

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 9.-Of Free-will.

V. The will of man is made, perfectly, and immutably free to good alone, in the state of Glory only¹.

Question 1.—*Is the will of man made perfectly and immutably free to good alone, in a state of glory only?*

Answer.—Yes. Phil. 3:12. Just as the elect angels are confirmed in a state of immutable happiness and holiness, beholding the glory of God in Christ, 1 Tim. 5:21; 3:16; so, the saints, in virtue of union with Christ, are fixed in an unchangeable state of grace here, and glory hereafter, John 10:28. This unchangeable state of the one and the other, is not owing to anything in their own natures, but to the free love and favor of God, Eph. 1:10. Regenerate man is to grow in grace unto that perfect man towards which all sound growth in grace is leading, Eph. 4:13. In a state of glory, the righteous are said to be among the just who have gone before and are now perfected in grace, Heb. 12:23. The state of glory implies a vision of God which brings one into a state of perfection and goodness, to be like unto God, 1 John 3:2. All of this, God accomplishes in such a way as to keep His elect in that state of grace and then glory by His almighty power, Jude 24.

It is in this state only, the will of man will be free to choose only the good, and not the evil, Matt. 22:30. This will be the highest degree, or the perfect liberty of the human will, when man shall obey God fully and forever, Ps. 103:20. In this state, men shall not only not sin, but they shall abhor sin above all other things, so that they shall no longer be able to sin, Matt. 13:43. In this state, the saints will never be forsaken, but will be constantly and forever ruled by the Holy Spirit, so that it will not be possible for them to deviate in the least respect from that which is right, 2 Cor. 3:18.

Question 2.—*How can the will of man be said to be free and yet immutable to good alone, in a state of glory?*

Answer.—Scripture asserts the freedom of God's will in the most absolute terms, Job 11:10; 33:13; Ps. 115:3; Prov. 21:1; Isa. 10:15; 29:16; 45:9; Matt. 20:15; Rom. 9:15-18, 20, 21; 1 Cor. 12:11; Rev. 4:11. Yet, it also informs us of God's goodness, Mark 10:18; Ps. 36:9. God, while possessing the highest freedom of will, yet by necessity of His own nature cannot will to lie, change or deny Himself, Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; 2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 6:18; Jas. 1:13, 17. Likewise, in a state of glory, man's soul being made perfect, Heb. 12:23, joined no longer to the corruptible flesh, Rom. 7:23, is freed being joined to the incorruptible body, 1 Pet. 1:4; whereby man no longer bears the image of that which is earthy, but that which is heavenly—the incorruptible, 1 Cor. 15:49, 52-54. In this state, the knowledge of God shall shine in their minds, Matt. 5:8; 18:10; while there will be the strongest and most ardent desire of both the will and heart to obey God, Ps. 16:11; thus, there will be no room left for ignorance or doubt, or the least contempt of God, 1 Cor. 13:12. The will of regenerate man is, in this state, freed from the power of sin, but in a state of glory, no longer encumbered with the corruptible, and it is left wholly free from the

¹ Eph. 4:13; Heb. 12:23; 1 John 3:2; Jude 24.

presence of sin as well, Luke 20:35, 36; Rev. 21:4. This state of freedom to do good is confirmed to the righteous, wherein they will be immutably free to do good alone, Rev. 22:3-5.

From this, we may observe that, for those who are regenerate, the center of the corrupt nature is fixed in the perishing body, the body of flesh, the body of this death, Rom. 7:24. The new nature, or new creation, is after the Spirit, Col. 3:10; and, throughout the life of the regenerate person, is engaged in dispossessing the old man, Eph. 4:23; Rom. 8:9. Thus, the principle, that will be manifest fully in glory, is already at work, 2 Cor. 5:16. The death of the believer is the final putting off of the corruptible flesh in order to put on the incorruption of the spiritual body, after Christ, 1 Cor. 15:42-45. It marks the culmination of the crucifixion of the old man, in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, Rom. 6:6. Afterward, in the glorified body, the flesh is renewed according to the quickening Spirit, so that man shall in his flesh behold the glory of God and be fixed in that disposition to only that which is good, Job 19:26.

Question 3.—What do we mean when we confess that the will of man is “immutably free to good alone,” when we assert that immutability is an incommunicable attribute of God?

Answer.—When we confess that God alone is immutable, we assert that He is unchangeable as to His Being, His perfection, His purposes and promises by nature, Mal. 3:6. Scripture teaches that God, as the absolute Perfection, is not subject to either deterioration or improvement, Ex. 3:14; Ps. 102:26-28; Isa. 41:4; 48:12; Rom. 1:23; Heb. 1:11, 12; Jas. 1:17. Man is not immutable by nature, his mutability accounts in some measure for his fall into sin, Eccl. 7:29; Rom. 5:12. However, at glorification, the will of the man, being continued from a state of grace into this state of glory, will be confirmed in its holiness and kept by the power of God from the possibility of lapsing into a sinful estate again, Heb. 12:23, 1 Thess. 4:17. Therefore, what is being asserted is not an immutability of the nature of man but an immutability of the divine keeping of the saints in glory, Rev. 7:16, 17.