

## ***Preface and Introduction.***

The treatise which is herewith offered to the public will be found, in the last analysis, to be a searching study of the will of God as related to the will of man.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Scriptures teach us that the will of God is directed towards man along two distinct lines. While the divine will itself is always one and never self-contradictory, it operates from distinct purposes and for distinct ends. But no matter how it operates, the element of man's sin is always a factor in its operations. The will of God is related to the possibility and actuality of man's sinning and exerts itself in two peculiar ways, against man's sin and all its effects, by denouncing, opposing, fighting, and destroying them.

In the first place, God has willed, is now willing, and will never cease willing, that man shall not sin. Sin is the absolute negation of that moral rule and order which God has set up for the universe that He created and in which He placed man as His foremost creature. Sin is lawlessness and constitutes the doer thereof a rebel against the righteous rule of His sovereign Lord.

God created man in His own image. That means that the original human being whom the almighty Maker of heaven and earth and all their substance fashioned from a clod of earth and made a living soul by breathing into him the breath of life, — that this original, primeval man was holy and righteous as his Creator is. He was holy because His entire being, body, soul, and spirit, with all their faculties and functions throughout man's life on earth, were consecrated solely and entirely to the service of God in whatever station the divine Ruler might place him or to whatever task He might appoint. He was righteous because his essence and actions were in perfect conformity with the will of his Maker. His human intellect, will, and affections were at no point out of harmony with the divine intellect, will and affections. God had put the attributes of holiness and righteousness which exist in him as His very essence into man as created gifts and as reflections of that perfection which exists in Him essentially.

God has worked into the very nature of man the rule of right — of being right and doing right. This rule has been permanently fixed in man. St. Paul says it is "written" in man's heart. Even sin does not wholly eradicate it; for the pagans, who are without a divine code of law, still do "by nature" the things contained in the code of Law which God published at a later time. Accordingly, what God is by a law of His own and in autonomous fashion, that man is to be by submitting to his divine Ruler and Potentate and in a heteronomous fashion. In God, holiness and righteousness are the characteristics of the one Sublime, Sovereign Being, to whom no one can issue a command or lay down a law. In man, holiness and righteousness are concreated characteristics of an intelligent creature of God that was made dependent upon, and subaltern to, God, of a being that was never meant to be a law unto himself or the sole arbiter of his volitions, judgments, and

desires, or answerable to no one for what he might choose to do.

Of this fact, that a divine norm of holiness and righteousness is implanted in him, man is made aware by a faculty which his Maker created for him when he made man in His likeness. This faculty is called the conscience in man. It is the natural, instinctive ability of man to apply the divine rule of right to himself, to his moral state, at any given moment of his existence and to any action of his or to any failure to act when action is demanded of him. While the divine norm of right implanted may be viewed as a judge who measures actions by the law and the testimony of witnesses and renders a decision, declaring a person guilty or not guilty.

Furthermore, man is made conscious by the forces of nature that he is living in a moral universe. This great, wide world and its history through nearly sixty centuries is a witness of God's sovereign rule over man and serves only for the glory of God. Its powers are spent for the benign purposes of the great Creator; its forces move in a heavenly rhythm to silent laws which He made for them. Man discovers that this world was not made to sin in; that even the laws of nature resist the effort to sin, and the brute and inanimate creatures rebel, as it were, against being pressed into service to sin. Man finds out that it is really more proper, easier, and more advantageous not to sin in a world like ours and that under existing conditions a person invariably makes life here hard for himself and others by sinning. Fully to suit sinners, the world would have to be made over again.

The divine norm of right concreated in the first human being and transferred in the course of natural propagation from him to all his descendants was afterwards published in writing in the form of "Ten Words," or commandments, and delivered by Moses to the chosen people of Israel, whom God has made the standard-bearers of the norm of righteousness in a morally decaying world, and the keepers of His oracles which from time to time He communicated to mankind through inspired writers. These Ten Words, or the Decalog, which were published more than two thousand years after the creation of Adam, formed the subject of many a discourse delivered to the followers of the true God in Old Testament times by their prophets, teachers, priests, lawyers, and scribes and in New Testament times by Jesus Christ and His apostles. The inspired records of all those deliverances is called "the Law" in Holy Scripture and in the theological literature of the Church.

The unwritten law in men's hearts and the conscience have revealed their existence in the efforts of natural man to do right, to lead an upright life, to serve his fellow-men and his country, to practice the virtue of religiousness and the domestic and civil virtues. The laws of nations, the ethical codes of society, are emanations and manifestations of the ineradicable notion of right and wrong implanted in man's heart, or of the natural Moral Law. The fearful operations of

this Law are also exhibited in every device which the retributive justice of legislators and courts has set up for the punishment of wrong-doing and the protection of the good. Furthermore, the terrors of the Law are produced in every human heart under the smitings of the conscience, which rivets his guilt upon the wrong-doer. The nemesis exhibited in the old Greek drama, in Shakespeare, and in every great drama since is nothing else than the cry of despair wrung from guilty souls by the accusing and damning conscience.

The Moral Law, in both its unwritten and written form, is made ever-enduring. No single or concerted effort of lawless spirits and men can put it out of commission. There will never be a time while this universe lasts when men will not feel the power of the Moral Law in their private and public lives; nor will the Moral Law ever lack advocates, defenders, and champions amidst the growing corruptions of the decadent world hastening to its final collapse. To the end of all things, up to the bar of the last assizes, and beyond the crack of doom the holy and righteous will of God will be asserted throughout eternity by the rightly reprobated in their endless, legally inflicted misery and by the Righteous One in heaven, who has made Himself the end of the Law to all who believe in Him.

“The end of the Law,” — is Paul really justified to apply a phrase like that to an interminable matter like the divine rule of right and wrong? Yes; for God, who maintains His moral rule over men forever through the expression of His holy and righteous will in the Law, has willed, in the second place, that the breakers of His Law shall be given another chance to become righteous in His sight. The Hater of sin and sinners (Rom. 5, 10; Eph. 2, 3) is at the same time the Lover of sinners, and He has declared His good and gracious intentions to the breakers of His Law by the same serious, energetic, and complete will which has been expressed in His holy and righteous Law.

This second manifestation of the will of God for the secure of sinners from the fatal effects of their sinning, viewed from our position in time and space, has occurred after, and in consequence of, sin's coming into the world. To us this second manifestation of the divine will looks like an after thought, somewhat like this: After beholding the wreckage which the sinner has made of the original plan of the Creator concerning him, the Creator, instead of inflicting inexorably the condign punishment with which He had threatened the sinner, arrested Himself, as it were, in His avenging act and proposed to the sinner a way of escape from the doom of temporal corruption and eternal destruction which the sinner had merited. But this view would not be altogether correct.

To God nothing is an accident. He knows events before they occur, and He determines beforehand the limits of each happening. While in no causal relation to sin, God had foreseen in eternity its entrance into the world and in eternity had prepared those safeguards against the ravages of sin which He afterwards proclaimed in the form of compassionate, merciful comforting promises which He made to men in their ruined condition under sin. How these two forms of the

divine will can coexist in God passes our comprehension, but that they always do exist in God at the same time, God has declared throughout His written revelation. In fact, the entire Bible which He breathed into the holy writers, from Moses to John, is nothing else than a continuous account and exposition of both His holy and righteous and His good and gracious will. While the former has been called the Law, the latter has been given the endearing name of the Gospel, that is, the goodly, or godly, spell, or tale — so good that it could only come from God. The entire Scriptures, which are chronologically divided into the Old and the New Testaments, are topically, or logically, divided into the Law and Gospel, both of these running through both Testaments.

In expounding to sinners His good and gracious will, God has stated in detail what all He purposes to do in order to help the sinner out of His sinful state. He has declared that in this divine endeavor to reclaim the sinner the entire holy Trinity is to be at work. As the manifestation of the holy and righteous will is a manifestation by the entire Deity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so the manifestation of the good and gracious will embraces an account, not only of the loving and gracious counsel of God in eternity, but also of the redeeming work performed by the Son of God and the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost here in time. The contents of the Gospel have been enumerated by Christians in the three articles of the Apostles' Creed, as the contents of the Law have been condensed in the Ten Commandments.

The Gospel, then, represents a profoundly thoughtful, elaborate, and orderly scheme of God to bring renegade man out of his rebel condition under sin into a state of loyalty to God under the Gospel. The sinner's rescue from his wretched condition by God's Gospel plan consists in this, that the sinner is told not only that God loves him in spite of his sin, but that He so loves the sinner, who is by nature a child of wrath, as to sacrifice His own Son for him and to send the Holy Spirit into his heart to produce in him repentance over his sins and faith in the divine forgiveness of his sins. The love of God for sinners of which the Gospel speaks is not like the easy-going attitude which an indolent and indulgent parent assumes to his libertine son, when he tells him not to bother his mind about his wrong-doing and its consequences, to forget it, and to consider himself still loved by his doting sire. No; the redemptive love of God works in conjunction with the righteousness and holiness of God. These divine attributes which God expounded to man in the Law are not put out of commission by the love of God, but without destroying the sinner, as He has threatened to do, God by His redeeming love finds a way to meet the demands which God's righteousness and holiness make upon man and to execute the lawful punishment which the sinner has incurred by breaking God's Law. God sent His Son, coequal and coessential with Himself, on earth in the form of a human being. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was made man and placed under the Law that had been issued to man for the purpose of fulfilling it in man's place. Through the sinless life of Christ on earth under every condition and in every relationship which the Law of God determines for man, a treasure of righteousness has been accumulated that

balances even with all the demands of the divine Law. This treasure Christ did not collect for Himself; for He was in no need of it, being both the holy and righteous God and a holy and righteous man, who never did the least wrong in thought, word, or deed. This treasure was designed by God to be given away to every sinner as his own and to be regarded by God as the sinner's righteousness. In other words, God in His love decreed that the sinner, who had lost the original righteousness in which he had been created and who had spent his life in unrighteousness, should be made righteous by proxy, viz., by the foreign righteousness of the Son of God, who had spent His earthly life under the Law as the sinner's Substitute, in the sinner's place.

Furthermore, the sinless, impeccable Christ, at the end of His sojourn among men, suffered death, which no one has to undergo except sinners; for death is the wages of sin. There is only one explanation of the death of the incarnate Son of God — it is substitutive, or vicarious, just like His life under the Law. Jesus died the death which sinners had deserved to die, and by His redeeming love, God purposes to regard the death of His Son as the death which He would have to inflict upon every sinner for breaking His Law.

The Gospel, then, embraces the entire work of Christ on earth, as the evangelical Teacher of men, as their evangelical High Priest, who makes atonement for their iniquities, and as their evangelical Regent, who sets up a new rule in their rebellious hearts by the power of His love.

By his first sinful act man had not only changed his relation to God from that of a loyal subject and loving friend to that of a mutinous rebel and hating enemy, but he had also changed his spiritual condition. The first sin was evidence that the human intellect, will, and affections no longer functioned as they had in the state of innocence; they had become blind, crooked, perverse, disorderly. Out of this changed condition other sinful acts kept springing up, and this condition was passed on from father to child by natural propagation. The blight which had fallen on the bright intellect, the strong will, and the correct desires of Adam and Even in the fatal hour of their first disobedience was inherited by their descendants.

Fallen man no longer understood fully the will of God, no longer purposed to live according to that will, no longer desired to please God. Despite the thundering accusations of the divine Law and his conscience against him he continued to live for his pleasures and defied God continually. But he loved to cheat himself by believing that he was complying with the Law of God, which he had grossly changed by his wanton misrepresentations. He managed to consider himself passing fair and even better in God's sight, and he suppressed the misgivings and scruples that would arise in him by reckless indifference or licentiousness or by increased hypocrisy. Of the divine Law, then, he still retained a partial knowledge, but had no inclination sincerely to live up even to his partial knowledge, and of the divine Gospel of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake

he could have no knowledge, for by nature no man knew of this divine plan of salvation.

The good and gracious will of God, then, had to embrace this kindness, that, after His Son had completed His work of redemption in the sinner's place on earth, God sent His Holy Spirit to men by means of His Word. The Holy Spirit was to lead men to a true knowledge of their wretched and hopeless condition as lawbreakers and lead them to genuine spiritual sorrow over their sins, crush their natural conceit and stubbornness, and make them contrite. Next He was to make them understand the wonderful kindness of God in sending His Son to be their Savior; He was to make them accept by an act of faith the work of Christ as performed in their place, and then teach them to lead holy and righteous lives from gratitude to God and after the pattern of Christ's life, until God would advance them after a life of progressive sanctification to be coheirs of Christ in everlasting glory.

Since God confronts man at all times both by His holy and righteous and by His good and gracious will, He wants him to understand clearly at any moment of his life on earth what his relation to God is when measured by either will. This is a task easy enough to grasp intellectually, but quite difficult to carry out amid the vicissitudes of a life in a world steeped in wickedness and with a body every prone to sin. The task is to keep the Law and the Gospel of God strictly apart, using either for the better understanding of the other, but never mingling the teaching of the one into that of the other.

Dr. Walther's treatise on this subject has been reproduced in this volume. It is one of the most searching disquisitions of the vitals of a truly Christian life. The reader will find in this treatise amazing insights opened up for him into his own inner life and that of other Christians and fellow-men in general.

A word regarding the origin of this treatise and its English edition.

The treatise is a posthumous product of the great Lutheran theologian. Walther was dead ten years when this treatise was first published. The manuscript of the treatise had been built up out of stenographic transcripts made by a student who was listening to these lectures, which began Friday, September 12, 1884, and terminated Friday, November 6, 1885. Next to Walther's lectures on the Inspiration of the Bible this series of lectures is the most extensive and exhaustive series of lectures that Walther attempted in those gatherings on Friday evening during the scholastic year, when he loved to assemble the entire student-body of Concordia Seminary and visiting clergymen and laymen around his desk and talk to them in a more or less informal manner on some doctrinal subject. It appears that in the introductory remarks, at the opening of each lecture, Walther followed a manuscript of copious notes; but for the lecture itself he had, as a rule, a mere outline to guide him in his discourse.

There is no doubt in the translator's mind that Rev. Th. Claus, whose stenographic reports of the lectures were used for the German edition in 1897, has correctly reported Dr. Walther, even to a fault. Dr. L. Fuerbringer, who acted as censor of the German edition and had compared the manuscript of Rev. Claus with his own notes, was likewise correct in seeing to it that the lecture form of this treatise and therewith a good deal of the historical setting amid which the lectures were delivered was preserved. A former listener of Walther can easily reproduce to his mind the events that happened in the Baier-Lahrsaal on South Jefferson Avenue Friday after Friday. Persons who never heard Walther can get a fair idea from these lectures how he addressed his students and handled the topics.

A speaker, especially an ex-tempore speaker, is not under the same restraints before his audience as an author before the reading public. Moreover, a greater freedom, even a certain abandon, is quite acceptable when an old, beloved professor is talking to an audience made up almost entirely of his students. While Walther always strove to be very precise, very correct, and very decorous in his personal behavior and speech, these lectures are evidence that he was human and could enjoy the nonchalance of familiar intercourse.

A speaker can accomplish something by a gesture, a pose, a modulation of the voice, a pause, a change of the tempo of his address, which an author cannot achieve at all in his lifeless print or but inadequately by illustrations. The translator heard this series of lectures, except those between New Year and Easter 1885. In reading the German edition, which has been built up from the transcript of a classmate, the translator has in a number of places felt that right here a picture of the speaker would have been of considerable help.

It is a great question with the translator whether Dr. Walther, if he had lived, would have permitted the publication of the German treatise just in that form. At any rate, the translator, while striving heroically to preserve in his English reproduction every detail of the German original has found it impossible to follow the German print, for instance, in its treatment of citations which Walther introduced in his lectures and usually broke up by a multitude of side-remarks. The German print inflicts an unnecessary hardship on the reader by the form in which these citations with the intercalations have been printed, purely for the sake of historical accuracy. In the English reproduction the form of the German edition has not always been followed, but the citation has been given entire, and the intercalations have been given after the citation. In one instance where it seems the bell rang for the close of the lecture, a citation has been cut in two, the second half being given after the introduction of the next lecture. In the English edition this citation has been given entire in the lecture in which it was introduced. A number of inaccuracies in the German original have been removed in this English edition which, while striving to retain all of the charm and flavor of the German of Dr. Walther, is not a slavish and labored verbatim translation, but a reproduction in the English idiom. Every one who has ever attempted work of

this kind knows that very often compound German clauses have to be recast, and the German adverbial connectives at times require a circumlocution in English.

May this treatise work for the upbuilding of genuine Christian lives in its English readers as it did for its German readers and to the listeners of Dr. Walther's matchless discourses!

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