

THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL

THE Freedom of the Will is an expression evidently brought forward in contradiction of the thought that humanity are mere machines, acted upon by certain influences; for instance, that God would act upon a person so as to oblige him to do or to will or to think in a certain way, or that Satan could control the will of any one for evil, against his desire.

The Bible gives us to understand that when God created man, He made him in His own mental image; that is to say, with freedom of will to choose his own course of action – ability and liberty to reach a mental decision for himself. The Bible indicates that God similarly created all the intelligences of the spirit world – angels, cherubim, seraphim, etc., all of whom are said to be in God's image, possessing full liberty of will.

As God can choose that course or this one, so can we. We can be obedient to God or disobedient to Him, just as we will. But by reason of the fall and its curse, or penalty of death, and the blighting of human powers by the dying processes, the human will often finds itself in difficulty. The Apostle Paul says, "To *will* is present with me, but to *perform*" is not always possible. (Rom. 7:18.) We should *will* to do *perfectly*, although none is able to *do* perfectly. On the other hand, one might will to do wrong, but might be more or less hindered in executing his will. In either case, the *will* is free.

There is such a thing as a dominated will. By yielding their wills to occult influences, some persons are mastered by evil spirits. Such practically lose their wills, and we call them deranged, insane. It is said that more than half of all the inmates of insane asylums are there, not because of any functional derangement of the brain, but because of being possessed by evil spirits.

INDIVIDUALITY TO BE PRESERVED

God's people are given to understand that the only way in which they come into relationship to God is by full submission of the will to Him. Such a submission of the will would be unwise except to the Lord; or, in the case of minor children, to their parents, or teachers.

A child might properly reason, I have a will of my own, but I will ignore it and do the will of my parents. This is the proper attitude for a child in the hands of good and intelligent parents. The child should be taught to realize that its will is uneducated, and that it should, therefore, submit itself fully to its parents and look to them for guidance and direction. But every parent, while recognizing his responsibility as the supervisor of the child, should treat the child from the standpoint of its free will, and seek to show it the reason why a matter should be thus and so, controlling it as far as possible by the intelligent exercise of its own will.

And so with those who are in the family of God. It is a primary requisite that they first submit themselves to God – give up their own wills. They are first to recognize that they are unholy, born in sin; that they have imperfect, fallen tendencies, which if pursued, would be injurious. Therefore they should seek to make the will of the Lord their will. They should give themselves fully up to His guidance; His will concerning them is only for their good. The Lord teaches His followers that they are to reason for themselves; they should read between the lines in their study of the Bible, to gain the instruction which He there furnishes. They will thus be better enabled to know His will, and will come more and more to see how much better God's will is than their own, and thus will come more fully into heart-harmony with Him, and with the Lord Jesus.

The freedom of the will is contrasted with the bondage of the flesh. We may *will* to go to the uttermost parts of the earth; but we

may be sick, or lame, or may lack the money or the means of conveyance. While the will may be there, there is not always the power to put it into operation. So also in respect to sin and righteousness, and the will to do one or the other. Each one is hampered more or less by his own imperfections and by the imperfections of others who are under the dominion of Satan, the prince of this world. But when the will is fully yielded to God, He gives us more and more of the spirit of a sound mind – we become more conformed, from day to day, to His likeness.

