

THAT IT [CALVINISM] IS INCONSISTENT WITH  
THE FREE AGENCY AND MORAL  
RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN

BY  
LORAINÉ BOETTNER

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## Chapter XVI

### 2. THAT IT IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE FREE AGENCY AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN

1. The Problem of Man's Free Agency. 2. This Objection Bears Equally Against Foreknowledge. 3. Certainty is Consistent with Free Agency. 4. Man's Natural Will is Enslaved to Evil. 5. God Controls the Minds of Men and Gives His People the Will to come. 6. The Way in Which the Will is Determined. 7. Scripture Proof.

#### 1. THE PROBLEM OF MAN'S FREE AGENCY

The problem which we face here is, How can a person be a free and responsible agent if his actions have been foreordained from eternity? By a free and responsible agent we mean an intelligent person who acts with rational self-determination; and by fore-ordination we mean that from eternity God has made certain the actual course of events which takes place in the life of every person and in the realm of nature. It is, of course, admitted by all that a person's acts must be without compulsion and in accordance with his own desires and inclinations, or he cannot be held responsible for them. If the acts of a free agent are in their very nature contingent and uncertain, then it is plain that fore-ordination and free agency are inconsistent.

The philosopher who is convinced of the existence of a vast Power by whom all things exist and are controlled, is forced to inquire where the finite will can find expression under the reign of the Infinite. The true solution of this difficult question respecting the sovereignty of God and the freedom of man, is not to be found in the denial of either, but rather in such a reconciliation as gives full weight to each, yet which assigns a preeminence to the divine sovereignty corresponding to the infinite exaltation of the Creator above the sinful creature. The same God who has ordained all events has ordained human liberty in the midst of these events, and this liberty is as surely fixed as is anything else. Man is no mere automaton or machine. In the Divine plan, which is infinite in variety and complexity which reaches from everlasting to everlasting, and which includes millions of free agents who act and interact upon each other, God has ordained that human beings shall keep their liberty under His sovereignty. He has made no attempt to give us a formal explanation of these things, and our limited human knowledge is not able fully to solve the problem. Since the Scripture writers did not hesitate to

affirm the absolute sway of God over the thoughts and intents of the heart, they felt no embarrassment in including the acts of free agents within His all-embracing plan. That the makers of the Westminster Confession recognized the freedom of man is plain; for immediately after declaring that "God has freely and unchangeably ordained whatsoever comes to pass," they added, "Yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

While the act remains that of the individual, it is nevertheless due more or less to the predisposing agency and efficacy of divine power exerted in lawful ways. This may be illustrated to a certain extent in the case of a man who wishes to construct a building. He decides on his plan. Then he hires the carpenters, masons, plumbers, etc., to do the work. These men are not forced to do the work. No compulsion of any kind is used. The owner simply offers the necessary inducements by way of wages, working conditions, and so on, so that the men work freely and gladly. They do in detail just what he plans for them to do. His is the primary and theirs is the secondary will or cause for the construction of the building. We often direct the actions of our fellow men without infringing on their freedom or responsibility. In a similar way and to an infinitely greater degree God can direct our actions. His will for the course of events is the primary cause and man's will is the secondary cause; and the two work together in perfect harmony.

In one sense we can say that the kingdom of heaven is a democratic kingdom, paradoxical as that may sound. The essential principle of a democracy is that it rests on "the consent of the governed." Heaven will be truly a kingdom, with God as the supreme Ruler; yet it will rest on the consent of the governed. It is not forced on believers against their consent. They are so influenced that they become willing, and accept the Gospel, and find it the delight of their lives to do their Sovereign's will.

## **2. THIS OBJECTION BEARS EQUALLY AGAINST FOREKNOWLEDGE**

Let it be noticed that the objection that fore-ordination is inconsistent with free agency bears equally against the doctrine of the foreknowledge of God. If God foreknows an event as future, it must be as inevitably certain as if fore-ordained; and if one is inconsistent with free agency, the other is also. This is often frankly admitted; and the Unitarians, while not evangelical, are

at this point more consistent than the Arminians. They say that God knows all that is knowable, but that free acts are uncertain and that it is doing no dishonor to God to say that He does not know them.

We find, however, that the Scriptures contain predictions of many events, great and small, which were perfectly fulfilled through the actions of free agents. Usually these agents were not even conscious that they were fulfilling divine prophecy. They acted freely, yet exactly as foretold. A few examples are: the rejection of Jesus by the Jews, the parting of Jesus' garments and the casting lots by the Roman soldiers, Peter's denials of Jesus; the crowing of the cock, the spear thrust, the capture of Jerusalem and the carrying away of the Jews into captivity, the destruction of Babylon, etc. It is plain that the writers of Scripture believed these free acts to be fully foreknown by the divine mind and therefore absolutely certain to be accomplished. The foreknowledge of God did not destroy the freedom of Judas and Peter — at least they themselves did not think so, for Judas later came back and said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood;" and when Peter heard the cock crow and remembered the words of Jesus, he went out and wept bitterly.

In regard to the events which were connected with Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem it is written: "These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him," Joh 12:16. Because we know beforehand that an upright judge will refuse a bribe, and a miser will clutch a nugget of gold, does this alter the nature or prejudice the freedom of their acts? And if we, with our very limited knowledge of other men's natures and of the influences which will play upon them, are able to predict their actions with reasonable accuracy, shall not God, who understands perfectly their natures and these influences, know exactly what their actions will be?

Hence the certainty of an action is consistent with the liberty of the agent in executing it; otherwise God could not foreknow such actions as certain. Foreknowledge does not make future acts certain but only assumes them to be so; and it is a contradiction of terms to say that God foreknows as certain an event which in its very nature is uncertain. We must either say that future events are certain and that God knows the future, or that they are uncertain

and that He does not know the future. The doctrines of God's foreknowledge and fore-ordination stand or fall together.

### 3. CERTAINTY IS CONSISTENT WITH FREE AGENCY

Nor does it follow from the absolute certainty of a person's acts that he could not have acted otherwise. He could have acted otherwise if he had chosen to have done so. Oftentimes a man has power and opportunity to do that which it is absolutely certain he will not do, and to refrain from doing that which it is absolutely certain he will do. That is, no external influence determines his actions. Our acts are in accordance with the decrees, but not necessarily so we can do otherwise and often should. Judas and his accomplices were left to fulfill their purpose, and they did as their wicked inclinations prompted them. Hence Peter charged them with the crime, but he at the same time declared that they had acted according to the purpose of God, — "Him being: delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hands of lawless men did crucify and slay," Act 2:23.

On other grounds also it may be shown that certainty is consistent with free agency. We are often absolutely certain how we will act under given conditions so far as we are free to act at all. A parent may be certain that he will rescue a child in distress, and that in doing so he will act freely. God is a free agent, yet it is certain that He will always do right. The holy angels and redeemed saints are free agents, yet it is certain that they will never sin; otherwise there would be no assurance of their remaining in heaven. On the other hand, it is certain that the Devil, the demons and fallen men will commit sin, although they are free agents. A father often knows how his son will act under given circumstances and by controlling these he determines beforehand the course of action which the son follows, yet the son acts freely. If he plans that the son shall be doctor, he gives him encouragement along that line, persuades him to read certain books, to attend certain schools, and so presents the outside inducements that his plan works out. In the same manner and to an infinitely greater extent God controls our actions so that they are certain although we act freely. His decree does not produce the event, but only renders its occurrence certain; and the same decree which determines the certainty of the action at the same time determines the freedom of the agent in the act.

#### 4. MAN'S NATURAL WILL IS ENSLAVED TO EVIL

Strictly speaking we may say man has free will only in the sense that he is not under any outside compulsion which interferes with his freedom of choice or his just accountability. In his fallen state he only has what we may call "the freedom of slavery." He is in bondage to sin and spontaneously follows Satan. He does not have the ability or incentive to follow God. Now, we ask, is this a thing worthy the name "free"? and the answer is, No. Not freewill but self-will would more appropriately describe man's condition since the fall. It is to be remembered that man was not created a captive to sin but that he has come into that condition by his own fault; and a loss which he has brought upon himself does not free him from responsibility. After man's redemption is complete he will spontaneously follow God, as do the holy angels; but never will he become entirely his own master.

That this was Luther's doctrine cannot be denied. In his book, "The Bondage of the Will," the main purpose of which was to prove that the will of man is by nature enslaved to evil only, and that because it is fond of that slavery it is said to be free, he declared: "Whatever man does, he does necessarily, though not with any sensible compulsion, and he can only do what God from eternity willed and foreknew he should, which will of God must be effectual and His foresight must be certain . . . Neither the Divine nor human will does anything by constraint, and whatever man does, be it good or bad, he does with as much appetite and willingness as if his will was really free. But, after all, the will of God is certain and unalterable, and it is the governess of ours."<sup>[1]</sup> In another place he says, "When it is granted and established, that Free-will, having once lost its liberty, is compulsively bound to the service of sin, and cannot will anything good; I from these words, can understand nothing else than that Free-will is an empty term, whose reality is lost. And a lost liberty, according to my grammar, is no liberty at all."<sup>[2]</sup> He refers to Free-will as "a mere lie,"<sup>[3]</sup> and later adds, "This, therefore, is also essentially necessary and wholesome for Christians to know: **that God foreknows nothing by contingency, but that He foresees, purposes and does all things according to his immutable, eternal, and infallible will.** By this thunder-bolt, Free-will is thrown prostrate, utterly dashed to pieces . . . . It follows unalterably, that all things which we do, although they may appear to us to be done mutably and contingently, and even may be done thus contingently by us, are yet, in reality, done necessarily and immutably, with

respect to the will of God. For the will of God is effective and cannot be hindered; because the very power of God is natural to Him, and His wisdom is such that He cannot be deceived."<sup>[4]</sup>

It is some times objected that unless man's will is completely free, God commands him to do what he cannot do. In numerous places in Scripture, however, men are commended to do things which in their own strength they are utterly unable to do. The man with the withered hand was commanded to stretch it forth. The paralytic was commanded to arise and walk; the sick man to arise, take up his bed and walk. The dead Lazarus was commanded to come forth. Men are commanded to believe; yet faith is said to be the "gift of God." "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee," Eph 6:14. "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," Mat 5:48. Man's self-imposed in-ability in the moral sphere does not free him from obligation.

#### **5. GOD CONTROLS THE MINDS OF MEN AND GIVES HIS PEOPLE THE WILL TO COME**

God so governs the inward feelings, external environment, habits, desires, motives, etc., of men that they freely do what He purposes. This operation its inscrutable, but none the less real; and the mere fact that in our present state of knowledge we are not able fully to explain how this influence is exerted without destroying the free agency of man, certainly does not prove that it cannot be so exerted.

We do have enough knowledge, however, to know that God's sovereignty and man's freedom are realities, and that they work together in perfect harmony. Paul plants, and Apollos, waters, but God gives the increase. Paul commanded the Philippians, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" and in the Immediately following verse the reason which he assigns for this is, "For it is God who worketh in you **both to will and to work**, for His good pleasure" (2:15, 13). And the psalmist declared, "They people offer themselves willingly in the day of thy power" (110:3).

The actions of a creature are to a great extent predetermined when God stamps upon it a particular "nature" at its creation. If it is given human nature, its actions will be those common to men; if horse nature, those common to horses; or if vegetable nature, those common to the vegetable world. Plain it is that those given human nature were foreordained not to walk on four feet,



nor to neigh like a horse. An act is not free if determined from without; but it is free if rationally determined from within, and this is precisely what God's fore-ordination effects. The comprehensive decree provides that each man shall be a free agent, possessing a certain character, surrounded by a certain environment, subject to certain external influences, internally moved by certain affections, desires, habits, etc., and that in view of all these he shall freely and rationally make a choice. That the choice will be one thing and not another, is certain; and God, who knows and controls the exact causes of each influence, knows what that choice will be, and in a real sense determines it. Zanchius expressed this idea very clearly when he declared that man was a free agent, and then added, "Yet he acts, from the first to the last moment of his life, in absolute subserviency (though, perhaps he does not know it, nor design it) to the purposes and decrees of God concerning him; notwithstanding which, he is sensible of no compulsion, but acts freely and voluntarily, as if he were subject to no control, and absolutely lord of himself." And Luther says, "Both good and evil men, though by their actions they fulfill the decrees and appointments of God, yet are not forcibly constrained to do anything, but act willingly."

In accordance with this we believe that, without destroying or impairing the free agency of men, God can exercise over them a particular providence and work in them through His Holy Spirit so that they will come to Christ and persevere in His service. We believe further that none have this will and desire except those whom God has previously made willing and desirous; and that He gives this will and desire to none but His own elect. But while thus induced, the elect remain as free as the man that you persuade to take a walk or to invest in government securities.

An illustration which well shows God's relation with both the saved and the lost is given by H. Johnson, — "Here are two hundred men in prison for violation of law. I make Provision for their pardon, so that justice is satisfied and the law vindicated, while yet the prisoners may go free. The prison doors are unbarred, the bolts thrown back, and promise of absolute pardon is made and assurance is given every prisoner that he can now step out a free man. But not a man moves. Suppose now I determine that my provision for their pardon shall not be in vain. So I personally go to one hundred and fifty of these condemned and guilty men, and by a kind of loving violence persuade them to come out. That's election. But have I kept the other fifty in? The

provision for pardon is still sufficient, the prison doors are still unbarred, the gates of their cells are still unlocked and open, and freedom is promised to everyone who will step out and take it; and **every man in that prison knows he can be a free man if he will**. Have I kept the other fifty in ?"<sup>[5]</sup>

The old Pelagian tenet, which has sometimes been adopted by Arminians, that virtue and vice derive their praiseworthiness or blameworthiness from the power of the individual beforehand to choose the one or the other, logically leads one to deny goodness to the angels in heaven, or to the saints in glory, or even to God Himself, since it is impossible for the angels, saints, or for God to sin. Virtue, then, in the heavenly state would cease to be meritorious, because it required no effort of choice. The idea that the power of choice between good and evil is that which ennobles and dignifies the will is a misconception. It does, indeed, raise man above the brute creation; but it is not the perfection of his will. Says Mozley: "The highest and the perfect state of the will is a state of necessity; and the power of choice, so far from being essential to a true and genuine will, is its weakness and defect. That can be a greater sign of an imperfect and immature state of the will than that, with good and evil before it, it should be in suspense which to do?"<sup>[6]</sup> In this life that grace from which good actions necessarily follow is not given with uniformity, and consequently even the regenerate occasionally commit sin; but in the next life it will be either constantly given or taken away entirely, and then the determination of the will will be constant either for good or for evil.

Perhaps some idea of the manner in which the Divine and human agencies harmonize to produce one work may be gained from a consideration of the way in which the Scriptures were written. These are, in the highest sense, and at the same time, the words of God and also the words of men. It is not merely certain parts or elements which are to be assigned to God or to men; but rather the whole of Scripture in all of its parts, in form of expression as well as in substance of teaching, is from God, and also from men. "By inspiration," says Hamilton, "we do not mean that God used the individual writers as automata, or that He dictated to them what they should say, but we mean that his Holy Spirit so guided and controlled the writers that what they wrote was **true**, and was the **particular** truth God wanted to be given in writing to His people. God allowed the writers to use their own intellects, their own language and their own style, but when they wrote, His Holy Spirit

supernaturally kept their writing free from error, and rendered it the exact truth which God wanted conveyed to His people down through the ages. The Bible thus becomes a unit, parts of which cannot be cut off without irreparable injury to the whole."<sup>[7]</sup>

Undoubtedly there is a contradiction in supposing that "chance happenings," or those events produced by free will agents, can be the objects of definite fore-knowledge or the subjects of previous arrangement. In the very nature of the case they must be both radically and eventually uncertain, "so that," as Toplady says, "any assertor of self-determination is in fact, whether he means it or no, a worshiper of the heathen lady named Fortune, and an ideal deposer of providence from its throne."

Unless God could thus govern the minds of men He would be constantly engaged in devising new expedients to offset the effects of the influences introduced by the millions of His creatures. If men actually had free will, then in attempting to govern or convert a person, God would have to approach him as a man approaches his fellowmen, with several plans in mind so that if the first proves unsuccessful he can try the second, and if that does not work, then the third, and so on. If the acts of free agents are uncertain, God is ignorant of the future except in a most general way. He is then surprised times without number and daily receives great accretions of knowledge. But such a view is dishonoring to God, and is both unreasonable and unscriptural. Unless God's omniscience is denied we must hold that He knows all truth, past, present, and future; and that while events may appear uncertain from our human view-point, from His view-point they are fixed and certain. This argument is so conclusive that its force is generally admitted. The weaker objection, which is sometimes urged that God voluntarily wills not to know some of the future acts of men in order to leave them free has no support either in Scripture or in reason. Furthermore, it represents God as acting like the father of a lot of bad boys who goes and hides because he is afraid he will see them do something of which he would not approve. If God is limited either by an outside force or by His own acts, we have only a finite God.

The Arminian theory that God is anxiously trying to convert sinners but not able to exert more than persuasive power without doing violence to their natures, is really much the same in this respect as the old Persian view that

there were two eternal principles of good and evil at war with each other, neither of which was able to overcome the other. Free-will tears the reins of government out of the hands of God, and robs Him of His power. It places the creatures beyond His absolute control and in some respects gives them veto power over His eternal will and purpose. It even makes it possible that angels and saints in heaven might sin, that there might again be a general rebellion in heaven such as is supposed to have occurred when Satan and the fallen angels were cast out, and that evil might become dominant or universal.

#### **6. THE WAY IN WHICH THE WILL IS DETERMINED**

Since man is a rational agent there must always be a sufficient cause for his acting in a particular way. For the will to decide in favor of the weaker motive and against the stronger, or without motives at all, is to have an effect without a sufficient cause. Conscience teaches us that we always have reasons for the things we do, and that after acting we are conscious that we might have acted differently had other views or feelings been present. The reason for a particular act may not be strong and it may even be based on a false judgment, but in each particular instance it is strong enough to control. Scales will swing in the opposite direction only when there is a cause adequate to the effect. A person may choose that which in some respects is disagreeable; but in each case some other motive is present which influences the person to a choice which otherwise would not have been made. For instance, a person may willingly have a tooth pulled out; but he will not do so unless some inducement is present which for the time being at least makes this the stronger inclination. As it has been expressed, "a man cannot prefer against his preference or choose against his choice." A person who prefers to live in California cannot, by a mere act of will, prefer to live in New York.

Man's volitions are, in fact, governed by his own nature, and are in accordance with the desires, dispositions, inclinations, knowledge, and character of the person. Man is not independent of God, nor of mental and physical laws, and all of these exert their particular influences in his choices. He always acts in the way in which the strongest inclinations or motives lead; and conscience tells us that the things which appeal to us most powerfully at the time are the things which determine our volitions. Says Dr. Hodge, "The will is not determined by any law of necessity; it is not independent, indifferent, or self-determined, but is always determined by the preceding

state of mind; so that a man is free so long as his volitions are the conscious expression of his mind; or so long as his activity is determined and controlled by his reason and feelings"<sup>[8]</sup>

Unless a person's volitions were based on and determined by his character they would not really be his, and he could not be held responsible for them. In our relations with our fellow men we instinctively assume that their good or bad volitions are determined by good or bad character, and we judge them accordingly. "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit . . . Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them," Mat 7:16-20. And again, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The tree is not free to produce good or bad fruit at random, but is governed by its nature. It is not the goodness of the fruit which causes the goodness of the tree, but the reverse. And according to the parable of Jesus, the same is true of man. And unless conduct does reveal character, how are we to know that the man who does good acts is really a good man, or that the man who does evil acts is really an evil man? While some for the sake of argument may insist that the will is free, in every day life all men assume that the will is both a product and a revelation of the person's nature. When a man exerts a volition which results in robbery or murder, we instinctively conclude that this is a true indicator of character and deal with him accordingly.

The very essence of rationality is that the volitions must be based on the understanding, principles, feelings, etc., and the person whose volitions are not so based is considered foolish. If after every decision the will reverted to a state of indecision and oscillation equipoised between good and evil, the basis for confidence in our fellow men would be gone. In fact a person whose will was really "free" would be a dangerous associate; his acts would be irrational and we would have no way of knowing what he might do under any conditions.

It is this fact (that volitions are a true expression of the person's nature) which guarantees the permanence of the states of the saved and of the lost in the next world. If mere free agency necessarily exposed a person to sin there would be no certainty that even the redeemed in heaven would not sin and be

cast down to hell as were the fallen angels. The saints, however, possess a necessity on the side of goodness, and are therefore free in the highest sense. There is an absence of strife, and their wills, confirmed in holiness, go on producing good acts and motions with the ease and uniformity of physical law. On the other hand the state of the wicked is also permanent. After the restraining influences of the Holy Spirit are with-drawn, they become bold, defiant, blasphemous, and sin with an irremediable obstinacy. They have passed into a permanent disposition of malice and wickedness and hate. They are no longer guests and strangers, but citizens and dwellers, in the land of sin. Further, if the theory of free-will were true, it would give the possibility of repentance after death; for is it not reasonable to believe that at least some of the lost, after they began to suffer the torments of hell, would see their mistake and return to God? In this world mild punishments are often effective in turning; men from sin; why should not severer punishments in the next world be more effective? Only the Calvinistic principle that the will is determined by the nature of the person and the inducements presented, reaches a conclusion in harmony with that of Scripture which affirms that "there is a great gulf fixed," so that none can pass over, — that the states of the saved and the lost alike are permanent.

The person who has not given the matter any special thought assumes that he has great freedom. But when he comes to examine this boasted freedom a little more closely he finds that he is much more limited than at first appeared. He is limited by the laws of the physical world, by his particular environment, habits, past training, social customs, fear of punishment or disapproval, his present desires, ambitions, etc., so that he is far from being the absolute master of his actions. At any moment he is pretty much what his past has made him. But so long as he acts under the control of his own nature and determines his actions from within, he has all the liberty of which a creature is capable. Any other kind of liberty is anarchy.

A man may carry a bowl of gold-fish wherever he pleases; yet the fish feel them-selves free, and move unrestrainedly within the bowl. The science of Physics tells us of molecular motion amid molar calm, — when we look at the piece of stone, or wood, or metal, it appears to the naked eye to be perfectly quiet; yet if we had a magnifying glass powerful enough to see the individual molecules and atoms and electrons, we should find them whirling in their orbits at incredible speeds.



Predestination and free agency are the twin pillars of a great temple, and they meet above the clouds where the human gaze cannot penetrate. Or again, we may say that Predestination and free agency are parallel lines; and while the Calvinist may not be able to make them unite, the Arminian cannot make them cross each other. Furthermore, if we admit free will in the sense that the absolute determination of events is placed in the hands of man, we might as well spell it with a capital F and a capital W; for then man has become like God, — a first cause, an original spring of action, — and we have as many semi-Gods as we have free wills. Unless the sovereignty of God be given up, we cannot allow this independence to man. It is very noticeable — and in a sense it is reassuring to observe the fact — that the materialistic and metaphysical philosophers deny as completely as do Calvinists this thing that is called **free will**. They reason that every effect must have a sufficient cause; and for every action of the will they seek to find a motive which for the moment at least is strong enough to control.

#### 7. SCRIPTURE PROOF

The Scriptures teach that Divine sovereignty and human freedom co-operate in perfect harmony; that while God is the sovereign Ruler and primary cause, man is free within the limits of his nature and is the secondary cause; and that God so controls the thoughts and wills of men that they freely and willingly do what He has planned for them to do.

A classic example of the co-operation of Divine sovereignty and human freedom is found in the story of Joseph. Joseph was sold into Egypt where he rose in authority and rendered a great service by supplying food in time of famine. It was, of course, a very sinful act for those sons of Jacob to sell their younger brother into slavery in a heathen country. They knew that they acted freely, and years later they admitted their full guilt (Gen 42:21; Gen 45:3). Yet Joseph could say to them, "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life...So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God;" and again, "As for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive," Gen 45:5, Gen 45:8; Gen 50:20. Joseph's brothers simply followed the evil inclinations of their natures; yet their act was a link in the chain of events through which God fulfilled His purpose; and their guilt was not the least diminished by the fact that their intended evil was overruled for good.

Pharaoh acted very unjustly toward his subject people, the Children of Israel; yet he simply fulfilled the purpose of God, for Paul writes, "The scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth," Rom 9:17; Exo 9:16; Exo 10:1, Exo 10:2. Some of God's plans are carried out by restraining the sinful acts of men. When the Israelites went up to Jerusalem three times a year for the set feasts, God restrained the greed of the neighboring tribes so that the land was not molested, Exo 34:24. He put it into the heart of Cyrus, the heathen king of Persia, to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem, Ezr 1:1-3. We are told, "The king's heart is in the hand of Jehovah, as the watercourses; He turneth it whithersoever He will," Pro 21:1. And if He turns the king's heart so easily surely he can turn the hearts of common men also.

In Isa 10:5-15 we have a very remarkable illustration of the way in which divine sovereignty and human freedom work together in perfect harmony: "Ho, Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few. For he saith, Are not my princes all of them kings? Is not Calno as Carchemish? Is not Hamath as Arpad? Is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?"

"Wherefore it shall come to pass, that, when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he hath said, by the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I have understanding; and I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and like a valiant man I have brought down them that sit on thrones; and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the peoples; and as one gathereth eggs that are forsaken, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or chirped.

"Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? Shall the saw



magnify itself against him that wieldeth it? As if a rod should wield them that lift it up, or as if a staff should lift up him that is not wood."

Concerning this passage Rice says: "What is the obvious meaning of this passage? It does most unequivocally teach, in the first place, that the king of Assyria, though a proud and ungodly man, was but an instrument in the hands of God, just as the axe, the saw, or the rod in the hands of a man, to execute His purposes upon the Jews; and that God had perfect control of him. It teaches, in the second place that the free agency of the king was not destroyed or impaired by this control, but that he was perfectly free to form his own plans and to be governed by his own desires. For it is declared that he did not design to execute God's purposes, but to promote his own ambitious projects. 'Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and to cut off nations not a few.' It consequently teaches, thirdly, that the king was justly held responsible for his pride, and wickedness, although God so overruled him that he fulfilled His wise purposes. God decreed to chastise the Jews for their sin. He chose to employ the king of Assyria to execute His purpose, and therefore sent him against them. He would afterward punish the king for his wicked plans. Is it not evident, then, beyond all cavil, that the Scriptures teach that God can and does, so control men, even wicked men, as to bring to pass His wise purposes without interfering with their free agency?"<sup>[9]</sup>

For any one who accepts the Bible as the word of God it is absolutely certain that the crucifixion of Christ — the most sinful event in all history — was foreordained: "For of a truth in this city against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass," Act 4:27, Act 4:28; "Him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hands of lawless men did crucify and slay," Act 2:23; and "The things which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He thus fulfilled," Act 3:18. "For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers because they knew Him not, nor the voice of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet they asked Pilate that He should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all things that were written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a tomb," Act 13:27-29.

And not only the crucifixion itself was foreordained, but many of the attending event, such as: the parting of Christ's garments and the casting of lots for His vesture (Psa 22:18; Joh 19:24); the giving of gall and vinegar to drink (Psa 69:21; Mat 27:34; Joh 19:29); the mockery on the part of the people (Psa 22:6-8; Mat 27:39); the fact that they associated Him with thieves (Isa 53:12; Mat 27:38); that none of His bones were to be broken (Psa 34:20; Joh 19:36); the spear thrust (Zec 12:10; Joh 19:34-37); and several other recorded events. Listen to the babble of hell around the cross, and tell us if those men were not free! Yet read all the forecast and prophecy and record of the tragedy and tell us if every incident of it was not ordained of God! Furthermore, these events could not have been predicted in detail by the Old Testament prophets centuries before they came to pass unless they had been absolutely certain in the foreordained plan of God. Yet while foreordained, they were carried out by agents who were ignorant of who Christ really was, and who were also ignorant of the fact that they were fulfilling the divine decrees, Act 13:27, Act 13:29; Act 3:17. Hence if we swallow the camel in believing that the most sinful event in all history was in the foreordained plan of God, and that it was overruled for the redemption of the world, shall we strain at the gnat in refusing to believe that the smaller events of our daily lives are also in that plan, and that they are designed for good purposes?

#### **FURTHER SCRIPTURE PROOF**

Pro 16:9: A man's heart deviseth his way; But Jehovah directeth his steps.

Jer 10:23: O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is n in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

Exo 12:36: And Jehovah gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked.

Ezr 6:22: For Jehovah had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God (rebuilding the temple).

Ezr 7:6: And the king (Artaxerxes) granted him (Ezra) all his request, according to the hand of Jehovah his God upon him.

Isa 44:28: (Jehovah) that saith of Cyrus (the heathen king of Persia), He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem,

She shall be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

Rev 17:17: (Concerning the wicked it is said) God did put in their hearts to do His mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished.

1 Sa 2:25: They (Eli's sons) harkened not unto the voice of their father, because Jehovah was minded to slay them.

1 Ki 12:11, 1Ki 12:15: And now whereas my father (Solomon) did lade you with a heavy yoke, I (Rehoboam) will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions . . . So the king harkened not unto the people; for it was a thing brought about of Jehovah.

2 Sa 17:14: And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The Counsel of Hushai is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For Jehovah had ordained to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that Jehovah might bring evil upon Absalom.

## FOOTNOTES:

**Chapter 16. 2.** That it is inconsistent with the Free Agency and moral responsibility of Man

[1] Quoted by Lanchius, p. 56.

[2] Bondage of the Will, p. 125.

[3] id. p. 5.

[4] id. pp 26, 27.

[5] Pamphlet, — The Love of God for Every Man.

[6] The Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination, p. 73.

[7] The Basis of Christian Faith, p. 162.

[8] Systematic Theology, II, p. 288.

[9] God Sovereign and Man Free, pp. 70, 71.