

THE WILL
IN ITS
THEOLOGICAL RELATIONS

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BY

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PREFACE

WHY write upon the old subject of the Freedom of the Will? The answer to this question will involve a recital of personal history, which will in part be justified by, and will derive its chief interest from, the fact that it implicates an allusion to the progressive thinking upon this subject of one of the greatest men of the present century. In the year 1849, while a licensed probationer for the gospel ministry, I took up a sermon in pamphlet form, by Dr. James H. Thornwell, on the Necessity of the Atonement, for the purpose of devoting a day to its study. Before the reading had proceeded far, this utterance was encountered: "The only efficient cause which exists in the universe is the fiat of the Deity." This led to the following reasoning: if this be true, then the will of God is the sole efficient cause of moral things; consequently of sin, for sin is a moral thing. If so, where is the right of God to punish sin? How is it conceivable that he would punish what he himself produces? Concluding that the limitation of my own faculties disabled me from solving the problem, I determined when opportunity