

*Edwards' argument for the
incompatibility of free will and divine
foreknowledge*

In this argument, Edwards seems to be using 'necessary' in a way which is different from the way in which we have been using it. Rather than using it to mean 'a thing whose opposite is literally impossible,' he uses it to mean something like 'a thing which we have no choice about.' Translating in this way, we can extract the following argument from the passage we read:

1. We have no choice about past events. (§1)
2. In the past, God had foreknowledge of all of our future actions. (§2)
3. We have no choice about the fact that God has foreknowledge of our future actions. (1,2)
4. If we have no choice about p, and no choice about the fact that if p then q, we have no choice about q. (§3)
5. We have no choice about the fact that if God knows that we will perform some action, then we will perform that action. (§4)

C. We have no choice about any of our future actions. (3,4,5)

Edwards presents this as an argument for the conclusion that there is no such thing as free will. But one might also use it as an argument for the following conditional conclusion:

If God has foreknowledge of our future actions, then we have no choice about any of those actions.

This is a style of argument called *conditional proof*. If we can show that P plus some other true premises logically leads to some conclusion Q, then we are licensed to conclude that if P is true, then Q is true.