

TH
M 563

A STUDY OF LUTHER'S WORKS TO
DISCOVER
HIS DOCTRINE OF FREE WILL

By

J. Ernest Messer

B. S., Parsons College

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Sacred Theology
in
The Biblical Seminary in New York

New York City
April 1931

**BIBLICAL SCHOOL OF
THEOLOGY LIBRARY**
HATFIELD, PA.

22989

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	L
A. Importance of the Problem.....	1
B. Ramifications of the Problem.....	1
C. The Problem Delimited and Stated.....	2
D. Sources and Method of Procedure.....	3
I. HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE FREE WILL CONTROVERSY....	4
A. Jewish Doctrine.....	7
B. Augustine.....	8
C. Pelagius.....	10
D. Thomas Aquinas.....	11
E. Duns Scotus.....	12
F. Dante.....	12
G. Erasmus.....	13
II. THE PROBLEM AS STATED BY LUTHER IN HIS WORK ON "	
"THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL"	19
A. Introduction.....	20
B. The Purpose and Necessity of Knowing the Problem.....	21
C. Definitions.....	23
1. Contingency.....	23
2. Necessity.....	23
3. Will.....	24
D. Methods of Proof.....	26
1. Rhetorical.....	26
2. Other Writers.....	27
3. Reason.....	28
4. Experience.....	28
5. Scripture.....	29
E. Erasmus Reduced to a Dilemma.....	30
III. AN EXAMINATION OF LUTHER'S PROOF AS PORTRAYED IN HIS WORK ON "THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL"	34
A. Texts Disproved which Erasmus Cited in favour of Free Will.....	35
1. Discussion of the Scriptures.....	35
2. Discussion of God's Will.....	38
B. Texts Maintained which Erasmus Disproved as being against Free Will.....	40
1. Erasmus Accused of Using a Trope.....	40
2. God's Method of Working Evil in Man.....	42
3. God's Method of Hardening.....	43

Messer

Gift of J. Ernest

18/85

NOV 21 1931

Chapter	Page
III. (Continued)	
C. Free Will Proved to be a Lie.....	44
1. Paul.....	44
a. Romans i.18.....	44
b. Romans iii.19-20.....	46
c. Romans iii.21-22.....	46
d. Abraham an Example.....	47
2. John.....	48
a. John i.5.....	48
b. John the Baptist's Testimony.....	48
c. Nicodemus.....	48
d. John xiv.....	49
e. Other Texts from John.....	49
D. Summary.....	50
IV. AN EXAMINATION OF LUTHER'S TEACHING AS PORTRAYED IN HIS COMMENTARIES.....	53
A. Man's Created State.....	54
B. Man's Temptation and Fall.....	55
C. Man's Will as a Result of the Fall.....	56
1. The Will as a Natural Faculty.....	56
2. The Will as Exemplified in History.....	57
3. The One Foundation and the Will.....	58
4. The Teaching of Romans on the Will.....	59
D. God's Will.....	60
V. AN EXAMINATION OF LUTHER'S TEACHING AS PORTRAYED IN HIS MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS.....	64
A. Luther's Table-Talk.....	65
B. Luther's Correspondence.....	69
C. Luther's Sermons.....	70
VI. SUMMARY STATEMENT OF LUTHER'S DOCTRINE.....	75
A. His Argument from the Sovereignty of God.....	76
B. His Argument from the Depravity of Man.....	77
C. Evaluation of Luther's Position.....	79
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	82

LUTHER

Star after star in radiant grandeur rose
To shame the midnight of the soul away! —
But, chief o'er all the galaxy of lights
That stud the firmament of Christian fame,
Shin'd Luther forth,—that miracle of men!
The gospel hero, who with faith sublime
Fulmin'd the lightnings of God's flaming word
Full on the towers of superstition's home,
Till, lo! they crumbled and his with'ring flash
Yet sears the ruin with victorious play.

—Montgomery—

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A. IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM.

Free will is a permanent problem of thought. It is one of the three or four most momentous issues which present themselves to the human mind. The problem is the ever present conflict between man's fundamental moral feeling which demands freedom and his intense religious feeling which demands belief in an omnipotent and omniscient creator and ruler of the universe. The former in its extremity denies the omnipotence and omniscience of God leaving man the power of contrary choice, with the ability of working out his own salvation. The latter in its finality leaves man's every action and emotion subject to the Will of God. These two positions are incapable of metaphysical combination and they must ever be so.

B. RAMIFICATIONS OF THE PROBLEM.

When an attempt is made to solve the problem through the faculty of human reason it immediately penetrates all fields of philosophical thought. In our own day it has become a topic of keen interest in the different branches of the modern sciences such as physics, biology and sociology. Psychology in attempting to analyse the cognitive, the volitional and emotional nature of man

finally comes to grips with the issue of free will. In an effort to discover primary causes, change, movement, and the beginning of existence the metaphysicist must consider the human will. Ethically, the manner in which the problem is finally settled affects the meaning of responsibility, merit, duty, remorse, justice, and other fundamental moral terms. Finally, in the days of Augustine the question entered the study of the theologian and was by no means simplified. For man can no longer be considered as either a maker of his own destiny with no thought of God or a mere automaton who has been set going and then deserted. Man's personal relationship to a personal God must be considered. This injects the doctrines of "original sin" and "grace" and makes it a vital and living question. In which ever one of the preceeding sciences man chooses to delve the conclusion at which he finally arrives has a direct bearing upon his concepts of sin, grace, redemption, justification, and salvation. It determines the bias of his whole theological system and the way in which he strives to attain his ultimate end.

C. THE PROBLEM DELIMITED AND STATED.

It would be impossible for the purposes of the present thesis to cover adequately even the field of theology. For this reason the present study is delimited to the works of Dr. Martin Luther with the intent of obtaining from them his teaching concerning free will. Then, our

problem is to discover Luther's doctrine of free will from a study of his works.

D. SOURCES AND METHOD OF PROCEDURE.

In pursuing the study, English translations of Luther's published works have been used throughout. And the results are to be presented as follows:

(1) A historical survey of the free will controversy is made in order to afford background for the works of Luther. Special note is taken of Augustine because Luther's doctrine was formulated under the direct influence of Augustine's teaching.

(2) The problem as stated by Luther in his work on "The Bondage of the Will." This is a study of his treatise written in reply to Erasmus.

(3) An examination of Luther's proof as portrayed in his work on "The Bondage of the Will."

(4) An examination of Luther's teaching as portrayed in his Commentaries.

(5) An examination of Luther's teaching as portrayed in his miscellaneous writings which include his Table-Talk, his Correspondence, and his Sermons.

(6) Finally, a summary statement of his doctrine.

CHAPTER I

"I believe it! 'T is thou, God, that givest, 't is I who
receive:
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
All's one gift; thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt
to my prayer,
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the
air.
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy
dread Sabaoth:
I will?—the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not loth
To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops my
despair?
This;—'t is not what man Does which exalts him, but what
man Would do!

—Browning.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE FREE WILL CONTROVERSY

OUTLINE

- A. JEWISH DOCTRINE
- B. AUGUSTINE
- C. PELAGIUS
- D. AQUINAS
- E. DUNS SCOTUS
- F. DANTE
- G. ERASMUS

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE FREE WILL CONTROVERSY

A. JEWISH DOCTRINE

A brief history of the free will controversy is necessary background for the study of Luther. In retrospect we find that the problem has not baffled Christendom alone. It was a matter of dispute among Jewish theologians. It was a question upon which the Pharisees and the Sadducees radically disagreed. The former emphasised God's pre-ordination, the latter, man's free will. The doctrine of the Pharisees in its severest form approached fatalism. Every incident in their history had been pre-ordained and was merely an instrument for carrying out the Divine program. The same was true in the history of the individual; ~~each~~ incidents of his life, even the minutest details were foreordained. Side by side with this doctrine they insisted upon man's freedom of choice. Man must choose to serve God, then God helps him in that service. God had created the evil in man but in the Law He had given him a remedy. Then, not fatalism but Jehovahism is the outcome of the Old Testament. Theirs was a faith which acknowledged the absolute rule of God and which willingly submitted to Him. (1)

(1) Cf. Edersheim, Vol. I, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah. Page 316-319.

As we pass on to the early Christian era, we find that the Church Fathers did not debate the subject. It was enough that their views of grace and free will should be recorded in their commentaries in connection with the passage under discussion. And it was not until the beginning of the fifth century when Pelagius opposed the doctrine of Augustine that theological disputes arose.

B. AUGUSTINE

Augustine in developing his doctrine began with the creation story of Genesis. Adam was created being able not to sin.

"Now it was expedient that man should be at first so created as to have it in his power both to will what was right and to will what was wrong, not without reward if he willed the former, and not without punishment if he willed the latter." (2)

Then, Adam through his evil choice destroyed both himself and his free will. Man still has a will but it is defective. (3) Its defection is not to evil things but it is of itself evil. It has voluntarily done that which is contrary to the order of nature. (4)

"If a man, to use the old Augustinian illustration, strike the cords of an untuned harp, he is the cause of the sinner's activity but not of the discordance between his acts and the laws of eternal truth and right." (5)

Man's will remains free but can only operate within the

(2) Nicene Fathers, Vol. III, chapter 105, p. 271.

(4) Cf. *ibid.*, Vol. II, Book xii, chapter 8, p. 230.

(3) Cf. *ibid.*, Vol. III, chapter 30, p. 247.

(5) Hodge, Systematic Theology Vol. II, p. 159.

realm of evil things, "because it takes pleasure in evil."

(6) It cannot operate in the realm of good, for, "it is free from righteousness when it serves sin." (7) It is by the grace of God that man becomes free from sin and serves righteousness. Until this grace acts upon his heart he is lost to sin. Once converted the will is begun to be made so good that it can fulfill the divine commandments. Until at last it shall obtain that perfect freedom when it shall not be able to sin.

Augustine as other great thinkers is often quoted both for and against free will. Lord says, "Augustine recognized free will, which so many think he ignored, when his soul aspired to a higher life." (8) Augustine writes in the City of God,

"Therefore we are by no means compelled, either retaining the prescience of God, to take away the freedom of the will, or, retaining the freedom of the will, deny that He is prescient of future things, which is impious. But we embrace both. The former that we may believe well; and the latter that we may live well." (9)

To summarize, Augustine taught: (1) That man was created with the power of choice for good or evil, able not to sin.

(2) Because of his choice, which was a defection from good, his will became defective. This defective will is inherited by every human being.

(3) Man still has the power of free choice but

(6) Nicene Fathers, Vol.V, Book 1, Chapter 7, p.379.

(7) Ibid. Chapter 31, p. 456-457.

(8) Lord, Beacon Lights of History Vol.I, p. 380.

(9) Nicene Fathers, Vol.II, Chapter 10, p. 92-93.

it can only operate in the realm of evil because it is conditioned by its inherent defective cause.

(4) Then, irresistible and efficacious grace makes man again able to will good.

(5) And man when he has taken his abode in the City of God will have perfect freedom in that he will not be able to sin. Augustine's doctrine dominated Christian thought for more than a thousand years following his death.

C. PELAGIUS

Augustine's teaching did not long stand unchallenged, however, and his polemical treatise, *De gratis contra Pelagium*, was written to refute Pelagius. Pelagius was a British monk and, contrary to Augustine, he taught that all men are created on an equality with Adam, that is, all men are born devoid of both virtue and sin. The universality of sin was ascribed not to the inherited deficiency of will but to the bad example set by Adam. Christ's redemption was a perfect example to counter-balance the evil one of Adam and to inspire men to a holy life. The moral stamina of man's will when steeled by asceticism is sufficient for attaining salvation without the aid of divine grace. God has given man the ability to will or not to will; the action is his own. (10) Strongly ^{fixes} the seven points of the Pelagian doctrine as follows:

"(1) Adam was created mortal so that he would have died

(10) Cf. Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XI, p. 604.

even if he had not sinned; (2) Adam's sin injured, not the human race, but only himself; (3) new-born infants are in the same condition as Adam before the Fall; (4) the whole human race neither dies on account of Adam's sin, nor rises on account of Christ's resurrection; (5) infants, even though not baptized, attain eternal life; (6) the law is as good a means of salvation as the gospel; (7) even before Christ some men lived who did not commit sin." (11)

Pelagius and his doctrine were condemned at the Council of Carthage in 418 but ^{the doctrine} was later developed into a compromise doctrine known as Semi-Pelagianism.

D. THOMAS AQUINAS

The question of free will did not cause any great theological disturbance again until the latter part of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, under the regime of the Schoolmen. In Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican monk, Scholasticism found its most brilliant mind and attained its noblest development. His great contribution to theology was in this, that he organized the teaching of the various theologians into a system. In so doing he was largely under the influence of Augustine. His view of free will was largely one of determinism. Man has the power of choice in temporal things and can himself attain the four natural virtues of prudence, justice, courage, and self-control. But on account of the will's defective leaning toward evil it is unable to attain a vision of God so that he might practice the three Christian virtues,—faith, hope, and love. This power comes only

(11) Strong, Systematic Theology Vol. II, p. 597.

through the free and unmerited grace of God. As to the question of whether or not man's acts were necessary he would have replied in the negative for the reason that God does not exist in time. The work of Aquinas is today the basis of theological instruction in the Roman Catholic Church. (12)

E. DUNS SCOTUS

Aquinas being a Dominican his work naturally aroused the criticism of the Franciscans. The Englishman, John Duns Scotus, championed their cause against Aquinas. Whereas, Aquinas had held that the essence of God was being, Scotus maintained that it was arbitrary will. Both man and God have free will. Whatever God wills is right by the mere fact of his willing. The devil also has free will and is not bound to will what is evil because of sin. The malice of sin in itself is no greater than the goodness of the opposite virtue. The theological hostility between the Scotists and the Thomasists continued until the time of the Reformation. (13)

F. DANTE

Dante, who was a follower of Aquinas, in his Purgatory has perhaps come the nearest to bridging the gulf between the two views. His was the genius of the poet. And with poetic art he sings that the gift of free

(12) Cf. Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XIV, p. 667.

(13) Cf. *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 197.

volition and light both come from heaven. The divine impulse and the will act and react to the determining of man's destiny.

"Brother!" he thus began, "the world is blind;
 And thou in truth com'st from it. Ye, who live,
 Do so each cause refer to heaven above,
 E'en as its motion of necessity
 Drew with it all that moves. If this were so,
 Free choice in you were none; nor justice would
 There should be joy for virtue, woe for ill.
 Your movements have their primal bent from heaven;
 Not all; yet said I all; what then ensues?
 Light have ye still to follow evil or good,
 And of the will free power, which, if it stand
 Firm and unwearied in Heav'n's first assay,
 Conquers at last, so it be cherish'd well,
 Triumphant over all. To mightier force,
 To better nature subject, ye abide
 Free, not constrain'd by that, which forms in you
 The reasoning mind uninfluenc'd of the stars.
 If then the present race of mankind err,
 Seek in yourselves the cause, and find it there.
 Herein thou shalt confess me no false spy. (14)

G. ERASMUS

The next great period in the free will controversy was that of the Reformation, brought to a climax in the dispute between Erasmus and Luther. The church had long sought for someone to refute the works of Luther which were coming from his pen with voluminous rapidity. They saw in the witty and satirical pen of Erasmus a keen edged weapon. Erasmus, because of the pressure brought to bear from such friends as Henry the VIII, Wolsey, Duke Geogre and the Pope and because he had hopes of winning Luther back into the church, consented

(14) Dante, Divine Comedy, Purgatory, Canto XVI, p. 157.

to write. He gave his reasons for hesitancy in a letter to Duke George.

"That hitherto I have not obeyed the exhortations of your Highness arose from many reasons but from two in particular. First, because I felt that on account of my years and disposition I was unequal to such a very risky business, and secondly, because from some strange trait of my nature I have always shrunk from gladiatorial contests of this nature." (15)

The point upon which he chose to attack Luther was that of free will. Considerable time was spent in the preparation of his thesis for he knew it was sure to bring forth a ready reply from the pen of Luther. When the treatise finally appeared it was heralded by the church as a most brilliant work. One which was certainly irrefutable even by such a man as Luther.

Erasmus began his argument in the customary way by defining terms and then proceeded by skillful argument from Scripture and reason to prove his proposition. He ascribed free will to a quality of the will by which man is able to turn toward or away from those things which lead to eternal salvation.

"Now I understand free will to be that quality of the human will by which a man is able to apply himself to those things which lead to eternal salvation or to turn away from them. Ecclesiasticus, chapter xv, says: God made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his own counsel. He added His commandments and precepts. If thou wilt keep the commandments and perform acceptable fidelity for ever, they shall preserve thee. He hath set water and fire before thee; stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt. Before man is life and death, good and evil; that which he shall choose shall be given him." (16)

(15) Mangan, Life Character and Influence of Erasmus,
 (16) Ibid., p. 248. (Vol. II, p. 245.)

In an interesting comment on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart he endeavors to prove that man's rejection is due to God but as the result of man's choice.

"Since it seems absurd that God, who is not only just but good, is said to harden the heart of man so that by the latter's malice He might illustrate His power, Origen, in his third book, *περὶ ἀρχῶν*, thus explains the difficulty; that while he admits the occasion of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is due to God, yet he charges the blame therefore on Pharaoh, who by his malice is made the more obstinate by those very things by which he ought to be led to repent, just as from the same showers of rain the cultivated field produces delectable fruit, while the uncultivated field produces thorns and thistles."

(17)

In the conclusion of his Diatribe (18) he gives the following reasons for the granting of free will:

"That there may be something which may deservedly be charged to the wicked who have willingly failed to respond to the grace of God; that the calumnious charge of cruelty and injustice on the part of God may be avoided; that excessive security may be shunned; and that we may be stimulated to endeavour. For these causes free-will has been laid down as a dogma by almost all men, but of no avail without the grace of God, lest we might arrogate anything to ourselves. But some one may say, 'Of what avail is freewill if it works nothing?' I reply, of what avail is man at all, if God works in him just as the potter in his clay, and just as He would in stone? I sincerely favor the freedom which is truly of the Gospel; and I detest whatever is opposed to the Gospel." (19)

Then, Erasmus taught that man had (1) the power of endeavouring to accept or reject God's commandments; and (2) that this power was not sufficient to attain his eternal salvation without the Grace of God.

Luther did not reply immediately because he was very busy at the time. Two months after the appearance

(17) Ibid. p. 248-249

(treatise.

(18) Diatribe, a learned discussion, name given to Erasmus's

(19) Ibid. p. 249.

of Erasmus's Diatribe, he wrote a letter to Spalatin to the effect that he loathed the pamphlet on free will, and that it was unpleasant to have to reply to such a learned and erudite a man. And considerable time elapsed before Luther published his treatise on the "Bondage of the Will!" This refutation of Erasmus did not end the debate however and they exchanged letters and wrote several briefer articles in defence of their respective positions. The present thesis is focused in the position of Luther and the two following chapters contain a study of "The Bondage of the Will."

CHAPTER II

"A Christian man is the most free lord of all,
and subject to none; a Christian man is the most du-
tiful servant of all, and subject to every one."
Luther.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM AS STATED BY LUTHER IN HIS WORK ON "THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL."

OUTLINE

- A. INTRODUCTION
- B. THE PURPOSE AND THE NECESSITY OF KNOWING THE PROBLEM.
- C. DEFINITIONS
 - 1. Contingency
 - 2. Necessity
 - 3. Will
 - a. God
 - b. Man
- D. METHODS OF PROOF
 - 1. Rhetorical
 - 2. Other Writers
 - 3. Reason
 - 4. Experience
 - 5. Scripture
- E. ERASMUS REDUCED TO A DILEMMA

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM AS STATED BY LUTHER IN HIS WORK ON "THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL."

A. INTRODUCTION

As has already been stated Luther's book entitled "The Bondage of the Will," was written in reply to Erasmus who had attacked him at what he himself considered to be the very heart of the problem. In the conclusion of his treatise he writes:

"I greatly commend and extol you for this thing also, that you are the only man of all my antagonists that hath attacked the heart of the subject, the head of the cause; instead of wearing me out with those extraneous points, the Papacy, Purgatory, Indulgences, and a number of like topics, which may more fitly be called trifles, than matters of debate: a sort of chase, in which nearly all my opponents have been hunting me hitherto in vain. You are that single and solitary individual, who hath seen the hinge of the matters in dispute, and hath aimed at the neck: I thank you for this from my heart—it is far more to my taste to be occupied in debating this question, so far as time and liesure are accorded me." (1)

At times as we pursue the argument Luther seems to be harsh, but it is to be kept in mind that he was fighting for a cause. All that he wrote was a definite statement of what he believed. "I, for my part, have not conferred, but asserted, in this book; yea, and I do assert." (2) Furthermore he wrote out of life. He asserted the things which had brought comfort and security to him.

(1) Luther, The Bondage of the Will, p. 468.

(2) Ibid. p. 470.

"For my own part, I confess that, if it could any how be, I should be unwilling to have Freewill given to me, or any thing left in my own hand, which might enable me to endeavour after salvation: not only because in the midst of so many dangers and adversities on the one hand, and of so many assaulting devils on the other, I should not be strong enough to maintain my standing and keep my hold of it (for one devil is mightier than all men put together, and not a single individual of mankind would be saved); but because, if there were even no dangers, and no adversities, and no devils, still I should be compelled to toil for ever as uncertainly, and to fight as one that beateth the air. For, though I should live and work to eternity, my own conscience would never be sure how much she ought to do, that God might be satisfied with her. Do what she might, there would still be left an anxious doubt. Whether it pleased God, or whether he required any thing more; as the experience of all self-righteous persons proves, and as I, to my own great misery, have learned abundantly by so many years of conflict." (3)

B. THE PURPOSE AND THE NECESSITY OF KNOWING THE PROBLEM

Luther gives the following three points as the purpose of his discussion: "what the free will does, what the free will suffers, and what is its proportion to the grace of God." (4)

Luther quotes Erasmus as having said that

"It is irreligious, curious, and superfluous, to wish to know whether our will be active in those things which pertain to everlasting salvation, or be only passive under the agency of grace." (5)

Luther holds such a view to be intolerable and considers that it is necessary for the Christian to know whether or not the will has any power unto the attaining of salvation. It is the very hinge of our disputation: the very question at issue turns upon it." (6) To be ignorant of such matters

(3) Luther, p. 458 (Cf. p. 79-80)

(4) Ibid., p. 27-28.

(5) Ibid., p. 25.

(6) Ibid., p. 28.

is to know nothing about Christianity. He even goes so far as to say that the man who despises the subject "is the worst enemy of Christianity." This is one part of the sum of Christianity to know how much man can effect of his own power toward God; and how much God effects in man. This is necessary first, that man may know God. If man is uncertain as to his own power it follows that he will be uncertain as to the power of God. For God through ^{by} grace completes the inefficiency of man. Second, it is necessary for man to know in order that he may truly worship and serve God. For it is impossible to worship a God whom we do not know. The more man's power diminishes, the more he attributes unto God and vice versa, as man rises in his own estimation God diminishes. (7)

"If I know not the works and power of God, I know not God himself; and if I know not God, I cannot worship, praise, give him thanks, serve him; being ignorant how much I ought to attribute to myself, and how much to God. We ought therefore to distinguish, with the greatest clearness, between God's power and our own power, between God's work and our own work; if we would live piously." (8)

The other part of the sum of Christianity is to know that God knows nothing by contingency, but that he accomplishes everything by an infallible will. This, thinks Luther, is a thunder bolt which grinds free will to powder. Against such a knowledge of God free will cannot

(7) Ibid., p. 29.

(8) Ibid., p. 29.

stand. (9)

"For this is the alone and highest possible consolation of Christians, in all adversities, to know that God does not lie, but brings all things to pass without any possibility of change; and that his will can neither be resisted, nor altered, nor hindered." (10)

If we do not know these things neither can man worship nor can he have faith. To doubt God's immutability is to doubt His promises. For if his will is subject to change how can one believe that he will fulfill the things which he has promised? This leads to unbelief, "the highest impiety, and a denial of the most high God." (11)

C. DEFINITIONS

1. Contingency

The word as used in the Latin does not signify that the work done is contingent but that it was done according to a contingent and mutable will, "such as is not in God." A work cannot be called a contingent one when performed by man, unless it be done by accident, without any forethought on the part of the doer. (12)

2. Necessity

Luther objects to the use of the term "necessity" as it is commonly understood in applying it to either God or man. Its connotation is one of compulsion. This is not true of either God's will or man's will for they both do what they do of mere willingness and desire with perfect

(9) Cf. Ibid., p. 30.

(10) Ibid., p. 38.

(11) Cf. Ibid., p. 37.

(12) Cf. Ibid., p. 34.

freedom. (13)

"Let the understanding of my reader, then, supply what the word 'necessity' does not express; apprehending by it, what you might choose to call the immutability of God's will, and the impotency of our evil will; what some have called 'a necessity of immutability'; not very grammatically or theologically." (14)

3. Will

First, Luther defines God's will as follows:

"The will of God is efficacious, and such as cannot be thwarted: since the power of God is itself a part of his nature: it is also wise, so that it cannot be misled. It is immutable and infallible, and governs our mutable will." (15)

Because God's will is immutable and efficacious He is the only being to whom the term free will can apply.

"Freewill is a title which belongs altogether to God; and cannot join with any other being, save the Divine Majesty only." (16)

Second,¹⁴ defining man's will we shall consider, the Luther's use of the phrase "the necessity of immutability," the dependence of the will upon the grace of God for salvation, and the use of the term "free will" as applied to man.

Due to original sin, man's will is impotent and inefficacious. When the Spirit of God is absent he can do nothing of profit toward attaining his own salvation. Therefore by necessity of immutability his works and acts are evil. He does not do evil against his will through a violence placed upon him, "as if some one should seize

(13) Cf. Ibid., p. 34.

(14) Cf. Ibid., p. 34

(15) Ibid., p. 33-34

(16) ibid., p. 73

by the throat and twist him round; just as a thief or highwayman is carried, against his will to the gallows, but works it of his own accord, and with a willing will." (17) If man were compelled to good while his will remained averse within he would only become angered at the one who forced him. This is true in life. If man has an affection for an object, he becomes angered when for any cause that affection is opposed or hindered. He changes his affection only when he has found a good reason. Likewise the mind must be changed by God's Spirit before the will can will good willingly.

"This is what I at present call 'a necessity of immutability'; that is, the will cannot change itself and turn another way, but is rather provoked the more to will, by being resisted: as is proved by its indignation. This would not be, if the will were free, or possessed Freewill." (18)

Then, it follows that man is absolutely dependent upon the grace of God for his salvation. It is upon this fact that Luther bases his argument. Once man's evil will "has been changed and softly whispered to by the Spirit of God," it still does all things according to its own self-accord. It now goes on willing and liking and loving, good just as it before willed and liked and loved evil. (19)

"For, experience again proves, how invincible and constant holy men are, whilst they are goaded on by force to other objects: insomuch, that they are from thence the more provoked to will: just as fire is inflamed by the wind, rather than extinguished! So that, neither in this case is there any freedom in the will to turn

(17) Ibid., p.67.

(18) Cf. Ibid., p.68.

(19) Cf. Ibid., p.68.

itself another way, or will something else, as the free will might choose; so long as the Spirit and God's grace remain in the man." (20)

Luther grants understanding and will to man. It is the thing which places him above the brutes and makes him subject to the influence to the Spirit of God. (21) Nevertheless, it would be best to dispense with using the term free will as applied to man. If used it must be within certain limits and "with respect to such substances as are inferior to himself." Within these limits he has a right, of "doing and forbearing to do" as he sees fit. (22) Even so this very right is controlled by God's alone free will. Luther defines the use of the term, free will, in his treatise as follows:

"The term, Freewill, in the judgment of all ears, is properly applied to 'that which can do, and which does,' towards God, whatsoever it pleases; without being confined by any law, or by any command." (23)

D. METHODS OF PROOF

1. Rhetorical

Luther throughout his discussion accuses Erasmus of using "rhetorical sallies" for the purpose of argument. First, he has confused indicative and imperative verbs, an error which all school boys and grammar-masters would discover. (24) Second, his use of the simile. Time and again he refutes some wrong use which Erasmus has made of

(20) Ibid., p. 68.

(21) Cf. Ibid., p. 71-72.

(22) Cf. Ibid., p. 75.

(23) Ibid., p. 130.

(24) Cf. Ibid., p. 165.

the simile. Luther in turn yields the same form of argument against his opponent. Third, and most conspicuous is his condemnation of Erasmus's use of the trope. By accusing Erasmus of using the trope in a Scripture passage where the meaning is perfectly clear he is able to refute a large section of his argument. (25) He does not say that a trope may never be used and cites two instances in which either a trope or an inference is allowable in the interpretation of a passage. First, if admitted by the context, and secondly, after an absurdity in which the obvious meaning offends an article of faith. (26) If Erasmus is guilty of using the above forms of argument, Luther is also, for he by the very nature of the proof employed in proving Erasmus's misuse of language and figures proves his own thesis.

2. Other Writers

Erasmus in his argument cited a long list of the Fathers in support of free will. Luther admits that in so far as number is concerned "only Wickliff and one other, Laurentius Valla (howbeit Augustine also, whom you pass over)" are on his side. (27) The Fathers, argues Luther, did not perform their works in support or in the name of free will but in the name of Christ. They were only men of the flesh and if they at times spoke of free will it was spoken of the flesh and not of the Spirit which came to glorify

(25) Cf. Ibid., p. 237.

(26) Cf. Ibid., p. 239.

(27) Ibid., p. 78.

Christ and could not possibly have preached free will.(28)

Erasmus also quotes the ancient philosophers as authority for his argument. Luther refuses such authority, first, because Erasmus misuses them, and secondly, because they were men who did not have the Spirit of God and who "dictated their own opinions without any authority from the Spirit." (29)

3. Reason

Luther condemns Erasmus on various occasions for depending upon Human Reason, which is only another name for human folly. (30) The argument from reason is allowable only when it confirms the Scripture because reason was corrupted in the fall.

"We maintain that man's best thoughts concerning God, the worship of God, the will of God, are worse than Cimmerian darkness; for the light of reason, which has been given to man alone, understands only bodily blessings." (31)

Not only this but natural reason must finally admit that God alone is free.

"Even natural reason is obliged to confess, that the living and true God must be such an one as to impose necessity upon us, seeing he himself is free." (32)

4. Experience

Luther makes a great deal of experience as a proof for his argument. At times he goes no farther than to appeal to experience. Again he draws analogies

(28) Cf. Ibid., p. 83.

(29) Ibid., p. 353.

(30) Cf. Ibid., p. 315.

(31) Luther, Genesis Vol. II - by Lenker, p. 168.

(32) Luther, The Bondage of the Will, p. 289.

from life to confirm his position. And, as has already been stated, his doctrine grew out of his own life experience of salvation and forgiveness.

5. Scripture

Luther accepts no authority other than that of Scripture. "If one text of Scripture shall have conquered Freewill, her innumerable forces will be of no use to her." (33) The Scriptures are not "obscure and ambiguous." If some portions appear to be obscure it is due to a lack of understanding of words and grammar. And it is foolish to think that it is impossible to know the truths that are contained therein. (34)

"To be brief; there is a twofold clearness in Scripture, even as there is also a twofold obscurity: the one external, contained in the ministeriality of the word; the other internal, which consists in that knowledge which is of the heart. If you speak of this internal clearness, no one discerns an iota of Scripture, but he who has the Spirit of God. All men have a darkened heart: so that, even though they should repeat and be able to quote every passage of Scripture, they neither understand nor truly know any thing that is contained in these passages; nor do they believe that there is a God, or that they are themselves God's creatures, or any thing else." (35)

This internal clearness is perfectly obscure and has been drawn out to the light by the ministeriality of the word. By the ministeriality of the word he means that use made of it by the public ministry to "confirm the weak and confute gainsayers." (36) That the Scriptures are clear is

(33) Ibid., p. 237.

(34) Cf. Ibid., p. 19.

(35) Ibid., p. 22.

(36) Ibid., p. 107.

a fundamental principle upon which the argument is to rest. (37) "I affirm, with respect to the whole Scripture, that I will not allow any part of it to be called obscure." (38) One of the reasons for Scripture being accounted obscure is the unfair interpretation given to it. Scripture is to be interpreted by studying it in its context. Men who argue from figures of speech remove the word or phrase from its surrounding and

"crucify it by the sense they impose upon it, without having the least regard for the surrounding context, or to the words which follow and precede, or to the author's scope or cause." (39)

God's word is necessary for life. It is through the words of law that men know sin. It is words of grace which bring comfort and cheer to those who are struggling against sin. It is through the word that God Proclaims his power and glory and man's impotence to the world. It is proclaimed alike among the believing and the unbelieving. Only the godly understand and keep it faithfully; the rest despise it. (40)

E. ERASMUS REDUCED TO A DILEMMA

Luther concludes his introduction and statement of the problem by demanding of Erasmus a fuller definition of terms and by reducing him to a dilemma. Thus he lays the foundation upon which to build his argument. As has been stated above, Erasmus defined free will as that power

(37) Cf. Ibid., p. 108.

(38) Ibid., p. 114.

(39) Ibid., p. 278.

(40) Cf. Ibid., p. 226

by which a man could endeavour to attain salvation. A power very small and ineffectual without the grace of God. If man has power to turn unto God, then he does that which pertains unto salvation and the grace of God is ^{un-}necessary. On the other hand if the grace of God is necessary because Man's will is ineffectual of itself there can be no free will. Either man has free will or he has not. There is no middle ground, for man is either in the power of God or Satan at all times and acts accordingly. In the following chapter it will be seen how Luther proceeds in proving his position. (41)

(41) Cf. Ibid., p. 25; 71; 143.

CHAPTER III

"I wish to have no wishes left,
But to leave all to thee;
And yet I wish that Thou should'st will
That which I wish should be."
Faber.

CHAPTER III

AN EXAMINATION OF LUTHER'S PROOF AS PORTRAYED IN HIS WORK ON "THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL."

OUTLINE

A. TEXTS DISPROVED WHICH ERASMUS CITED IN FAVOUR OF FREE WILL

1. Discussion of the Scriptures
2. Discussion of God's will

B. TEXTS MAINTAINED WHICH ERASMUS DISPROVED AS BE- ING AGAINST FREE WILL

1. Erasmus Accused of Using a Trope
2. God's Method of Working Evil in Man
3. God's Method of Hardening Man's Heart
- 4.

C. FREE WILL PROVED TO BE A LIE

1. PAUL

- a. Romans i.18
- b. Romans iii.19-20
- c. Romans iii.21-22
- d. Abraham Used as an Example

2. JOHN

- a. John i.5
- b. John the Baptist's Testimony
- c. Nicodemus
- d. John xiv
- e. Other Texts from John

D. SUMMARY

CHAPTER III

AN EXAMINATION OF LUTHER'S PROOF AS PORTRAYED IN HIS WORK ON THE "BONDAGE OF THE WILL."

Luther begins his refutation of these texts by a discussion of the definitions which his opponent has advanced. Luther rightly says,

"a definition ought to be
the plainest and most certain thing in the world; for
to define obscurely, is just like not defining at all!"

(1)

Naturally enough Erasmus is accused of being indefinite and obscure in his definitions and Luther by skillful argument draws from these so called obscurities, contradictions and elaborations which prove Erasmus to be inconsistent. Definitions having been satisfactorily refuted Luther continues by destroying the texts which Erasmus advanced in favour of free will.

A. TEXTS DISPROVED WHICH ERASMUS CITED IN FAVOUR OF FREE WILL.

1. Discussion^{of the} Scriptures

In order to understand the Scripture it is necessary to distinguish between law words and words of promise. Time after time Erasmus is guilty of not giving proper attention to this distinction. For example he cites Deuteronomy xxx.19 "I have set before thy face the way of

(1) Luther, The Bondage of the Will, p. 131.

life and of death; choose that which is good." (2) From the very nature of the case he makes it to mean that man has the power of choice. But he has failed to take cognizance of the fact that "choose" is a law word. Man is not told to choose but is admonished and excited to see his own impotency. "By the law is a knowledge of sin," says Paul. The law is not given to affirm the power of the will but that the will may see how impotent she really is. This error of Erasmus's is partly due to his confusion of the tense of the verbs. Law words are in the imperative and say not what men can do, but what they ought to do. The indicative expresses what men can do. (3) And it is Satan's business to keep men in their misery and make them believe they can do all that is commanded.

"But the legislator Moses's business is the very opposite of this: He is to lay open man's misery to him by the law, that, having hereby broken his heart, and confounded him with the knowledge of himself, he may prepare him for grace, and send him to Christ, and so he may be saved for ever. What the law does, therefore, is not ridiculous, but exceedingly serious and necessary." (4)

Following the law words which convince the sinner of sin there must be words of promise or else the sinner would fall into a worse state, adding impenitence to his other sins. (5) In citing, Ezekiel xviii.23, "I would not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live, by all means." Erasmus here made the

(2) Ibid., p. 162. (All Scripture is quoted from Luther's

(3) Cf. Ibid., p. 162-165.

text.)

(4) Ibid., p. 170.

(5) Cf. ibid., p. 181.

same error again except that this time the word of Ezekiel is not a law word but a word of promise. It is a word of consolation for the sinner. (6)

"He does not say, 'I would not the sin of a man,' but 'I would not the death of a sinner;' clearly intimating, that he speaks of the punishment of sin, which the sinner is experiencing for his sin; that is, the fear of death." (7)

So this passage is to bring hope of pardon to the sinner. Just as law words speak only to those who are not conscious of their sin; words of grace come only to those whom the law has convicted of sin. (8) Then, not only do the words of the law argue against free will, but also the words of promise. For the fact that God promises to raise sinners from their misery is argument to the effect that free will could not raise herself and without grace would fall from bad to worse. (9) In similar manner Luther refutes the use made of such passages as Isaiah xlv, "Assemble yourselves, and come; turn to me, and ye shall be saved." And Jeremiah xv, "If thou wilt turn, I will turn thee; and if thou wilt separate the precious from the vile thou shalt be as my mouth." (10) Does it follow from "turn ye" that man can turn? Erasmus argues that "to turn" signifies endeavour. But he has failed to note the fact that they are words of promise. "To turn" has two uses, its legal use

(6) Cf. Ibid., p.179.
 (7) Ibid., p.180.
 (8) Cf. ibid., p. 181.
 (9) Cf. ibid., p. 181.
 (10) Ibid., p. 172.

as an exacter and commander requiring a change of life; and its evangellical use as a word of promise offering the grace of God to men. (11)

Likewise the New Testament consists of promises and exhortations. The New Testament preaches the Gospel which offers the Spirit together with grace unto the remission of sin through Christ who was crucified for mankind. Men are unworthy and the Gospel is granted to them entirely by the mercy of God. Then follow exhortations to stir up those who have been justified to the bringing forth of good works and to the bearing of the cross. (12)

2. Discussion of God's Will

The question naturally arises as to why does the law effect some so that they lead a good life while others are not touched in any way? "That," says Luther, "is another question not treated by Ezekiel, when he says, 'I would not the death of a sinner'." (13) God's will^{is} divided into his revealed will and his hidden will. Mankind is concerned with God only in so far as he is clothed and displayed in his word. It is the way by which he offers himself for our acceptance. In this way God is trying to save man from death and trying to remove sin from the world. For, "he hath sent his word and healed them." (14)

Luther also speaks of God as He is revealed through

(11) Cf. Ibid., p. 176.

(12) Cf. Ibid., p. 212.

(13) Ibid., p. 183.

(14) Ibid., p. 188.

the "Incarnate God." In refuting Matthew xxiii. 37-39, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered thy children together, and thou would'st not?," he contends that this is not an argument for free will in that they could have come unto Jesus but that Christ was merely fulfilling that for which he came into the world. Namely, that he might suffer the things which were necessary for salvation. (15) Thus the Christ in weeping and groaning over the destruction of the wicked was fulfilling that for which he came into the world. Why some were ~~some were~~ left untouched by his words he was not to ask. It was a secret hidden in the Will of Majesty. (16)

Then Diatribe made an error in failing to distinguish between "the proclaimed God and the hidden God; that is, between the word of God and God himself." It is his hidden will which contains the answer to the question, Why does God will the death of some and not of others? And when acting according to his hidden majesty he is not bound to his word. (17)

Luther realizes that he has gotten himself into deep water and says that "quick-scented and saucy reason, will say that he has found an admirable refuge in the hidden will of God." (18) As a matter of fact, that is what he uses it for through the argument. Whenever he is faced

(15) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 202.

(16) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 203.

(17) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 191.

(18) *Ibid.*, p. 204.

with a question of the kind mentioned above he immediately refers it to the Sovereign Will of God as a question which it is unlawful to ask. In order to be consistent he proves from Scripture that his statement is true.

"I answer, 'It is not my invention but a direction confirmed by the divine Scriptures. Thus speaks Paul in Rom. ix. "Why doth God complain then? Who shall resist his will? O man, who art thou that contendest with God?" "Hath not the potter power?" and the rest. And before him, Isaiah, in his 58th chapter, had said, "For they seek me daily, and desire to know my ways, as a nation which hath done righteousness: they ask of me the ordinances of justice, and desire to draw near to God." (19)

B. TEXTS MAINTAINED WHICH ERASMUS DISPROVED AS BEING AGAINST FREE WILL

Luther proceeds in his discussion by maintaining the Scripture passages which Erasmus disproved as being against free will. The texts are but two, namely, Exodus ix. "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart;" the other is from Malachi i. "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated." For the purposes of this thesis it will be sufficient to follow the discussion of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

1. Erasmus Accused of Using a Trope.

Such arts of grammar are not to be employed in the interpretation of Scripture. The words are to be understood literally. Not as Diatribe interprets, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart," to mean "my lenity in bearing with a sinner, leads others, it is true, to repentance,

(19) Ibid., p. 206-207.

(20) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 236.

but it shall render Pharoah more obstinate in his wickedness." (21) Following the above line of reasoning we would say that God showed mercy upon the children of Israel when they were carried into captivity in that he was inviting them to repentance through affliction. And that when he allowed them to return to their native land he was hardening them by showing mercy. (22) Likewise Christ's coming to earth was an act^{of} hardening because God was showing mercy. Why then does God say when he is in the very act of hardening Pharoah's heart, which is showing mercy, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." (23) God had certainly afflicted Pharoah through the ten plagues.

Diatribes has failed to excuse God from the act of hardening for two reasons. First, man with a free will, which does nothing good, necessarily serves sin and becomes worse unless it is changed by the Spirit. Secondly, the very fact of God's lenity makes Him to be a cruel God for in so doing he is allowing man's free will to become worse. (24)

Erasmus's has given too reasons for the use of a trope here. First, it is absurd that a just God should harden a man's heart in order that he might demonstrate his own power. Luther replies that there is no reason for an absurdity for it offends no article of faith. Reason is offended because she cannot conceive of a just and good

(21) Ibid., p. 249.

(22) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 248.

(23) *Ibid.*, p. 252.

(24) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 252.

God performing such an act, but the Spirit and faith judge differently; they would believe God to be good even though he were to destroy all men. (25) Then the trope only makes way for a greater absurdity, and ascribes all power to free will. His second reason for accepting the trope here is "that the things which God hath made are very good." This, Luther maintains, does not apply to the subject under discussion for it was spoken before the fall of man. After the fall he was deserted by God and left to himself. (26) From this corrupted man all men were born wicked. As Job says, "Who can make clean that which has been conceived of unclean seed?"

"For although God does not make sin, still he ceases not to form and to multiply a nature which has been corrupted by sin, through the withdrawal of the Spirit: just as if a carpenter should make statues of rotten wood. Thus men are made just as their nature is, through God's creating and forming them of that nature."
(27)

Second, the words, "were very good," are not to be understood of man but of God. That is God saw that all things were very good, and things are good to the eyes of God which are hated by the world. (28)

2. God's Method of Working Evil in Man

God works evil in man in the following fashion. First, God worketh all things in all things. Therefore Satan and men having fallen cannot will the things which

(25) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 259.

(26) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 260.

(27) *Ibid.*, p. 261.

(28) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 265.

God wills and can do only that which is averse to God. Although man's nature is contrary to God's it is still subject to his omnipotency. Secondly, as he acts, the response is in proportion to the perfection of the instrument. A teamster drives a lame horse and a good horse in the same manner. The lame horse goes badly not because of the driver but because of the nature of the animal. Just so the wicked man, who is not allowed to remain idle, "will's desires, acts, according to what he is." (29)

3. God's Method of Hardening.

The next question to be considered is how does God harden?

"These are sure and settled verities if we in the first place believe that God is omnipotent, and in the second that the wicked man is the creature of God, but being averse from him, and left to himself, without the Spirit of God, cannot will or do good." (30)

Then man's evil will actuated by an exercise of God's omnipotence cannot but do evil and seek the things of this world and continues in this way until the Gospel comes to change the inward man. God, therefore, when he is said to harden is not creating new evil but is merely allowing full play to the evil nature of man. (31)

In the case of Pharoah, God through the agency of Moses presents his words and works to him and his inward evil will rebels at them. So that he pursues his own

(29) Ibid., p. 265-268.

(30) Ibid., p. 269.

(31) Cf. ibid., p. 268-272.

natural bias and does what is contrary to God. This was done not to show the wickedness of Pharoah but to strengthen the faith of the Israelites. It was done to show that God speaks truth. God knew that he would not withdraw his omnipotence from Pharaoh and in sending contradictory words and works hardening was the only possible result. (32)

"Thus, we see that this text fights manfully against Freewill; inasmuch as God who promises cannot lie; and if he does not lie, Pharaoh's heart cannot but be hardened." (33)

Then God's foreknowledge and omnipotence are opposed to free will. It would be a ridiculous God who was disappointed in events and could be thwarted by man's actions.

"Now if the foreknowledge and omnipotency of God be conceded, it follows naturally, by an undeniable consequence, that we were not made by ourselves, neither do we live by ourselves, neither do we perform any thing by ourselves, but all through His omnipotency. And now, since he both knew beforehand that we should be such a sort of people, and goes on to make us as such; what can be imagined in us, pray, that is free to have to have a different issues given to it from that which he foreknew, or is now effecting?" (34)

C. FREE WILL PROVED TO BE A LIE

Finally Luther asserts that he has proved free will to be a lie and maintains his assertion with texts from Paul and John.

1. Paul

a. Romans i. 18

"The wrath of God," says Paul, "is revealed from

(32) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 272-282.

(33) *Ibid.*, p. 282.

(34) *Ibid.*, p. 289-290.

heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." (35) All men are under the wrath of God. First, because of the use of ~~the~~ article in the Greek. It is used to distinguish the godly from the ungodly. Secondly, from the nature of its context. It applies to all men. Paul has just said, that "the Gospel is the power of God, unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (36) Then the Gospel is necessary to all men. It puts all men under the wrath of God and therefore condemns free will. Thirdly, fact and experience confirm the text. Men have always tried to secure salvation by some other method than that of the Gospel. In fact they are angered and repelled by the Gospel method. None have ever attained, therefore, free will wages war against grace. (37) Fourthly, the prophets justify Paul in his statement. Psalm xiv. "The Lord looketh forth from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there were any that understandeth or seeketh after God. But they are all gone out of the way, &c." (38) Diatribe holds that man has the power of endeavour but the Prophets' words condemn power as well as act. As if it were to read, "man cannot seek after God." (39) Likewise Paul has condemned both power and act because he is proving the necessity of grace. (40)

(35) Ibid., p. 382.

(36) Ibid., p. 383.

(37) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 383-387.

(38) Ibid., p. 393.

(39) Ibid., p. 396.

(40) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 397.

b. Romans iii,19-20

"That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Because by the deeds of the law is no flesh justified before him." (41) There is no power left in us or every mouth could not be stopped. Paul is not there speaking of the ceremonial law but of all the works of the whole law as he later proves by dividing men into spiritual doers for whom Christ is necessary and carnal doers who are condemned. And the law is necessary for a knowledge of sin. One thing more is needful for the sinful man if he is to be saved, namely, the word which presents Christ as the deliverer.

"It is not Reason or Freewill which makes Him known: nay, how should she make him known, when she herself is very darkness, needing the light of the law to shew her that self-disease, which she sees not by her own light, but imagines to be soundness." (42)
Galations iii.19 and Romans v.20 also confirm the above argument. (43)

c. Romans iii.21-25

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the Prophets; the righteousness of God, I say, by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe in him. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth as a propitiation by faith in his blood &c." (44)

Luther finds five "thunderbolts" against free will

-
- (41) Ibid., p. 398.
 (42) Ibid., p. 408.
 (43) Cf. ibid., 409.
 (44) Ibid., p. 411.

in this passage. First, he separates the righteousness of God from the righteousness of the law; for the righteousness of faith comes by grace without the law. (45) Secondly, the righteousness of God is manifested to all who believe in Christ. (46) Thirdly, "all have sinned,"; Paul makes no exception. Then the so-called power of endeavour in man stands condemned as sinful. (47) Fourthly, all men have come short of the glory of God. The glory of God is to be understood actively i.e., that which God glories in us, and passively i.e., that which man glories in God. Luther understands it passively and Paul has said that all men, except they be saved, are void the glory of God. Therefore free will can do nothing of herself. (48) Fifthly, those who are justified are justified freely. Men are not justified by merit but by the grace of God. (49)

d. Abraham an Example

"Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Abraham has two righteousnesses: one of works, which is moral and civil to justify him before men. And, second, one of faith which does not stand in works through grace and justifies him before God. Then it is plain that righteousness is not imputed through works which are only wicked in the sight of God. (50)

This is the sum of Luther's argument adduced from

(45) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 411.

(46) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 413.

(47) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 414.

(48) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 414.

(49) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 416.

(50) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 424.

Paul. He says finally that if he were to consider all of Paul that condemns free will it would be necessary to write a "perpetual commentary on Romans."

2. John

a. John i.5

Luther calls John "an abundant and able devastator of free will." In the beginning of his Gospel he ascribes blindness to free will in that it is not able to see the true light. "The light shineth in darkness, but the darkness apprehendeth it not." (51) The world, as used here, signifies the whole race of man. And whatever is said concerning the world is meant against free will. (52) John has here rejected what is not divine and the will of man not having been renewed by the grace of God is included in the condemnation. (53)

b. John the Baptist's Testimony.

From the Baptist's testimony "of whose fulness have all we received grace for grace," Luther adduces the fact that grace is received, not by any endeavour of our own, but through the merit of Jesus Christ. (54) Then free will is false and those asserting free will are deniers of Christ. (55)

c. Nicodemus

Nicodemus came to Christ, a man who had done all

(51) Cf. Ibid., p.438.

(52) Cf. Ibid., p. 439.

(53) Cf. Ibid., p. 441.

(54) Cf. Ibid., p. 442.

(55) Cf. Ibid., p. 443.

that was in his power to attain salvation. When Christ told him that he must be born again he was astounded. No one had ever thought of such a way, not even free will until it was revealed by the Gospel. (56) Experience is a proof of this.

"Even the whole world, even human reason, even Free-will herself is compelled to acknowledge, that she neither knew nor heard of Christ, before the Gospel came into the world. Now, if she did not know, much less hath she sought, or been able to seek, or to endeavour after him. But Christ is the way, the truth, the life and the salvation. She confesses therefore, whether she would or no, that by her own powers she has neither known, nor been able to seek those things, which are belonging to the way, the truth and the salvation."
(57)

d. John xiv.

Christ is called the way, the truth, and the life. Scripture speaks by way of comparison and whatever is not of Christ is neither of the way, the truth, nor the life.
(58)
The best in man, namely, free will is not of Christ, therefore, it is in sin and of Satan until redeemed by Him. (59) To deny this is to make Scripture void, to deny Christ, and to declare God unjust.

e. Other Texts from John.

John iii.18,36. Free will is not of Christ and cannot believe in Him, therefore, she is judged and condemned as wicked by God. (60) John iii.31. Free will is not of heaven, therefore, it is earthly and evil out of

(56) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 444.

(57) *Ibid.*, p. 445.

(58) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 446.

(59) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 447.

(60) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 448-450.

Christ. (61) John vi.44. No one comes to Christ except the Father draw him; this leaves nothing to free will. (62)

D. SUMMARY

The clearest and best summary of Luther's argument of the un-free will is to found in his own words.

"Here I shall put an end to this treatise; prepared, if need be, to plead the cause yet further; although I consider, that I have in this said abundantly enough to satisfy the pious mind, which is willing to yield to the force of truth without pertinacity. For, if we believe it to be true, that God foreknows and predestinates every thing; moreover, that he can neither be mistaken, nor hindered, in his foreknowledge and predestination; and, once more, that nothing is done without his will (a truth which reason herself is compelled to yield); it follows, from the testimony of the selfsame reason, that there can be no such thing as Freewill in man or angel, or any creature. So again; if we believe Satan to be the Prince of this world, who is perpetually plotting and fighting against the kingdom of Christ, with all his might, so that he doth not let his captives of human kind go, unless he be driven out by a divine power; again it is manifest, that there can be no such thing as Freewill.

So again, if we believe original sin to have so ruined us, as to make most troublesome work even for those who are led by the Spirit, through striving, as it does, against good in them; it is clear, that nothing is left in man as devoid of the Spirit, which can turn itself to good, but only what turns itself to evil. Again: if the Jews who followed after righteousness; with all their might have fallen headlong the rather into unrighteousness; and the Gentiles, who were following after unrighteousness, have freely and unhopedly attained to righteousness; it is manifest, as in the former instances, by very deed and experience, that man without grace can will nothing but evil. In fine; if we believe Christ to have redeemed man by his blood, we are obliged to confess that the whole man was undone; else we shall make Christ either superfluous, or the redeemer of the vilest part in man: which is blasphemous and sacrilegious." (63)

(61) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 452.

(62) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 453.

(63) *Ibid.*, p. 466-467.

CHAPTER IV

"Satan does not immediately entice Eve with the sweetness of the fruit; he attacks at once the chief strength of man, faith in the Word! The root and source of all sin therefore is disbelief, and turning aside from God. Even as, on the contrary, the root and source of all righteousness is faith. Satan therefore first of all draws Eve aside from faith to unbelief. When he had accomplished this and had brought Eve not to believe the Word of God's commandment spoken unto her, he had no trouble in accomplishing the rest, in causing her to rush up to the tree, to pluck the fruit and eat it. For when sin is ripened in the heart by unbelief, the external act of disobedience soon follows."

Luther

CHAPTER IV

AN EXAMINATION OF LUTHER'S TEACHING AS PORTRAYED IN HIS COMMENTARIES.

OUTLINE

- A. MAN'S CREATED STATE
- B. MAN'S TEMPTATION AND FALL
- C. MAN'S WILL AS A RESULT OF THE FALL
 - 1. The Will as a Natural Faculty.
 - 2. The Will as Exemplified in History.
 - 3. The Will and the One Foundation.
 - 4. The Teaching of Romans on the Will.
- D. GOD'S WILL

CHAPTER IV

AN EXAMINATION OF LUTHER'S TEACHING AS PORTRAYED IN HIS COMMENTARIES.

The preceeding two chapters were a resume of Luther's, "Bondage of the Will", written in the heat of controversy. Often times on such occasions men overstate their views for the purpose of refutation. For this reason it is necessary that we make a study of his works other than the one mentioned above. The present chapter is to deal with his doctrine of the will as it is revealed in a study of his commentaries.

A. MAN'S CREATED STATE

His "Dear Genesis" is of special interest because it was his last public work. It was begun in 1535 and completed November 17th, 1545 a couple of months before his death. It like his other commentaries is not primarily exegetical but expositional and devotional. In it is to be found his doctrine of man's created state and the fall.

Special note is to be taken of Genesis ii.17_b, "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (1) In the discussion of this passage he portrays his conception of man's created state. Man was created

(1) Luther, Genesis Vol. I, p. 182.

in God's image, to be a participator of the divine nature. He was formed a most beautiful creature from a lump of clay to be a partaker of immortality. He was free from sin and in a state of natural immortality from which through disobedience he fell into mortality, sin, and death. On the other hand if he had not sinned he would have been transplanted from the "childhood of original innocency into the manhood glory of immortality," in which state he could never have sinned. (2) His will was an upright will but not a perfect will. And it was not to be perfected until through absolute fidelity to God's Word, at a time when God saw fit, he was to be transplanted from the animal life to the spiritual life. (3)

"He was in a middle state, or a state of neutrality or liability; in a state where he could be deceived by Satan; and could fall into that awful calamity into which he did fall. But such a peril of falling will not exist in that state of perfect manhood of glorified innocency, which we shall enjoy in the future and spiritual life."

(4)

B. MAN'S TEMPTATION AND FALL

But man did not remain in his created state. He yielded to Satan who attacked him in that part of his nature which was the very image of God, namely, his will. The tempter's aim was to draw Eve away from the Word, to get her to disbelieve. He knew that once she disbelieved she would disobey the Word. And in disobeying the Word she would lose salvation, for our whole salvation lies in

(2) Cf. Ibid., p. 183-184.

(3) Cf. Ibid., p. 188. (See also p. 148.)

(4) Ibid., p. 183.

obedience to that Word. (5)

Eve having disobeyed enticed Adam to do likewise. With the result that they soon saw their sin and were lost in despair and shame. But that was only the beginning. Due to the fall human nature in its entirety was depraved. The intellect was darkened so that man can no longer neither understand God's will nor acknowledge his works. The conscience when it meditates on the judgments of God despairs and no longer has peace and quiet. The sense of the glorious dignity of the human body has been usurped by lust. (6) The imagination of the human heart is entirely evil and corrupted. (7) Reason although it may dictate good in a carnal sense is so clouded with ignorance of the things of God that its leading is only averse to the way portrayed in the Word.

"And the greatest loss of all these losses is, that not only is the will lost, but there has followed in its place a certain absolute aversion to the will of God. So that man neither wills nor does any ~~one~~ of those things which God wills and commands. Nay, we know not what God is, what grace is, what righteousness is; not in fact what sin itself is which has caused the loss of all." (8)

C. MAN'S WILL AS A RESULT OF THE FALL

1. The Will as a Natural Faculty.

The will, therefore, due to original sin is made averse to God and is only antagonized when it is confronted by the Gospel. Luther in his exposition of the fifty-

(5) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 249.

(6) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 186-187.

(7) Cf. *Genesis Vol. II*, p. 259.

(8) *Genesis Vol. I*, p. 224.

first Psalm remarks that he had not known this essential doctrine of original sin from his theological training. He had been taught that nature was corrupted but that the natural faculties were perfect. Then the will being a natural faculty was held to be perfect. If they speak of will as simply willing it may be called a natural faculty. The devil and heretics have a natural will. But to say that the will as a natural faculty can will good is wrong for this Psalm teaches that the will is not good.

It teaches, "that we are under sin and death, and that we will, understand, and seek, that which is corrupt and evil. These things accord with the present usage of the Psalm and can be proved from it." (9)

2. The Will is Exemplified in History.

Likewise in the longerange view of history as represented by Paul, "And it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator," (10) Luther finds free will to be nothing when confronted by the law. The school divines had taught the doctrine of good works, that is, justification by law, which necessitates that man have a good will and right judgment concerning the things of God. To prove this view to be in error he cites Paul's own proof exemplified in the history of the children of Israel. They could not abide the "true and spiritual use of the law." First, because they could not look unto the end of the law and second, because they could not look upon the countenance of Moses. If they were unable to look upon the face of

(9) Select Works of Martin Luther, p. 118.

(10) Galations iii.19.

Moses, a man, their mediator how then could they have heard the voice of God? Then the law only terrifies and a mediator is necessary to comfort him who has heard the law. Therefore we see that free will in the children of Israel, although they were cleansed and sanctified, did not welcome the Lord's coming on Mt. Sinai. Neither could it listen to the voice of the Lord but was rather contrary to it saying, "let not the Lord speak unto us; lest we die." (11)

3. The One Foundation and the Will.

The first epistle of Peter ii.6-10 designates Christ as the chief corner stone. Christ is the stone upon which faith should be built and should stand. He is a stone, both God and man. God, because we are bidden to believe on him. Man, because he is to be the head of a structure which man builds and all the material must be alike. Then man must confess Christ as his foundation stone and must rest on him and become like him. The stone, therefore, receives nothing from man for it bears him up and carries the weight of his "sin, death and hell." Nothing can injure those who rest on him. Further "whoever believes on him shall not be put to shame." The supposition is that the whole world has been put to shame, but those who believe are rescued from that shame.

"Now let any one come forward who may, and exalt free will, and defend human ability. If you should wish

(11) Cf. Luther, Commentary on Galatians, p. 395 ff.

to overthrow with one stroke all human works and doctrines, and whatever springs from man, you have enough in this single passage to do it, so that all must fall like dry leaves from the tree.
 But what is it to rest upon his righteousness? Nothing else but to despair in regard to myself; and think my righteousness, my truth, must go to pieces; and build upon this, namely, that his righteousness, his truth, his life, and all the blessings he has, are eternal. There lies the foundation on which I stand; whatever rests not on this foundation will all necessarily fall. But whoever falls back on this foundation, he alone shall not be put to shame and shall rest safely, so that no violence shall ever injure him in the least. Therefore Christ shall not only be a stone, but God will lay also him as a foundation on which we should confide. God has said this, he cannot lie." (12)

4. The Teaching of Romans on the Will.

A word must be said concerning Luther's commentary on Romans. It was his study of Romans that led him to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He says that if he were to cite all of Paul which opposes free will he would have to write a "perpetual commentary on Romans." This book was one of the first taught by him and every word was weighed with great care. In his preface he states that every one is under the charge of sin and that those who would by the power of free will live aright are open sinners.

(13)

"Through faith man comes to be without sin and learns to delight in the commandments of God, thereby giving to God His glory and rendering to Him that which he owes to Him; he also willingly serves^{his} fellow men in every way possible, and thereby renders to every man

(12) Luther, St. Peter and St. Jude, p. 98 ff.

(13) "The commentary on Romans is a great human document priceless for its autobiographical interest. So important is it in the history of the author's thought that Father Denfile, who first called attention to it, was inclined to date the commencement of the Reformation from it." Preserved Smith.

his due. Such righteousness as this , nature, free will, and our own powers cannot effect. For as no man can give faith to himself, so neither can he take away unbelief." (14)

D. GOD'S WILL

In a study of Luther's doctrine of the human will it is impossible to ignore his doctrine of the Divine Will. From eternity God knew everything. And into his essential and divine will we should not pry for it is inscrutable and not to be known by us in this life.

"I constantly follow the rule to avoid, whenever possible, such questions as draw us before the throne of the highest majesty. It is better and safer to stand at the manger of Christ, the man. To lose one's self in the labyrinths of divinity is fraught with greatest danger." (15)

However, God's will has been revealed, in part, to man through such symbols as the Son, the Word, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the ten commandments are to be found terrible examples of God's wrath, for they only condemn man. And the condemned soul must take refuge in the will of grace which was revealed in Christ. It is "a gracious and lovable will" and in it man finds comfort and forgiveness. "This is the only vision of Diety which in this life is expedient and possible." (16)

Therefore, the commentaries of Luther present the same doctrine of the will which was found in his "Bondage of the Will." They approach the problem from many varied

(14) Luther, Preface to St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. An English translation of the Commentary could not be obtained.

(15) Luther, Genesis Vol. II, p. 170.

(16) Ibid., p. 175.

and different angles but always with the same result, namely, God's will is Sovereign and immutable, man is totally depraved and his will is averse to God. He only attains salvation through grace by faith in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V

Our pardon is Thy gift; Thy love
And grace alone avail us.
Our works could ne'er our guilt remove,
The strictest life must fail us.
That none may boast himself of aught,
But own in fear Thy grace hath wrought
What in him seemeth righteous.

And thus my hope is in the Lord,
And not in mine own merit;
I rest upon His faithful word
To them of contrite spirit.
That He is merciful and just, —
Here is my comfort and my trust
His help I wait with patience.

Luther

CHAPTER V

AN EXAMINATION OF LUTHER'S TEACHING AS PORTRAYED IN
HIS MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS

OUTLINE

- A. LUTHER'S TABLE-TALK
- B. LUTHER'S CORRESPONDENCE
- C. LUTHER'S SERMONS

CHAPTER V

AN EXAMINATION OF LUTHER'S TEACHING AS PORTRAYED IN HIS MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS

The two most fruitful sources of Luther's works have been examined. But there still remains an interesting miscellaneous group which is delightful reading and which at the same time throws many an interesting side-light upon his doctrine. This group consists of (a) his Table-Talk, (b) his Correspondence, and (c) his Sermons.

A. TABLE-TALK

Luther like other men of genius was beset with reporters who faithfully and accurately set down every word that came from his lips. When he was at dinner, when he was performing his clerical duties, when he was conversing with his friends a disciple was always to be seen assiduously making notes. These recorded discourses are the best source for ascertaining the true character of the man for in them is to be found his ideas and ideals

(1)

(1) "In pursuing the work itself, we may here observe, it must always be recollected that they show the Reformer in his undress, and are not to be taken as specimens of what he wrote or preached when girded up for great occasions;: a great peculiarity of both his preaching and writing was, that, despising all form and authority, he went straight to the hearts of his hearers and readers, and never hesitated to use an image or impression, however coarse or homely, provided it conveyed his meaning with liveliness and force." (Translation of a letter prefixed to the folio edition of 1652. See Hazlitt p. xi.)

as they came from the heart without the guard^{ed}ness which was necessary for public speech and discourse.

In his discourses we find that he presented his doctrine in a way which every one could easily grasp. Man was created with a free will. It was free will that led man into original sin. Upon this sin followed all manner of evil so that man now stands continually in bodily danger everywhere that he goes. (2)

In temporal affairs man still has a free will. There are many examples of virtues among the heathen. But such a free will receives its reward in the virtue attained and the honor which accompanies the attainment. Man's free will is for the purpose of building houses and milking cows and nothing more. In time of prosperity man glories in his free will but in time of war, pestilence, drought and famine, the will of itself can give the heart no comfort.

"I confess that mankind has a free-will, but it is to milk kine, to build houses, &c., and no further; for so long as a man is at ease and in safety, and is in no want, so long he thinks he has a free-will, which is able to do something; but when want and need appear, so that there is neither meat, drink, nor money, where is then free-will? Thy will cannot so much as give thy heart the smallest comfort in these times of need, but the longer thou strivest, the more it makes thy heart faint and feeble, insomuch that it is affrighted even at the rushing and shaking of a leaf. These are the valiant acts our free-will can achieve." (3)

Divines in using the term apply it not to temporal

(2) Cf. Luther, Table-Talk, p. 119.

(3) Ibid., p. 120.

things but to spiritual things. From his own experience Luther had found that he could accomplish nothing good. Time after time he had resolved to lead a godly life only to meet with failure. The flesh and free will resolved to keep the law, in this case the law works presumption. Conscience told him that it was impossible to keep it, this led to despair, confession of his inability to accomplish that good which was intended, and explicit faith in the grace of God. (4)

Again Moses also teaches that, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." All that man can conceive with his thoughts, understanding, and will, is evil. A knowledge of God comes only through the Holy Ghost.

"We draw, therefore, the general conclusion that man without the Holy Spirit and without grace can do nothing but sin, and thus he unhaltingly goes forward from sin to sin. When in addition, he will not endure sound doctrine but rejects the word of salvation and resists the Holy Spirit, he becomes an enemy of God, blasphemes the Holy Spirit and simply follows the evil desires of his heart." (5)

Many divines held that the will was an aid to faith, that the Holy Ghost could work in those only who consented to his presence. Luther flatly denies this doctrine saying, "the Holy Ghost draws the will of mankind when he pleases, through preaching."

(4) Cf. Ibid., p. 117.

(5) Luther, Genesis Vol. II, p. 166. (See p. 165 ff. for fuller discussion of the depraved imagination.)
Cf. Luther, Table-Talk, p. 118.

"Even as no man may lawfully have children, except in a state of matrimony, though many married people have no children, so the Holy Ghost works not always through the word but when it pleases him, so that free-will does nothing inwardly in our conversion and justification before God, neither does it work with our strength—no, not in the least, unless we be prepared and made fit by the Holy Ghost." (6)

For all about us we see people who are corporally possessed of the devil. The devil can not be driven out by other devils much less by man's own power. If it is impossible to drive the evil one from the body it is likewise impossible to drive him from the soul. For the will, the soul, is the seat of the trouble. The body was possessed as punishment for the fall of the inner man. Man is under the power and influence of the devil and nothing but the Holy Spirit can prevail against him.

Again man is like the silly sheep who has gone astray. He must continually have the care of the shepherd. If he becomes lost from the flock he cannot return save he be rescued by the Master. Christ calls men through the Word. Once they are called he sustains and keeps his own. (7) Thus it is to be seen that man can of his free will do nothing in approaching unto God, but is lost forever lest the Shepherd comes to claim him.

"I, for my part, admit that God gave to mankind a free will, but the question is, whether this same freedom be in our power and strength, or no? We may very fitly call it a subverted, perverse, fickle, and wavering will, for it is only God that works in us, and we must suffer and be subject to his pleasure. Even as a potter out

(6) Ibid., p. 121.

(7) Cf. ibid., p. 122 ff.

of his clay makes a pot or vessel, as he wills, so it is for our free will, to suffer and not to work. It stands not in our strength; for we are not able to do anything that is good in divine matters." (8)

B. CORRESPONDENCE

We find Luther making mention of the doctrine of free will in his correspondence even before he had nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg. In a letter written to John Lang at Erfurt, March 1st, 1517; he warned Lang against accepting Erasmus's writings without close scrutiny. For,

"the opinion of him who attributes something to man's will is far different from the opinion of him who knows about grace." (9)

Again in a letter written to Rhenanus by Bucer, May 1st, 1518; he inclosed a few of the theses from the Heidelberg disputation in which Luther had been involved. The following was number xiii,

"since the fall, free will is a mere name: when the will does what is in its power it sins mortally." (10)

That the subject was a live one of the times can be seen from a letter written December 7th, 1519 concerning the Leipsic debate which was held June 27th, 1519 to July 18th, 1519. Carlstadt and Eck debated the subject for one week and later for a period of three days. Carlstadt maintained God to be the smith and man's will the hammer. Eck finally came close enough to that position to admit

(8) Ibid., p. 117.

(9) Smith, Luther's Correspondence Vol. I, p. 55.

(10) Ibid., p. 83.

that "the whole work was from God but not wholly." (11)

Luther's enemies were accusing him of taking both elements of the sacraments with his family and he wrote a letter to Spalatin, January 14th, 1530, in which he said,

"I hope by the signal mercy of Christ shown to my unworthy self that I shall not lose on account of any worthy opinion which has real weight, such as my doctrine of free will, of grace or of the keys of the church." (12)

Therefore from his correspondence we see that it was a doctrine which was early formulated and that it was one which was potent at the time.

C. SERMONS

If we find him mentioning the subject of free will in every walk of life it would be only natural to expect to find it in his sermons. However no sermons were discovered which were expressly on the subject of the will, but mention was made of it in various connections.

In a sermon for Trinity Sunday he speaks of God's will as follows:

"God's actual divine essence and his will, administration and works—are absolutely beyond human thought, human understanding or wisdom; in short, that they are and ever will be incomprehensible, inscrutable and altogether hidden to human reason." (13)

All the things which we know are to be ascertained through revelation, that is his Word "which was sent from heaven."

Throughout his commentaries he emphasises the ne-

(11) Ibid., p. 259-261.

(12) Ibid., p. 273.

(13) Lenker, Luther's Works Vol.IX, p. 14-15. Text Ro.xi.33-36.

cessity of preaching the doctrine of total depravity or original sin. His sermons show him to be a man who preached with power what he urged upon others. A representative example is to be found in his sermon for the Third Christmas Day. Of a truth man was created by God, but because of his "deceptive natural light" he can never be sure what good can be done and consequently does what is pleasing to himself. Man is not inclined to chastity but to unchastity, not to humility or love of his neighbor but to selfishness and pride. He is continually in pursuit of evil. (14)

Again in a sermon on Salvation by Grace without Works he condemns the doctrine of righteousness by works. Paul has so commended grace that good works and free will stand condemned. The fame of the philosophers has gone abroad preaching free will, but any virtue which they might have attained is sin before God, because it was not done in and by the grace of God. Paul himself is an example of this, he had been blameless before the law, but when he had learned Christ he counted it all to unrighteousness.

"Hence therefore is condemned all boasting of free-will, man's strength, righteousness, and good works; and it is concluded, that they are all nothing but sin, and certain destruction although they have a fair shew; that we are saved only by the grace of God, and many of us as believe and call for it with acknowledging of our own vanity and perdition." (15)

(14) Cf. Ibid., Vol.X, p. 192, Text John i.1-14.

(15) Thirty-four Sermons on the Most Interesting Doctrines of the Gospel. p.103. Text Titus iii.4-7
Cf. Ibid., Sermon Concerning them that are Under the Law, and them that are Under Grace. p. 212.

In a Gospel Sermon preached on the parable of the tares Luther draws the lesson that Christ and Satan are the sowers and free will can accomplish nothing of itself. To preach works and free will is to preach deception. (16) In a later sermon he brings out the fact that God remits to those who have nothing, which implies that man has nothing with which to remunerate God. And free will can only tremble and struggle to no avail.

"Therefore, if you would be free from sin, you must desist from and despair in all your own works, and cling to the cross and plead for grace, and then lay hold of the Gospel by faith." (17)

From these representative examples gleaned from numerous sources it must be concluded that Luther was consistent. And taken with the study of the preceding chapters will afford an adequate basis upon which to formulate a summary of his doctrine.

(16) Lenker, Luther's Works Vol. XI, §. 103. Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany. Text Matt. xiii. 24-30.

(17) Ibid. Vol. XIV, p. 287. Sermon for the Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity. Text Matt. xviii. 23-35.

CHAPTER VI

"This is my absolute opinion: he that will maintain that man's free-will is able to do or work anything in spiritual cases, be they never so small, denies Christ. This I have always maintained in my writings, especially in those against Erasmus, one of the learnedest men in the whole world, and thereby will I remain, for I know it to be the truth, though all the world should be against it; yea, the decree of Divine Majesty must stand fast against the gates of hell."

****Luther****

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF LUTHER'S DOCTRINE

OUTLINE

- A. HIS ARGUMENT FROM THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD
- B. HIS ARGUMENT FROM THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN
- C. EVALUATION OF LUTHER'S POSITION

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF LUTHER'S DOCTRINE

As was stated in the introduction, the purpose of this thesis was to discover Luther's doctrine of free will from a study of his works. The study having been completed, it is the aim of this chapter to briefly summarize his teaching. This can be done by reviewing the two methods of argument pursued by Luther in establishing his position. First, the argument from the omnipotence and foreknowledge of God, that is, every individual's salvation is dependent upon the unconditional divine law. Secondly, the argument from the fact that man due to the fall is totally depraved and consequently remains in the power of the devil until changed by divine grace.

A. HIS ARGUMENT FROM THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

In thinking of God Luther reflects on the "hidden God" and the "revealed" or "preached God." The hidden will is not an object of worship and it does many things which are not known. It is in this will, for example, that he wills the death of sinners. In this will Luther saw an awe-inspiring judge. Herein is a mystery which is beyond man's comprehension and he must be content to leave it thus. Man is to worship and adore the will which is revealed in the Word. It is in this will that he

wills not the death of sinners. We must distinguish between the Word of God and God himself. In this will we see a gracious and loving Father. And contemplated in Christ, the "Incarnate God," it is a single will, willing only man's salvation. Apart from Christ there can be no certainty of God's will; in Him God's various attributes become identical.

God, therefore, is omnipotent and foreknew all things from the beginning. God's will belongs to his very nature and is immutable. Because of his very nature He of necessity acts as He does and is subject to no limitation. And the term free will can be applied only to God himself. He alone willed and foreknew all things from eternity and it is in Him that all things are completed which were willed. From such a doctrine of God who is all in all it follows that man's every action and emotion is motivated by Him. Such a doctrine of God leaves no place for free will.

B. HIS ARGUMENT FROM THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN

Man was created in the image of God. He was created in a middle state where he could be deceived by Satan. His will was an upright will but not a perfect will. He was in the "childhood of glorious innocency" and through obedience to God's word he was to have been transplanted to the "manhood glory of immortality" at a time when God saw fit. In the discussion with Erasmus the Fall is consid-

ered as due to the doing or not of God. God knew that man would fall. In his commentary on Genesis it is considered as due to the lack of conformity of the human will to the divine will. It was conditioned upon the nature of Adam and Eve in that they had not yet reached maturity.

As a result of the fall original sin took the place of original righteousness and all sorrow, all sickness, all misery, all suffering entered the world. Since the Fall the will has been averse to God. It can no longer do other than that which is evil and contrary to Him. It is in the power of the devil.

Luther allows the term free will to be applied to men in temporal and civil affairs, such as are subject to reason. There are many examples of this will even among the heathen. They have a tendency toward a good life but it is because of their fear of punishment. And whatever they accomplish either in an individual way or for their country is for personal glory and not for the glory of God. For such goodness they receive outward secular blessings for an outward secular righteousness.

In the activities just mentioned the will is to be considered as a natural faculty. But it like the other natural faculties was corrupted in the fall and can no longer keep one iota of God's law. And the term free will is not allowable when applied to man's choice either for or against Christ. In things pertaining unto salvation the

will has only a "passive adaptiveness" which renders it fit to be seized by the Spirit. It stands as a saddle horse between God and the devil and which ever one is in the saddle has control.

The will is only made good at conversion and free will plays no part in that conversion. The Spirit draws man's will through the preaching of the Word. The Law educates man to sin. Divine grace works with the Word until man despairs of his own righteousness and through faith builds upon the true foundation the righteousness of Christ. Then men who through faith keep their grip on Christ are constant in the godly life. They may and do still commit sin because of their inherent evil nature. Their life is a continual growth, grace shows man his sin, he confesses and gives place for more grace and so he continues in the upward way until he will one day be taken into the "manhood of glorified innocency" where he will no longer be in peril of falling. And here as in the argument from the Sovereignty of God we have ended with Jesus Christ the Son of God and the Son of Man, the one true Mediator. All life must flow toward Him and the Cross for it is there that man and God can meet.

C. EVALUATION OF LUTHER'S POSITION

It is interesting to note that Luther himself considered that his Catechism and "The Bondage of the Will" gave evidence of his best efforts. Many later scholars

have misunderstood Luther and accused him of preaching a cold determinism approaching fatalism. This may be true if his doctrine of the will is considered separately. But it cannot be understood apart from the thing which he was defending, the grace of God. He did not set out to prove the inability of man, but because of man's depravity he was striving to prove the need of efficacious grace. His doctrine of the will was the frame-work upon which the rest of his theology was built. It cannot be understood apart from justification by faith. Luther had recaptured something which the church of his day had forgotten. He reversed the order of subjective and objective experience. The church taught that penitence and good works were subjective and that faith was the result objectively visible to the world. Luther on the other hand found that God was the subjective experience and that He planted faith in the heart of man. Then penitence and good works are the objective result. And religious experience is no longer based upon reason and historic and sacramental acts. In his own religious experience he found religion to be an act of the inner life and all reason and creed which did not conform were cast aside. This fact of Christian ex-

(1) "Luther himself, many years afterwards had so good an opinion of it, (The Bondage of the Will) as to declare, that he could not review any one of his writings with complete satisfaction, unless perhaps his Catechism, and his Bondage of the Will." — Memoirs of the Rev. Martin Luther by Philip Melancthon. See Thirty-Four Sermons on the Most Interesting Doctrines of the Gospel. p. xxvii,

perience is the root out of which his doctrine of the un-free will and the Sovereignty of God grew. To him life was uncertain until through faith in Jesus Christ it was thrown upon the mercy of an omniscient and omnipotent God. It was this faith which gave him power to stand "against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. SOURCES

- Luther, Martin: *Bondage of the Will*, Translated by E. T. Vaughan, London, 1823.
- Luther, Martin: *Commentary on Galations*, Translated by S. S. Schmucker, published by Salmon S. Miles, Philadelphia, 1840.
- Luther, Martin: *Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters*, Translated by Preserved Smith, 2 vols., published by Lutheran Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1913.
- Luther, Martin: *Conversations with Luther*, Translated by Smith and Gallinger, published by Pilgrim Press, New York, 1915.
- Luther, Martin: *First Principles of the Reformation*, Edited by Wace and Bucheim, London, 1883.
- Luther, Martin: *Preface to St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, Translated by Charles E. Hay, published by Lutheran Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1903.
- Luther, Martin: *Select Works of Martin Luther*, 4vols., Translated by Henry Cole, published by Simkin and Marshall, London, 1826.
- Luther, Martin: *Table-Talk*, Translated and edited by W. Hazlitt, published by G. Bell and Sons, London, 1911.
- Luther, Martin: *Thirty-Four Sermons on the Most Interesting Doctrines of the Gospel*, London, 1816.
- Luther, Martin: *Luther's Works*, Translated and edited by John Nicholas Lenker, published by Lutherans in All Lands Company, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Vol. I, *Commentary of First Twenty-Two Psalms*, 1903.
- Vol. II, *Commentary on Genesis*, 1904

Vol. III, Epistle of St. Peter and St. Jude, 1904.
 Vol. IX, Epistle Sermons, 1909.
 Vol. X, Gospel Sermons, 1905.
 Vol. XI, Gospel Sermons, 1906.
 Vol. XII, Gospel Sermons, 1907.
 Vol. XIII, Gospel Sermons, 1904.
 Vol. XIV, Gospel Sermons, 1905.
 Vol. XXIV, Christian Education, 1907.
 Vol. XXXI, Commentary on Genesis, 1910.

Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Edited by Philip Schaff, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1902.

Vol. II, The City of God.
 Vol. III, Enchiridon.
 Vol. V, Against 2 Letters of the Pelagians.
 On Grace and Free Will.

B. SECONDARY REFERENCES

Böhmer, Henrick: Luther in the Light of Recent Research, published by Christian Herald, New York, 1916.

Dante Alighieri: Divine Comedy, Translated by H. F. Cary, published by Scribner, Welford, and Armstrong, New York, 1814.

Edersheim, Alfred: Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Vol. I, published by Longmans, Green, and Co., London, 1884.

Fülop-Miller: The Power and Secret of the Jesuits, Translated by Flint and Tait, published by Viking Press, New York, 1930.

Harnack, Adolph: History of Dogma, Vol. VII, Translated by Neil Buchanan, published by Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, 1900.

Hodge, Charles: Systematic Theology, 3 vols., published by Charles Scribner and Co., New York, 1888.

Jacobs, Henry Eyster: Martin Luther, published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1898,

- Jacobs, Henry Eyster: A Summary of the Christian Faith, published by United Lutheran Publication House, Philadelphia, 1905.
- Köstlin, Julius: Theology of Luther, 2vols., Translated by Charles E. Hay, published by Lutheran Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1897.
- Lord, John: Beacon Lights of History, published by Fords, Howard, and Hulbert, New York, 1884.
- Mangan, John Joseph: Life, Character and Influence of Erasmus, 2 vols., published by MacMillian Company, New York, 1927.
- McGiffert, A. C.: Martin Luther, The Man and His Work, published by Century Company, New York, 1912.
- Murray, R. H.: Erasmus and Luther, published by Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1920.
- Smith, Henry B.: Faith and Philosophy, published by Scribner, Armstrong and Company, New York, 1877.
- Walker, Williston: A History of the Christian Church, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1929.
- Strong, Augustus Hopkins: Systematic Theology, 3 vols., published by Griffith and Rowland Press, Philadelphia, 1907.

C. ENCYCLOPEDIAS

- Catholic Encyclopedia: International Works of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline and History of the Catholic Church, published by Encyclopedia Press, New York, 1913.
- Vol. V, Article, Duns Scotus.
 Vol. VI, Article, Free Will.
 Vol. XI, Article, Pelagius.
 Vol. XIV, Article, Thomas Aquinas.
- Encyclopedia Religion and Ethics: Edited by James Hastings, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1924-1926.
- Vol. VI, Article, Free Will.