

That the divine knowledge is infinite, we have not undertaken to prove. That position has been assumed. The purport of the immediately preceding argument has been to maintain the inferences from that assumption: that the divine knowledge is all-comprehending; that it is immutable, unsuccessive, stable; and that it is exempt from the limitations of human knowledge which spring from place and time. Whatever may be thought of the considerations by which these inferences have been supported, it must be admitted by all Theists that the knowledge of God is infinite, and that admission enforces the belief that it is immediate and intuitive. Consequently, his knowledge of the first sin was not, strictly speaking, first foreknowledge, then presentative knowledge, then memory, but an intuition which included in itself its future occurrence, its actual occurrence and its past occurrence. The fact, therefore, of his knowledge of that sin did not depend upon his *predetermination* that it *should be* committed. From the nature of the case, he eternally knows every event as to be, as being, and as having been. If this be so, the argument of the Necessitarian is inconclusive, that God could not have foreknown the first sin unless he had predetermined its commission. Nothing comes to pass without his efficient or his permissive ordination; some things come to pass without his predetermination; but he equally knows them all.

CHAPTER VIII.

LET us now sum up the results, reached through the foregoing discussion, in regard to the Will in its Theological Relations, so far as man's innocent condition, and his fallen, unregenerate estate, are concerned.

1. The distinction between the Deliberate Election and the Spontaneity of the will has been maintained by argument, and supported by profuse quotations from the writings of Calvin, and from the Confessions of the Reformed Church. The freedom of deliberate election is the freedom of the will to determine itself to either of two opposing alternatives—the power of otherwise determining, and is inconsistent with causal necessity. The freedom—if, in strictness of speech, it can be so designated—of spontaneity is the freedom of the will to do as the man pleases, to pursue his inclinations in any one, definite direction, and is consistent with necessity. The distinction is vital to theology, and, as what is true in the one sphere must, upon the principle of the harmony of truth, be true also in the other, is entitled to be regarded as vital to philosophy.

2. In the estate of man's innocence, his will possessed a self-determining power. It had the freedom of deliberate election between the contrary alternatives of holiness and sin. The moral spontaneity was holy; there was no moral spontaneity that was sinful. Consequently, the moral spontaneity of the will was

holy. Its *habitus* was right. So, by his benevolent Creator, was man started in his moral probation. He was furnished with all ability and every opportunity for choosing and maintaining holiness. But it is the testimony of all theology, worth the name, that the will was mutable. It was not confirmed in holiness. The moral spontaneity, although holy, was not fixed, was not so determined in the direction of holiness as to be beyond the danger of being sacrificed by a wrong election of the will. Had man continued obedient to God for the time of trial specified in the covenant of works, his will would have been confirmed. It would have ceased to be mutable, and would have been so determined in holiness as to be forever placed beyond the contingency of a sinful choice. The Fall would have become impossible. But the will, thus mutable and unconfirmed, consented to yield, in all probability, to the solicitation of the blind impulses, in themselves legitimate, but wrongly directed to an object which God had interdicted, and through them to the Satanic temptation which moved them. The will freely decided to do the forbidden act, despite the trend and protest of man's holy spontaneity, and the plunge into sin and ruin occurred. The choice was not necessitated, either by God's pre-determination, or man's inherent constitution. It was freely made, when it might have been avoided. Hence the justice of the first man's condemnation; and, as the Scriptures unristakably declare that all men were represented in him, their federal head, hence, also, the justice of the condemnation visited upon the whole race for that primal act of disobedience.

3. In man's fallen and unregenerate estate, the will

has no self-determining power in relation to the contrasts of holiness and sin. The free self-decision for sin destroyed man's holy spontaneity, and originated, in its place, a sinful spontaneity. Nor does it follow that, as when man was holy he might choose sin, so now that he is sinful he may choose holiness. An innocent man may avoid a crime, or he may commit it and experience condemnation, but having perpetrated it and having been condemned, it is impossible for him, by any effort of his own, to return to his former condition. Had man stood in integrity during his allotted probation, his will would have lost its mutability in a confirmed holiness, determined by God's justifying sentence and the infusions of his grace. But as he fell, his will became immutably confirmed in sin, through God's condemning sentence, the deprivation of grace, and the active principle of corruption. The will freely, that is, spontaneously chooses sin, but it is utterly unable to choose holiness. The freedom of deliberate election between the alternatives of sin and holiness no longer exists. A sinful spontaneity, once established by an act of sin, cannot be changed by an act of the will. The only possible deliverance from it lies in the grace of redemption which is able to destroy it, and to substitute for it a spontaneity confirmed in holiness. Thus, and only thus, may the *infelix necessitas mali* be exchanged for the *felix necessitas boni*. Man, in his fallen, unregenerate condition, is spiritually dead, and his will can no more restore him from that death, than a corpse can raise itself from the grave. In a word, the will, in the spiritual sphere, is under *bondage to sin*.

But while, in the spiritual sphere, the will of man in his unregenerate condition has by its own fatal act lost all self-determining power, it still possesses that power in the merely natural sphere.

(1) It may exercise that power in deliberately electing between one particular sin and another. A man, for example, may at the same time be tempted to drink and to gamble. He may freely elect to do one rather than the other; but if he do either, he sins.

(2) The will has a self-determining power in relation to things merely external and civil, that is, things which have, in themselves considered, no spiritual significance. For instance, one may choose to pay or not to pay his taxes to the State. In either case, nothing is determined as to his ability in things spiritual.

(3) The will has, to some extent, a self-determining power with reference to merely moral culture. A profane man may choose to refrain from blasphemy, but this would prove nothing as to his power to abstain from all sin, much less to deliver himself from the principle of sin, and to become holy in heart and life.

(4) The will of the unregenerate man has some self-determining power in regard to certain acts, in the natural sphere, which tend towards religion.

First, He can freely choose to direct his understanding to the consideration of the evidences in favor of the divine origin of the Scriptures, and of the truth of the Christian religion. This he ought to do, and may do, in accordance with the great maxim, that evidence is the measure of assent. It is admitted, on all hands, that the human reason is competent to perform the preliminary function of investigating the claims of a revelation professing to come from God.

Secondly, He can freely determine to read and examine the Bible. This he has the same natural power to do, as he possesses in regard to any philosophical, literary or scientific book.

Thirdly, He can, in the exercise of his natural freedom, attend upon the ordinances of the Church, and hear the preaching of the gospel. He has the same ability to do this as he has to stay at home, to go to his place of business, to visit friends, or to repair to a drinking saloon.

Fourthly, He can call on God to show him the truth, to reveal to him his real spiritual condition, to extend to him mercy, and to deliver him from bondage to sin. He can do this, by virtue of the same power of will as determines him to seek information on any subject from an expert, or to appeal to a friend for help under the pressure of temporal affliction.

These things, in the natural sphere, the unregenerate man has power in his own will to do. He is, therefore, responsible for neglecting to do them, and will be unable to justify himself, when charged with failure to perform these duties before the final bar of judgment. These things the Holy Spirit, ordinarily, in his "law-work" of conviction, incites the sinner to do, before he actually converts him. At least, in being convinced of his sin and misery, it is commonly the case that the sinner, instead of at once discharging the commanded duty to believe on Christ as his Saviour, betakes himself to these acts. The question just here is, not whether he *ought* to do them, but whether he *has power* to do them. That he has, is proved by the fact that many actually do them before they are converted.

It is not intended to say that the sinner is not responsible for the sin of Adam, his federal head and representative. He is. The inability to do spiritual acts, which now characterizes him in his unregenerate condition, is penal, and cannot excuse him for not performing those acts. But he is also responsible for neglecting to do what, consciously and subjectively, he has ability to do; nor can he blame God for not doing for him in the spiritual sphere what he cannot do, when he will not do in the natural sphere what he can do. Upon this point we cite a passage from Dr. John Owen, which is as remarkable as it is pertinent:

“There are some things required of us in a way of duty in order unto our regeneration, which are so in the *power of our own natural abilities* as that nothing but corrupt prejudices and stubbornness in sinning do keep or hinder men from the performance of them. And these we may reduce unto two heads:—1. An *outward attendance* unto the dispensation of the word of God, with those other external means of grace which accompany it or are appointed therein. ‘Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,’ Rom. x. 17; that is, it is hearing the word of God which is the ordinary means of ingenerating faith in the souls of men. This is required of all to whom the gospel doth come; and this they are able of themselves to do, as well as any other natural or civil action. And where men do it not, where they despise the word at a distance, yea, where they do it not with diligence and choice, it is merely from supine negligence of spiritual things, carnal security, and contempt of God; which they must answer for. 2. A

diligent *intension* of mind, in attendance on the means of grace, to understand and receive the things revealed and declared as the mind and will of God. For this end hath God given men their reason and understandings, that they may use and exercise them about their duty towards him, according to the revelation of his mind and will. To this purpose he calls upon them to remember that they are men, and to turn unto him. And there is nothing herein but what is in the liberty and power of the rational faculties of our souls, assisted with those common aids which God affords unto all men in general. And great advantages both may be and are daily attained hereby. Persons, I say, who diligently apply their rational abilities in and about spiritual things, as externally revealed in the word and the preaching of it, do usually attain great advantages by it, and excel their equals in other things; as Paul did when he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. Would men be but as intent and diligent in their endeavors after knowledge in spiritual things, as revealed in a way suited unto our capacities and understandings, as they are to get skill in crafts, sciences, and other mysteries of life, it would be much otherwise with them than it is. A neglect herein also is the fruit of sensuality, spiritual sloth, love of sin, and contempt of God; all of which are the voluntary frames and actings of the minds of men.

“These things are required of us in order unto our regeneration, and it is in the power of our own wills to comply with them. And we may observe concerning them that: 1. The omission of them, the neglect of men in them, is the *principal occasion* and cause of

the eternal ruin of the souls of the generality of them to whom or amongst whom the gospel is preached: 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil,' John iii. 19. The generality of men know full well that they do in this matter no more what they are *able* than what they *should*. All pleadable pretences of inability and weakness are far from them. They cannot but know here, and they shall be forced to confess hereafter, that it was merely from their own cursed sloth, with love of the world and sin, that they were diverted from a diligent attendance on the means of conversion and the sedulous exercise of their minds about them. Complaints hereof against themselves will make up a great part of their last dreadful cry. 2. In the most diligent use of outward means, men are *not able of themselves* to attain unto regeneration, or complete conversion to God, without an especial, effectual, internal work of the Holy Spirit of grace on their whole souls. This, containing the substance of what is principally proposed unto confirmation in the ensuing discourses, need not here be insisted on. 3. *Ordinarily*, God, in the effectual dispensation of his grace, meeteth with them who attend with diligence on the outward administration of the means of it. He doth so, I say, ordinarily, in comparison of them who are despisers and neglecters of them. Sometimes, indeed, he goeth, as it were, out of the way to meet with and bring home unto himself a persecuting Saul, taking of him in, and taking him off from, a course of open sin and rebellion; but ordinarily he dispenseth his peculiar especial grace among them

who attend unto the common means of it; for he will both glorify his word thereby, and give out pledges of his approbation of our obedience unto his commands and institutions."¹

"Every man's conscience, moreover," says Dr. Charles Hodge, "teaches him that he has never sought the salvation of his soul with the sincerity and perseverance with which men seek the things of the world, and yet failed in his efforts. Every man who comes short of eternal life knows that the responsibility rests upon himself. . . . It is the natural and actual tendency of a sense of helplessness under a burden of evil, to lead to earnest and importunate application for relief to Him who is able to afford it, and by whom it is offered."²

¹ *Works*, Vol. iii., pp. 229-231: *On the Spirit*. Goold's Ed.

² *Syst. Theol.*, Vol. iii., p. 40.