

A.W. Pink:

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).

In our last chapter we considered at some length the much debated and difficult question of the human will. We have shown that the will of the natural man is neither Sovereign nor free but, instead, a servant and slave. We have argued that a right conception of the sinner's will-its servitude-is essential to a just estimate of his depravity and ruin. The utter corruption and degradation of human nature is something which man hates to acknowledge, and which he will hotly and insistently deny until he is "taught of God." Much, very much, of the unsound doctrine which we now hear on every hand is the direct and logical outcome of man's repudiation of God's expressed estimate of human depravity. Men are claiming that they are "increased with goods, and have need of nothing," and know not that they are "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). They prate about the 'Ascent of Man,' and deny his Fall. They put darkness for light and light for darkness. They boast of the 'free moral agency' of man when, in fact, he is in bondage to sin and enslaved by Satan-"taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. 2:26). But if the natural man is not a 'free moral agent,' does it also follow that he is not accountable?

'Free moral agency' is an expression of human invention and, as we have said before, to talk of the freedom of the natural man is flatly to repudiate his spiritual ruin. Nowhere does Scripture speak of the freedom or moral ability of the sinner, on the contrary, it insists on his moral and spiritual inability.

This is, admittedly, the most difficult branch of our subject. Those who have ever devoted much study to this theme have uniformly recognized that the harmonizing of God's Sovereignty with Man's Responsibility is the gordian knot of theology.

The main difficulty encountered is to define the relationship between God's Sovereignty and man's responsibility. Many have summarily disposed of the difficulty by denying its existence. A certain class of theologians, in their anxiety to maintain man's responsibility, have magnified it beyond all due proportions until God's Sovereignty has been lost sight of, and in not a few instances flatly denied. Others have acknowledged that the Scriptures present both the Sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man but affirm that in our present finite condition and with our limited knowledge it is impossible to reconcile the two truths, though it is the bounden duty of the believer to receive both. The present writer believes that it has been too readily assumed that the Scriptures themselves do not reveal the several points which show the conciliation of God's Sovereignty and man's responsibility. While perhaps the Word of God does not clear up all the mystery (and this is said with reserve), it does throw much light upon the problem, and it seems to us more honoring to God and His Word to prayerfully search the Scriptures for the completer solution of the difficulty, and even though others have thus far searched in vain that ought only to drive us more and more to our knees. God has been pleased to reveal many things out of His Word during the last century which were hidden from earlier students. Who then dare affirm that there is not much to be learned yet respecting our inquiry!

As we have said above, our chief difficulty is to determine the meeting-point of God's Sovereignty and man's responsibility. To many it has seemed that for God to assert His Sovereignty, for Him to put forth His power and exert a direct influence upon man, for Him to do anything more than warn or invite, would be to interfere with man's freedom, destroy his responsibility, and reduce him to a machine. It is sad indeed to find one like the late Dr. Pierson-whose writings are generally so scriptural and helpful-saying, "It is a tremendous thought that even God Himself cannot control my moral frame, or constrain my moral choice. He cannot prevent me defying and denying Him, and would not exercise His power in such directions if He could, and could not if He would" ("A Spiritual Clinique"). It is sadder still to discover that many other respected and loved brethren are giving expression to the same sentiments. Sad, because directly at variance with the Holy Scriptures.

It is our desire to face honestly the difficulties involved, and to examine them carefully in what light God has been pleased to grant us. The chief difficulties might be expressed thus: first, How is it possible for God to so bring His power to bear upon men that they are prevented from doing what they desire to do, and impelled to do other things they do not desire to do, and yet to preserve their responsibility? Second, How can the sinner be held responsible for the doing of what he is unable to do? And how can he be justly condemned for not doing what he could not do? Third, How is it possible for God to decree that men shall commit certain sins, hold them responsible in the committal of them, and adjudge them guilty because they committed them? Fourth, How can the sinner be held responsible to receive Christ, and be damned for rejecting Him, when God had foreordained him to condemnation? We shall now deal with these several problems in the above order. May the Holy Spirit Himself be our Teacher so that in His light we may see light.

1. How is it possible for God to so bring His power to bear upon men that they are PREVENTED from doing what they desire to do, and IMPELLED to do other things they do not desire to do, and yet to preserve their responsibility?

It would seem that if God put forth His power and exerted a direct influence upon men their freedom would be interfered with. It would appear that if God did anything more than warn and invite men their responsibility would be infringed upon. We are told that God must not coerce man, still less compel him, or otherwise he would be reduced to a machine. This sounds very plausible; it appears to be good philosophy and based upon sound reasoning; it has been almost universally accepted as an axiom in ethics; nevertheless, it is refuted by Scripture!

Let us turn first to Genesis 20:6: "And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against Me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her." It is argued, almost universally, that God must not interfere with man's liberty, that he must not coerce or compel him, lest he be reduced to a machine. But the above Scripture proves, unmistakably proves, that it is not impossible for God to exert His power upon man without destroying his responsibility. Here is a case where God did exert His power, restrict man's freedom, and prevent him from doing that which he otherwise would have done.

Ere turning from this Scripture let us note how it throws light upon the case of the first man. Would-be philosophers who sought to be wise above that which was written have argued that God could not have prevented Adam's fall without reducing him to a mere automaton. They tell us, constantly, that God must not coerce or compel His creatures otherwise He would destroy their accountability. But the answer to all such philosophisings is, that Scripture records a number of instances where we are expressly told God did prevent certain of His creatures from sinning both against Himself and against His people, in view of which all men's reasonings are utterly worthless. If God could "withhold" Abimelech from sinning against Him then why was He unable to do the same with Adam? Should someone ask, Then why did not God do so? we might return the question by asking, Why did not God "withhold" Satan from falling? or, Why did not God "withhold" the Kaiser from starting the War? The usual reply is, as we have said, God could not without interfering with man's "freedom" and reducing him to a machine. But the case of Abimelech proves conclusively that such a reply is untenable and erroneous-we might add wicked and blasphemous, for who are we to limit the Most High! How dare any finite creature take it upon him to say what the Almighty can and cannot do? Should we be pressed further as to why God refused to exercise His power and prevent Adam's fall, we should say, Because Adam's fall better served His own wise and blessed purpose-among other things, it provided an opportunity to demonstrate that where sin had abounded grace could much more abound. But we might ask further: Why did God place in the garden the tree of the knowledge of good and evil when He foresaw that man would disobey His prohibition and eat of it; for mark, it was God and not Satan who made that tree. Should someone respond, Then is God the Author of Sin? We would have to ask, in turn, What is meant by "Author"? Plainly it was God's will that sin should enter this world otherwise it would not have entered, for nothing happens save as God has eternally decreed. Moreover, there was more than a bare permission for God only permits that which He has purposed. But we leave now the origin of sin, insisting once more, however, that God could have "withheld" Adam from sinning without destroying his responsibility.

The case of Abimelech does not stand alone. Another illustration of the same principle is seen in the history of Balaam, already noticed in the last chapter, but concerning which a further word is in place. Balak the Moabite sent for this heathen prophet to "curse" Israel. A handsome reward was offered for his services, and a careful reading of Numbers 22-24 will show that Balaam was willing, yea, anxious, to accept Balak's offer and thus sin against God and His people. But Divine power "withheld" him. Mark his own admission, "And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak" (Num. 22:38). Again, after Balak had remonstrated with Balaam, we read "He answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?...Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it" (23:12, 20). Surely these verses show us God's power, and Balaam's powerlessness: man's will frustrated and God's will performed. But was Balaam's "freedom" or responsibility destroyed? Certainly not, as we shall yet seek to show.

One more illustration: "And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat" (2 Chron. 17:10). The implication here is clear. Had not the "fear of the LORD" fallen upon these kingdoms they would have made war upon Judah. God's restraining power alone prevented them. Had their own will been allowed to act "war" would have been the consequence. Thus we see, that Scripture teaches that God "withholds" nations as well as individuals, and that when it pleaseth Him to do so He interposes and prevents war. Compare further Genesis 35:5.

The question which now demands our consideration is, How is it possible for God to "withhold" men from sinning and yet not to interfere with their liberty and responsibility—a question which so many say is incapable of solution in our present finite condition. This question causes us to ask, In what does moral "freedom," real moral freedom, consist? We answer, it is the being delivered from the BONDAGE of sin. The more any soul is emancipated from the thralldom of sin the more does he enter into a state of freedom—"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). In the above instances God "withheld" Abimelech, Balaam, and the heathen kingdoms from sinning, and therefore we affirm that He did not in any wise interfere with their real freedom. The nearer a soul approximates to sinlessness the nearer does he approach to God's holiness. Scripture tells us that God "cannot lie," and that He "cannot be tempted," but is He any the less free because He cannot do that which is evil? Surely not. Then is it not evident that the more man is raised up to God, and the more he be "withheld" from sinning, the greater is his real freedom!

A pertinent example setting forth the meeting-place of God's Sovereignty and man's responsibility, as it relates to the question of moral freedom, is found in connection with the giving to us of the Holy Scriptures. In the communication of His Word God was pleased to employ human instruments, and in the using of them He did not reduce them to mere mechanical amanuenses: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation (Greek: of its own origination). For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20, 21). Here we have man's responsibility and God's Sovereignty placed in juxtaposition. These holy men were "moved" (Greek: "borne along") by the Holy Spirit, yet was not their moral responsibility disturbed nor their "freedom" impaired. God enlightened their minds, enkindled their hearts, revealed to them His truth, and so controlled them that error on their part was, by Him, made impossible, as they communicated His mind and will to men. But what was it that might have, would have, caused error, had not God controlled as He did the instruments which He employed? The answer is SIN, the sin which was in them. But as we have seen, the holding in check of sin, the preventing of the exercise of the carnal mind in these "holy men" was not a destroying of their "freedom," rather was it the inducting of them into real freedom.

A final word should be added here concerning the nature of true liberty. There are three chief things concerning which men in general greatly err: misery and happiness, folly and wisdom, bondage and liberty. The world counts none miserable but the afflicted, and none happy but the prosperous, because they judge by the present ease of the flesh. Again; the world is pleased with a false show of wisdom (which is "foolishness" with God), neglecting that which makes wise unto salvation. As to liberty, men would be at their own disposal and live as they please. They suppose the only true liberty is to be at the command and under the control of none above themselves, and live according to their heart's desire. But this is a thralldom and bondage of the worst kind. True liberty is not the power to live as we please, but to live as we ought! Hence, the only One Who has ever trod this earth since Adam's fall that has enjoyed perfect freedom was the Man Christ Jesus, the Holy Servant of God, Whose meat it ever was to do the will of the Father.

We now turn to consider the question.

2. How can the sinner be held responsible FOR the doing of what he is UNABLE to do? And how can he be justly condemned for NOT DOING what he COULD NOT do?

As a creature the natural man is responsible to love, obey, and serve God; as a sinner he is responsible to repent and believe the Gospel. But at the outset we are confronted with the fact that natural man is unable to love and serve God, and that the sinner, of himself, cannot repent and believe. First, let us prove what we have just said. We begin by quoting and considering John 6:44, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." The heart of the natural man (every man) is so "desperately wicked" that if he is left to himself he will never 'come to Christ.' This statement would not be questioned if the full force of the words "coming to Christ" were properly apprehended. We shall therefore digress a little at this point to define and consider what is implied and involved in the words "No man can come to Me"—cf. John 5:40, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life."

For the sinner to come to Christ that he might have life is for him to realize the awful danger of his situation; is for him to see that the sword of Divine justice is suspended over his head; is to awaken to the fact that there is but a step betwixt him and death, and that after death is the "judgment"; and in consequence of this discovery, is for him to be in real earnest to escape, and in such earnestness that he shall flee from the wrath to come, cry unto God for mercy, and agonize to enter in at the "strait gate."

To come to Christ for life, is for the sinner to feel and acknowledge that he is utterly destitute of any claim upon

God's favor; is to see himself as "without strength," lost and undone; is to admit that he is deserving of nothing but eternal death, thus taking side with God against himself; it is for him to cast himself into the dust before God, and humbly sue for Divine mercy.

To come to Christ for life is for the sinner to abandon his own righteousness and be ready to be made the righteousness of God in Christ; it is to disown his own wisdom and be guided by His; it is to repudiate his own will and be ruled by His; it is to unreservedly receive the Lord Jesus as his Lord and Saviour, as his All in all.

Such, in part and in brief, is what is implied and involved in "coming to Christ." But is the sinner willing to take such an attitude before God? No; for in the first place he does not realize the danger of his situation, and in consequence is not in real earnest after his escape; instead, men are for the most part at ease, and apart from the operations of the Holy Spirit whenever they are disturbed by the alarms of conscience or the dispensations of providence they flee to any other refuge but Christ. In the second place, they will not acknowledge that all their righteousnesses are as filthy rags but, like the Pharisee, will thank God they are not as the Publican. And in the third place, they are not ready to receive Christ as their Lord and Saviour for they are unwilling to part with their idols; they had rather hazard their soul's eternal welfare than give them up. Hence we say that, left to himself, the natural man is so depraved at heart that he cannot come to Christ.

The words of our Lord quoted above by no means stand alone. Quite a number of Scriptures set forth the moral and spiritual inability of the natural man. In Joshua 24:19 we read, "And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for He is an holy God." To the Pharisees Christ said, "Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word" (John 8:43). And again: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7, 8).

But now the question returns, How can God hold the sinner responsible for failing to do what he is unable to do? This necessitates a careful definition of terms. Just what is meant by "unable" and "cannot"?

Now let it be clearly understood that when we speak of the sinner's inability, we do not mean that if men desired to come to Christ they lack the necessary power to carry out their desire. No; the fact is that the sinner's inability or absence of power is itself due to lack of willingness to come to Christ, and this lack of willingness is the fruit of a depraved heart. It is of first importance that we distinguish between natural inability and moral and spiritual inability. For example, we read, "But Ahijah could not see; for his eyes were set by reason of his age" (1 Kings 14:4); and again, "The men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them" (Jonah 1:13). In both of these passages the words "could not" refer to natural inability. But when we read, "And when his brethren saw that their father loved him (Joseph) more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him" (Gen. 37:4), it is clearly moral inability that is in view. They did not lack the natural ability to "speak peaceably unto him" for they were not dumb. Why then was it that they "could not speak peaceably unto him"? The answer is given in the same verse: it was because "they hated him." Again; in 2 Peter 2:14 we read of a certain class of wicked men "having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin." Here again it is moral inability that is in view. Why is it that these men "cannot cease from sin"? The answer is, Because their eyes were full of adultery. So of Romans 8:8-"They that are in the flesh cannot please God": here is spiritual inability. Why is it that the natural man "cannot please God"? Because he is "alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18). No man can choose that from which his heart is averse-"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things?" (Matt. 12:34). "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him" (John 6:44). Here again it is moral and spiritual inability which is before us. Why is it the sinner cannot come to Christ unless he is "drawn"? The answer is, Because his wicked heart loves sin and hates Christ.

We trust we have made it clear that the Scriptures distinguish sharply between natural ability and moral and spiritual inability. Surely all can see the difference between the blindness of Bartimaeus, who was ardently desirous of receiving his sight, and the Pharisees, whose eyes were closed "lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted" (Matt. 13:15). But should it be said, "The natural man could come to Christ if he wished to do so," we answer, Ah! but in that IF lies the hinge of the whole matter. The inability of the sinner consists of the want of moral power to wish and will so as to actually perform.

What we have contended for above is of first importance. Upon the distinction between the sinner's natural Ability, and his moral and spiritual Inability rests his Responsibility. The depravity of the human heart does not destroy man's accountability to God; so far from this being the case the very moral inability of the sinner only serves to increase his guilt. This is easily proven by a reference to the Scriptures cited above. We read that

Joseph's brethren "could not speak peaceably unto him," and why? It was because they "hated" him. But was this moral inability of theirs any excuse? Surely not: in this very moral inability consisted the greatness of their sin. So of those concerning whom it is said, "They cannot cease from sin" (2 Peter 2:14), and why? Because "their eyes were full of adultery," but that only made their case worse. It was a real fact that they could not cease from sin, yet this did not excuse them-it only made their sin the greater.

Should some sinner here object, I cannot help being born into this world with a depraved heart and therefore I am not responsible for my moral and spiritual inability which accrue from it, the reply would be, Responsibility and Culpability He in the indulgence of the depraved propensities, the free indulgence, for God does not force any to sin. Men might pity me but they certainly would not excuse me if I gave vent to a fiery temper and then sought to extenuate myself on the ground of having inherited that temper from my parents. Their own common sense is sufficient to guide their judgment in such a case as this. They would argue I was responsible to restrain my temper. Why then cavil against this same principle in the case supposed above? "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee thou wicked servant" surely applies here! What would the reader say to a man who had robbed him and who later argued in defense, "I cannot help being a thief, that is my nature"? Surely the reply would be, Then the penitentiary is the proper place for that man. What then shall be said to the one who argues that he cannot help following the bent of his sinful heart? Surely, that the Lake of Fire is where such an one must go. Did ever a murderer plead that he hated his victim so much that he could not go near him without slaying him. Would not that only magnify the enormity of his crime! Then what of the one who loves sin so much that he is at "enmity against God"!

The fact of man's responsibility is almost universally acknowledged. It is inherent in man's moral nature. It is not only taught in Scripture but witnessed to by the natural conscience. The basis or ground of human responsibility is human ability. What is implied by this general term "ability" must now be defined. Perhaps a concrete example will be more easily grasped by the average reader than an abstract argument.

Suppose a man owed me \$100 and could find plenty of money for his own pleasures but none for me, yet pleaded that he was unable to pay me. What would I say? I would say that the only ability that was lacking was an honest heart. But would it not be an unfair construction of my words if a friend of my dishonest debtor should say I had stated that an honest heart was that which constituted the ability to pay the debt? No; I would reply: the ability of my debtor lies in the power of his hand to write me a check, and this he has, but what is lacking is an honest principle. It is his power to write me a check which makes him responsible to do so, and the fact that he lacks an honest heart does not destroy his accountability.*

Now, in like manner, the sinner while altogether lacking in moral and spiritual ability does, nevertheless, possess natural ability, and this it is which renders him accountable unto God. Men have the same natural faculties to love God with as they have to hate Him with, the same hearts to believe with as to disbelieve, and it is their failure to love and believe which constitutes their guilt. An idiot or an infant is not personally responsible to God, because lacking in natural ability. But the normal man who is endowed with rationality, who is gifted with a conscience

*The terms of this example are suggested by an illustration used by the late Andrew Fuller.

that is capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, who is able to weigh eternal issues IS a responsible being, and it is because he does possess these very faculties that he will yet have to "give an account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).

We say again that the above distinction between the natural ability and the moral and spiritual inability of the sinner is of prime importance. By nature he possesses natural ability but lacks moral and spiritual ability. The fact that he does not possess the latter does not destroy his responsibility, because his responsibility rests upon the fact that he does possess the former. Let me illustrate again. Here are two men guilty of theft: the first is an idiot, the second perfectly sane but the offspring of criminal parents. No just judge would sentence the former; but every right-minded judge would the latter. Even though the second of these thieves possessed a vitiated moral nature inherited from criminal parents that would not excuse him, providing he was a normal rational being. Here then is the ground of human accountability-the possession of rationality plus the gift of conscience. It is because the sinner is endowed with these natural faculties that he is a responsible creature; because he does not use his natural powers for God's glory, constitutes his guilt.

How can it remain consistent with His mercy that God should require the debt of obedience from him that is not able to pay? In addition to what has been said above it should be pointed out that God has not lost His right, even though man has lost his power. The creature's impotence does not cancel his obligation. A drunken

servant is a servant still, and it is contrary to all sound reasoning to argue that his master loses his rights through his servant's default. Moreover, it is of first importance that we should ever bear in mind that God contracted with us in Adam, who was our federal head and representative, and in him God gave us a power which we lost through our first parent's fall; but though our power is gone, nevertheless, God may justly demand His due of obedience and of service.

We turn now to ponder,

3. How is it possible for God to DECREE that men SHOULD commit certain sins, hold them RESPONSIBLE in the committal of them, and adjudge them GUILTY because they committed them?

Let us now consider the extreme case of Judas. We hold that it is clear from Scripture that God decreed from all eternity that Judas should betray the Lord Jesus. If anyone should challenge this statement we refer him to the prophecy of Zechariah through whom God declared that His Son should be sold for "thirty pieces of silver" (Zech. 11:12). As we have said in earlier pages, in prophecy God makes known what will be, and in making known what will be He is but revealing to us what He has ordained shall be. That Judas was the one through whom the prophecy of Zechariah was fulfilled needs not to be argued. But now the question we have to face is, Was Judas a responsible agent in fulfilling this decree of God? We reply that he was. Responsibility attaches mainly to the motive and intention of the one committing the act. This is recognized on every hand. Human law distinguishes between a blow inflicted by accident (without evil design) and a blow delivered with 'malice aforethought.' Apply then this same principle to the case of Judas. What was the design of his heart when he bargained with the priests? Manifestly he had no conscious desire to fulfill any decree of God, though unknown to himself he was actually doing so. On the contrary, his intention was evil only, and therefore, though God had decreed and directed his act, nevertheless his own evil intention rendered him justly guilty as he afterwards acknowledged himself-"I have betrayed innocent blood." It was the same with the Crucifixion of Christ. Scripture plainly declares that He was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23), and that though "the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ" yet, notwithstanding it was but "for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:26, 28); which verses teach very much more than a bare permission by God, declaring, as they do, that the Crucifixion and all its details had been decreed by God. Yet, nevertheless, it was by "wicked hands," not merely "human hands" that our Lord was "crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). "Wicked" because the intention of His crucifiers was only evil.

But it might be objected that if God decreed that Judas should betray Christ, and that the Jews and Gentiles should crucify Him they could not do otherwise, and therefore, they were not responsible for their intentions. The answer is, God had decreed that they should perform the acts they did, but in the actual perpetration of these deeds they were justly guilty because their own purposes in the doing of them was evil only. Let it be emphatically said that God does not produce the sinful dispositions of any of His creatures, though He does restrain and direct them to the accomplishing of His own purposes. Hence He is neither the Author nor the Approver of sin. This distinction was expressed thus by Augustine: "That men sin proceeds from themselves; that in sinning they perform this or that action, is from the power of God who divideth the darkness according to His pleasure." Thus it is written, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps" (Prov. 16:9). What we would here insist upon is, that God's decrees are not the necessitating cause of the sins of men but the fore-determined and prescribed boundings and directings of men's sinful acts. In connection with the betrayal of Christ God did not decree that He should be sold by one of His creatures and then take up a good man, instill an evil desire into his heart and thus force him to perform the terrible deed in order to execute His decree. No; not so do the Scriptures represent it. Instead, God decreed the act and selected the one who was to perform the act, but He did not make him evil in order that he should perform the deed; on the contrary, the betrayer was a "devil" at the time the Lord Jesus chose him as one of the twelve (John 6:70), and in the exercise and manifestation of his own devilry God simply directed his actions, actions which were perfectly agreeable to his own vile heart, and performed with the most wicked intentions. Thus it was with the Crucifixion.

4. How can the sinner be held responsible to receive Christ, and be damned for rejecting Him, when God FOREORDAINED him TO condemnation?

Really, this question has been covered in what has been said under the other queries, but for the benefit of those who are exercised upon this point we give it a separate, though brief, examination. In considering the above difficulty the following points should be carefully weighed:

In the first place, no sinner, while he is in this world, knows for certain, nor can he know, that he is a "vessel of

wrath fitted to destruction." This belongs to the hidden counsels of God to which he has not access. God's secret will is no business of his; God's revealed will (in the Word) is the standard of human responsibility. * And God's revealed will is plain. Each sinner is among those whom God now "commandeth to repent" (Acts 17:30). Each sinner who hears the Gospel is "commanded" to believe (1 John 3:23). And all who do truly repent and believe are saved. Therefore, is every sinner responsible to repent and believe.

In the second place, it is the duty of every sinner to search the Scriptures which "are able to make thee wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15). It is the sinner's "duty" because the Son of God has commanded him to search the Scriptures (John 5:39). If he searches them with a heart that is seeking after God then does he put himself in the way where God is accustomed to meet with sinners. Upon this point the Puritan Manton has written very helpfully.

"I cannot say to every one that ploweth, infallibly, that he shall have a good crop; but this I can say to him, It is God's use to bless the diligent and provident. I cannot say to every one that desireth posterity, Marry, and you shall have children; I cannot say infallibly to him that goeth forth to battle for his country's good that he shall have victory and success; but I can say, as Joab (1 Chron. 19:13) 'Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people and the cities of our God: and let the LORD do that which is good in His sight.' I cannot say infallibly you shall have grace; but I can say to every one, Let him use the means, and leave the success of his labor and his own salvation to the will and good pleasure of God. I cannot say this infallibly, for there is no obligation upon God. And still this work is made the fruit of God's will and mere arbitrary dispensation-'Of His own will begat He us by the Word of Truth' (James 1:18). Let us do what God hath commanded, and let God do what He will. And I need not say so; for the whole world in all their actings are and should be guided by this principle. Let us do our duty, and refer the success to God, Whose ordinary practice is to meet with the creature that seeketh after Him; yea, He is with us already; this earnest importunity in the use of means proceeding from the earnest impression of His grace. And therefore, since He is beforehand with us, and hath not showed any backwardness to our good, we have no reason to despair of His goodness and mercy, but rather to hope for the best" (Vol. XXI, page 312).

God has been pleased to give to men the Holy Scriptures which "testify" of the Saviour, and make known the way of salvation. Every sinner has the same natural faculties for the reading of the Bible as he has for the reading of the newspaper; and if he is illiterate or blind so that he is unable to read he has the same mouth with which to ask a friend to read the Bible to him, as he has to enquire concerning other matters. If, then, God has given to men His Word, and in that Word has made known the way of salvation, and if men are commanded to search those Scriptures which are able to make them wise unto salvation, and they refuse to do so, then it is plain that they are justly censureable, that their blood lies on their own heads, and that God can righteously cast them into the Lake of Fire.

In the third place, should it be objected, Admitting all you have said above, Is it not still a fact that each of the non-elect is unable to repent and believe? The reply is, Yes. Of every sinner it is a fact that, of himself, he cannot come to Christ. And from God's side the "cannot" is absolute. But we are now dealing with the responsibility of the sinner (the sinner foreordained to condemnation, though he knows it not), and from the human side the inability of the sinner is a moral one, as previously pointed out. Moreover, it needs to be borne in mind that in addition to the moral inability of the sinner there is a voluntary inability, too. The sinner must be regarded not only as impotent to do good but as delighting in evil. From the human side, then, the "cannot" is a will not; it is a voluntary impotence. Man's impotence lies in his obstinacy. Hence, is everyone left "without excuse," and hence, is God "clear" when He judgeth (Psa. 51:4), and righteous in damning all who "love darkness rather than light."

That God does require what is beyond our own power to render is clear from many Scriptures. God gave the Law to Israel at Sinai and demanded a full compliance with it, and solemnly pointed out what would be the consequences of their disobedience (see Deut. 28). But will any readers be so foolish as to affirm that Israel were capable of fully obeying the Law! If they do, we would refer them to Romans 8:3 where we are expressly told, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

Come now to the New Testament. Take such passages as Matthew 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." 1 Corinthians 15:34. "Awake to righteousness, and sin not." 1 John 2:1, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." Will any reader say he is capable in himself of complying with these demands of God? If so, it is useless for us to argue with him.

But now the question arises, Why has God demanded of man that which he is incapable of performing? The

first answer is, Because God refuses to lower His standard to the level of our sinful infirmities. Being perfect, God must set a perfect standard before us. Still we must ask, If man is incapable of measuring up to God's standard, wherein lies his responsibility? Difficult as it seems the problem is nevertheless capable of simple and satisfactory solution.

Man is responsible to (first) acknowledge before God his inability, and (second) to cry unto Him for enabling grace. Surely this will be admitted by every Christian reader. It is my bounden duty to own before God my ignorance, my weakness, my sinfulness, my impotence to comply with His holy and just requirements. It is also my bounden duty, as well as blessed privilege, to earnestly beseech God to give me the wisdom, strength, grace, which will enable me to do that which is pleasing in His sight; to ask Him to work in me "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

In like manner, the sinner, every sinner, is responsible to call upon the Lord. Of himself he can neither repent nor believe. He can neither come to Christ nor turn from his sins. God tells him so; and his first duty is to "set to his seal that God is true." His second duty is to cry unto God for His enabling power; to ask God in mercy to overcome his enmity and "draw" him to Christ; to bestow upon him the gifts of repentance and faith. If he will do so, sincerely from the heart, then most surely God will respond to his appeal, for it is written, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

Suppose I had slipped on the icy pavement late at night, and had broken my hip. I am unable to arise; if I remain on the ground I must freeze to death. What, then, ought I to do? If I am determined to perish I shall be there silent; but I shall be to blame for such a course. If I am anxious to be rescued I shall lift up my voice and cry for help. So the sinner, though unable of himself to rise and take the first step toward Christ, is responsible to cry to God, and if he does (from the heart) there is a Deliverer to hand. God is "not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27); yea, He is "a very present help in trouble" (Psa. 46:1). But if the sinner refuses to cry unto the Lord, if he is determined to perish, then his blood is on his own head, and his "damnation is just" (Rom. 3:8).

A brief word now concerning the extent of human responsibility.

It is obvious that the measure of human responsibility varies in different cases, and is greater or less with particular individuals. The standard of measurement was given in the Saviour's words, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required" (Luke 12:48). Surely God did not require as much from those living in Old Testament times as He does from those who have been born during the Christian dispensation. Surely God will not require as much from those who lived during the 'dark ages,' when the Scriptures were accessible to but a few, as He will from those of this generation when practically every family in the land owns a copy of His Word for themselves. In the same way, God will not demand from the heathen what He will from those in Christendom. The heathen will not perish because they have not believed in Christ, but because they failed to live up to the light which they did have-the testimony of God in nature and conscience.

To sum up. The fact of man's responsibility rests upon his natural ability, is witnessed to by conscience, and is insisted on throughout the Scriptures. The ground of man's responsibility is that he is a rational creature capable of weighing eternal issues, and that he possesses a written Revelation from God in which his relationship with and duty toward his Creator is plainly defined. The measure of responsibility varies in different individuals, being determined by the degree of light each has enjoyed from God. The problem of human responsibility receives at least a partial solution in the Holy Scriptures, and it is our solemn obligation as well as privilege to search them prayerfully and carefully for further light, looking to the Holy Spirit to guide us "into all truth." It is written, "The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way" (Psa. 25:9).

In conclusion it remains to point out that it is the responsibility of every man to use the means which God has placed to his hand. An attitude of fatalistic inertia, because I know that God has irrevocably decreed whatsoever comes to pass, is to make a sinful and hurtful use of what God has revealed for the comfort of my heart. The same God who has decreed that a certain end shall be accomplished has also decreed that that end shall be attained through and as the result of His own appointed means. God does not disdain the use of means, nor must I. For example: God has decreed that "while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest... shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22); but that does not mean man's ploughing of the ground and sowing of the seed are needless. No; God moves men to do those very things, blesses their labours, and so fulfills His own ordination. In like manner, God has, from the beginning, chosen a people unto salvation; but that does not mean there is no need for evangelists to preach the Gospel, or for sinners to believe it; it is by such means that His eternal counsels are effectuated.

To argue that because God has irrevocably determined the eternal destiny of every man, relieves us of all

responsibility for any concern about our souls, or any diligent use of the means to salvation, would be on a par with refusing to perform my temporal duties because God has fixed my earthly lot. And that He has is clear from Acts 17:26; Job 7:1; 14:15, etc. If then the foreordination of God may consist with the respective activities of man in present concerns, why not in the future? What God has joined together we must not cut asunder. Whether we can or cannot see the link which unites the one to the other our duty is plain: "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29).

In Acts 27:22 God made known that He had ordained the temporal preservation of all who accompanied Paul in the ship; yet the Apostle did not hesitate to say, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (v. 31). God appointed that means for the execution of what He had decreed. From 2 Kings 20 we learn that God was absolutely resolved to add fifteen years to Hezekiah's life, yet he must take a lump of figs and lay it on his boil! Paul knew that he was eternally secure in the hand of Christ (John 10:28), yet he "kept under his body" (1 Cor. 9:27). The Apostle John assured those to whom he wrote, "Ye shall abide in Him," yet in the very next verse he exhorted them, "And now, little children, abide in Him" (1 John 2:27, 28). It is only by taking heed to this vital principle, that we are responsible to use the means of God's appointing, that we shall be enabled to preserve the balance of Truth and be saved from a paralyzing fatalism.