

Will and Self-Will

by W.R. Inge

The sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering self-will to God's eternal will, which leads to true freedom, contentment, and peace.

Scripture: Psalm 143:10, Proverbs 19:21, Matthew 26:39, John 8:36, Romans 6:16, Galatians 2:20

Topics: "Gods Will", "Free Will"

Description

W.R. Inge delves into the concept of self-will and its relationship with God's eternal will, emphasizing the importance of surrendering our will to God's, allowing His will to flow through us unhampered. Inge explains that the will in the creature is as truly God's as the eternal will, and when surrendered to God, the will is exercised by Him, leading to true freedom and peace. He contrasts the freedom found in aligning our will with God's with the bondage that comes from self-will, highlighting that true freedom comes from being in harmony with God's will.

Transcript

Some may ask: "If this tree, Self-Will, is so contrary to God and to the eternal will, why did God create it, and place it in Paradise? We may answer: a man who is truly humble and enlightened does not ask God to reveal His secrets to him, or enquire why God does this or that, or prevents or allows this or that; he only desires to know how he may please God, and become as nothing in himself, having no will of his own, and that the eternal will may live in him, and possess him wholly, unhampered by any other will, and how what is due may be paid to the Eternal Will, by him and through him. But there is another answer to this question. For we may say: the most noble and gracious gift that is bestowed on any creature is the Reason and the Will. These two are so intimately connected that the one cannot be anywhere without the other. If it were not for these two gifts, there would be no reasonable creatures, but only brutes and brutality; and this would be a great loss, for God would then never receive His due, or behold Himself and His attributes exhibited in action; a thing which ought to be, and is, necessary to perfection. Now Perception and Reason are conferred together with will, in order that they may teach the will and also themselves, that neither perception nor will is of itself, or to itself, nor ought to seek or obey itself. Nor must they turn themselves to their own profit, nor use themselves for their own ends; for they belong to Him from whom they proceed, and they shall submit to Him, and flow back to Him, and become nothing in themselves--that is, in their selfhood.

But now you must consider more in detail something concerning the will. There is an Eternal Will, which is a first principle and substance in God, apart from all works and all externalisation; and the same will is in man, or the creature, willing and bringing to pass certain things. For it pertains to the will, to will something. For what else does it exist? It would be a vain thing if it had no work to do, and this it cannot have without the creature. And so there must needs be creatures, and God will have them, in order that by their means the will may be exercised, and may work, though in God it must be without work. Therefore the will in the creature, which we call the created will, is as truly God's as the eternal will, and is not from the creature.

And since God cannot exercise His will, in working and effecting changes, without the creature, He is pleased to do so in and with the creature. Therefore the will is not given to be exercised by the creature, but by God alone, who has the right to carry into effect His own will by the will which is in man, but yet is God's will. And in any man or creature, in whom it should be thus, purely and simply, the will of that man or creature would be exercised not by the man but by God, and thus it would not be self-will, and the man would only will as God wills; for God Himself, and not man, would be moving the will. Thus the will would be united with the Eternal Will, and would flow into it; although the man would retain his sense of liking and disliking, pleasure and pain. But nothing is complained of, except what is contrary to God. And there is no rejoicing except in God alone, and in that which belongs to Him. And as with the will, so is it with all the other faculties of man; they are all of God and not of man. And when the will is wholly given up to God, the other faculties will certainly be given up too; and God will have what is due to Him.

No one may call that which is free his own, and he who makes it his own, doeth injustice. Now in all the sphere of freedom nothing is so free as the will; and he who makes it his own, and allows it not to remain in its excellent freedom, and free nobleness, and free exercise, does it a great injustice. This is what is done by the devil, and Adam, and all their followers. But he who leaves the will in its noble freedom does right; and this is what Christ, and all who follow Him, do. And he who deprives the will of its noble freedom, and makes it his own, must necessarily be oppressed with cares and discontent, and disquietude, and every kind of misery, and this will be his lot throughout time and eternity. But he who leaves the will in its freedom has contentment and peace and rest and blessedness, through time and eternity. Where there is a man whose will is not enslaved, he is free indeed, and in bondage to no man. He is one of those to whom Christ said: "The truth shall make you free"; and He adds immediately afterwards: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Moreover, observe that whenever the will chooses unhindered whatever it will, it always and in all cases chooses what is noblest and best, and hates whatever is not noble and good, and regards it as an offence. And the more free and unhampered the will is, the more it is grieved by evil, by injustice, by iniquity, and all manner of sin. We see this in Christ, whose will was the purest and freest and the least brought into bondage of any man's who ever lived. So was the human nature of Christ the most free and pure of all creatures; and yet He felt the deepest distress, pain, and wrath at sin that any creature ever felt. But when men claim freedom for themselves, in such a way as to feel no sorrow or anger at sin, and all that is contrary to God, and say that we must take no notice of anything, and care for nothing, but be, in this life, what Christ was after the resurrection, and so forth, this is not the true and Divine freedom that springs from the true and Divine light, but a natural, unrighteous, false, deceiving freedom, which springs from the natural, false, deceitful light.

If there were no self-will, there would be no proprietorship. There is no proprietorship in heaven; and this is why contentment, peace, and blessedness are there. If anyone in heaven were so bold as to call anything

his own, he would immediately be cast out into hell, and become an evil spirit. But in hell everyone will have self-will, and therefore in hell is every kind of wretchedness and misery. And so it is also on earth. But if anyone in hell could rid himself of his self-will and call nothing his own, he would pass out of hell into heaven. And if a man, while here on earth, could be entirely rid of self-will and proprietorship, and stand up free and at liberty in the true light of God, and continue therein, he would be sure to inherit the kingdom of heaven. For he who has anything, or who desires to have anything of his own, is a slave; and he who has nothing of his own, nor desires to have anything, is free and at liberty, and is in bondage to no man. li.

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