

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 9.-Of Free-will.

II. Man, in his state of Innocency, had freedom, and power, to will, and to do that which was good, and well pleasing to God¹; but yet, mutably, so that he might fall from it².

Question 1.—*Did man, in his state of innocency, have freedom, and power, to will, and to do that which was good, and well pleasing to God?*

Answer.—Yes. Gen. 1:26. A creature can be no more morally independent of God, in its actions and powers, than it can be naturally independent of Him, Acts 17:25, 28. A creature, as a creature, must acknowledge the Creator's will as its supreme law, Luke 20:38; for as it cannot be without Him, so it must not be but for Him, and according to His will, Prov. 16:4: yet, no law obliges, until it is revealed, Rom. 4:15. And hence it follows, that there was a law which man, as a rational creature, was subjected to in his creation; and that this law was revealed to him, Rom. 2:14, 15. Scripture tells us, God made man upright, Eccl. 7:29. This supposes a law, to which he was conformed in his creation—which we call the natural Moral Law, *cf.* Gen. 9:6. Man's righteousness consisted in conformity to this rule or law, Acts 24:16. Now, there is a two-fold conformity required of man; a conformity to the powers of his soul to the law, which is called habitual righteousness; and a conformity of all his actions to it, which is actual righteousness. Prov. 20:7. God made man habitually righteous, Gen. 1:26; man was to make himself actually righteous, Ps. 26:1. This state into which man was created is called the state of Original Righteousness, *cf.* 1 Cor. 11:7. It consisted of three things: 1.) Man's understanding, in his state of innocency, was a lamp of light, *cf.* Prov. 20:27. He had perfect knowledge of the law, and of his duty accordingly; he was made after God's image, and consequently could not lack knowledge, which is a part thereof, Col. 3:10. Adam had the law written upon his mind, the knowledge thereof being concreated with him—as the remains of it upon the heathen do testify, Rom. 2:14, 15. 2.) His will was in all things agreeable to the will of God, *cf.* Rom. 12:2. There was no corruption in his will, no bent nor inclination to evil; for that is sin, properly and truly so called, Rom. 7:7. It was disposed, by its original make, to follow the Creator's will, as the shadow does the body, *cf.* Eph. 4:24. 3.) His affections were orderly, pure and holy, *cf.* Jas. 3:9. The apostle petitions the Lord straighten your hearts to the love of God, 2 Thess. 3:5. And we are told man was made thus straight, Eccles. 7:29. Man's affections, in this primitive state, were pure from all defilement, free from all disorder and distemper, *cf.* Phil. 2:7. Thus man, in his state of innocency, was endued with the power not only to will, but to will that which is good having been created in the image of God, Gen. 5:1, 2.

Question 2.—*Wherein consists the freedom and power to will?*

Answer.—The freedom of the will consists in a natural liberty from any external compulsion, whereby it is forced or constrained to act, *cf.* John 8:33. It also consists in a liberty from any psychological or internal constraint, whereby it could not enact the desires formed in accordance with the faculty of rational judgment, *cf.* 1 Cor. 7:37. The will consists,

¹ Eccles. 7:29; Gen. 1:26.

² Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:6.

then, in an unconstrained ability to choose, as to both the object (this rather than that) and its subject (the agent does so voluntarily), Josh. 24:15.

This presupposes that the will, like the mind, is an attribute of the nature of man, which takes its peculiar character from the agent, or individual, giving expression to that will, Ezek. 18:4. Thus, the freedom and power of the will is that of the nature of man in a man, it is the freedom and power of agency, *cf.* Ruth 1:15, 16. The freedom and power of the will corresponds to the freedom and power of the nature and accurately reflects this nature through the personal agency of a man, 2 Sam. 15:21. In other words, when a person enacts his nature, he makes personal the freedom and power of the nature he possesses, *cf.* Rom. 5:12.

Question 3.—*Was this freedom and power to will mutable, so that man might fall from it?*

Answer.—Yes. Adam in his estate of innocence was a free agent, created with holy affections and moral tendencies, Ps. 25:8, Gen. 1:27; yet with a character as yet unconfirmed, capable of obedience, yet liable to be seduced by external temptation, and by the inordinate excitement of the propensions of his animal nature, such as in their proper degree and due subordination are innocent, *cf.* 1 Cor. 9:25, 27. His will was not absolutely indifferent to good and evil: God set it towards good only, Eccles. 7:29. Yet, it was not fixed or confirmed in its inclinations, so that it could not alter, *cf.* Ps. 103:14; 1 Chron. 29:18. It was moveable to evil: and that only by the man himself, Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:6. If Adam had been unchangeably righteous, it would have to be either by nature or by free gift, Rom. 11:35. But, it could not be by nature, for immutability is proper to God alone, and incommunicable to any creature, Jas. 1:17. If it was to be by free gift, then it was that confirmation in the state of original righteousness would have been the reward of grace, given upon continuance in righteousness through the trial state—the Covenant of Works, as pledged by the tree in the garden, Gen. 2:9. Of this primitive state of a holy yet fallible nature we have no experience, and consequently very imperfect comprehension, *cf.* John 3:11.