

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 9.-Of Free-will.

I. God hath indued the Will of man with that naturall liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil¹.

Question 1.—*Has God endued the will of man with a natural liberty?*

Answer.—Yes. Matt. 17:12. In our discussion of *free will*, it should be noted first of all that man's free will is not independent from God, Phil. 2:13. Man is totally dependent upon God in regard: 1.) To his being, Acts 17:28. 2.) To his activity, Ezra 7:27. 3.) To God's prerogative to obligate him to His will and laws (so that His commands must be loved and what He has forbidden is to be hated), Isa. 33:22; 1 Kings 8:58. And, 4.) To the foreknowledge and decree of God, for He infallibly knows and has decreed that every matter and deed will have a certain outcome and none other, Acts 2:23. This foreknowledge cannot be thwarted; and this decree cannot be changed, 1 Pet. 1:2.

Secondly, the will does not function independently from the judgment faculty of the intellect, Eccl. 8:11. The will cannot possibly function apart from the intellect, neither can it do otherwise than follow the dictates of the intellect, for man is a rational being and therefore functions rationally, Matt. 9:3, 4. Otherwise, the will would be able to reject that which is good as well as that which is perceived as being good, and find delight in sin as sin—all of which is irrational, Prov. 9:17, 18; Isa. 44:19.

Thirdly, the will of man is not free from human peculiarities, for man functions according to his nature, Prov. 23:7. A man who is perfectly holy in his nature will be a servant of righteousness, and the will shall respond likewise, Rom. 6:18. However, if man is nothing but sin in all his characteristics, he is a servant of sin, John 8:34. The will responds and functions in harmony with man's sinful nature, Dan. 12:10. To a holy nature belongs a holy will, and to a sinful nature a sinful will, Gal. 5:17, 22.

Even though the will is necessarily dependent upon the matters mentioned, this *necessity* does not eliminate the freedom of the will, nor is this necessity compulsory in nature, since the will responds spontaneously, 2 Cor. 9:7.

Question 2.—*Is this will of man forced?*

Answer.—No. James 1:14. 1.) The will is free from external compulsion, Jas. 4:1, 2. All the people on earth cannot force someone's will or cause him to do something which he is not willing to do, Hos. 13:9. In order to cause someone to do another's will, however, the matter must be presented in such a manner that the person voluntarily chooses and wills, and thus functions according to his own will, *cf.* John 7:17; Rom. 7:11.

2.) The will of man is also free from natural instinct, by which animals, without being conscious of it, are motivated to function according to their purpose, 2 Pet. 2:12; Prov. 30:24-28; for the will responds to the intellect and functions rationally, Prov. 4:23.

Question 3.—*Is this will of man under any necessity of nature determined to good or evil?*

Answer.—No. Deut. 30:19. Man possesses the inalienable faculty of choosing as upon the whole he judges right or desirable, for—

¹ Matt. 17:12; James 1:14; Deut. 30:19.

1.) From the consideration that while we are conscious, in every deliberate act of choice, that we might have chosen otherwise, all the external conditions being the same, we always feel that our choice was determined by the sum-total of our views, feelings, and tendencies at the time, Ps. 119:111. A man freely chooses what he wants to choose, Ps. 119:30; Prov. 1:29. He would not choose freely if he chose in any other way, Jos. 24:15-22. Nevertheless, his desire in the premises is determined by his whole intellectual and emotional state at the time, Luke 10:42.

2.) It is plain that if the human will decided in any given case in opposition to all the views of the reason and all the desires of the heart, however free the *will* might be, the man would be a most pitiful slave to a mere irrational and immoral power of willing, Prov. 8:36.

3.) All men judge that the rational and moral character of any act results from the purpose or desire, the internal state of mind or heart, which prompted the act, Deut. 19:11. If the man wills in any given case in opposition to all his judgments and to all his inclinations of every kind, his act in that case would obviously be neither rational nor moral; and the man himself, in respect to that act, would be neither free nor responsible, Ex. 21:13, 14.

4.) If the human soul had the power to act thus irrespective of its entire interior intellectual and emotional condition at the time, such action could neither be foreseen nor controlled by God, nor influenced by men, and such exercise of volitional power would be absolutely fortuitous, devoid of any responsibility, *cf.* Jer. 17:10. It would sustain no certain relation to the character of the agent, Matt. 12:35. Christ taught, in opposition to this, that human action is determined by the character of the agent as certainly as the nature of the fruit is determined by the nature of the tree from which it springs; and that the only way to change the character of the action is to change the permanent character or moral tendency and habit of the heart of the agent, Matt. 7:16-20; 12:33-35.

So, free will may be said to consist of two things: 1.) The choice, so that what is done is done by a previous judgment of reason, Ps. 119:173. 2.) The willingness, so that what is done is done voluntarily and without compulsion, 2 Cor. 8:3, 12. The will is possessed of a liberty not of indifference, but of rational spontaneity, Judg. 5:2.