

Thoughts On The Will

J. H. Oliphant

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PREFACE

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Liberty of will, in some sense, is essential to moral government; we must make a distinction between man and inanimate objects. Exhortation, persuasion, commands, are proper, and in this, man is regarded as capable of voluntary action, and of being influenced in his conduct by these things.

I have found that it is essential to the well being of a church that the brethren be exhorted to duty, to love and good works, and I believe our people have neglected these things too much. I have felt the need of these things myself, and when I have been urged to duty by my brethren I have sensibly felt the benefit of it.

The doctrine that the will is determined by the strongest motive is consistent with exhortation, and makes it proper that we persuade men to obedience.

The notion that the will is self-determining is not consistent with exhortation, for if it be self-determining it is capable of choosing independent of motives.

I hope nothing I have said in these pages will be so construed as to interfere with exhortation, and the propriety of urging our people to do their duty in all the relations of life.

It would be as easy to reason sunshine out of the solar system as to destroy, in mankind a sense of obligation to God. That when we do wrong we should own that the sin is ours. In all our statements of the doctrine of predestination we should avoid any statement that would seem to apologize for sin, for so far as we do apologize for it we destroy the basis of the doctrine of salvation by grace. The great end of God in our salvation is that "In the ages to come He might

show forth the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us." That we "should be to the praise of the glory of His grace."

If there is any excuse or apology for sin, this fact would tend to destroy the doctrine of grace.

If we love that doctrine, and feel it our duty to maintain it among men, we should not only oppose Arminianism, but we should oppose every other sentiment that would tend to the overthrow of it. I hope the readers of these pages may be led to a better understanding of the subject and that these pages may be a blessing to our people.

I feel thankful to our people for the kind reception they have given my books heretofore. I trust my object in offering these pages to the public is good, and if it should in any way aid our people in their search for truth, I shall feel rewarded for my labors.

Affectionately,

J. H. OLIPHANT.

Crawfordsville, Ind., September 11th, 1899.

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CHAPTER I

J. H. Oliphant

I trust that I may not write so as to offend any one, and I beg our brethren not to feel unkind if I present views somewhat different from theirs. I am sure this is an intricate subject and requires care to understand it. I am sure that those who have not most patiently inquired into this matter are not prepared to give an intelligent opinion concerning it. So now let our readers peruse these pages patiently, and kindly, and not condemn any position until it is clear that it is false; and then I beg that the reader do this in kindness. I have with sorrow of heart, observed how easily offended we are if a brother differs from us; even as to the use of a word; although we agree as to the principles involved, we are so sensitive as to be hurt if others do not use the same words we do. I have tried to lay aside this spirit and love my brethren although they may use different words to express their views.

In these pages I design to quote freely what others have said on this subject and try to arrive at truth so clearly and unmistakably as to unite our dear brethren and edify the readers.

The will is defined to be choice. To will a thing is to choose that thing. So far as I have examined, all our dictionaries define the will as the choice; the act of the mind in choosing or preferring. The word "will" is used in other senses ; but the first and leading use of the word is choice, wish, desire, etc.

Some writers try to distinguish between the will and the desire, but I believe there is no important distinction between the two words. There is an important distinction between choosing a thing and the taking it into possession. We may choose an object that we never take possession of; but when we do really take possession of an object, it is safe to say the mind first willed, or chose, that object. The act of willing is an act of the mind or soul, and not an act of the hand or foot.

We sometimes choose between two things, both of which are repulsive, as in this: we choose bitter medicine rather than disease; "of the two evils we choose the least."

Some speak of perceiving, judging, willing, etc., as so many faculties of the mind. If we accept this, it would still be the mind choosing by the faculty of the will. I think better to accept the definition of the word as given by Webster, and, in fact, all the dictionaries I have seen, will is choice, to will is to choose, though I am not disposed to insist on this point.

If you will substitute the word choice, or wish, or desire, for will, where it occurs in the Bible, it will nearly always make good sense, and this is evidence that the word "will" means choice, or choose, in those texts. "If any man will be my disciple"-chooses to be my disciple. "Whosoever will"-that is, whosoever chooses. "Not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man"-choice of the flesh or choice of man. "Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth"-him that chooseth, etc. The reader can see that the will and the choice are the same. The will and wish never run counter to each other. The will, wish and desire are never contrary to each other, but the same.

Men maybe hindered from obtaining those things which they choose, but they cannot be hindered from choosing; that is, they cannot be hindered from desiring or wishing for things, although they can be hindered from securing or procuring those things.

In the above texts the will is referred to, but there is no reference to how the will came to be as it is. For instance in the text, "Whosoever will," the reference is only to those who are willing, and nothing as to how they came to be willing. I will not now say anything as to this matter, but leave it to some future article. I hope the above definition will be satisfactory to all the readers.

I wish, in concluding this article, to make some inquiry as to the distinction between a human being and an inanimate, or irrational, being. A stone is not susceptible of being governed by moral law, because it is incapable of voluntary action, and while an animal is capable of voluntary action, he is not capable of choosing one course because it is right, or rejecting another course because it is wrong. He is not capable of vice or virtue, but man is. There is an important difference between a human being and these things, and on account of this

distinction he is susceptible of being governed by moral law-the laws of our country, or the discipline of the family or church, as well as the law of God, or the precepts of the gospel. It is proper that we consider the distinction between a human being and other creatures. In addressing men through papers, books, sermons, etc., we recognize an important difference between human beings and stones or animals. These are not in possession of will, nor are they capable of voluntary action, while human beings are. If they were not, we would not address them in any way. I think we will never arrive at any correct notion concerning the will unless we understand this distinction. We must not regard man as a territory about which two armies are contending, as passive and not capable of choosing anything.

In addressing men we recognize that they are capable of choosing in regard to the matter. If they are not, it would be needless to address them. I repeat, we must not regard men as incapable of voluntary action. We must distinguish between men and stones, or we will fail to understand the will.

I hope the above definition and this distinction will be understood and approved by all.

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CHAPTER II
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The Will is not "self-determining." If the will be determined, it is absurd to say it determined itself, for this would be like saying anything is the cause of itself and for anything to be the cause of itself, would involve the absurdity of a thing existing before it existed.

Whatever exists, be it matter or mind, physical or moral acts, it is certain there was and is a cause for it.

So for every choice of the mind, or volition, there must be a cause. Whatever a man's choice may be, there is a cause for it. The power to act either in body or mind, is of the Lord, as men could not move the body only as their lives are sustained by the Lord. So neither can they will anything, or reject anything but as they are upheld by the Lord.

But we must distinguish between the power by which men will, and the reason why they will any particular thing, why the choice embraces one thing in preference to another.

The cause of a body's moving may be one thing, and that which determines its motion in one direction rather than another, may be a different thing. Edwards

says: "It is that motive which as it stands in the view of the mind, is the strongest, that determines the will." I think this is correct. In our inquiry as to why any man's choice is what it is, we must consider, first, the state or nature of that man ; and second, his environment. A place of sin would look pleasing to one man and repulsive to another, and so it would please a man at one time, and displease him at another time. Affinity is an important element in every act of choosing.

If the carnal mind of man be "enmity against God," then the element of affinity would be lacking, and there could be no choice. Let me explain a little on the last words, "There could be no choice." Ordinarily when we say a man "can not" do a thing we suppose he may try to do so, or make an effort to do so, or desire to do so, and is hindered, but in this case he is not supposed to desire to love God, for the desire to love Him would be to love Him. We can not conceive of an effort to love Him, for there would be nothing in him to create the effort to love Him. The clear rays of the sun are hurtful to the eye, and nothing would cause the sun's rays to be agreeable to the eye, but the change of the nature of the eye, and so the doctrine of regeneration is the basis upon which men choose the Lord. Without being born again, God and his service is not agreeable to men, and so we may say they can not choose the Lord and his service, and we do not use the words "can not" to intimate that men may desire to do so, and are hindered.

It is safe to say that men will choose that which is most agreeable to them. Men are ever choosing that which is worthless instead of that which is good. Some men, and most men, prefer the house of sin to the house of prayer, but this is because it is to them most pleasing, and agreeable.

Put before a man a penny and twenty dollar gold piece, and let him understand the value of each, and he could not prefer the penny, because there is more in the gold to please than in the penny. Men do ever choose that which to them at the time of the choice, is most agreeable to them. To say otherwise is to say a man can choose what he does not prefer.

Ordinarily when we say a man "can do anything," we mean he can, notwithstanding all opposition, and in spite of all difficulties, but when we say a man can choose that which is pleasing to him we do not use the word "can" in that sense, because there is nothing to hinder a man from choosing or wishing. Such a thing as a forced choice cannot be imagined. The body can be forced in this way or that, but not so the desires. It was from this consideration that Gill said, "The will can not but be free." We know no way to hinder one's will or desires. Men may be slaves in body and serfs. The body may be laid in chains, but not so the will or desires. No chain or prison can interfere with the voluntary motions of the will.

In the way of argument, &c., we may seek to change the will or choice of men, but if we be successful in our arguments or persuasions, we do not in this interfere with the voluntariness of the will, but where the choice is transferred from one thing to another it is still the choice embracing that which at the time

of choice is most desirable. Such a thing as a forced choice is absolutely inconceivable. We can understand how the body may be forced but not the desires. The choice forever embraces that which is most pleasing at the time of the choice.

The choice or will can not deal with matters not perceived by the mind. Perception is essential to choice. If men in nature can not perceive divine or spiritual things, there could be no choice of them nor desires after them. As the fish in the water could not choose the life and liberty of the bird, for the reason: first, it knows nothing of it; and second, it is content with its own home, it has all the liberty it desires. So in order that we choose divine things we must perceive them and have some knowledge of their value, and also we must be so changed as to have affinity for them. But still when thus changed and enlightened, we still choose that which is most desirable and pleasing

The notion that the will, or choice, is capable of embracing that which, at the time, is hateful, and rejecting that which is pleasing, has no foundation in sound reason. One may choose to have a tooth pulled, or to take a bitter medicine, or to submit to a painful surgical operation, and he may do so most voluntarily, but in these cases ease and health are laid in the scale with the suffering, and the disease and cause of trouble is put in the other end, and so the mind is not simply choosing between the painful operation and the refraining from it, but from the painful operation and life on one side, and the refraining from the painful operation, and death, on the other side.

I am satisfied that no one can conceive or imagine a circumstance in which the choice is forced or compelled.

We sometimes speak of arguments being such as to compel assent and approval, but the word "compel" is not used here as it is used when we speak of an army being compelled to submit. Our brethren who are printing books and papers expect to determine the wills of those who read them, if they do not it is hard to tell why they print them; but they do not expect to compel them any other way than by putting truth before the mind so as the mind will see more to please and benefit in their views than elsewhere, and thus choose their views and ways because they are most agreeable to them.

It is plain to me that the will or choice is not "self-determining," and also it is plain that the will follows the strongest motive. I will conclude by a quotation from Buck's dictionary. While Buck was not sound in practice he has ever been regarded as sound in doctrine. "Free agency is the power of following one's inclination ; or whatever the soul does with full bent of preference and desire. "Many * * * have been the disputes on this subject ; not that man has been denied to be a 'free agent,' but the dispute has been in what it consists. A distinction is made by writers between free agency and what is called the Arminian notion of free agency."

"The Arminian notion" referred to was that the will is "self determining." Buck continues, and correctly, too, "The one consists in the power of following our prevailing inclination, the other in a supposed power of acting contrary to it, or

at least of changing it." Buck and Gill and Calvin and all sound thinkers held that the choice or will follows the strongest motive, while Arminians held then, as they do now, and as they must hold, to sustain their doctrine, that the will may change itself, or that it may leave a stronger motive, and embrace a weaker one. Buck goes on, "The one predicates freedom of the man, the other of a faculty in man."

Gill held that man is capable of choosing that which is agreeable to him, and all Calvinists, so far as I know; and so held that man is a free agent in this sense, while Arminians held that the will is free in the sense that the will can act independently of motives, that the will may choose what it pleases. But there is no sense in saying the will may choose what it pleases, as Edwards and Locke have shown, and I will mention this in a future chapter. Buck continues, "The one goes merely to render us accountable beings, the other arrogantly claims a part, yea the very turning point of salvation ; according to the latter we need only certain helps * * * to enable us to choose the path of life, but according to the former * * * we need an almighty and invincible power to renew us."

According to this Buck and other clear thinkers contended for such a freedom of will as would render men accountable, and so make a distinction between men and animals; while the Arminians contended for such a freedom of will as would make the will, or choice, independent of all motives, and as would give to the will the "turning point" in the matter of salvation.

On p. 646 Hassel's history: "If there be not free grace in God how can he save the world, and if there be not free will in men, how can the world by God be judged?"

This last question is worthy of a serious consideration. Hassel then quotes Bernard: "Abolish free will, and there is nothing to be saved. Abolish free grace and there is nothing wherewithal to save." We must take such a view of "free will" as will make man an accountable being, and Buck clearly shows that all sound thinkers of his times contended for such liberty of will as was agreeable to the accountableness of man, and the final punishment of the wicked, and not for such a liberty of will as would make the will independent of all motives and capable of deciding the turning point in the matter of salvation.

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CHAPTER III

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Some recent writers on the will, define the will as the "Self," and maintain that the will is self-determining from this standpoint, but the Bible in many places distinguish between man and his will. "The will of man," these words separate man and his will. Man has power to will or choose, and choosing is an act, not of the will, but of the man. When Gill, Buck, Hussell and others speak of "Liberty of will" they mean that man possesses some kind of liberty in choosing. They do not mean that the will has liberty, but that the man has, and exercises some kind of liberty in his choice and conduct. That man is not like an inanimate object, or an irrational being, but that he, in some sense, chooses his way.

Edwards defines liberty as follows: "The plain and obvious meaning of the words freedom and liberty, in common speech, is the power and opportunity that any one has to do as he pleases, or in other words, his being free from hindrance or impediment in the way of doing as he wills." Now, when one does as he pleases, he has liberty. It seems to me this must be admitted by all. Edwards continues: "And the contrary to liberty, whatever name we call that by, is a person's being hindered or unable to conduct as he will. If this which I have mentioned be the meaning of the word liberty, in the ordinary use of language, as I trust that none that has ever learned to talk and is unprejudiced, will deny, then it will follow that in propriety of speech neither liberty nor its contrary can properly be ascribed to any being or thing but that which has such a faculty, power or property as is called will, for that which has no will can not have any power or opportunity of doing according to its will nor be restrained from acting agreeably to it."

Concerning the above quotation I will observe first, that Edwards, like all other clearminded Calvinists, maintained that Freedom is essential to moral government; without it there could be no such thing as vice or virtue. There could be no such thing as accountability nor future judgment. His definition of liberty cannot be questioned. Where men do as they like, all "who have learned to talk" know this is a good definition of the word liberty. Concerning this question of liberty I will quote Gill, Cause of God and Truth, P. 8, "The will of man thought it is free, yet not independently so, it is dependent on God, both in its being and its acting; it is subject to his authority." * * * * "The will of God is only free in this sense." Gill held that the will is free in the same way that Edwards held it. None held, not even Arminians, that man is free from dependence on God for his being, none held that man is free in the sense, he is not forbidden to do wrong. Arminians and Calvinists have ever agreed about these things. Gill says, "What free will is, or what is the nature of the liberty of the human will, is the question in dispute."

If it be said that we should not speak of the "liberty of the will," because there are so many particulars in which man is not free, and so if we speak of "liberty of will" we would be understood to hold that man is absolutely free. Now in reply to this let it be remembered that the bible often speaks of God's people as being "free " and as having "liberty," &c., and none understand these places as teaching that man is absolutely free, and so why should any understand these

men to hold that man is absolutely free because they hold that he is free in the sense that he is not hindered from doing as he pleases, and as Edwards says, "None who have learned to talk" will deny this to be a good definition of the word liberty.

Any thing having no will or choice, or liberty could not be a subject of moral government; as trees and stones, they could not be subject to law, because they can not choose a single action for themselves, nor animals, because they have no understanding or discernment between right and wrong. Now man differs from stones and trees in the fact that he can and does choose his conduct and is subject to law. We must make a difference between men and inanimate objects, or hold that God's government of men is like the boy's government of his marbles. Not one marble is in any sense whatever to blame for being in the wrong place, nor is it entitled to any kind of approval for being in the right place. Second, the quotation from Edwards also shows that nothing, having no will, could be free or in slavery. We would not speak of a stone as having liberty or as being in bondage. The terms liberty, freedom, bondage, slavery, &c., are only applied to beings having will.

So these terms could not properly be applied to the will. They can be applied to man, for man has a will; but not to the will, for the will is never said to have a will.

We read of the "will of man" but not of the will of the will, nor do we read of the will of the will of man. "We say with propriety that a bird let loose has power and liberty to fly, but not that the bird's power of flying has a power and liberty of flying." "To be free is the property of an agent* * * as much as to be cunning, valiant, beautiful or zealous; but these qualities are the properties of persons and not the property of properties." Arminians so hold the liberty of will as that the will itself is free and can act voluntary, while freedom and voluntariness belong to the agent who has will, and not to the will itself.

The Arminian theory is that the liberty of will lies in the self-determining power of the will, "or a certain sovereignty the will has over itself * * * whereby it determines its own volitions, so as not to be dependent in its determinations on any power outside of itself."

They must hold the will to be poised or balanced and to possess power to determine its own course. Another sentiment belonging to that system is the determinations of the will are not certain or determined by any fixed principle. A moral agent is one capable of doing right or wrong-virtuous or vicious. Herein is an important distinction between men and animals. Animals are not capable of doing morally right or wrong, and so they are not moral agents. The sun is an agent, and the most powerful agent we have ever seen with our natural eyes, but he is not a moral agent. And so everything that acts is an agent, but only those beings that act from choice and judgment and reason are moral agents. To moral agency belongs a sense of right and wrong, and in this sense I understand the words in Rom. 1:32: "Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which do such things are worthy of death, not only do them but have pleasure in them

that do them." Paul here speaks of bad men as "knowing that they that commit such things are worthy of death." This agrees with my experience in my most sinful days and I think all men have something of this experience, and this is essential to a moral agent.

"That which may be known of God is manifest in (to) them for God hath showed it unto them." Moral law belongs to moral government, and so man, as a moral agent, is susceptible of being addressed by command, exhortation, &c. Herein man differs from stones or animals.

I will quote from Buck on "necessity." "The actions of a man may be at one and the same time free and necessary. It was infallibly certain that Judas would betray Christ, yet he did it voluntarily. Christ necessarily became man and died, yet he acted freely. A good man cloth naturally love his children, yet voluntarily. It is part of the happiness of the blessed to love God unchangeably, yet freely, for it would not be their happiness if done by compulsion, * * * that necessity doth not render actions less morally good is evident, for if necessary virtue be neither moral nor praiseworthy, it will follow that God himself is not a moral being, because he is a necessary one, and the obedience of Christ can not be good because it was necessary; further, it does not preclude the use of means. * * * It was ordained that Christ should be delivered up to death, but he could not have been betrayed without a betrayer, * * * it is not a gloomy doctrine, * * * because nothing can be more consolatory than to believe that all things are under the direction of an all wise being. * * * So far from its being inimical to happiness * * * there can be no solid happiness without it, * * * it inspires gratitude, excites confidence, teaches resignation, produces humility, and draws the soul to God."

These men held that "liberty" is consistent with certainty of events, and chance does not necessarily rule if man possesses freedom of will, but I will refer to this later.

Arminians insist that if the will is not self-determining. then man could not be subject to commands, for they urge that if the will of man be determined by something outside of him, or by his own nature, or by these things together, he could not be a moral agent, nor capable of doing wrong, or right. It is clear that all the freedom necessary to moral agency is had when one is capable of doing as he pleases, and evil men, the worst men, as well as the best of men, possess the capacity of acting as they wish, and this is all the liberty necessary to moral agency, or moral government.

The notion that the will is self determining, supposes the will, itself to have a will. An eminent writer said "A man can choose to serve the Lord if he will." This is equal to saying a man can choose to serve the Lord if he chooses. It all rests upon the notion that the will itself is under the direction of an antecedent will, which would, as Edwards shows, involve the idea of an endless chain of wills, each will determined by the will going before, and the chain determined by the first will in the infinite series of wills. Let the reader study well the following quotation from Edwards, Vol. I, P. 14: " If the will which we find governs the

members of the body and determines their motions, does also govern itself, and determines its own actions, it does so, the same way, even by antecedent volition.

The will determines which way the feet shall move by an act of choice, and there is no other way of the will's determining * * * any thing at all." Whatever the will commands, it commands by act of the will, and if it has itself under its command, and determines itself in its own actions, it does it the same way that it determines other things which are under its commands.

So that if the freedom of will consists in this, that it has itself under its commands, and its own volitions are determined by itself, it will follow that every free volition arises from another antecedent volition directing and commanding that, and if that directing volition be free, in that also, the will is determined; that is, that directing volition is determined by another going before that, and so on till we come to the first volition in the whole series, and if that first volition be free and the will self-determined in it, then that is determined by another volition preceding that, which is a contradiction; because by the supposition it can have none before it to direct or determine it, being the first in the train. But if that first volition is not determined by any preceding act of the will then that act is not determined by the will, and so is not free in the Arminian notion of freedom, which consists in the will's self-determination, and if that first act of the will which fixes the subsequent acts be not free, none of the following acts determined by it can be free."

Edwards shows that the notion that the will is self determining involves the idea that the will itself has a will that determines it, and so, that antecedent will has a will back of it which also determines it and so we would have an infinite series of wills each determined by a will antecedent to it, back to the first will, but if that first will be not self determining, then it would not, in the Arminian notion, be a free will, and so this would destroy the liberty of will in their whole chain.

There could be no such a thing as liberty of will on their plan; how much better to say that will is choice and in every act of choice it is not the will choosing but the man choosing. Let us not refer to the will as an actor but as an act, and this will remove all confusion. Certainly when men choose what is agreeable to them, what they please, this is all the liberty necessary to moral government, and this is essential to moral government.

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CHAPTER IV
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Can a man choose the Lord and his works? Ordinarily when we say a man can not do a thing, we suppose that man to wish to do that thing, but in this case we may say a wish to love God is nothing less than the loving of him. It has been said that "a want of inclination to do a thing constitutes a want of power to do that thing." So if this be true then, if a man has no inclination to love God, or disposition to love him, it would hardly be correct to say that he can do so. And to further clear this question, where a man loves any thing, there must be a reason or cause for his doing so. Perhaps a number of things may unite to constitute one cause. Now, if a man loves sin and sinful ways, there is a reason why he does so. The reason why he loves these things must exist at the time he loves sin. So then our question may be stated, "Can a man love God while there is a sufficient cause in existence, and in operation, for his loving the opposite of God?" And further, I think it plain that it would be absurd to say a man can love the opposite of what he prefers. Take a man who is against Christ. "He that is not for me is against me." If we say this man can love Christ, we must mean he has power to love that which he is "against." At the same instant, and moment, that he loves sin, he is able to love the reverse, I think this would be absurd. If there were no cause for his loving sin or reason for it, then we might say that such a man could love God. But is there a reason why an evil man loves sin? I will not, now at least, enquire what the reason is, that bad men love sin, but will enquire whether there be a reason at all. I think it is certain that there is a reason for every thing around us from the motion of the least atom of dust to that of the rolling spheres, and so a good and sufficient reason for all the actions of holy men. To say a man loves sin and yet there is no cause why he does so. It is true there is no proper and worthy reason for men's love of sin, but there must be a cause for it.

If a man steals or murders or commits any serious crime, we know there is a cause for it. Jesus says: "An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil." I suppose that all will admit that when a man loves sin, and rejects righteousness, that there is a cause for it.

So then our question would be, Can one who loves sin, and rejects righteousness, can such a man at the same time that he loves sin, and also while the cause for loving sin exists and is in operation, can such a man, at such a time, love holiness? To say so would be to say that a man can choose what he does not prefer, and this is an absurdity. The Arminian notion of "free will" is that the will or choice can be reversed by some sovereign determining power of the will. They urge that unless this be true men could not be blamable for sin, nor could there be any just pretext for moral government of God. But it is clear that the sentiment they contend for is utterly unreasonable and self contradictory. Where men are situated to do as they please they have all the liberty necessary to moral government. And evil men have all the liberty necessary to moral government. Men have not the right to sin or love sin, in the sense they are not forbidden to do so, but they certainly have liberty to do so in

the sense they are not hindered from it, and this is, properly speaking, liberty. Let us now put our question in another form, "Can a man whose pleasure it is to serve sin, choose the service of God?"

It is true that men can do as they please about their behavior, but for us to say a man can choose the service of God when at the same time, it is his pleasure to serve sin, would be to say he can do as he does not please to do, or that he can choose that in which he has no pleasure, which brings us back to the proposition, a man can choose that which he does not prefer, and this is to say he can choose that which he does not choose, and this is absurd.

I think we are liable to be confused by regarding the will as an organ of the body. We can change our feet from one place to another, and so we conclude we can move the will from one place to another.

The feet are subject to, and governed by the will, but the will is not an organ of the body, it

is an ad of the mind. The will governs the feet but the will does not govern the will. I have heard

men say, can't I choose whatever course I please? and seem to think this an answer to the positions here taken. But to answer these positions it is necessary to show that a man can choose the course he does not choose. Their task is to prove that the will governs itself. Their task is to prove that a man can choose the course of life that he does not choose.

It has been asked can not a man choose that which is disagreeable to him, on account of some other advantage gained, or some other trouble avoided? A man may take that which is disagreeable to him, for the above reasons, as a man takes a bitter medicine, for the sake of health, but in this case the mind chooses the health.

And so where men enter the service of God, to escape future suffering, or simply to secure heaven or in order to promote good morals in community, in such cases God is not really the object chosen but to escape the trouble, &c., is the thing chosen. The choice is not God, but to escape future misery. The true Christian chooses God not as the wife who chose her husband on account of his wealth, honor, &c., but he chooses God on his own account. I think it important to remember that the words can and can not, in connection with this subject are used in a different sense from the sense in which they are used in regard to physical things.

When we say, "the army can suppress the rebellion," we mean in spite of all opposition. But when we say a man can love his dutiful son, we do not mean that there is anything to oppose his loving his son. There is nothing to hinder him from it. He may be hindered from aiding his son by poverty, &c., but nothing can hinder him from loving his son.

So we may say of a good man: "He can love the Lord and do so most freely." I know of nothing to hinder him from doing so. So when Paul spoke of persons

"having eyes full of adultery and that can not cease from sin." In an ordinary way this might imply that these men were forced against their will to sin, but the thought here is these men were so attached to sin they could not avoid it. There is no intimation of a desire to do so on their part. I think it clear that in order to the choice of anything there must be some affinity between him that chooses and the object chosen. When the needle is disengaged it turns to the pole, while a piece of wood would not do so. And so I am sure that in order for a man to choose God there must be some affinity of nature in him for God, but I will leave this subject for some other chapter. Our own nature and environment forever determine the choice or will. A house of sin has an attractive influence on some men, and not so with others. So a church or place of worship will attract others. Let a gold mine be discovered, and many are determined in their wills and conduct by it. We might follow up this line of reasoning and find that events around us, and men's conduct grow out of the surroundings. I mean the conduct of men in all the relations of life are determined by two things, namely, The nature of man, and his environment. We must distinguish between the power men have to choose, and the cause of their choice being one thing rather than another. To say a man chooses sin because the Creator has endowed man with a capability of choosing would be the height of absurdity. There must be a reason why the choice is what it is rather than something else. If we see a body in motion we know there is not only a cause of its moving, but a reason why it moves in that particular direction. I think that there is as much reason why a man's choice is what it is, as there is why a body moves in any particular direction. To say there is no reason why a man's choice is what it is, would be as absurd as to say there was no reason why the stone fell downward instead of upward. But it may be asked "May we not by instruction and good examples determine the choice of our neighbors to God's ways?" Certainly we may, and all men who write books or print papers on religious subjects or who preach or address the people, I say they do so with design of leading men or influencing them to choose the right thing, rather than the wrong; but they do not address the people with any design of destroying the liberty of will. It is the design that they should choose truth and right without compulsion, and, indeed, "moral force" never operates so as to destroy liberty of will or liberty of choosing, which is the same thing, but in the exercise of instruction we may remember that men must be willing to be instructed, to go where it is, and to listen to it. They must be willing to weigh what is said, and so attend it as to understand it. I may also notice the fact that those who so address the people do so with the design of determining the will or choice of those they address. The man who preaches does so with design of determining his hearers to choose the right, and if he succeeds then the truth that "environment determines the choice" is established, and the will is not self-determining.

Thoughts On The Will. J.H. Oliphant. Press of Moore & Langen Printing Co. Terre Haute, IN. 1899. Pages 28-35.

Thoughts On The Will

CHAPTER V

J. H. Oliphant

I desire to give a lengthy quotation from Gill's "Cause of God and Truth" which will show how our people met Arminius in his time, as well as show the subject in hand, page 183.

"It is said that 'freedom of the will in this state of trial and temptation, can not consist with a determination to one, namely on the one hand, in a determination to good only, by the efficacy of divine grace,' seeing that this puts man out of a state of trial, and makes him equal to the state of angels; nor with the contrary determination to evil only, for then man in this state of trial must be reduced to the condition of the Devil and damned spirits,' and it is more than once urged; "that the doctrine that teaches that man is so utterly disabled by the fall of Adam, that without efficacious grace, which God vouchsafes only to some few who are the objects of his election to salvation, he hath no power to do what is spiritually good, or to avoid what is spiritually bad, must be destructive of the liberty belonging to man, in a state of trial and probation."

The above is Whitby's argument against our people. The following is Gill's reply: "This seems to be the principle argument, and on which the greatest stress is laid, since it is so often referred to.

"In my first part, I have considered this case, whether man is now in such a state of trial as is contended for; I have shown, by several arguments, that man is not in such a state, and have given answer to those which are brought in favor of it, and therefore am not concerned to reconcile the doctrine of man's disability to do that which is spiritually good, to the liberty of man in such a state, or what becomes of this imaginary state, and the liberty of man in it. But though man is not in such a state, and his will is biased and determined, either by the efficacy of divine grace, to that which is good, or through the corruption of nature to that which is evil, yet he is not, by the one made equal to angels, nor by the other reduced to the condition of the devil, for though regenerated persons, when and while they are under the divine impulse or powerful operation of grace, are biased and determined to that which is good as the angels are, without any violation of the natural liberty of their wills, yet they are not in an equal state with them, for they are still liable to sin, and their obedience is imperfect, neither of which can be said of angels; besides there is a principle of corruption in them, sin that dwells in them; the old man which is as much biased and determined to that which is evil as the new man is to that which is good. And as for

unregenerate men, * * * though their hearts and inclinations may be as bad as the devils * * * yet they are not reduced to the same condition with them."

Gill contends for liberty of will, yet not as the Arminians of his times. Again he says: "The doctrine of man's disability to that which is good, is not destructive of any of the natural faculties of the soul or spirit, nor of the will, nor of the natural liberty of it. "It is argued that 'If the will be determined to that which is good, by the grace of God, or to that which is evil through the disability contracted by the fall; this must take away the liberty of men's actions, since then there is no place for election and determination.' To which I reply, supposing choice necessary to free actions, a determination of the will to some one thing is not contrary to choice, for the will of Christ, and the will of angels and glorified spirits are determined only to that which is good, and yet t they both choose and do that freely."

"A wicked man who is under the strongest bias power and dominion of his lusts, acts freely in his fulfilling of them, as does also a good man in doing what is spiritually good, and never more so than when he is under the most powerful influences of grace."

The Arminian argued that if the will of an evil man were determined to sin only this fact would destroy liberty of will, and also that it would clear the sinner of all blames, for sin. Gill argued that the will is free and yet determined to evil only, which I think I will demonstrate to be true later on in the work.

"It is said 'that the freedom of man's will pleaded for is absolutely requisite to render our actions worthy of praise or dispraise, and that a determination to one leaves no room for either of these.' As to good men they are not solicitous about the praise of their actions, being very willing to give the praise and glory of them to the grace of God, by which they are what they are and do what they do.

Though I see no reason why these should not be praiseworthy, and the more for being done in a dependence on the grace of God.

"The good actions of angels and glorified saints are praiseworthy, they are commended for doing the commandments of the Lord, for their constant and perfect obedience to his will, hence our Lord taught his disciples to pray that the will of God might be done in earth as it is done in heaven, and yet the wills of these celestial inhabitants are only determined to that which is good, and as to the actions of wicked men, notwithstanding their disability to do good, they are worthy of dispraise, for if bad fruit may be dispraised which comes from a bad tree, * * much more must the actions of wicked men be worthy of dispraise, who voluntarily choose their own ways.

"The actions of apostate angels deserve dispraise and they have been rebuked for them by the Lord himself, and yet their wills are determined to that which is evil only."

I would beg the reader to notice that Gill argues that the wills of evil men are determined to evil only, yet this fact does not destroy liberty nor obligation. The battle ground was not as to whether the will is free, but as to whether a determined state of the mind to good or evil consists with accountability, with

commendation for obedience, or disapprobation for disobedience, and this is the real issue yet.

"I have already observed, that actions to which men are directed, influenced, and determined by the grace of God, are commendable and praiseworthy; as the services of angels and glorified saints, and so are rewardable by the grace of God, though not through any merit or desert in them; for as the saints have all they have through the grace of God, and do all they do, that is well done, by the assistance of it, so they expect no other reward but what is according to it. And as to wicked men, they are justly liable to punishment for their wicked actions, since these are committed by them against the law of God, voluntarily, with a full will, desire, delight, and affection; without any force upon them; though they are influenced and determined to them by the corruption of their nature; which corruption of nature is so far from excusing them from condemnation and punishment, that it is an aggravation of it; even as the devils are not only liable to punishment for their former transgressions, but to greater degrees thereof, by their daily repeated sins; though their wills, through the malice and wickedness of their natures, are only determined to sin.

"The learned writer attended to, argues from what he had more largely insisted on elsewhere, to show that 'God acts suitably to our faculties by the illumination of our understanding, and by persuading the will by moral causes; and from his having demonstrated the falsehood of that supposition that though God has laid no necessity upon man to do evil by his decrees, yet man lies under a necessity of doing evil since the fall, by reason of the disability he bath contracted by it, to do anything which is truly good; and from his having shown, that, though the evil habits added to our natural corruption do render it exceeding difficult, they do not render it impossible for them to do what is good and acceptable in the sight of God.' I reply; if no more light were put into the understanding of man, or communicated to him but what is done by moral causes, he would never be capable of knowing and receiving the things of the Spirit of God; and if the will of man were no otherwise wrought upon than by moral suasion, it would never be subject to the law of God or gospel of Christ. Nor has this author demonstrated the falsehood of the hypothethis that though God has laid no necessity upon men to sin, by His decrees, yet such is the disability of man, contracted by the fall, that he can not but sin; for God's decrees do not at all infringe the liberty of the will, as the case of Joseph being sold by his brethren, and the crucifixion of Christ do abundantly declare; and that such is the state of man since the fall, such the corruption and impotency of his nature that he cannot do that which is spiritually good, and is fully set and wholly bent upon that which is evil, both Scripture and all experience sufficiently testify."

Again on Page 197 he says: "God is a most free agent and liberty in him is in its utmost perfection, and yet does not lie in an indifference to good or evil; he has no freedom to that which is evil, he cannot commit iniquity, he cannot lie or deny himself; his will is determined only to that which is good; he can do no other.

He is the author of all good and that only, and what he does, he does freely and yet necessarily. It is said that 'this argument is not good, since he is in no state of trial nor can he be tempted to do evil.' I reply, neither is man in a state of trial as has been shown, he may be and is tempted to do evil, and there is a propensity in his nature, nay, he is only determined to it, before a principle of grace is wrought in him, which shows that the liberty of his will lies in a determination to one. Moreover, since God cannot be tempted to evil nor is it possible that he ever should commit it, it follows that true liberty does not lie in an indifference to good or evil.

"The human nature of Christ, or the man Christ Jesus, who as, he was born without sin, and lived without it, all his days on earth, so was impeccable, could not sin. He lay under some kind of necessity, from the purpose of God, the command of God, the covenant between God and him, as well as from the purity of his nature, to fulfill all righteousness, and yet he did it most freely and voluntarily, which proves that the liberty of will, in its greatest perfection does not lie in equilibrio, in an indifference to good or evil, but is consistent with some kind of necessity, and with a determination to that which is good only.

* * * The good angels, holy and elect, who are confirmed in the state in which they are, and by the confirming grace of God are become impeccable, cannot sin or fall from that happy state, yet perform their whole duty, do God's will cheerfully and willingly. The freedom of their wills is not lost, nor in the least curtailed by their impeccability, confirmed state, and determination to do that which is only good."

Gill and Baptists of his times argued that evil men are determined to sin only by the corruption of their nature. The Arminians argued that if their wills were determined to sin only this would destroy all liberty of will, and leave sinners blameless.

It is an Arminian sentiment to say that a determination to evil only is destructive to all liberty. Arminians also held that a determination to holiness would also destroy all liberty of will, and also would shear our Saviour, himself, of all right and title to praise for his holiness. I will try to ascertain whether men are inclined to sin, and whether that inclination is such as to constitute a determination to evil, and whether a determination to evil does destroy liberty of will or remove all just ground for censure.

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Thoughts On The Will

CHAPTER VI
J. H. Oliphant

I have long thought the distinction between moral and physical inability ought to be well understood, so I will devote this article to that subject. "Edwards on The Will," p. 11, says: "We are said to be naturally unable to do a thing when we cannot do it if we will, because what is most commonly called nature does not allow of it, or because of some impeding defect, or obstacle that is intrinsic to the will, either in the faculty of understanding, constitution of body, or external objects. Moral inability consists not in any of these things." His definition of physical inability is the being unable to do the thing from want of bodily strength or mental weakness. Inability of this kind destroys accountability, and where one fails to do a thing for want of power to do so, he cannot be to blame. In our earliest life we learned that a "can not" of this kind was a perfect excuse for not doing anything our superiors required of us. But moral inability is very different. Edwards says:

"Moral inability consists not in any of these things; but either in the want of inclination, or the strength of a contrary inclination, or the want of sufficient motives in view, to induce and excite the will, or strength of apparent motives to the contrary, or both these may be resolved into one; and it may be said in one word, that moral inability is the opposition or want [lack] of inclination [desire]; for when a person is unable to will choose such a thing through a defect of motives, or prevalence of contrary motives, it is the same thing as his being unable through the want of an inclination or the prevalence of a contrary inclination in such circumstances and under the influence of such views."

When we say a man could do better we mean he could if he would, we do not mean a man can do that which he has no inclination or disposition to do. The words "can" and "cannot" are used in a different sense respecting moral conduct from what they are used respecting physical things.

The Arminians a century ago held that moral inability to do a thing, would destroy "liberty of will" and remove all blame for the not doing, but I desire to stay with my first subject till it is made plain. Suppose a parent requires a child to perform a task utterly above its strength, the child says: "I can not."

In such a case the child is entirely excusable. The will or wish to do so is present, but not a sufficiency of natural strength. We have from infancy learned that a "can not" of this kind is a just apology for not doing.

Edwards gives a number of illustrations showing the nature of moral inability and I will give them. "A woman of great honor and chastity may have a moral inability to prostitute herself to her slave." None can dispute the truth of this statement. She could not do so, and yet her freedom of will is not destroyed, nor is it true, that this kind of inability, destroys the idea of virtue in her behavior. "A child of great love and duty to his parents, may be thus unable to kill his parents." "A very lascivious man, in case of certain opportunities and temptations, and in the absence of such and such restraints, may be unable to

forbear, to gratify, his lusts." "A drunkard, under such and such circumstances, may be unable to forbear taking strong drink."

These are sufficient to illustrate the subject, and show that moral inability neither destroys liberty of will, nor accountability.

Edwards gives a great many more illustrations and the reader can add an infinite number of illustrations to the list.

You cannot forsake your family and would feel insulted if you were told that you could. You can not take your neighbor's property. Physically you are able to slay your own child, but morally you are not.

Physically you are able to attend the place of sin but morally you are not.

Physically you are able to leave your home and church and neighbors, and live the life of a desperado, but morally you are not. These illustrations will help to illustrate the distinction between moral and physical inability.

Arminians hold that, in order to vindicate "liberty of will" we must hold that the will is poised or balanced between right and wrong so that the will by some sovereign power it has over itself may determine itself either to the right or to the wrong, and also that if we hold that the will is determined to sin, and sin only, then this fact would destroy all "liberty of will" as well as all accountability and blamableness for sin.

As to this supposed poised or indifferent state of the will I will leave for another chapter, but will now ask whether a determined state of the will to sin and sin only destroys all liberty of will or accountability. "Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin." Here is a cannot, but who would say it is such a cannot as would remove blame. If it would remove blame it is a blessed "cannot," but, on the contrary, it is a cannot that, instead of apologizing for the case, it aggravates it; it is a moral cannot. When our Savior said, "No man can come to me," he did not refer to such a cannot as would remove all blame, but to a moral cannot.

I think it plain that an inclination to do wrong makes it somewhat difficult to do right. I suppose none would deny this, and if so a stronger inclination to do wrong would make it more difficult to do right, and so it is plain to me that the inclination to do wrong may be so strong as to render one unable to do right, but who would say that an inclination to do wrong is an apology for the wrong or that it furnishes any excuse for doing wrong.

If an inclination to do wrong destroys blame and liberty of will in the act, then the more one is inclined to do a wicked deed the less he would be to blame, and the less liberty of will he would have in it. And so on the other hand, the less one is inclined to do an evil deed the more he is to blame and the more liberty of will he would have in the act. But the very reverse of this is true. The more one is inclined to do an evil deed the more blameworthy he is, and the more freely he does it. So that there is no excuse nor apology for sin of any kind whatever, and wicked men are to blame for every evil act of their lives. The degree of sinfulness increases with the degree of inclination to do the deed and decreases as the inclination to do the deed decreases. If we would take care of the doctrine

of grace we must watch both sides. The Arminian is urging that our obedience is sufficient to weigh at least something in the matter of salvation, and this plainly destroys the doctrine of grace. On the other hand our own brethren are liable to unite with the Arminian and say a "determined state of the will destroys all liberty of will," and thus apologize for sin and so rob grace of its dues by making sin out to be a misfortune instead of a fault.

But I repeat that an inclination to do wrong is no excuse for it nor does it destroy liberty of will in the matter.

Suppose a man be determined to kill his neighbor, and so determined as that no argument, nor appeal could induce him to give up the design. How could this interfere with his liberty in the matter, or how could it remove blame from his conduct?

Edwards defines "liberty of will" as one who is situated to do as he pleases about things, and where persons are so situated to do as they like about matters, they have liberty. He adds that "All who have learned to talk and are not prejudiced will accept this definition."

Where men are tried in human courts for crime it is not necessary to show how men first became inclined or willing to do the deed, it is sufficient to show that men are thus inclined.

And so I do not think it necessary to show how this inclination to sin came to be in men. Arminians must admit that there is a strong inclination among men to sin, and this inclination to sin is not an apology for sin. No doubt we are sinful by nature or hereditarily so, but this is no apology for our sin. David said, "I was conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity." He did not say this to apologize for sin but rather to exhibit the deep corruption and sinfulness of his behavior.

This is the experience of God's people, we feel that it is our sin, and we deplore the deep corruption of our hearts, as truly as the evil of our conduct, although the one is hereditary and the other our own conduct. Yet we deplore the one as truly and really as the other.

Paul says: "Who knowing that they which do such things are worthy of death, not only do them but have pleasure in them that do them." In this Paul refers not to the Saints, but to the vilest of men, and shows that wicked men have thoughts on this subject and confess themselves worthy of death. And to show the strength of inclination to sin that evil men have he adds: "They not only do them but have pleasure in them that do them." Again Paul says: "Whatsoever the law saith it saith to them who are under the law that every mouth should be stopped and all the world become guilty before God."

This is experimental. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things written in the book of the Law to do them." Men are under the curse.

Reader, if you are not a Christian, let me ask you what reason could you assign why you should not be lost or why you should not die now. Your cup of sin is full enough, were it the pleasure of God to call you hence now. Men are not simply in danger of being lost or under the curse, they are that now. This is not a state of trial and probation for man; he is now under the curse and under the law.

Among criminals on earth and before human courts the criminal has no power to relieve himself, he is at the sovereign disposal of the court; no power to rescue himself, and yet to blame for his condition. This is true of the criminal in the best governments of earth, and we insist it is also true in God's government of men. The hope of the convict is only in the mercy of the court, and so it is before God; every human being may say, " Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me whole." This view of the subject puts God on the throne, and puts man, all men, in the attitude of the criminal.

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Thoughts On The Will

CHAPTER VII

J. H. Oliphant

It is urged that regenerated persons are "servants of God," and so a servant of God can not be free or that "liberty of will" is inconsistent with servitude; also that wicked men are the "servants of sin," and so "liberty of will" is denied to them. Dr. Gill notices these objections in the following words: "The liberty of will is consistent with some kind of necessity, yea, even with some kind of servitude. A servant may serve his master freely, and voluntarily, as the Hebrew servant who was unwilling to part from his master when his time of service expired.

A wicked man who commits sin, gives himself up to it, as a servant of it, yet acts freely in all his shameful and sinful services; even at the same time he is a slave to those lusts and pleasures he chooses and delights in, which made Luther call "free will" "servum arbitrium." Again, "A wicked man, in the highest degree of servitude to sin, his will acts as freely in this state of bondage as Adam's will did in obedience to God in a state of innocence."

Such is the nature of moral force, (argument, persuasion, &c.,) that it never interferes with liberty of will, however strong and irresistible it may be, nor is it the wish of those who reason, exhort or persuade, to interfere with liberty of will.

Gill held that predestination, extends to all events, yet he distinguished between its relation to good and its relation to evil. He was a necessarian, or necessitarian. He held that God's purposes extends to all events in such a way as that chance and uncertainty are entirely excluded from the world, and yet so as to distinguish between right and wrong, the one having its origin in God, and the

other not. He says, "The liberty of will is consistent with some kind of necessity, God necessarily and yet freely hates that which is evil, and loves that which is good." "Christ as man, was under some kind of necessity of fulfilling all righteousness, and yet performed it voluntarily." Cause of God and Truth P.8.

When we say a man is compelled to do a thing we ordinarily understand that he is unwilling to do it, but not so where a man is morally compelled. Here is where confusion arises, we get physical and moral compulsion confused together, and so we fail to see that a man may be compelled to do, by an irresistible moral force, and yet do it so freely as to do as he pleases.

A good man is compelled to provide for his family, and yet never in a lifetime does as he pleases more truly than when thus providing for them. This was what Gill meant when he said, "The will cannot be forced; nor is it, even by the powerful, efficacious, and unfrustrable operation of God's grace in conversion, for though before it is unwilling to submit to Christ and His way of salvation, yet it is made willing in the day of His power, without offering the least violence to it, God working upon it, as Austin says, 'with a sweet omnipotence and an omnipotent sweetness.'"

Again, Gill says: "A good man looks upon himself as under a necessary obligation to act agreeably to the will of God, yet this necessity is not contrary to the liberty of his will." This, no doubt, is what is meant in the third chapter of Philadelphia confession of faith by the words, "Nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

By noticing the arguments made by the Arminians it is clear they felt the necessity of defending the notion that the will is "self-determining." While Gill, Calvin, and all who opposed Arminianism maintained that the will is "determined," not "self-determined" but "determined" and not "poised" or in "equilibrio," with a certain sovereignty over itself whereby it is able to determine itself. Relative to this Gill says, "The liberty of will does not consist in an indifference to good or evil, nor in an indetermination to either, otherwise the will of no being would be free; for God, as he is essentially good, his will is determined only to that which is so, nor does he, nor can he do anything evil, and yet in all he does, acts with the utmost freedom and liberty of will."

I wish to give a few quotations from Whitby and others to show what they regarded as their difficulty. "That the freedom of will in this state of trial cannot consist with a determination to one; on the one hand, in a determination to good only, by the efficacy of divine grace seeing this puts man out of a state of trial * * * nor with the contrary determination to evil only, for then man in this state of trial must be reduced to the condition of the devil," &c.

This is not a state of trial for any who are sinners, for all such are now under the curse. "Cursed is every one who continues not in all the things written in the book of the law to do them." Again Whitby says, "That only is said to be free for us to do which it is in our power to do, which may be done otherwise than it is done, and about which there is ground for consultation and deliberation." In this quotation he plainly confuses physical and moral powers.

Another writer quoted by Edwards, says, "that nothing is, or comes to pass, without a sufficient reason why it is, and why it is in this manner rather than another." "Allows that it is thus in corporeal things, which are properly and philosophically speaking passive being, but denies it is thus in spirits which are beings of an active nature, who have the spring of action within themselves."

His idea seems to be that an act of choice may exist without a sufficient reason for its existence, or why it is what it is. The relation of cause and effect is as true and real in the moral world as it is in the physical world, and this is the thing Arminians must deny to sustain their theory. They hold that if there be a reason why men choose as they do, that this would destroy all liberty of will, and also that it would destroy all just cause for blame in evil men, as well as all ground of commendation of the good actions of virtuous men.

In reply to the above, if a sufficient cause for one's choice would destroy all liberty of will; then one, to choose freely, would choose without a reason why he chooses.

The better reason one has for his choice the less liberty he would have in choosing and so if God has the best reason possible, for all his conduct, this theory would deny a particle of liberty to him, and also would hold that he is not entitled to a particle of praise for his conduct. And so the insane who act with no reason would have perfect liberty.

But I repeat that cause and effect are as real and true in the moral as in the natural; every atom of matter from the creation till now, has had a sufficient reason for its every motion, not a ripple on the face of all the waters, nor a motion of one single leaf nor of one atom of dust, from the morning of creation to the close of time, but that is traceable to a sufficient cause, and the same law of cause and effect is found in the moral universe. This principle Arminians must overturn to make their doctrine stand on its feet.

Locke on the Understanding, p. 7, says, "No man ever sits himself about anything but upon some view or other which serves him for a reason for what he does. * * * The will itself, how absolute and uncontrollable soever it may be thought, never fails in its obedience to the dictates of the understanding. * * *

But in truth the ideas and images in men's minds are the invisible powers that constantly govern them, and to these they all universally pay a ready submission."

In this Locke affirms that the choice is "determined" and that it is controlled by the judgment. Edwards quotes Whitby's essay on the will, p. 25, "That there are many instances wherein the will is determined neither by present uneasiness, nor by the greatest apparent good, nor by the last dictate of the understanding, nor by anything else, but merely by itself, as a sovereign, self-determining power of the soul, and that the soul does not will this or that action, * * * by another influence, but because it will." Edwards, in reply to this, says: "The thing supposed, wherein this grand argument consists, is that among several things the will actually chooses one before another, at the same time that it is perfectly indifferent."

The action of choosing is based on the last dictate of the understanding, as Locke and Edwards show. That which the judgment apprehends as best or as containing the most to please and gratify, the choice as surely embraces as that a stone falls when that which holds it up is removed. There may be things about which the will is indifferent, or about which the will is poised and in such a case there would be no choice, but when these things are brought before the judgment, and the judgment is that one of them is most desirable, then the will embraces that. To say otherwise is to say the judgment is that one thing is, all things considered, most desirable and yet the will chooses the other. It is to say man's judgment is that one thing is preferable yet he chooses another thing. It is to say a man chooses what he does not prefer, which is to say he chooses what he does not choose, and this is an absurdity.

Edwards says, P. 21, "To make out this scheme of liberty the indifference must be perfect and absolute." There must be a perfect freedom from all antecedent preponderation or inclination." If liberty of will consists in "indifference" the indifference must be total and absolute, for if there be any preponderation whatever, this would destroy liberty of will, on the Arminian plan. "The least degree of antecedent bias must be inconsistent with their notion of liberty." "Surely the will can not act or choose contrary to a remaining inclination of the will." Bias to either sin or holiness would destroy all liberty of soul, and this would destroy all ground for blame for an evil choice, or all ground for approval in a right choice. So that there must not be a particle of preference in the soul, at the time of choice, and this makes it necessary to choose while in a state of perfect and absolute indifference on the Arminian plan.

Edwards shows that according to the Arminian notion of free will there could be no choice, such a thing could not exist--it is utterly self-contradictory and self-destructive.

Whitby instances two cakes, just alike, or two eggs, and attempts to sustain his notion of "indifference," or "equilibrio" by insisting that the soul is capable of choice here when there is no choice. I think Edwards destroys this reasoning effectually. But while there is no difference between two cakes that are just alike, yet there is a great difference between right and wrong, and this would render his illustration by the two cakes or two eggs entirely unsuitable. We may also say that the mind or soul of a sinner is not in "equilibrio" between right and wrong, but the preponderance is to the evil. So that if the Arminian could show the soul capable of acting or choosing, while in equilibrio it would fail to serve their purpose unless they could also show that the sinner is in equilibrio between righteousness and sin.

It is unnecessary for me to endeavor to prove that the sinner is not in a "poised" state of mind, for all who know anything of scripture teaching know that this world is inclined to evil. The "poise" they talk of is broken in every one, and so their task is to prove that evil men are capable of choosing against their inclination, and against a most powerful preponderation to evil, against the tendency and inclination of their own nature and against the influences of their environment.

Thoughts On The Will. J.H. Oliphant. Press of Moore & Langen Printing Co. Terre Haute, IN. 1899. Pages 53-61.

Thoughts On The Will

CHAPTER VIII

J. H. Oliphant

If freedom consists in one's being situated to do as he pleases, it is clear that the will will follow the strongest motive, it will embrace that which, at the moment, appears most desirable.

Edwards quotes an Arminian author as follows: "Though with regard to physical causes, that which is strongest always prevails, yet it is otherwise with regard to moral causes. Of these sometimes the stronger and sometimes the weaker prevails. And the ground of this difference is evident, namely, that what we call moral causes, strictly speaking, are no causes at all, but barely passive reasons of, or excitements to the action, or to the refraining from action, which excitement we have power to comply with, or reject as I have showed above." They seem to think the "self-determining power of the will" is essential to their theory, essential to that liberty of will that is essential to moral government; that

unless the will be thus free there could be no such thing as vice or virtue, &c. Mr. Edwards in replying to this position says: "If a hungry man have the offer of two sorts of food, to both of which he finds an appetite, but has a stronger appetite to one than the other, and there be no circumstances or excitements to induce him to take either the one or the other but his appetite; if in the choice he makes between them he chooses that to which he has the least appetite to, and refuses that to which he has the strongest appetite, this is a choice made absolutely without previous motive, excitement or reason, as much as if he were perfectly without appetite to either."

This illustrates the Arminian notion of "freedom of will." Where one is situated to do as he pleases, he certainly has all the liberty of will essential to moral government. I suppose this much liberty is essential, to vice or virtue, crime or innocence; and as Edwards says, "All who have learned to talk will admit that for one to be so situated as to do as he pleases is properly speaking liberty."

But the Arminian notion of liberty of will is for one to be capable of choosing that which is least desirable even repulsive, and rejecting that which is most desirable. "If the most high should endow a balance with agency, or activity of nature, in such a manner, that when unequal weights are put into the scales, its agency could enable it to cause that scale to descend, which has the least weight and so to raise the greater weight, this would demonstrate that the motion of the balance does not depend on weights in the scales, at least as much as if the balance should move itself, when there is no weights in the scales. And the activity of the balance which is sufficient to move itself against the greater weight, must, be more than sufficient to move itself when there is no weight at all." Edwards on will, P. 28.

A scale like this would be the most wonderful thing conceivable, but it would be a perfect illustration of the Arminian notion of "Free moral agency."

I am willing to accept the doctrine of "Free moral agency" if by these words we are to understand that man is capable of choosing that which is agreeable to him and of rejecting that which is disagreeable to him; but Arminians find it necessary to infuse a strange meaning into these words, a meaning not found in Webster or any other author of dictionary, namely that these words denote that a man is capable of choosing that which is disagreeable to him and of rejecting that which is most agreeable to him, capable of choosing without motive or against the most powerful preponderating motive. If this is free agency I would reject it most assuredly.

A system that requires a new meaning to the words of our language, and an unnatural and unreasonable meaning, must be at fault. The plain meaning of the words "Free moral agent" is "one situated to do as he prefers." To say these words denote "one situated to do as he does not please," "To choose what he does not prefer" is to give the words an unnatural meaning.

Arminians find the human family much inclined to sin. That all men are by "nature children of wrath." They find that the environment of men is sinful, and not only so but they find that the nature of man is such as to favor his

environment and give it strength, and hence the necessity of contending for these strange and peculiar notions of the liberty of the will.

I will repeat what I said in a previous chapter, that "Affinity of nature is essential to choice." Where there is no affinity of nature there can be no choice. And the human family in its fallen condition has no affinity for God and his service, and hence the necessity of "being born again" as the Savior teaches, but I will say more of this later on.

Another Arminian writes the following, Edwards on the Will, P. 25: "What makes the will choose, is something approved by the understanding, and consequently, appearing good. And whatever it refuseth is something represented by the understanding, and so appearing to the will as evil. All that God requires of us is, and can be only this, to refuse the evil and choose the good.

Wherefore to say that evidence proposed, apprehended, and considered, is not sufficient to make the understanding approve; or that the greatest good proposed, the greatest evil threatened, when equally believed and reflected on, is not sufficient to engage the will, to choose the good, and refuse the evil, is in effect, to say, that which alone, doth move the will to choose, or to refuse, is not sufficient to engage it to do so, which being contradictory to itself, must be false."

This author says that instruction and exhortation is "that which alone doth move the will to choose." He knows of nothing else that tends in any degree to move the will to choose holiness and God but there are several things in this to consider, first -- in this, he gives up the theory of self-determination, and speaks of something as "that which alone doth move the will to choose." If the will be moved to choose, then it is not self-determining, and so not free, from the Arminian standpoint. Another thing, he speaks of something approved by the understanding, also as "evidence proposed and apprehended, considered or adverted to." Now in order to "apprehend and consider" the things proposed, the sinner

must be disposed to attend to, and consider. It is not the proposing that produces a disposition to attend to it, for that is to suppose the thing proposed to have an effect before it is "apprehended or considered." Campbell, who was a champion of Arminianism, says, in "Campbell on Baptism," p. 62, "Now we may with propriety say that as respects God there is an understanding distance, all beyond that distance can not understand God's word; all within it can easily understand him in all matters of piety, and morality." "God himself is the center of that circle and humility is its circumference." Campbell saw and mentions that some kind of preparation is necessary to enable one to "apprehend" the thing proposed, and that, that prepares men to hear is not the thing "proposed" unless we suppose it to produce good results before it is "apprehended."

Some kind of action of the will or choice is necessary to attend to and properly consider the thing "proposed." The will cannot be influenced by the weighty arguments of the gospel until heard, apprehended and considered, and some kind of will or choice is necessary to a patient attendance on the word. Now, the

scheme quoted by Edwards and that quoted from Campbell both fail to inform us how men are induced to thus consider and so attend to the word as to have the equilibrium of the will broken, and determine to holiness. The fact is that on this scheme the "poise" of the will must needs be broken before "that which only" can break the poise, as they say, is brought into operation, and so the whole thing is a bundle of contradictions.

Another thing in regard to this whole plan is, it is open to all the criticisms and complaints usually leveled at Calvinism.

Suppose we have an organization of men who have means sufficient and men well qualified to present the "weighty arguments of the gospel," and they are preparing to visit some distant heathen region. They are not expecting to look after each and every heathen, but only a limited number. They have in store irresistible arguments according to the supposition, arguments that "alone doth move the will to choose or refuse," and they are to determine the field to be operated and the regions to be left out of their operations. Practically it is for this organization to say what land shall be blest with salvation and what shall be "reprobated," for they say election will necessarily lead to reprobation, and so now in as much as they can not bless every heathen land with "that which doth alone determine the mind to the choice of God and His service," they must needs elect the country upon which they will send the showers of salvation, and so reprobate all the rest.

The land which they elect is not needing it more than others, and is no more worthy of it than others, yet they deliberately claim the right to select that land and leave all the other lands in darkness. So now how much better is this scheme and view than the most ultra "Hyper" Calvinism. Wesley repeatedly said that the view that God selects some and leaves others makes "God meaner than the devil." But we find in lands where these weighty arguments are presented, that only a small per cent of the human family so attend, and consider as to be determined by that which "alone can move the will to choose." Now why do some choose to thus attend, while others do not. The will, at every moment of one's life follows the strongest motive, and those who fail to thus attend the weighty arguments and reject such a course are at the same time following what to them is the strongest motive, or else they are at the same moment acting like Edwards' remarkable scales, that were capable of determining that scale to ascend that contained the heavy weight and that one to descend that contained the light weight.

These things will lead us to understand there is something necessary here beside argument, something beside the mighty argument "that only can move the will to choose." Flavel spoke of a physical work of God on the soul wherein it is invested with a nature that is in affinity with, God. Edwards in commenting on the quotation above referred to, says, "I am sensible, the doctors aim in these assertions is against the Calvinists, to show, in opposition to them, that, there is no need of any physical operation of the spirit of God on the will, to change and determine that to a good choice. But that God's operation and assistance is only

moral, suggesting ideas to the understanding which he supposes to be enough," &c.

Indeed here is the wide gulf between Arminianism and truth respecting the will.

The one supposes moral force sufficient to engage the will to fix upon God; the other holds that such is the carnality and corruption of human nature that moral force is insufficient to fix the heart upon God and Godliness. The one regards the mind as an enemy to God, that can be changed into a friend by wholesome instruction, while the other regards the "carnal mind as enmity against God," and so something above and beyond moral force is necessary to engage the heart to fix on God as the object of love and choice. But I hope to present this feature of the subject more fully in another chapter.

Thoughts On The Will. J.H. Oliphant. Press of Moore & Langen Printing Co. Terre Haute, IN. 1899. Pages 62-70.

Thoughts On The Will

CHAPTER IX

J. H. Oliphant

The Arminians argue that if the will be determined to sin or holiness, then this fact would destroy all ground for praise or commendation for the obedient, and so all ground for condemning the wicked. They urge that there would be as little reason for loving a being for holiness as for loving the sun for its brightness. I think I have shown that a determined state of the mind to holiness increases our esteem for those thus determined, and I have shown that a determined state of the mind to sin does not destroy liberty in sin, nor remove blame.

They argue that choice is necessary to a free act and also to accountability. Gill answers this by saying, "supposing choice is necessary to free actions, a determined state of the will to some one thing is not contrary to choice, for the will of Christ and the will of angels, and glorified saints, are determined only to that which is good, and yet they both choose and do that good freely, * * * besides neither the disability of man, nor the efficacious influences of grace at all hinder the freedom of human actions. A wicked man, who is under the strongest bias, power and dominion of his lusts, acts freely in fulfilling of them, as does also a good man in doing what is spiritually good. And never more so than when he is under the most powerful influences of the holy spirit."

Gill, in Cause of God and Truth, p.183 to 202, shows that for one to be "determined" to holiness instead of lessening his virtue it increases it, and on the

other hand, persons "determined" to sin are not exempt from punishment or blame for such determination. A wife who is so determined to virtue that she could not one moment meditate infidelity is the more worthy on account of such determination, and a wife "poised" or in "equilibrio" in regard to loyalty to her husband is utterly unworthy.

A man who is determined to honesty is surely worthy of commendation, and so one determined to dishonesty is the more to be condemned and rejected. Gill refers to God as eternally determined to holiness in every act, yet such determination is every way consistent with liberty of will as also with praise for His holiness.

Edwards gives a long chapter on this topic showing that a determined state of the will is every way consistent with the liberty of the will. Edwards argues that the obedience of Christ was "necessary," that it was morally impossible for Him to fail to do His Father's will and yet that He of all beings is most to be praised. Whereas, if Arminians are right in saying that a determined state of the will to holiness is destructive to all liberty of will as well as of all ground for praise and commendation, then Christ Himself was shorn of all liberty of will as well as unworthy of any praise whatever. Dr. Whitby urged that a determined state of the will to sin is inconsistent with such liberty as is necessary to moral government. That persons determined to sin are not suitable beings for moral government; not suitable beings to whom to present threatenings or rewards. In answer to all this, Gill, Calvin, Edwards and others argue that Jesus Christ is the most determined to holiness of all beings and yet is subject to his Father's will, subject to his commands and rewards," &c. Edwards' lengthy and irresistible argument is found, p. 41 to 46, where he cites scores of texts that prove Christ's obedience was certain and yet a willing obedience, that he was subject to commands and rewards, &c., and if all this is true then the Arminian argument that freedom of will, accountability, &c., are inconsistent with a determined state of the will, must go for nothing. I will quote a few lines on this subject from Edwards: "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us and let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God."

"How strange would it be to hear any Christian assert that the holy and excellent temper and behavior of Christ * * * was not virtuous or praiseworthy because his will was not free, but was unalterably determined to one, that on this account there is no virtue at all in all Christ's humility, meekness, patience, charity, forgiveness of enemies, contempt of the world, heavenly mindedness, submission to the will of God, perfect obedience to his commands unto death, even the death of the cross, his great compassion to the afflicted, his love to mankind * * * his praying for his enemies even when nailing him to the cross, that virtue when applied to these things is but an empty name, that there is no merit in any of these things, that Christ was worthy of nothing at all on account

of these things, worthy of no reward, no praise, no honor, or respect, from God or man, and all because his will was not indifferent, "in equilibrio," and free either to these things or the contrary; but under such a strong inclination, or bias, to the things that were excellent, as made it impossible he should choose the contrary;" that he was worthy of no more honor "than a clock or mere machine that is purely passive and moved by physical necessity."

These authors have buried forever the notion that a determined state of the mind to either sin or holiness, is destructive to liberty of will, or accountability, or that it renders one unfit for a moral government, and unworthy of rewards, or unsuitable for punishment. I will cite some of the texts that show that Christ "necessarily" obeyed his Father in all things. 2nd Sam. 23, 50; Rom. 5,19; Phil. 2, 18; Heb. 5, 8; Isa. 53, 10, 11, 12; Ps. 2, 110; Isa. 49, 7, 8, 9; Jno. 10, 17, 18; and especially Rev. 5, 8 to 12. These places show that Christ's will was "determined" that he was subject to the commands of God, and that in the end he was praised for all this. And so this fact demolishes the argument of Arminians that a determined state of the mind to holiness renders one unfit for praise, and unsuitable for moral government, and also utterly divested of freedom of will.

Some men have been given up to sin, and this fact does not relieve them of blame for sin, but if Arminians are right that a "determined state of the mind to sin removes, all liberty and all grounds for blame," &c., then it would not be a disadvantage to be thus given up to sin. Ps. 81, 12; "So I gave them up to their own counsels."

Acts. 7, 42; "Then God turned and gave them up to worship the hosts of heaven." Rom. 1, 24; wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts" &c.; (ver. 20) "For this cause God gave them up to vile affections" &c.; (ver. 28) "and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient," &c.

In all these instances we find persons that none can deny but that their wills are "determined" to sin, and if this fact destroys liberty, and accountability then to be thus given up would be an advantage rather than a disadvantage. I admit that so far as I can see it would destroy accountability, &c., for God by some positive act to make men to be bad and invest them with an evil nature. But in the cases above cited there is no evidence that God made any of those persons to be bad, but rather his procedure was a judicial hardening for past sins, as in the case of Pharaoh. In the hardening of his heart, he was not made to be bad, but rather punished for past sins. So in the case of Joseph and his brethren, there is not the slightest evidence that God made any of them to be bad; also the circumstance of David's numbering Israel. There is no proof that God made David to be bad, but this was a punishment for past sins. So in the case of the lying spirit being sent from God to Ahab's prophets. No evidence here that God made the spirit to be a liar or those prophets to be bad. The one was a liar before this event and the others were false prophets before this event; and all

that can be said of these circumstances is that God so controlled Devils; false prophets, lying spirits and evil men as to accomplish his will.

A recent writer cited some of these places to show that "Predestination sustains the same relation to evil that it does to good," but in none of the above cases, nor in the bible anywhere, is there evidence that God made any one to be a sinful being, while hundreds of places show that God has made man to be good and holy. So no text can be found showing that the decrees of God are related to sin just as they are related to holiness.

The circumstances crucifixion and being delivered "according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, to be taken with wicked hands." These hands were not made wicked by the decree of God. All that this whole circumstance can prove is that evil men were, and are so under the control of God as to carry out His purposes.

How different it is with the Saints, who are made worthy and holy by the efficacious work of the Spirit.

I regret that our brethren, any of them, should insist that predestination sustains the same relation to evil that it sustains to good, for if so, certainly it would be so related to evil as to produce it. All admit that the efficacious decree of God is essential to holiness, and if so, and God's decree of sin is efficacious, then as sure as God's decree is productive of holiness so sure would it be of sin. I have felt astonished at the efforts of brethren to defend the position that predestination sustains the same relation to sin that it does to holiness.

If we would defend the doctrine of grace, we must not so explain predestination or anything else as to make an excuse for sin; for so far as sin is excusable, so far it is not sin at all; and so if we excuse sin, or make out that men are not blameworthy for sin we rob grace of its dues, by insisting that there is nothing for grace to do.

If men are not "worthy of death" if they are not blamable for sin, then there is but little or nothing for grace to do. Any theory that apologizes for sin is destructive of the doctrine of grace. Arminians do this by urging that God in the very nature of things ought to give all men a chance for salvation, and so universalists apologize for sin.

Every theory of two seedism also, by finding some quality in the elect that stands as the reason why they are saved.

An extreme view of predestination does the same thing by tracing sin up to the decrees of God as a cause for it.

If we would know the riches of his grace we must find no apologies for sin of any kind whatever.

When we consider our own experience we have a light that shines in a dark place, and we find there no excuse claimed, or even admitted.

If we hold that the wicked do the will of God and that every sin is but the carrying out of God's will, with no distinction between the sense in which wicked persons do his will, and that in which the obedient Christian does his will, thus confounding and confusing all sin and holiness right and wrong, and obscuring

the need and work of grace, leaving little or nothing for grace to do, I say in holding these views we obscure and lose sight of the doctrine of grace.

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Thoughts On The Will

CHAPTER X

J. H. Oliphant

It is urged that if there be such a bias to sin as to make sure of a sinful life, or such a bias to holiness as to make sure of a holy life, that in the one case it would be inconsistent with blame and in the other it would be inconsistent with virtue or praise. They urge that the will must be poised in its conduct in order that vice or virtue attend its actions. Is it a better and a more virtuous frame of mind for one to be at a "stand still" or in "equilibro" in regard to theft, or the murder of his neighbors, or is it infinitely more worthy and virtuous that he be so "determined" as to render him incapable of meditating such a thing? Shall we say that that man who habitually inclines to do his neighbor's good and renders good for evil; who is "determined" in honesty, truthfulness, integrity, &c., that habitually takes the right side of every question involving right and wrong; shall we say there is no virtue in this man on account of the strength of his bias to holiness; or shall we say that all liberty of will is destroyed on account of his bias to holiness? This I understand to be the Arminian ground, but I am sure that every dictate of sound reason would say that the more one is biased to uprightness the more virtuous and praiseworthy he is, and the more nearly one is at a stand still between right and wrong the less virtuous he is. In fact, it is a very sinful state of mind for one to be in to be perfectly undetermined between the murder of a neighbor and the not doing so. To be "poised" in mind about it is to be next door to it, and does not common sense say this is a sinful state of the mind to be in? So the "poised" state of mind for which they plead is itself a sinful state. Suppose one has five degrees of inclination to do a murder, would he have more liberty of will in the deed than he would have if he had five hundred degrees of inclination to do so? It seems clear to me that as the inclination to do the deed is strengthened, the freedom in doing it is also strengthened, and also the greater degree of wickedness. There is surely more sin in being fully inclined to sin than in being only slightly inclined to sin.

I think these considerations will enable the reader to see that an inclination to sin, be it ever so great, does not in the least degree whatever lessen the guilt, but on the contrary aggravates it, and also, that the strongest possible inclination

to sin, does not in the least interfere with liberty of will in sin; also that a poised state of the mind is a sinful state, that persons being most worthy and virtuous, whose inclination to holiness is strongest. The wife whose inclination to virtue is absolute and perfect, is most virtuous, and that one whose inclination to virtue is feeblest, is least virtuous, and so that one whose inclination is strongest to infidelity, is the most vicious and blameworthy.

A failure to distinguish between natural and moral inability leads to confusion. A law requiring men to pluck the stars or deface the skies would be foolish, and men would be unblamable for failing to do as it required. Natural inability is a perfect excuse for non-compliance.

But where a law exists, reasonable in its demands, moral inability to obey would not be a just excuse. Remember that moral inability consists in an inclination to do that which is forbidden or not to do that which is required or both.

In short, moral inability in no degree releases one from obligation, nor does it form a good reason why men should not be called on to do right.

A citizen could not justly plead that his inclination to do wrong exempts him from the duty of obedience, or the penalty for disobedience. Let those who say that a "determined" state of the will to sin would put aside all idea of vice; I say let them show how it is that an inclination to sin releases the sinner from all blame, or renders it unreasonable to execute the penalty for disobedience. If we take that position we would have no place or use for law "human or divine."

The doctrine of total depravity, usually held by our people consists largely in this: That men, all the race, are inclined to sin, that an inclination to sin, constitutes a moral inability to do right.

Where one is inclined to sin, where the choice is that way, it constitutes moral inability to do right, and this is total depravity. I say it constitutes moral inability to do right at least during the time that the choice is to do wrong, for as before remarked, If a man's choice be sin there is a reason for that choice and that cause is in operation while the choice is sin. Now to say a man under these circumstances can choose holiness would be to say he can choose what he does not choose, and this is absurd.

This is a moral inability to do right, and does not in the least excuse one from sin or render him blameless, but on the contrary, the more firmly fixed, and permanent, the determination to sin be, the more guilty, and justly condemned; and so on the other hand that neighbor who is most inclined to do right about everything, in all the relations of life, whose every day life evinces that there is in his heart a determination to the right, so that it is impossible for him to do a little mean act, I say that man is most praiseworthy and virtuous. His inability to do a mean act is the chief of his virtues, and the grounds upon which he should be most esteemed.

I have noticed some discussion in regard to the cause of this inclination to sin among men. All must admit that this inclination is universal.

It is urged that if this inclination be hereditary, that this fact would form an apology for sin.

The usage in criminal courts is, that if the criminal be guilty of the deed and wilfully so, this is sufficient to convict without considering whether the criminal gained this tendency to sin by the influence of others, or whether it was bred and born in him to be wicked.

Certainly no jury would conclude the penalty should be less because the criminal was naturally inclined to the deed. On the contrary, where the criminal is shown to be naturally inclined to evil deeds, that his record in general shows that he is in heart a bad man, that there is a determination to evil in his very nature, that his ancestry was bad in general; all these things on the Arminian theory, would tend to excuse him from sin, and form an apology for his conduct, but the very reverse is true; and all these things instead of apologizing for the deed would aggravate the offense, and so court usage would rather increase the penalty than lessen it on account of these circumstances.

I will not enter into the investigation of the subject-matter of original sin, but certainly those who plead that a determined state of mind to evil destroys liberty of action, removes blame for sin, and renders one unfit for moral government and obligations, will find nothing to support that view in the question of hereditary sin.

When David made confession of his sin in the case of Uriah's wife he used every expression possible to set forth his crime in the strongest light. This is found in Ps. 51, read down to fifth verse, where he says, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." This language was not designed to apologize for his sin but rather to set it forth in a deeper and more aggravated way.

So this universal tendency to sin and corruption of nature and life, establishes "moral inability" to holiness, and is the sum and substance, of total depravity, and is in no sense an excuse for sin; nor does it destroy or lessen "liberty of will," or render one unsuitable to be governed by moral law, or to be punished for sin, nor does it destroy the propriety of pointing out the duty of men to them. Cruden on the will says, "It is that faculty of the soul, whereby we freely choose or refuse things." "It is of the nature of the will, to will freely whatever it wills, for the will cannot be compelled." Gill remarked, "The will can not but be free." Cruden goes on, "But it is unable, till it be changed by grace, to move itself towards God, and to will any thing pleasing to him."

I said in a previous chapter that the nature of man and his environments determines his choice. In Rev., last chapter, Ver. 17, "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." This text refers to those who are willing, but does not inform us how they became willing. To be willing in the sense of this text carries with it the idea of hating evil, for he that wills or chooses God hates sin, and so is loyal to God, and has in himself the elements of loyalty, but this text does not even suggest how men become willing.

So the words "If any man will be my disciple," &c. This text calls attention to what the will or choice is without suggesting anything as to how this will was produced. So the words "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. To hunger after righteousness is to choose it, and so to will it. Jesus informs us that such a man is BLESSED.

It does not tell us what is required to make a man choose or will righteousness, but only tells us that such a man is blessed. The blessing does not follow after the choosing, but it occurs to me that that which makes one choose, or that which establishes this choice for holiness, whatever it is, is what blesses. So the text, " We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren."

This text does not tell us what is required in our passing from death unto life, nor does it tell us how to pass, but it gives one evidence that a man has passed. To love the brethren is to choose them and their good, and he that does that is passed.

Also the words, " In this the children of God are manifested, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." Here we learn that doing righteousness manifests us as the children of God, but it leaves the real cause of our being so concealed. Again, "If ye know that He is righteous ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him." Here again we are taught to believe and know that he that doeth righteousness is born of God. This text only tells us how to know that one is born of God without telling us how or by what means one is born of God. So the words, " By their fruits ye shall know them." No intimation in this text as to how the tree becomes good, but only how we are to know a good tree. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous." Abel's offering evidenced that he was righteous; it was not the cause of it, but the evidence of it. What it really was that made him righteous is left out of this text. So, "He that loveth is born of God." To love God is to choose Him. This text tells us the condition of every one that loves God. He tells us they are born of God, but fails to tell us what it is to be born of God, or how it is effected; it only gives an evidence of its having been done.

"When on the boughs rich fruit we see

Tis then we cry a goodly tree."

The bible will not allow works to be the cause of that change, whatever it is. Works is not the cause of our being "of God" or "born of God," &c., but good works are the evidence. To love God is not the cause but the evidence. How that mysterious border line between the state and condition, of the unloving and disloyal, on the one hand, and the loyal and loving on the other hand, I say how this is crossed is not explained, in these texts; and it is hard to understand how it is done, but it is easy to discover the evidence that this line has been crossed. In our judgment of our neighbors we act on the same principles. Where we find one true and reliable, we judge him by this to be a good citizen, but we never

once think that the exercise of those qualities makes him a trusty and reliable man. It is hard to tell just what it is that makes him a good citizen, but it is easy to tell what proves him to be such.

Sincerity is one of the brightest jewels ever seen by mortal man. We know not how to produce it, but we may be able to detect the evidences of it.

So there is something in religion, that stands back out of sight, hard to understand, hard to discover or explain, that appears to be the cause of it. There are scores of evidences pointed out in the bible by which we may know of its presence.

It is certain there is something, not produced by teaching, instruction, or any kind of exhortation, or examples. It is as hard to understand as life and requires the same power to produce it.

Thoughts On The Will. J.H. Oliphant. Press of Moore & Langen Printing Co. Terre Haute, IN. 1899. Pages 80-89.

Thoughts On The Will

CHAPTER XI

J. H. Oliphant

Our brethren are sometimes unable to see how it is that men are to blame for sin, and yet it be true that men can do no works that would tend to their eternal salvation. I have been asked, often, whose fault it is that men are lost? Good brethren who see and love the truth in general, are unable to see how it is that "works of righteousness" and "works" in every sense, are excluded from the cause of justification, and yet sins and transgressions of men are in any sense the cause of future punishment.

The experience of Christians is evidence to them that it is "your sins and your iniquities that have separated between you and your God." Years ago, the president of the state university of Indiana, in talking to me on this subject said: "Every Christian man and woman knows for himself that if they are ever saved it will not be for any good works of theirs, or goodness of their nature, and also that if they are finally lost it will be for their own sins. These two truths may be hard for some men to reconcile, but every Christian must know that both are true, whether he can harmonize them or not." In the administration of human government we see something that partially illustrates this principle.

Let us consider the condition of a man, guilty of treason, which is the highest form of crime known among men; and all sin, every sin, has in it the nature of treason against the government of God. Now let us consider the condition of this man; he is not in a state of probation now, he is condemned and is legally lost.

The notion that, in this life, we are on probation, or in a state of trial is false; at least it is false, so far as every one is concerned, who has sinned one time, because he that offends in one point is guilty of the whole law. One sin, the least sin, has in it the nature of treason and is leveled at the very throne of God himself.

But all can see that this man is now justly condemned, all can see that it is his fault; and yet all can see that there is nothing that he can do, to deliver himself from his present difficulty. Let him try what way he will, his state of ruin still remains and is absolutely unchangeable so far as he is concerned.

Whatever hope he may have, is in the action of the sovereign power he has offended. In a word, his only hope lies, not in any act of his, but in the sovereign power he has dared and insulted, "so then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth but of God that showeth mercy," "who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.

All can see that this man is to blame for his sins, wholly and entirely his own fault, and yet he is utterly powerless to do anything to secure his release.

So when we contend that our ultimate salvation cannot be secured by any act of ours, but that it is all depending on God, and yet, if finally lost, it will be wholly our fault, we are but insisting that God's government in these things is equally as severe as the best and most enlightened governments of earth. Civilization would not endure among us if the principle were incorporated in our governments that all crime should be removed and every criminal set free upon the performance of certain conditions, to be performed by the criminal after his being guilty of the highest crime known to the world.

So now we contend that God, in his government of men, may and does justly, pursue that course which every good government of earth pursues; and so it is plain that men by sin, may get themselves into trouble in such a way that no act of theirs can ever deliver them and we ought not to be called hard for contending for a principle in God's governments which, if not exercised in human governments, civilization would perish from the earth.

Men may in many ways bring themselves into difficulty in such a way that no good works of theirs can get them out of it.

By bad conduct, a man may waste his health or property, or good name among men, so that no good action of his would ever deliver him from it. In many ways this principle that bad conduct may bring ruin, so that good conduct never can remove it, may be illustrated. I call attention to Paul's words, "The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life." Eternal death, no doubt, is here intended. A careful study of this text will clear this subject.

Wages is what men receive for their works, while a gift is what men receive freely and from no consideration of works or merit of their own.

But Arminians urge that it is severe to blame men for what they cannot help, and that if men can not do right, it is certainly wrong to blame them for not doing so, as we contend that the will is "determined" to evil, and if so we must do evil

necessarily, and unavoidably. So they urge it would be cruel to punish men for what they cannot avoid.

Now here again is where they fail to distinguish between natural and moral inability.

It is true that natural inability does remove blame. If the thing required is impossible with a natural impossibility it would be cruel to punish men for a non-performance.

Sometimes we are met with such sentences as "you say a man can not come to the Savior," "can not turn from sin," &c., intimating that men might greatly desire to do so, and are hindered by some natural difficulty, but this is a false supposition. The inability of men to do right is moral, and not natural, and moral inability lies in an inclination to do wrong, or a disinclination to do right, or both, and these things are not a just apology for sin.

Edwards says that, "Men in their first use of the words must, cannot, "cannot help it," cannot avoid, necessary, unable, impossible, unavoidable, irresistible, use them to express a natural necessity, or impossibility, or some impossibility that the will has nothing to do with, something that must be, whether we be willing or not, and which will be no matter how much we may desire to the contrary."

That such expressions are used to express that which must be, no matter how anxious we should be that they should not be.

In our early childhood we used these expressions and came to understand them to contain a good excuse for not doing what was required of us. This understanding of the words grew with our growth, and was strengthened with our strength, so that when we hear men talk of what cannot be done we understand a natural "cannot." We understand they cannot, no difference how much they may desire to do so. And so when men speak of the inability of men to turn from sin we are apt at once to think men may be ever so anxious to turn and are hindered from doing so by some natural obstacle. When Paul said "Who cannot cease from sin," he used the words in a moral sense and not in a natural sense. He did not mean that men might be very anxious to cease from it and were hindered by some unavoidable difficulty; but he refers to the strength of their bias to sin, as constituting inability to do right. And a bias to do sin, let it be ever so strong, does not constitute an apology for it, although it may constitute an inability to avoid it. I have for years thought that our people should well consider the difference between moral and natural inability. A clear understanding of this subject would, as I believe, settle some difficulties among our own people as well as furnish the most irresistible arguments against Arminianism.

Sometimes sin is presented as a disease, and Christ as the physician. In this figure we are liable to be misled, for a sick man desires to be cured, is tired of the disease, &c., whereas the sinner is not tired of his disease, he loves the disease well, and would sooner perish in hell than part with it. He does not love the remedy nor the physician, and would never apply to Him if left to himself.

The strength of the disease lies in his love for the disease, so that the physician's task is to cure him of his love of the disease. When his love of sin is cured the disease of sin is broken up.

So we see how liable we are to be misled by bible figures. In bible times the poor leper no doubt loathed his disease and longed for a remedy, but the sinner whose soul is all leprous loves the disease, and feels no pain from it. His disease is his heart's delight, the darling of his bosom. So that to cure this moral leprosy is to cure his love for the disease.

Another figure, sometimes misunderstood, is where sin is presented as a debt. "Ten thousand talents in debt," &c.

Naturally a man may be in debt to his neighbor, and he may regret it, and long to be freed from it. He may in every way regret it and avoid increasing that debt, but the sinner's case is different. He is in debt, 'tis true, but has no regret about it; instead of seeking to lessen the debt, or to avoid increasing it, he with "every imagination of the thought of his heart" increases that debt.

The heart of men by nature is set on evil, inclined to evil, prone to evil, dead in sin, "by nature children of wrath" in love with sin, and all things, that constitute a moral inability to holiness; yet these things do not apologize for sin in the least degree, nor do they destroy liberty of will in sin, nor render men blameless for sin, nor unfit for moral government. I insist that our people should consider well the distinction between moral and natural inability, I am sure that a clear understanding of this matter will help to settle some troubles now existing among us and also furnish us with a most fatal weapon against Arminianism.

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Thoughts On The Will
CHAPTER XII
J. H. Oliphant

"What things soever the law saith it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God, for the invisible things of Him from the creation * * * are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." The foundation of our accountability does not grow out of the gospel and its provisions, but out of the law. Our relations to God as creatures to a creator, and our entire dependence on Him for life and all that is necessary to life, "for in Him we live," and "He giveth life and breath to all," His mercies pursue every day; all these demonstrate His right to govern and claim our obedience. His very greatness and excellency of character render Him

infinitely worthy of the never ending praise of all His intelligent creatures, and that, too, without the gospel and its provisions. No doubt those who are blest with the gospel and its immense blessings are under additional obligations to God, but men's obligations exist independent of the gospel, and so their accountability and liability to the penalty of the law, all must exist had there been no gospel or provisions of it, and there is a sense of this in men, all men, "Who knowing that they which do such things are worthy of death, not only do them but have pleasure in them that do them." Men may be told of the law and its just claims, and of the penalty to be inflicted on sin in the next world, but all this is not sufficient to deter men from sin.

The ground upon which future punishment will be visited upon the wicked will not be because they were embraced in the atonement and failed to comply with conditions, nor for refusing to be born again, nor for refusing to be quickened, &c., but for their sins. Your sins and your iniquities have separated between you and your God. "Depart from me ye workers of iniquity." "They that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." The notion that men must be given a chance of salvation before they can be justly condemned is childish. A nation that would adopt the plan of giving its criminals a chance to escape in order to make it just, and reasonable to punish them for their sins, would be a wonder among the nations of earth. Human government would die off of the face of the earth with such a procedure.

If the right of condemning the criminal does not exist independent of such a chance, the proper thing to do is not to give the chance to escape, but to set them free at once.

Arminianism presents us with a method of government for God which, if adopted among the nations of earth, would banish civilization from the globe. But we are sure that such is not the divine method of government.

Paul in speaking of the "New covenant" says, "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt because they continued not in my covenant and I regarded them not saith the Lord." I call attention to the words. "They continued not in my covenant." This covenant proved disastrous to them, on account of the fact that they continued not in it. We may say they could have done so, that is they might have done so if they would. They were naturally able to do so, but they were not morally able to do so. A covenant that could fail for this reason would not save a single human being on all the face of the earth, because there is not one of the race morally able to "continue." So Paul mentions a remedial statute, one not liable to fail for the reason this one did, a remedial statute must provide a remedy for the weak place in the old, and so, the new one has the following clause in it "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Now a covenant with this last clause in it will not fail for the reason the old one did, nor will it fail on the account of the moral weakness of men. Moral inability is here provided against, and a system of salvation that is sure.

I would not have the reader understand that men will be saved in their sins but "from their sins." I mentioned in a previous chapter that one difference between Arminians and Calvinists lies in this, the former holds that moral force, teaching, exhorting, persuasion, &c., is sufficient to secure the salvation of men; the latter holds that a physical work on the soul is essential to salvation. This expression, "physical work on the soul," I have not seen often, but what is intended by it is that some work on or within the soul, not dependent on our wills or understanding, is necessary. Take the words, "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The word see, Campbell translates, discern. So this text teaches that the kingdom of God cannot be seen until we are born again. Seeing the kingdom cannot be a means of being born of God, because we must be born again before we can see it.

Now I shall insist that there is a work done for us, which is necessary to salvation, that is not the result of moral force.

And first in all those places where we are said to be born again, the verb is passive. "Being born again" does not denote action exerted by us, but action received by us, and this is true in every single text where being born again is expressed or referred to. It is unnecessary to cite all the texts where the new birth is mentioned, it is enough to say that every single text is so worded as to express action received and not action exerted, and I regard this as a strong argument supporting the position of Calvinists that there is something not produced by moral force essential to salvation. In the application of moral force we are active both in exerting this force and receiving it, whereas the new birth is "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man," but if it were effected by moral force it would be of the "will of man," because in teaching the one must be willing to teach and the other must be willing to hear.

Second. It is nowhere made our duty to be born again, or to be quickened. Not one text makes it our duty to do either of these things. Many texts make it our duty to obey God, but not one makes it our duty to be born again or to be quickened.

Third, many texts show that there is some preparation necessary to enable us to understand spiritual things, and this fact when considered will show that moral force is not sufficient. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened," &c., Eph. 1, 20. This text shows that the understanding must be enlightened before we can understand spiritual things. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them."

There are many figurative expressions of that which prepares men for heaven. "Ye are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works." In creation that which is created is not in condition to consent nor refuse, or resist the operation. Adam in his first creation was not situated to consent or resist, to aid, or hinder the work, and now in as much as this preparation is called a "creation," we learn that it "is not of the will, of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It is also called a "quickening" or a raising up. "And you hath he

quickened," &c., "Who believe according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him up from the dead."

Now if this work be performed by the same power that raised up Jesus from the dead there is no place in it for resistance or human assistance, no place for the will to take part. In raising Lazarus from the dead there could be no resistance on His part, and so in raising up Jesus from the dead there was no place for the will either to choose or refuse. So we see why Paul said, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth but of God that showeth mercy."

I could add many arguments to show that there is something necessary to salvation not produced by moral force, and hence produced in a way that is independent of will. To be born again is not an act connected with moral law, that is, it is not the performance of duty, for it is not our act at all, it is God's act, and independent of all men. It is not the performance of duty on God's part, because it is wholly of grace. It does not free us from the duties of moral law, it takes us from under the law as a covenant but leaves us under the law as a guide to our feet, it puts us under grace and under the parental law of God, under the discipline of the gospel where our disobedience will be attended with the rod, and our obedience with rest to our souls.

I wish to add a few thoughts here relative to the decrees of God, and their relation to the conduct of men.

If we accept the position that the will is "determined" and not self-determining, then we must see that for every volition there is a cause, so that the principle of cause and effect is as certain, as real, in the moral universe, as the natural. We who hold the "liberty of will" are charged with holding that chance and uncertainty prevails in everything pertaining to sin. We have seen that liberty of will is consistent with a determined state of the will, and this is consistent with the sentiment that there is a cause for every choice or volition of men. Indeed there is a cause for everything that exists but God. So chance and uncertainty have no place in the universe. We may apply the word chance to events when their cause is not known to us, but yet we know there is a cause for every event. But to say that predestination sustains the same relation to evil that it does to good, is to teach that good and evil have the same origin. This is one objection I have ever had to the words, "Absolute predestination of all things," because whatever is intended by these words they will lead to the impression that evil is as absolutely and as efficaciously predestinated as good, and this will tend to minimize the difference between right and wrong, and to impress the mind that sin is a misfortune and not a fault, and this tends to destroy the sense of accountability, and this leads on to the utter and everlasting overthrow of the doctrine of grace. For, just so far as sin is a misfortune and not a fault, so far as there is any apology for it, or any mitigating circumstances connected with its origin, our salvation from it is not entirely of grace.

To vindicate grace, we must oppose every view of predestination that confounds or confuses good and evil, in their origin or operation. We must oppose every form and phase of Arminianism. We must oppose every form and phase of

twoseedism, and the sentiment of the preexistence of God's people in Him as a seed.

As I look at the doctrine of grace, it cannot stand up in all its gigantic glory and beauty, and any of these sentiments be maintained.

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Thoughts On The Will

CHAPTER XIII

J. H. Oliphant

Buck defines "Will" as follows: "That faculty of the soul by which it chooses or refuses any thing offered to it."

When man was created he had liberty and power to do what was pleasing in the sight of God, but by the fall he lost all ability of will to any spiritual good; nor has he any will to that which is good until grace enlightens the understanding, and changes the heart.

The nature of the will is in itself indisputably free."

Liberty can not properly be attributed to any thing that has no power, nor can liberty be attributed to any thing in a sphere of which it knows nothing. While the fish has liberty, all the liberty it wants, yet it would be absurd to say it has the liberty of the bird, because it knows nothing of the state of the bird nor has it a nature suited to the liberty of the birds. So a man spiritually dead while he has liberty, even all the liberty he wishes, yet spiritual things are beyond his powers, and so it can not be said that he has liberty in spiritual things. So Buck continues, 'Will, as will, must be free, or there is no such faculty.

But the human will being finite, hath a necessary bound, which indeed so far may be said to confine it, because it cannot act beyond it, yet within the extent of its capacity it necessarily is, and ever will be spontaneous, (free). The limits of the will therefore, do not take away its inherent liberty. The exercise of its powers may be confined, as it necessarily must, in finite being. But where it is not confined, that exercise will correspond. with its nature and situation."

I regard this explanation of will, by Buck as excellent. By "liberty of will" is not meant capacity of will, or the liberty of will is one thing, but the capacity of will is another. Liberty of will in the sinner does not denote that he has power to choose beyond and above his station, or nature.

Arminians confound his liberty and capacity, or rather they by "liberty of will" mean that the sinner not only is capable of choosing things in harmony with his

being, but he has power to choose things above and beyond his capacity, and for which he has no affinity of nature or feeling, which notion is absurd and unreasonable. This being understood, it is easy to perceive man, in his fallen state, can only will according to his fallen capacities, and that however freely his volitions may flow, within their extent, he can not possibly ever pass them. He therefore, as a sinful, carnal and perverse apostate, can will only according to the nature of his apostasy, which is continually and invariably evil, without capacity to exceed its bounds, into good, purity and truth." When Buck says, "He cannot," we are not to understand that the sinner will desire to "exceed his bounds," and cannot. He is, even in his fallen state, capable of choosing, freely, whatever is agreeable to him.

Regeneration will not increase his liberty of choosing, but his capacity, or rather his capacity is transferred to holiness, and he still chooses as freely as before, or perhaps, in view of the fact that in his regenerated state, being one in which two natures oppose each other, and in the sinful state there is but the one nature. The choice may be attended with less obstruction in the sinful state than in the Christian state. However, if we adhere to the principle that the will is guided by the judgment, or is as the judgment is, we might say that the judgment is not so easily settled in the regenerated state as the sinful, on account of their being two opposing or conflicting natures in the Christian. "When I would do good evil is present with me." Men are not at liberty to sin in the sense they are licensed to do so nor are they at liberty in the sense that they are independent of God in their being, for all men and beings are dependent on God for their existence, since He upholds all things by the word of His power.

Men are at liberty to sin in the sense that they are not hindered from it. Sin is not the result of God's efficacious power but it may be in some sense the result of God's forbearing to act or nonaction. Where God efficaciously acts on or within men it is for their improvement. Sin must not be traced to God's positive act. It has its rise in the moral corruption of human nature.

The will is free, or rather man is free in willing, in the sense that he is situated to choose or wish for anything that is agreeable to him. And none can hinder him from doing this.

No being wishes for that of which he has no understanding, nor for that, for which he has no affinity of nature and feeling. So now when a man is sincerely wishing for a Savior's love and presence and approval this is evidence that there is, in him an affinity for these things, and so is evidence that he is born of God. When Jesus said "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Hungering and thirsting is evidence that there is an affinity in him for these things, and this is evidence that he is born of God, which is the sum of the blessing named in the text.

We may not be able to reason well about these things, but we can tell whether we crave to be pure in the sight of God, and if we do inwardly long for the love of God to be given us we may be sure we are blessed and are in possession of that nature that chooses divine things.

Paul says, "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." A will to serve God is here attributed to God as his work to produce it. Regeneration invests man with a new nature, with the "Divine nature," and as the needle turns to the pole, so the soul, new born, turns to God as the sum of all good.

"Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of Thy power." The power of God is essential to the will being inclined to God and holiness, not the power of God to reason or in moral force, but his power to impart a new nature to the soul. "Who hath believed our report and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed."

The revealed arm of the Lord is essential to a hearty choice of God.

In order to cause darkness or frost it is not necessary that the sun exert his power, but rather that he withdraw or withhold his power. So sin is not the result of God's power exerted, but it rather results from His ceasing to act.

It is admitted by all sound Baptists that all good has its source or fountain in God. So that it is God that makes us "mete to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints, in light." And all trace this gracious work in men to God's purpose, which must necessarily be eternal. We must not trace our sin to the same source no more than we trace frost and darkness to the sun as their source. Paul speaks of the "vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory." The preparation for glory is of the Lord, and not of men, and this all true Baptists believe.

Paul also speaks of "the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." He does not say whom "He afore fitted to destruction." If we say that all things were equally decreed we would believe that the vessels of wrath were fitted to destruction by the same power that prepared the vessels of mercy to glory, and this would be to trace opposite to the same source. It would be to have the same fountain send forth both bitter and sweet water. Whatever our brethren mean by the words, "Absolute predestination of all things," it does not seem to distinguish between good and evil as it is proper to do.

Nebuchadnezzar is spoken of as the servant of God but he was not the servant of God as the obedient christian is. The wicked are spoken of as the hand and sword of God, but if the wicked do God's will as the saints do, this would destroy the notion of opposition to God. Our Savior is presented as the captain of our salvation, as arrayed in garments rolled in blood, and so as a soldier overcoming his enemies, and the enemies of his people, and in the end, the saints will sing, "Thanks be unto God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," and a victory implies that enemies have been overcome, but if all things are absolutely decreed, equally decreed, then all this war on enemies, and opposition would be a mere appearance of opposition. And we would be led to look upon Jesus in all his conflicts with foes as originating the very opposition he met. Some kind of distinction must be made here or we might be led to confound good and evil as the same thing.

Now it must be admitted that God has power to bring good out of evil, to so control as the greatest possible good comes from the greatest evil and also that his power and wisdom is so concerned about sin as that this world is not a chance world, as respects sin, nor does the devil so occupy the throne as to determine the destinies of nations, however wicked they may be, nor so as to determine what the history of this world shall be.

But there ought to be some distinction made with regard to predestination in its application to sin and the concern it has in holiness.

When we speak of man as an agent our brethren become confused. They are accustomed to regard the word "agent" as "one appointed to do business for another." Its first meaning is an "actor," so when we speak of man as an "agent" we mean he is an "actor," but it is hard for some of our brethren to avoid being confused about this. And so the word "moral." Some of our brethren fail to get the meaning of this word. They understand it to mean "upright," "just." This is one of its meanings, but in its first meaning it denotes the distinction between the actions of man, and those of animals. The actions of men have the quality of being right or wrong, virtuous or vicious, while the actions of animals are not so. When we say man is a "moral agent" we mean his actions are either good or bad.

The insane are not "moral agents," because their conduct is not virtuous or vicious, in the sense that they are accountable beings. When we call man a "moral agent" we do not mean that he is a good man, nor do we mean he is a bad man. Man as a moral agent may be either a good man, or a bad man. Man to be governed by moral law must be so situated as to do as he pleases about the requirements of the law. To publish to man a law requiring him to stay within certain bounds and then confining him within those bounds would be to control by physical law. To force a man to obey or disobey, renders the act of giving moral law a farce. The act of giving law to man supposes him to be situated to do as he pleases about the thing required or forbidden, and if man is not so situated, the act of giving law is a farce. Law must have a penalty affixed to it, and conditionality is an essential element of moral law and inseparable from it.

To say that God gave Adam a law and then compelled him to violate or keep it is to mix moral and physical law and confuse them together. An act of obedience or disobedience must be performed when one is doing as he pleases or the action would be destitute of either obedience or disobedience.

If by "free" is meant that man in his conduct does as he pleases, I mean if it is proper to call this liberty, then man, before the fall, and after the fall, and in his regenerated state is a "free moral agent," and I believe that man must possess the liberty of doing as he pleases in order to be capable of moral government. Deny that man is thus free and he ceases to be a moral agent, or he ceases to be governed by moral law, but is under the control of physical law.

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Thoughts On The Will

CHAPTER XIV

J. H. Oliphant

If one be required to lift a weight of four hundred and ten pounds, he being able to lift only four hundred pounds, he would be physically unable to obey and this inability would be a sufficient apology for not obeying the requirement. If he were commanded to raise a thousand pound weight he would be farther from being able to obey, and he would have a still better excuse for not obeying. One feature of physical inability to obey is the farther one is from being able the better excuse he would have for not obeying.

If one is required to help the needy or aid a charitable undertaking, the poorer he is the better excuse he would have for not aiding. And so if one is required to instruct the ignorant, the less he is qualified for giving the instruction the better excuse he has for not giving it.

This principle may be illustrated in many ways. The greater one's physical inability the better would be his apology for not obeying; his excuse is clearer and more absolute, just in proportion to the degree of his inability.

Physical inability is a just and valid excuse for not performing the commands of those in a position to command us.

And I think too, that if the inability of men to obey God is physical, it would furnish a perfect excuse for disobedience.

But let us consider the nature of the inability of men to serve God, or let us again consider the nature of moral inability.

A disinclination to obey, or an inclination to do the reverse would constitute a moral inability to obey. Or both, an inclination to do wrong, and an aversion to doing right, both taken together may constitute a moral inability to do right. If one has an inclination to do wrong, and no inclination to do right, he is morally unable to do right. The fact that this inclination to do wrong, springs from the natural corruption of the heart is no apology for it.

We find some men more inclined to sin than others, and let it be remembered that a preponderance of inclination to sin constitutes an inability to do right.

Some men are so inclined to sin that they give themselves up to its service in fraud and profanity; others are still more inclined to sin and give themselves up to its service in theft and robbery, and others are still more inclined to evil and give themselves up to the vilest lives of murder, rapine and every foul crime. It is plain

to every observer that some men are more inclined to evil than others, and hence farther from an ability to do right.

It is true that no one is by nature inclined to obey God, "All are gone out of the way," but some are more given up to sin, more corrupt in their lives. But an inclination to sin is no excuse for sin. The greater one's physical inability the better his excuse for not obeying, but the greater one's moral inability the more criminal he is.

As we increase in moral inability our guilt increases. It is the reverse from physical inability. As our physical inability increases our apology is made better, but as man's moral inability to do right is increased his guilt is more inexcusable and blameworthy.

My position has been all the time, that an inclination to evil is no excuse for it, and the stronger one is inclined to evil, the more absolute is his moral inability to holiness, and the more aggravated is his offense, and the more inexcusable he is for his sins. It is the reverse from physical inability, and the fact that this inability has its rise in the corruptions of the heart is no excuse whatever for it.

If we take such a view of "Absolute predestination" as would prompt men to act independently of their wills, we would have physical causes producing moral effects.

Sin ever grows out of the will or there is no sin only wilful sin, or I may say the will is ever connected with sin, or with righteousness. If I benefit my neighbor without willing to do so, it would not be a righteous deed; and so if I injure my neighbor without intention, I am not guilty of an evil deed. The absolute decree of God is concerned in our regeneration in a manner independent of our wills, and so we are born again in a manner wholly independent of our choice, but in every sin, the will is concerned. Sin is not forced on men whether they like or not, but it is ever acquiesced in by the choice.

The bible abounds with instances in which God has made bad men to be good, and where the tree has been made good we have seen good fruit grow on it as the result, but no instance is on record where men have been made to be bad by the Lord. There has ever been dispute as to whether moral force, instruction, exhortation, persuasion, &c., is sufficient to secure the eternal salvation of men. Those who believe this theory ignore what Flavel and others call a physical change, and urge that everything essential to eternal life can be produced by moral force, and thus go to an extreme that ignores the life-giving power of God as necessary to regeneration; while those who oppose this extreme are liable to ignore the use and place for exhortation entirely, and insist that God, by some physical power will press men into His service when He wants them, in some absolute way independent of moral suasion.

The new testament teems with exhortation, persuasion and instruction, in righteousness in all of which men are addressed as moral beings and are recognized as capable of listening to, and considering, what is duty and right, showing that moral force has an important end to accomplish in the matter of our duty.

There is, however, a point where moral force fails. The point of the introduction of life God has reserved to himself, but after this, teaching is important. The capacity to understand spiritual things is secured in one way, or rather is given in one way, and the presentation of truth in another, even by moral instruction. The importance of teaching, of persuasion, &c., ought not to be forgotten. Prior to regeneration the wills of men may be influenced to a better life by moral force. The will is not "self determining" but is determined by the nature of man, and his own environment.

So men's conduct, morally, may be in some measure determined by exhortation. A proper understanding of the moral nature of man discloses the importance of instruction not only to the regenerated but to those who cannot understand spiritual things.

The church is a light to the world. Children favored with church privileges are liable to be morally better for having this privilege, and parents who try to bring up their children right are apt to see their children grow up with well established moral habits as a reward to them for their labors.

An intelligent man in seeking a wife, will prefer that one whose moral training has been good to that one who has had no right training.

So let us not ignore the use and importance of moral training, even for this world, and let us not forget the importance of exhorting one another to love and good works. It is good for men to appeal to them in hearty and warm exhortation to duty. Also let us not forget that there is a point in the eternal salvation of men where God only operates, independent of all instrumentalities, either human or angelic. Here is a point where moral force is as insufficient as it is to make a world; it is a creative work, the work of God.

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