.⁹⁶⁵ Once again, the dominion established over the Son by the act of eternal generation does not imply an essential subordination caused by ontological inferiority since in the act of eternal begetting the Father actively begets (*generatio activa*) by communicating his very infinite essence to the Son, who in turn is passively begotten (*generatio passiva*) by receiving it.⁹⁶⁶ Elsewhere, Charnock declares that eternal generation is the foundation for the sending of the Son. The mission of the Son has been sovereignly established on the basis of the Father’s ‘right of sending *propter relationem originis* [because of a relation of origin]; and because of Christ’s voluntary putting himself into the relation of a mediator.’⁹⁶⁷

Furthermore, God demonstrates his dominion as a redeemer in his determination to transfer humanity’s sins upon Christ. Charnock argues his point from the theological concept of imputation, which in this case ultimately signifies God’s resolution to impute the penalty reserved for the creature onto Christ.⁹⁶⁸ This punitive act is, in turn, preceded by God’s sovereign resolve of transferring the creature’s sins upon Christ. The logical order in the temporal execution of God’s decree is of utmost significance for by transferring the sins of the sinner upon Christ before imputing the latter with the guilt of the

⁹⁶⁵ Ibid. The use of terms such as ‘possession’ to indicate the Father’s eternal ownership of the Son is not idiosyncratic. Brakel, for instance, speaks of the ‘second Person being eternally possessed by the Father’, in Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*: 1:161.

⁹⁶⁶ Charnock, *Works*, 4: 557. Cf. Velde, *Synopsis*, 190-193, 204-205, also editorial comments in p. 205, n. 6.

⁹⁶⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 3: 411.

⁹⁶⁸ Idem., *Works*, 2: 458-459.

former, the moral perfection of God in this act of justice is safeguarded: ‘A punishment for sin, as most understand it, which could not be righteously inflicted, had not sin been first righteously imputed by the consent of Christ, and the order of the Judge of the world.’⁹⁶⁹

This unit concludes by indicating that the sovereignty of God is observed in the exaltation of Christ and in his appointment as redeemer (the means of redemption) and, by extension, in the dominion exercised over Christ’s offices of priest and king.⁹⁷⁰ The account begins with a rejection of such notions that ascribe Christ’s exaltation to a natural right resulting from his humanity being united to his divinity. Instead, it is claimed that Christ’s exalted dignity is founded upon God’s sovereign will. The argument presupposes a distinction between the sovereignty of the eternal Son as the second Person of the Trinity and the authority of Christ as the incarnated Son wherein the sovereignty of the former is said to be intrinsic whereas the authority of the latter is claimed to be conferred.⁹⁷¹ If conferred, then, it must be by the determination of the Father in response to Son becoming flesh.⁹⁷²

Patience (*De Patientia Dei*)

Properly speaking, *patientia* is an attribute of the divine nature that figuratively describes an *affectio* (affection) or *virtus* (virtue) belonging to the

⁹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 459. Goodness itself, which serves as the ethical principle in the operation of the divine attributes, would have prevented the punishment of an innocent, see *ibid.*, 34.

⁹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 460-461.

⁹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 460.

⁹⁷² *Ibid.*

divine will.⁹⁷³ Consequently, the subject of *patientia Dei* is found in the Reformed scholastic systems alongside other affections of the divine will such as *veritas* (truth), *caritas* (charity), *amor* (love), *zelus* (zeal), *ira* (anger), *misericordia* (mercy), and *odio* (hatred).⁹⁷⁴

To speak of the affections of God in Charnock's theology of the divine attributes, one needs to comprehend that in the faculty psychology of the seventeenth-century the concept of *affectio Dei* comprised various metaphoric or figurative descriptors manifesting the divine will (and intellect) in its motions *ad extra*, that is, affective manifestations of God in relation to finite objects.⁹⁷⁵ In what matters to this investigation, it is significant to note that the same anthropopathic description presented as divine affections in the Reformed scholastic systems is suggested in Charnock's theology of the divine attributes.⁹⁷⁶

⁹⁷³ Muller explains that, when referring to God, the Reformed orthodox preferred the terms 'affections' or 'virtues' over that of 'passions' (*passiones*). The latter presupposes mutability and dependence on an external object, something that cannot be predicated of God. Muller, *PRRD*: 3:553. Cf. *Westminster Confession of Faith* (§II.1), which uses the qualification '*without* body, parts or *passions*' to describe the nature of God. (Emphasis mine) Charnock, more precisely, qualifies the rejection of the term 'passions' to the description of God's nature as human passions and within them particularly to those implying weakness or limitation, see Charnock, *Works*, 1: 400-402. Some scholars have used the word 'virtue' to describe divine patience in Charnock's theology, see Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*: 82.

⁹⁷⁴ See Cocceius, *Summa*: III/x, 52, 67; pp. 151-153. Cocceius includes in the same group the attributes of *sanctitas* (holiness), *iustitia* (justice) and *potentia* (power), see *ibid.*, III/x, 52-75; pp. 151-155. The Leiden divines speak of 'virtues of his [God's] intellect and will', in Velde, *Synopsis*, 177. Both, the *Summa* and the *Synopsis* refer to the patience of God in terms of *longanimitas* (longsuffering).

⁹⁷⁵ Muller, *PRRD*: 3:559. Accordingly, Thysius defines divine affections as 'nothing other than God's ardent will towards us, and its power and effect in creatures. These are classified by different names, according to the variety of things that are their object, and according to the ways in which they are performed, and their various effects.' Velde, *Synopsis*, 177-179. Cf. Ames, *Marrow*: I/iv, 62; p. 16.

⁹⁷⁶ Take for instance, the references in the *Discourses* wherein terms such as 'love' and 'delight' are explicitly identified as affections belonging to the nature of God. In Charnock, *Works*, 1: 89, 91. Charnock also speaks of the 'truth of God' (in *Idem.*, *Works*, 3: 269.), and the

Charnock begins this theological homily by presenting some general observations derived from the immediate context of the text selected for lecturing on the patience of God, Nahum (1.3): *The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked; the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.*⁹⁷⁷ In what could be identified in homiletical studies as an expository style of presenting the content of the Bible, Charnock dissects verses 1-3 in sequential clauses to provide the exegetical background that would serve as the introduction for the key doctrinal formulation on the discussion of divine patience.⁹⁷⁸ There are some claims worth noting from Charnock's exegetical analysis. For instance, one cannot ignore the importance Charnock gives to the disclosure implied by the name 'God'; in it, Charnock observes a reference to the covenant as far as 'God' represents a covenantal name—in contrast to the signification of 'Lord', which imply the power of judgement, thus 'the covenant runs "I am your God" or "the Lord your God;" mostly *God* without *Lord*, never *Lord* without *God*.'⁹⁷⁹ Also significant are Charnock's comments concerning the first clause of verse 3, *The Lord is slow to anger*, from which it is noted: (1) the anthropomorphic nature of the text, and (2) a qualification of divine anger wherein it is indicated that while being an aspect of the nature of

'anger of God' (in Idem., *Works*, 1: 501.) in a context whereby it is implied that these are understood to be essential properties of the divine essence.

⁹⁷⁷ These observations are (1) God is a comfort to his people in times of affliction, (2) The execution of God's final judgement of God over the enemies of the church is a comfort to the latter, and (3) the providence of God allows that the victories of persecutors prompt the triumph of others over the former. Idem., *Works*, 2: 500.

⁹⁷⁸ Ibid., 501-504.

⁹⁷⁹ Ibid., 501. Charnock follows the insights of Francisco Ribera (1537-1591), the Jesuit scholar. Most certainly from Ribera's commentary on the minor prophets. Cf. Millington, *Bibliotheca Charnockiana*, 3.

God, anger is not always in execution.⁹⁸⁰ Furthermore, the power cited in this verse is said to denote the strength of God in restraining his anger, from which Charnock deduces that the power of God is, by acting upon himself, that which produces the delay of his wrath.⁹⁸¹ This does not mean, however, that God lacks of the power required to effect his justice for ‘his power is as great to punish, as his patience to spare’, but it simply means that God delays the execution of his punitive justice.⁹⁸²

The main doctrinal claim of the discourse is succinct: patience is a property of the divine nature.⁹⁸³ Rather than being prompted by a simplistic approach, the simplicity observed in Charnock’s proposition is explained by the need of making a case for the theological legitimacy of invoking ‘patience’ to describe an aspect of the nature of God. At the outset of the doctrinal section, Charnock expands on the reference ‘God’s slowness to anger’ seeking to define divine patience more precisely; accordingly, ‘[God’s patience] signifies a willingness to defer, and an unwillingness to pour forth his wrath upon sinful creatures, he moderates his provoked justice, and forbears to revenge the injuries he daily meets with in the world.’⁹⁸⁴ In this explanation,

⁹⁸⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 501-502.

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 502. It can be argued, from Charnock’s theology of the divine attributes, that the wrath of God is contained by the power of God just as it is always directed by the rector principle of the wisdom of God. See *ibid.*, 96.

⁹⁸² *Ibid.*, 502.

⁹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 504.

⁹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* Very similar definitions of divine patience are found amongst the Continental Reformed scholastics: *Patientia est, qua ita iram suam moderatur Deus erga creaturas, ut vel poenas differat, vel iram uno momento non effundat.* [Patience is that whereby God regulates his wrath towards the creature, either that punishment may be delayed, or that wrath may not be released for a moment] In Wendelin, *Christianae Theologiae*: I/i, xxv; p. 106.

divine patience is taken positively and negatively in relation to the divine will. Positively, patience implies a volitional act of God whereby he postpones the discharge of his wrath; negatively, patience is an intentional restraint on the divine will preventing the immediate release of God's wrath.

Charnock is evidently conscious of the problems of ascribing affections to God noted earlier, and thus he reckons necessary to explain that patience, when predicated of God, does not suggest suffering, as when predicated of the creature.⁹⁸⁵ This qualification of divine patience is warranted by Charnock's commitment to the classical doctrine of divine impassibility.⁹⁸⁶ This is not to say, however, that by being impassible God is dispassionate in the sense of being apathetic or insensible to the affairs of creation; on the contrary, while being transcendent, immutable, and hence impassible (i.e., immune to emotional changes of state by being acted upon from without), God is capable of establishing loving relations with his creature: 'We must conclude him an inapprehensive God, before we can conclude him an insensible God.'⁹⁸⁷ Interestingly, this feature has been noted elsewhere; take for instance Robert Lister's monograph on divine impassibility, wherein he concludes that, 'Charnock's affirmation of divine impassibility did not thereby lead to him to

⁹⁸⁵ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 504.

⁹⁸⁶ In general, impassibility is commonly explained in apophatic terms to deny: (1) that God can be imperilled by an external influence, i.e., that God can be acted from without, (2) that God can experience emotional change from within, and (3) that God can be subjected to experience pain, pleasure, or suffering caused by an external agent. Consult *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. "Impassibility of God."

⁹⁸⁷ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 507.

the conclusion that God is entirely dispassionate, even when “negative” emotions are in view.’⁹⁸⁸

Charnock sees necessary to make a theological distinction between the divine attributes of patience, goodness, and mercy. While patience is a part of goodness and mercy, there are significant differences in regards to its objects; patience, for instance, is directed towards the sinners in their state of transgressors of the law (i.e., criminals) whereas mercy and goodness are aimed respectively at sinners in their state of misery and at the whole creation (humans, angels, and demons) in their creaturely status.⁹⁸⁹

The conceptual similitude between the attributes of goodness, mercy, and patience lead Charnock to formulate other theological claims: (1) that the patience of God is not insensible, and (2) that the patience of God is neither limited in power nor hesitant in execution. In proposing (1), Charnock seeks to reject those notions of divine patience wherein God is conceived (allegedly by being patient) as indifferent to the provocations of his justice, indolent towards the sinner’s plight, and ignorant of the transgressions committed against him. In response, Charnock notes, on the one hand, that goodness would prevent patience to be caused by a flaw in the character of God, and, on

⁹⁸⁸ Lister, *Impassible and Impassioned*: 121. What is more, scholars have indicated that in earlier versions, the doctrine of impassibility did not carry the idea of indifference or inactivity neither was it thought to be incompatible with certain affections. G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1936), 7; Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 48.

⁹⁸⁹ Interestingly, Watson understands the goodness of God in such manner that its definition includes mercy and patience also: ‘This relative goodness is nothing else but his mercy, which is an innate propenseness in God to pity and succour such as are in misery.’ In Watson, *Body of Divinity*: 93.

the other, that divine omniscience gives no space for attributing ignorance to God.⁹⁹⁰ Though Charnock does not mention it here, he could have added in response to this objection that God cannot but punish evil considering that the moral perfection of his nature entails retaliation for any violation against the divine law. Concerning (2), Charnock argues that God's slowness to anger is not the result of a decline in his power to enact his reprisal, this is so since there is no variation or fluctuation within the divine nature because God is pure actuality, *actus purus*; besides, '[h]is mercy would be a feeble pity, if he were destitute of power to relieve; and his justice a slighted scare-crow, without power to punish'.⁹⁹¹ Furthermore, Charnock could have argued (based upon his claims elsewhere) that since patience and power share the same excellency (*per* divine simplicity), no attribute outranks ontologically the other, which is to say, in relevance to the point here discussed, that the same infinitude that clothes God's slowness to anger must involve his power to punish.⁹⁹²

Interestingly, Charnock establishes a link between the divine will and the attributes of patience, power, and holiness to say that patience is ultimately a manifestation of the fullness of God's power, that is, an indication of a strength within God himself (*in se*) capable of restraining him from the

⁹⁹⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 507.

⁹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 108. Cf. *Ibid.*, 123. What is more, the power of God is manifested precisely in the moral and judicial government God exercises over creation. *Ibid.*, 139-145.

⁹⁹² This is a matter that Charnock discusses later, there he notes that patience does not operate in contradiction with other divine attributes: 'One perfection must not cloud another... Justice will be fully recompensed for the delay, when, after patience is abused, it can spread itself over the offender with a more unquestionable authority, it will haw more arguments to hit the sinner in the teeth with, and silence him.' In *ibid.*, 512. Cf. *Idem.*, *Works*, 4: 282.

immediate execution of his verdicts. This prompts Charnock to offer a theological interpretation of Nahum (1.3) wherein the clause ‘slow to anger, and great in power’ is understood to speak of God’s dominion over himself, a self-ruling by which God moderates his own affections in accordance to the moral perfection of his will.⁹⁹³ What is more, Charnock asserts that there is more evidence of the infinite power of God in the display of his patience than it would be in multiple acts of creation *ex nihilo* as far as the former implies a form of power that it would not be required for the actualisation of the latter, that is, ‘the δυνατὸν αὐτοῦ, a power over himself.’⁹⁹⁴

By conceiving patience as an extension of divine mercy, Charnock is led to conclude that the foundation of the former rests upon the death of Christ.⁹⁹⁵ This affirmation is motivated by two interrelated factors; one is clearly Christological, the other is covenantal. On the one hand, Charnock explains that the sacrificial death of Christ is the condition *sine qua non* for the patience of God to flow in the direction of its objects.⁹⁹⁶ On the other hand, Charnock believes that Christ’s voluntary sacrifice is the Son’s fulfilment of the legal provisions established in the covenant of redemption.⁹⁹⁷ Therefore, since the covenant of redemption is the eternal foundation of the covenant of grace, patience is said to be explained ‘upon the account of the gospel, and a fruit of

⁹⁹³ Idem., *Works*, 2: 508-509.

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid., 509.

⁹⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁶ Ibid. For Charnock on the necessity of Christ’s death, consult Idem., *Works*, 5: 3-48.

⁹⁹⁷ Idem., *Works*, 5: 10-11.

the covenant of grace, whereof Christ was mediator.’⁹⁹⁸ To explain how one can affirm that the death of Christ is the cause of God’s patience before the historical event at Golgotha had taken place, Charnock notes that it is assumed on the basis of the promises concerning the advent of Christ in his mediatory role of redeemer.⁹⁹⁹

Interestingly, Charnock opts for not following his habitual threefold outline to elaborate on the manifestation of divine patience. Instead of looking at God’s acts *ad extra* (creation, redemption, and providence/government), Charnock focuses on three groups of people (ancient fathers, gentiles, and Israelites) and in one overall theme (divine judgment) to make his case in favour of the display of divine patience.¹⁰⁰⁰ In brief, the patience of God is manifested in the delay to punish the sins of the ancient fathers immediately after they broke the divine command, in the delay to punish the sins of the gentiles considering that they were in a lower state of depravity, in the delay to punish the offenses of the Israelites for their ungratefulness and stubbornness.¹⁰⁰¹ Additionally, the patience of God is demonstrated particularly in the warnings that God issues before his judgment is enacted, in the delay of the execution of his judgments, in the unwillingness to execute his

⁹⁹⁸ Idem., *Works*, 2: 509.

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid. As to why the death of Christ is necessary for the salvation of those preceding his advent, see Idem., *Works*, 5: 12-14.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Idem., *Works*, 2: 512-524.

¹⁰⁰¹ Ibid., 512-514.

judgements and in the moderation of it, and finally in the abundant mercies after his justice has been provoked.¹⁰⁰²

In a segment, unique amid the discourses on the divine attributes, Charnock considers the reasons accounting for God's generous display of patience towards his creatures.¹⁰⁰³ Six different explanations are provided; one involving the disclosure of an aspect of God's nature, two including a purpose directed to humankind in general, two more particularly concerning the sake of the church, and one relating to the twofold functionality of patience.

For Charnock, divine patience reveals that God is willing to placate his wrath on the condition of genuinely seeking after him, this is to say that there is a definite *telos* in the exercise of divine patience, and on God's self-disclosure of being appeaseable.¹⁰⁰⁴ Theologically, this is important for it provides an explanation as to why God is patient and simultaneously it corrects the notions of divine justice understood only in terms of divine implacability.¹⁰⁰⁵ Closely related to the previous explanation is Charnock's

¹⁰⁰² Ibid., 514-524.

¹⁰⁰³ Ibid., 524-530.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid., 524. Interestingly, the above resonates with the concern of one contemporary biblical scholar, who warns about the risks involved in losing sight of the 'personal and affective' character of certain divine attributes. See D.A. Carson, "The Wrath of God," in *Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2008), 48-49.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Not in a few instances throughout the *Discourses*, Charnock explains (implicitly or explicitly) the compatibility between the nature of attributes such as that of justice, wrath, anger, and the satisfaction of their demands, vis-à-vis attributes such as goodness, mercy, and patience. Noteworthy here is the role divine wisdom plays in Charnock's theology of the divine attributes concerning this matter. For Charnock, the wisdom of God accounts for designing a scheme of redemption wherein it complies with the demands of divine justice whilst, at the same time, it serves as the foundation for the mercies of God. Consult, Charnock, *Works*, 2: 52-55.

claim about the double function of divine patience.¹⁰⁰⁶ Given that the *finis proximus* (the immediate purpose) of divine patience is to guide sinners to repentance, one needs to explain whether patience becomes ineffective when it is ultimately abused and rejected or whether it takes another role. Charnock opts for the latter option saying that in those instances patience becomes an amplifier of God's wrath.¹⁰⁰⁷ Drawing from a technical distinction used in medieval theology whereby the morality of a human action was evaluated according to the intentionality of the moral agent in doing X (*finis operantis*) and the end resulting from X itself (*finis operis*), Charnock writes: 'The proper and immediate end [*finis proximus*] of his [God's] long-suffering is to lead men to repentance; but after they have, by their obstinacy, fitted themselves for destruction, he bears longer with them, to magnify his wrath more upon them, and if it is not the *finis operantis*, it is at least the *finis operis*, where patience is abused.'¹⁰⁰⁸ Though syntactically difficult to support, it seems sensible to construe Charnock's words in the quote above as suggesting that the exacerbation of God's wrath towards the unrepentant is not the *finis operantis* (the primary intention of God's will) but the *finis operis* (the intrinsic consequence of abusing God's patience).¹⁰⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid., 529-530.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibid., 530.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid. For the meaning of the terms in Catholic medieval theology, see James T. Bretzke, *Consecrated Phrases: A Latin Theological Dictionary*, s.v. "Finis Operantis."; Idem., *Consecrated Phrases: A Latin Theological Dictionary*, s.v. "Finis Operis."

¹⁰⁰⁹ This interpretation takes in consideration the technical meaning of the terms *finis operis* and *finis operantis* while it assumes that Charnock would reject any notion of God wherein a contradiction between the intention of the divine will with respect to X and the resulting effect of the action X takes place.

Finally, God is slow to anger for the benefit of humankind, which can be manifested in at least two ways: (1) in delaying his judgments over the creature while inviting her to repent, and (2) in permitting the propagation of people by not destroying them though God could have executed the due punishment for sin (i.e., death) immediately after the first transgression took place.¹⁰¹⁰ More particularly, the patience of God takes place for the benefit of the church; on the one hand, God seeks the continuance of his people by providing the time necessary for it to grow in number; on the other hand, God seeks the instruction of the saints by temporarily sparing the wicked from his wrath for purposes concerning the safety or trial of his church.¹⁰¹¹

Pars Practica: Practical Application of the Doctrine

In accord with his customary style, Charnock explains the practical use of the doctrine of divine power in terms of information, comfort, and exhortation.¹⁰¹² The fact that omnipotence belongs exclusively to the divine nature makes of this sort of power an incommunicable property and thus impossible to be in possession of any other being but God, but since Christ's omnipotence is inferred from Scriptures, then, it goes the argument, Christ must be God. The omnipotence of Christ is mainly revealed in his participation in the act of creation. According to Charnock, creation cannot be thought simply as the concurrence between the Son's and the Father's attributes to bring everything into existence but as a single operation of the

¹⁰¹⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 526-528.

¹⁰¹¹ *Ibid.*, 528-529.

¹⁰¹² *Ibid.*, 164-187.

Triune God whereby the Son acts in the same manner of operation as that of the Father, 'not by a delegated, but natural and essential power, by one undivided operation and manner of working'¹⁰¹³ In this manner, Christ's role in creation is not instrumental, that is, he is simply not the medium by which God creates but, as with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the agent of creation itself. Moreover, had the Son be the instrumental cause of creation, he could have not been eternal, but Scripture testifies abundantly of the Son's perpetual duration (Heb. 1. 10-11; Rev 1. 8), thus in creation he must have 'acted by a divine omnipotency, which surmounts an instrumental cause.'¹⁰¹⁴ Additionally, the omnipotence of God serves as the foundation to apprise of other perfections in the divine nature such as divine aseity, immutability. The former by noting that omnipotence implies complete sufficiency and the former by arguing that an almighty being could not be liable to change as the consequence of forces outside of himself, 'If God be almighty, he can want nothing... Since he is omnipotent, nothing can hurt him... so he is incapable of being forced to any change.'¹⁰¹⁵

In acknowledging the omnipotence of God, Charnock see a source for comfort in all afflictions as there is no rival for divine power in acting on behalf of God's people.¹⁰¹⁶ Likewise, the omnipotence of God provides a

¹⁰¹³ Ibid., 164.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ibid., 168. It is worth noting that Charnock includes for the first-time the divinity of the Holy Spirit as one of the uses derived from knowing the divine perfections. Though Charnock does expand as much as he does when discussing the divinity of Christ, he notes that since omnipotence is predicated of the operations of the Spirit his deity must be inferred accordingly. Ibid., 169.

¹⁰¹⁵ Ibid., 169-170.

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid., 180.

guarantee for the believer's assurance of preservation, 'It is the great comfort that the lowest distresses of the church are a fit scene for the discovery of this attribute, and that the glory of God's omnipotence, and the church's security, are so straitly linked together.'¹⁰¹⁷

In regards to the use of exhortation, the doctrine of the power of God urges the believer to meditate on its importance so that the name of God can be properly glorified in prayer by the constant remembrance of all his mighty acts in behalf of his church, 'We cannot glorify God without due consideration of this attribute... Faith will be spiritless, and prayers will be lifeless, if power be not eyed by us in those things which cannot be done with an arm of omnipotence.'¹⁰¹⁸

As holiness is a transcended attribute of the divine essence, reflection upon it provides an important number of practical principles. For instance, concerning God himself, holiness must be thought as that essential property of the divine being which prevents him from being the personification of a supreme but 'deformed power'.¹⁰¹⁹ In fact, no proper conception of God must be conceived without the attribute of holiness.¹⁰²⁰ Reflection upon holiness informs one about the essential otherness of God vis-à-vis creation. Though holiness is intrinsic and necessary for the being of God, the creature's holiness is accidental and, in fact, derived: 'No creature can be essentially holy but by

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid., 182.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid., 183, 186.

¹⁰¹⁹ Ibid., 243.

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid., 191. Cf. Ibid., 251.

participation from the chief fountain of holiness, but we must have the same kind of holiness, the same truth of holiness'.¹⁰²¹ Likewise, the holiness of God as observed in the operations of his justice and the execution of his wrath guarantees that sin will not go unpunished. The fact that punitive justice and divine wrath are in tune with divine holiness prompted Charnock to speak of a doctrine of redemption in which '[t]here is therefore a necessity of a satisfaction of the holiness of God by some sufficient mediator.'¹⁰²²

In similar manner, Charnock argues that the knowledge of divine holiness brings comfort with it. God cannot but honour the determinations of the covenant: 'God's holiness engaged in an inviolable covenant.'¹⁰²³ Therefore, God is a proper object of trust and dependence as far as his holiness guarantees that he will answer the prayers of his creatures, that he will comfort the believer during times of tribulation, and that he will maintain his protection upon his church.¹⁰²⁴ Finally, the eminence of divine holiness exhorts us to have a proper notion about the nature of God, but also about ourselves. The benefits of attending to this exhortation include getting a proper sense of humility, orienting one's affections in the right direction, displaying fear and reverence before the majesty of God, expressing a desire to be conformed in God's image, and achieving a genuine sense of contentment.¹⁰²⁵

¹⁰²¹ Ibid., 256-257, 266.

¹⁰²² Ibid., 253. Interestingly, Charnock expands on this theme by framing his argument in consideration of some covenantal principles, namely, the eternal stipulations of the covenant of redemption in which the God the Father appoints God the Son to accomplish redemption on behalf of his church. In *ibid.*, 255.

¹⁰²³ Ibid., 258.

¹⁰²⁴ Ibid., 257-258.

¹⁰²⁵ Ibid., 258-263.

Concerning the uses of knowing the doctrine of divine goodness, Charnock indicates that the essential goodness of God instructs the church about the different manners wherein this divine perfection could be debased. The list of transgressions against divine goodness include, among others things, ungratefulness, unbelief, distrust in divine providence, and ascribing one's welfares to a different cause than that of divine goodness.¹⁰²⁶ Likewise, to know that God is good provides instruction concerning the Fall. The argument is that the judgement pending over the created order cannot be explained as if it had been established from creation because '[i]nfinite goodness could never move infinite justice to inflict punishment upon creatures, if they had not highly merited it. We cannot think that any creature was blemished with a principle of disturbance as it came first out of the hand of God.'¹⁰²⁷ Therefore, something calamitous must have happened to account for the precarious state wherein creation remains ever since, and this is the Fall. Furthermore, divine goodness instruct the church concerning the suitability of God to govern the world: just as power is the necessary principle whereby God executes his decree to create the universe, goodness is that necessary attribute which moves God to create and maintain the universe: 'Power without goodness would deface, instead of preserving.'¹⁰²⁸ What is more, the perfection of goodness is the foundation of all acceptable religion, devotion, and worship; in fact, even pagan religions were built upon the assumption of divine goodness

¹⁰²⁶ Ibid., 365.

¹⁰²⁷ Ibid., 374.

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid., 376.

as their adherents hoped to obtain assistance from their gods.¹⁰²⁹ Lastly, divine goodness makes God the most desirable object of trust and confidence.¹⁰³⁰ Charnock asserts that it is the very being of God, more precisely his goodness, that which is the principal foundation of faith.¹⁰³¹ This somehow resonates with the Reformed scholastic axiom whereby God is thought to be the *principia essendi theologiae*.¹⁰³²

In the context of explaining how divine goodness makes God worthy of obedience and honour, Charnock affirms that God delights only in the execution of that which is good. Charnock explains that though divine sovereignty would allow God to order ‘that which is indifferent in its own nature’, that is, positive and ceremonial laws, God would not be able to dictate anything contrary to the righteousness of his nature neither would he be able to prompt the creature to do anything damaging to herself.¹⁰³³ By being pure goodness, God cannot but command that which is in harmony with his own righteousness, otherwise God would be acting against his own nature.¹⁰³⁴

Here Charnock encounters a perennial conundrum for theologians and philosophers alike concerning with the ontological origin of the good: does God instruct an action *X* because it is morally right, or is *X* morally right

¹⁰²⁹ Ibid., 378.

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid., 383-385.

¹⁰³¹ Ibid., 383.

¹⁰³² See pp. 54-58 above in this study. Cf. Muller, *PRRD*: 1:430-437.

¹⁰³³ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 386.

¹⁰³⁴ Ibid., 387.

because God instructs it? This rendering of the so-called Euthyphro's dilemma poses an objection against ethical systems that are built up under the assumption of divine command theories of morality.¹⁰³⁵ If the first clause is taken as the answer for the question above, then it follows that there is a criterion of goodness that is independent from God. On the contrary, if the second clause is preferred, then morality ends up being arbitrary. The former option assumes a non-voluntaristic view of morality wherein something is good regardless of the divine will whereas the latter alternative subscribes to ethical voluntarism, a notion wherein the good is thought to be determined exclusively by what God wills. Neither option is theologically desirable: one injures God's moral freedom by placing an autonomous form of goodness above him whilst the other makes theistic-based morality irrelevant by assuming that God might impose whatever kind of moral law he wills.¹⁰³⁶

It is worth noting that by saying that the moral goodness of a thing is not dictated by the commands of the divine will, Charnock unequivocally takes side on the debate that took place within the Reformed orthodox concerning the ontological status of the good.¹⁰³⁷ Indeed, Charnock was not the only

¹⁰³⁵ Originally, the 'dilemma' is part of a dialogue between Socrates and Euthyphro described in Plato's *Euthyphro*: 'Is that which is holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods?' In Plato, *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, trans. Harold North Fowler, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1977), 35. Interestingly, some have argued that the dilemma comes from an mistaken reading of Plato, see Timothy Chappell, "Euthyphro's 'Dilemma', Socrates' Daimonion and Plato's God," in *God, Goodness and Philosophy*, ed. Harriet A. Harris (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2011), 63-65.

¹⁰³⁶ For a helpful description of the problems involved in the Euthyphro's dilemma, consult David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 31-48.

¹⁰³⁷ Simon J. G. Burton, "Samuel Rutherford's *Euthyphro* Dilemma: Reformed Perspective on the Scholastic Natural Law Tradition" in *Reformed Orthodoxy in Scotland: Essays on Scottish Theology 1560-1775*, ed. Aaron Clay Denlinger (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 138-139; Velde, *The Doctrine of God*: 719; Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*: 93-94.

Reformed divine during the High Orthodoxy era who followed a similar line of reasoning. Heidegger, for instance, argued that neither God's will nor his commands, but instead the absolute purity of the divine nature [*quia ejus purissimae naturae*] is that from which all kind of moral goodness conforms.¹⁰³⁸ Likewise, Mastricht answers in the negative to the question whether all righteousness depend entirely in the will of God [*An omnis iustitia pendeat a sola voluntate Dei?*] He notes that though nothing antecedes the being of God, something may precede his will and thus some things may be righteous in themselves [*quae sunt iuris naturalis.*]¹⁰³⁹

Like Heidegger and Mastricht, Charnock believes that the ontological goodness of something does not depend on the will of God in commanding it; instead, when commanding something, God already considers it to be morally good: 'The truth is, all his moral precepts are comely in themselves, and they receive not their goodness from God's positive command, but that command supposeth their goodness.'¹⁰⁴⁰ As it has been noted, this position safeguards Charnock's moral theology from the arbitrariness linked to some forms of theological voluntarism; however, it leaves it open to the question of whether the divine command has to conform to an autonomous rule of goodness apart from God himself. In response, Charnock reasons that if things receive their moral goodness by an antecedent dictate of the divine will, then a prior determination of the divine will would also be required for God to be good.

¹⁰³⁸ Johann Heinrich Heidegger, *Corpus Theologiae Christianae* (Zurich: Joh. Henrici Bodmeri, 1700), III/Thes. 89-90; p. 95.

¹⁰³⁹ Mastricht, *Theoretico-Practica*: II/18, xi; p. 195.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 387.

But this cannot be since God is good *per essentiam*, not by any posterior determination of his will and since God is pure goodness he is the *summum bonum*; thereby: ‘God’s loving himself doth not make him good, but supposeth him good. He was good in the order of nature, before he loved himself, and his being good was the ground of his loving himself’.¹⁰⁴¹ In this manner, Charnock secures the supremacy of God’s nature in relation to the good and places the divine ontology, i.e., the highest good, as the perfection of the divine being wherefrom the divine affections are grounded. Subsequently, Charnock asserts that just as the divine goodness comes prior than God’s self-love in one’s *ordo cognoscendi* [order of knowing], *mutatis mutandi* the moral goodness of a thing comes prior in its *ordo essendi* [order of being] than the divine mandate of it, so ‘if God should command the contrary, it would openly speak him evil and unrighteous.’¹⁰⁴² Finally, in saying that reason is capable of recognising the moral virtue that is embedded in the divine command alone apart from Scripture, Charnock’s argument suggests an intellectualist impulse.¹⁰⁴³ This in turn leads to the conclusion that since the divine commands are intrinsically good, then the goodness of God directs his sovereign authority to take delight on them always.¹⁰⁴⁴ In the final analysis, Charnock grounds the moral status of the things God commands in the being

¹⁰⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴² Ibid.

¹⁰⁴³ In the context above, the term ‘intellectualist’ must not be taken in view of divine but human agency. In this sense, ‘intellectualist’ conveys the medieval notion wherein the schoolmen stressed the precedence of human reason over human will. Consult Hoffman, “Intellectualism and Voluntarism.”

¹⁰⁴⁴ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 387.

of God, for although things may be good in themselves they are not had not their moral value agreed with the goodness of God.

The second and third uses of divine goodness are that of comfort and exhortation. In addition to the consolation that the nature of divine goodness (always compassionate and communicative) brings, the awareness of the goodness of God also provides relief from the burdens of life, reassurance of the bestowal of undefeatable felicity, and security amid all kinds of dangers.¹⁰⁴⁵ Additionally, a sense of the doctrine of divine goodness would urge the believer to enjoy God since he is ‘the purest, best, and most universal good’¹⁰⁴⁶ while it demands to abandon any form of arrogance, unfaithfulness, impatience, envy, and ungratefulness.¹⁰⁴⁷ Finally, divine goodness invites the church to imitate God for ‘as God would not be a perfect God without goodness, so neither can any be a perfect Christian without kindness; charity and love being the splendour and loveliness of all Christians graces as goodness is the splendour and loveliness of all divine attributes.’¹⁰⁴⁸

In addition to the customary headings of information/instruction, comfort, and exhortation, Charnock appends two extra titles to his presentation of the practical use of the doctrine of divine dominion.¹⁰⁴⁹ Though the inclusion of these two additional themes (dreadful considerations of and

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ibid., 387-391.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ibid., 391.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Ibid., 394-398.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ibid., 398.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Ibid., 461-499.

meditations about divine dominion) seems superfluous considering that their content could have been included under the titles of information/instruction and exhortation, their discussion remains relevant to the practical use of the doctrine.¹⁰⁵⁰

For Charnock, the unrepentant should consider that her despise of God's dominion would always be accompanied by an indictment of rebellion, which automatically would carry with it the greatest punishment: death.¹⁰⁵¹ This is explained by noting that punitive acts of justice are a corollary of divine sovereignty in the understanding that God cannot but vindicate his right as supreme sovereign in the face of a challenge to his dominion posed by the creature on the basis that '[i]f God be an eternal King, he is an eternal Judge.'¹⁰⁵² This means that for God to ignore such transgressions against his divine right would be tantamount to inflict a self-attack on his sovereignty, which would a denial of his own being since '[t]o slight his sovereignty, is to stab his deity; since the one cannot be preserved without the support of the other, his life would expire with his authority.'¹⁰⁵³ Concerning the effects resulting from meditating on God's dominion, Charnock includes an assortment of benefits including a renewal confidence in God, a more diligent adoration, an awareness of the perils of temptation, a God-centred vision of afflictions, a profound sense of reliance on God, and a disinterest for vain

¹⁰⁵⁰ These themes are treated respectively in *ibid.*, 477-480; 483-487.

¹⁰⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 478.

¹⁰⁵² *Ibid.* Therefore, this punishment must be inevitable in its execution and terrible in its effects, *ibid.*, 478-480.

¹⁰⁵³ *Ibid.*, 461.

curiosity.¹⁰⁵⁴ Noteworthy, Charnock argues that by meditating on the dominion of God one would transition from acknowledging the role of secondary causes as means of divine grace to the recognition due to God as the first cause of all motions.¹⁰⁵⁵ In sum, Charnock resolves, based upon the considerations just described, that a revile on God's dominion is ultimately an irrational act of the human mind.¹⁰⁵⁶

An awareness of the sovereignty of God is instructive in the general sense by noting that all sins are essentially a repudiation of the authority of God as a lawgiver.¹⁰⁵⁷ In like manner, a proper understanding of divine dominion informs one: (1) that the absolute sovereignty of God does not lead to divine injustice for the royal right of God over creation never works in isolation from the perfection of his own infinite righteousness, (2) that the dominion of God excludes human merit, that is to say that God does not owe anything to his creatures apart from what he has promised, and (3) that earthly magistrates operate under an authority that is subservient to God.¹⁰⁵⁸

A further instructive aspect that comes from the doctrine of divine dominion is an awareness of the fact that some different sins debase the authority of God in different manner. For example, the sovereignty of God in his role as universal lawgiver is neglected by: (1) issuing laws that are

¹⁰⁵⁴ Ibid., 484-487.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Ibid., 485.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Ibid., 480.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ibid., 461-464.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ibid., 473-476.

essentially in opposition to the law of God, (2) adding human prescriptions to the laws of God, (3) opting for obeying the laws of the creature instead of the divine law.¹⁰⁵⁹ Furthermore, sins of envy, theft, and the misuse of benefits given by God are actions that overlook the dominion of God in his office of sovereign proprietor.¹⁰⁶⁰ The dominion of God as sovereign governor of the world is at odds with the practice of idolatry, impatience, pride, careless worship, omission of service, censorship, and with imposing limitations to God's mode of acting.¹⁰⁶¹

In addition, the doctrine of God's dominion brings comfort to the people of God.¹⁰⁶² The point to highlight here concerns the claim that the presence of God as sovereign Lord is mediated through a federal (i.e., covenantal) relation whereby creator and creature are united by a bond of infinite affection. Charnock takes the biblical imagery in Hos. 2.16, 19ff to say that God is not only Lord, 'but a husband by a marriage knot, admitting us to a nearness to him, and communion of goods with him.'¹⁰⁶³ This covenantal implication is significant for it leads Charnock to conclude that the relation between God and his church is not one purely determined by the relation between a king and his servants, but one that is also mediated by a pact of

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ibid., 464-468.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid., 468-469. Charnock includes the use of God's word as one of the benefits divinely conferred that may turn into an insult against the sovereignty of God when used for ends distinct to that of the exaltation of his glory: 'When men will wrest his word for the favour of their lusts... and make interpretations of it according to their humours, not according to the will discovered in the Scripture, this is to pervert the use of the best goods and *depositum* he hath put into our hands, even divine revelations.' In *ibid.*, 469.

¹⁰⁶¹ Ibid., 469-473.

¹⁰⁶² Ibid., 480-483.

¹⁰⁶³ Ibid., 480.

divine grace: ‘His [God’s] government of his people is not only of absolute dominion, but also in a way of federal relation.’¹⁰⁶⁴

Lastly, divine dominion is an exhortation to be humble in regards of authority and propriety by knowing that no creature, as powerful she may be, is outside of the sovereign rule of God and by acknowledging that creaturely dominion is limited and temporal.¹⁰⁶⁵ Once more, Charnock appeals to his covenantal understanding of history to say that the sovereignty of God should prompt the creature’s praise and thankfulness as God decides to enter in relation to his people by means of a covenant of grace instead of by absolute dominion only: ‘He doth not oppress us by the greatness of his majesty; he enters into covenant with us, and allures us by the cords of a man, shews himself as much as merciful as an absolute sovereign.’¹⁰⁶⁶

Finally, the doctrine of God’s dominion exhorts one to fear, revere, and obey God in all of his ways and to promote the glory of his sovereignty in the recognition that God is the efficient, preserving, and the final cause of everything (Rom. 9.36): ‘God being every way sovereign,—the sovereign being, giving being to all things; the sovereign ruler, giving order and preservation to all things,—is also the end of all things, to whose glory and honour all things, all creatures are to be subservient.’¹⁰⁶⁷

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibid. Cf. Ibid., 1: 91. Additionally, knowing that God is sovereign is a source of comfort amid doubts concerning one’s eternal state, and in the face afflictions and public commotions.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Idem., *Works*, 2: 487-488.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Ibid., 488-489.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Ibid., 490.

By applying the knowledge concerning the doctrine of divine patience one may gain considerable instruction by considering the abuses against it. For example, exploitations directed at the patience of God are, in some case, evident by a gross misrepresentation of the divine nature as when some assert, based upon a faulty view of divine patience, that God neglects his providence of government over creation.¹⁰⁶⁸ Knowing that God is patience brings comfort since just as the anger of God produces terror, his patience ‘is a mitigation of that terror’.¹⁰⁶⁹ This comfort, though temporal, extends to everyone, particularly over the faithful as far as patience is the first aspect of the divine nature that acts for the sake of the sinner in the plan of redemption.¹⁰⁷⁰

This doctrine exhorts one to meditate on the loving character of God because his patience towards sinners ‘shews him [God] to be of a sweeter disposition than creating goodness to unoffending creatures, and consequently speaks a greater love in him, and bespeaks a greater affection from us.’¹⁰⁷¹ To contemplate upon God’s patience prompts an admiration for the character of God in enduring sin and in suffering a multitude of provocations. Furthermore, knowing that the patience of God is not contrary to his justice would lead one to acknowledge that the benefits of the former are temporal, not in terms of its essence for the patience of God is infinite, but concerning its role as containing the execution of God’s wrath; thus,

¹⁰⁶⁸ Charnock attributes this view to medieval Islamic philosopher Ibn Rushd (1126-1198), also known as Averroës. See *ibid.*, 531.

¹⁰⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 536.

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 537.

¹⁰⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 538.

Charnock: 'The exercise of it [God's patience] is not eternal; you are at present under his patience, yet while you are unconverted you are also under his anger'.¹⁰⁷² Charnock concludes this discourse by exhorting his audience to be divine by imitating the patience of God: 'To conclude; as patience is God's perfection, so it is the accomplishment of the soul. And as his slowness to anger argues the greatness of his power over himself, so an unwillingness to revenge is a sign of a power over ourselves, which is more noble than to be a monarch over others.'¹⁰⁷³

¹⁰⁷² Ibid., 543.

¹⁰⁷³ Ibid., 544.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Charnock structured his theological sermons on the existence and the attributes of God in a way that presupposes the style of theological investigation observed in the theological systems of the seventeenth-century. That scholasticism permeates the *Discourses* is proven by identifying the method of investigation framing Charnock's works, by accounting for the order of exposition in his lectures, and by the substance of the theological argumentation exhibited on them.

In discussing the doctrine of God, the Reformed scholastics appealed to a series of scientific questions dictated by the *quaestio* technique, the distinctive mode of inquiry of the scholastic method. Accordingly, the *locus de Deo* included an in-depth study on the existence of God, the divine nature (the perfections of God), and the divine persons (the doctrine of the Trinity). While not explicitly formulated, Charnock's discourses concerning the doctrine of God are arranged according to a sequential order following the manner of investigation proposed by the *quaestio*: the subject of the existence of God is, then, discussed first in preparation for a full analysis of the divine attributes. Additionally, the discourses often included a section devoted to answering the objections raised against the doctrines asserted, another feature of the scholastic *quaestio*.

In terms of order, Charnock begins by establishing the existence of God as the ontological principle for the theological task. This task is followed by

the exposition on the attributes of God according to an order that suggests familiarity with the patterns of classification commonly used in material explicitly scholastic in nature. Charnock begins his lectures on the perfections of God with a series of properties that belong to the so-called attributes of first order (incommunicable/absolute) and then it continues into the attributes of the second order (communicable/relative). Both categories are informed by the manner the schoolmen understood the ways of knowing God; therefore, Charnock determines the attributes belonging to the former category primarily by means of the *via negativa* whereas the latter category is resolved primarily by the *via eminentiae*.¹⁰⁷⁴

Regarding content, it is significant to note that the argumentation deployed in the discourses, while primarily homiletical in nature, is marked by a level of erudition and detail proper of the scholastic method. In addition to the order of inquiry dictated by the *quaestio*, Charnock's discourses on the existence and the attributes of God exhibit an array of arguments indicating the influence of scholasticism. The use of sophisticated methods of biblical exegesis, the appeal to medieval rhetoric, and the importance of defining the terms with high precision, in addition to the significance of Aristotelian categories, the employment of the laws of logic and causality, and the use of syllogisms for postulating an argument, exhibit a style commonly found in scholastic material.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Interestingly, the order for the attributes of the second order in Charnock's discourses also reflect a scholastic distinction between attributes according to the divine intellect and those according to the divine will. See chapters VI and VII above.

At this point, it is necessary to highlight that this research enhances the current scholarship on the theology of Stephen Charnock and, incidentally, it contributes to the renewed academic interest for Reformed Orthodoxy. On the one hand, the findings of this dissertation add valuable information to the, still scarce, literature on the thought of prominent theologian such as Charnock. By identifying the *Discourses* as an example of theological sermons framed by the scholastic method, this investigation proves that the range of influence of scholasticism during the Protestant orthodox era extended beyond the genres of *systema*, *compendia*, and *medulla*. On the other hand, this study opens up the opportunity for further research on subjects that remain unexplored in Charnock's theology. For instance, just to name two possible options, one could determine to what extent, if any, Charnock's notion of God determines his theological convictions in matter concerning soteriology, Christology, or ecclesiology, themes that are treated to some degree in the remaining volumes of *The Complete Works*. Furthermore, one could investigate whether Charnock is committed to a meta-ethics based upon a Protestant variation of the natural law theory.

It is worth mentioning that Charnock's theology has met with some critics amongst contemporary theologians. They have raised important objections concerning the method of exposition and the theological content observed in Charnock's lectures concerning the divine perfections. In terms of method, Millard Erickson has described Charnock's material on the doctrine of God as an 'excessive analysis' wherein the meticulous study of the divine perfections resembles a 'virtual autopsy' that fits better for a textbook on

anatomy than for a work of Christian theology.¹⁰⁷⁵ On the other hand, Colin Gunton has claimed that Charnock's theology of God exhibits, in 'many places', a severe dislocation caused by the effects of a faulty method that results in 'grave structural deficiencies.'¹⁰⁷⁶ For Gunton, the problem is that apophatic theology is executed at the expense of biblical revelation. Such appeal to negative theology, says Gunton, has resulted in a conception of the divine nature purely in abstract terms whereby God ultimately becomes unknowable and impersonal.¹⁰⁷⁷

In closing, a proper reading of the *Discourses* would require a consideration of the scholastic method that frames Charnock's theology of the existence and the attributes of God, but more significantly it would demand recognition of the homiletical aim of the material. Charnock's insistence on moving beyond the academic apprehension of the things of God into the practice of meditation as a spiritual discipline for the edification of the soul is an exhortation that permeates the *Discourses*:

He that would express the image of God must imprint upon his mind the purity of his nature, cherish it in his thoughts, that the excellent beauty of it may pass from his understanding to his affections, and from his affections to his practice. How can we arise to a conformity to God in Christ, whose most holy nature we seldom glance upon, and more rarely sink our souls into the depths of it by meditation! Be frequent in the meditation of the holiness of God.¹⁰⁷⁸

¹⁰⁷⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 235.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Gunton, *Act and Being*: 91.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 91-92. This research treats in some detail Gunton's critique in Chapter VI of this study, see pp. 165-169 above.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Charnock, *Works*, 2: 272.

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