

WILLING
TO BELIEVE

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE
of the HUMAN WILL IN
SALVATION

R. C. SPROUL



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Portrait of Martin Luther painted by Lucas Cranach the Elder in 1528. Engraving of James Arminius by Thomas from a scarce Dutch print. Engraving of Jonathan Edwards from a portrait probably painted in 1751 by Joseph Badger. Photograph of Charles Grandison Finney taken by A. C. Platt of Oberlin.

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To
Dr. James Montgomery Boice
Scholar, Pastor, Christian Leader

For his courageous ministry in the service of Christ
and his tireless efforts in the advancement
of the doctrines of grace

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Preface

In the spring of 1996, a conference was held in Cambridge, Massachusetts, near the campus of Harvard University. The conference was hosted by the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals for the purpose of calling the evangelical church to reaffirm its historic confessions. Special attention was given to the reaffirmation of the sola's, *sola fide, soli Christo, soli Deo gloria, and sola gratia*.

This present volume focuses on the issue of sola gratia, the underlying foundation of the issues that provoked the Reformation. It is an overview of the historical developments that grew out of the original controversy between Pelagius and Augustine. The stress is on the graciousness of grace and the monergistic work of God in effecting the believer's liberation from the moral bondage of sin. It explores the relationship between original sin and human free will.

Special thanks are in order to Maureen Buchman and Tricia Elmquist for their assistance in preparing the manuscript; to Ron Kilpatrick, librarian of Knox Theological Seminary, for his bibliographical assistance; and to Allan Fisher, my editor at Baker Book House.

R. C. Sproul, Orlando
Advent 1996

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Introduction

EVANGELICALISM AND AN ANCIENT HERESY

Here was the crucial issue: whether God is the author, not merely of justification, but also of faith.

J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston

Perhaps the most ignominious event in the history of the Jewish nation prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was the Babylonian captivity. In 586 BC the Southern Kingdom was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, and the Jewish elite were carried off to Babylon. There the people of God were faced with the onerous task of singing the Lord's song in a strange and foreign land. They were forced to hang their harps in the trees by the river Euphrates.

The Babylonian captivity was a time of testing, a crucible that produced spiritual giants such as Daniel and Ezekiel, and heroic champions of faith such as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. The flames of the crucible were made hot by the systematic pressure imposed on the Jewish people to adopt the ways of

the pagan nation that held them hostage. Many of the interns undoubtedly capitulated and scrambled to assimilate their new environment. There was a price to be paid for nonconformity; a severe cost for resistance to government and cultural mandates to acquiesce to the customs of paganism. It was a historical setting conducive to the practice of what Friedrich Nietzsche would later call a “herd morality.”

Adjusting to the customs and worldview of one’s environment is one of the strongest pressures people experience. To be “out of it” culturally is often considered the nadir of social achievement. People tend to seek acceptance and popularity in the forum of public opinion. The applause of men is the siren call, the Lorelei of paganism. Few are they who display the moral courage required for fidelity to God when it is unpopular or even dangerous to march to his drumbeat.

We remember Joseph, who was treacherously sold into foreign captivity and spent his younger years in a prison cell, but who nevertheless remained faithful to the God of his fathers, to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In Egypt Joseph was a congregation of one. Without the support of church or national custom, he resolved to be faithful to a God no one around him believed in except those converted by his testimony.

Our Babylonian Captivity

We do not live in Babylon. We enjoy a large measure of religious freedom and a cultural heritage that to a greater or lesser degree was built on the foundation of Christian faith. Yet the culture becomes increasingly hostile to biblical Christianity, and our faith is deemed more and more irrelevant to modern society. Ours has been described as the “post-Christian era,” in which churches are likened to museums and biblical faith is regarded as an anachronism.

The cultural “Babylon” of our day is often described by evangelical Christians as the worldview espoused by so-called secular humanism. The rubric has been used as a magic word or phrase to capture all that is wrong with our culture. To be sure, secular humanism has a real face, but this worldview is but one of many systems competing with Christianity for the minds and souls of people.

The secular of secular humanism refers specifically to a worldview by which people understand the meaning and significance of human life. The term secular derives from the Latin *saeculum*, one of the Latin words for “world.” In ancient Latin the two terms most frequently used to describe this world are *saeculum* and *mundus*. We derive the English word mundane from the latter. In the ancient world *mundus* usually referred to the world’s spatial dimension, pointing specifically to the geographical “here” of our dwelling place. The term *saeculum* generally referred to the temporal mode of our existence, the “now” of our present life. Together the terms related to the “here and now” of this world.

On the surface it is not wrong or irreligious to speak of the here and now of human existence. Our lives are indeed lived out within the geographical confines of this planet, and we all measure our days by units of time that are at least subeternal. The problem is not with the word secular. The problem emerges when the three-letter suffix *ism* is attached to the otherwise docile word secular. The suffix indicates not so much a time frame as a philosophical worldview, a system by which life is understood and explained.

When the term secular is changed to secularism, the result is a worldview that declares that the now is all there is to human experience. It assumes that human experience is cut off from the eternal and the transcendent. We are told to grab all the gusto we can because “we only go around once.” If God does exist, then in this view we have no access to him. We are marooned on alien soil

where appeals to moral and philosophical absolutes are judged out of bounds. Ours is a time of existential crisis where meaning and significance are to be found in the realm of personal preference. We have truths, but no truth; purposes, but no purpose; customs, but no norms.

In the phrase secular humanism the word secular serves as an adjectival qualifier. It defines a particular strand of humanism. Humanism in various forms has been around for centuries. Some point to the pre-Socratic philosopher Protagoras as the original founder of this philosophy. His motto *homo mensura* defines the essence of humanism. It means that man is the measure of all things, that mankind represents the apex of living beings. There is nothing higher, no supreme being who reigns and rules over the affairs of human beings. In this case there is no ultimate distinction between a supreme being and a human being because the human being is the supreme being.

Though Protagoras is normally credited with founding ancient humanism, we can find its roots much earlier. This worldview was first presented as a philosophical option in the Garden of Eden. The irony is that it was introduced not by a man but by a snake. His motto was not *homo mensura* but *sicut erat dei*. This Latin phrase translates the seductive promise of Satan to our primordial parents: “You shall be as gods” (Gen. 3:5).

The conflict between Christianity and secular humanism is a conflict about ultimates. This conflict allows no room for compromise. If God is ultimate, then manifestly man is not. Conversely if man is ultimate, then God cannot be. There can be only one ultimate. Compromise may be achieved in the realm of culture by tolerating competing worldviews. A secular nation may choose to “tolerate” Christianity to some degree as long as it is viewed merely as an expression of one form of human religion. But it cannot tolerate Christianity’s truth claims. Christianity is always in a posture of antithesis with respect to secular humanism.

This antithesis makes it difficult for the modern Christian to maintain the integrity of faith in an alien culture. He must face the difficult choice of playing his harp or hanging it on the nearest tree. The Christian must be willing to be a pilgrim, a sojourner in a foreign land, if he expects to be faithful to Christ.

Perhaps the greatest threat to Israel was not the military might of foreign and hostile nations, but the dual threats of the false prophet within her gates and the constant temptation of syncretism. The two obviously went together. The favorite ploy of the false prophet was to obscure the antithesis between the ways of Yahweh and the practices of paganism. From the earliest days of conquest, Israel's history was one of syncretism, by which pagan thought and custom were assimilated by the covenant community. It was compromise with idolatry that destroyed Israel. Babylon was but the rod of punishment God wielded in chastising his people. Judgment fell on them (as canonical prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah had forecast) precisely because the Jewish people mixed the impurities of paganism with the faith delivered to them by God.

The people of God have always had to live in antithesis. Every generation has been forced to face the seductive powers of syncretism. Church history is replete with examples of pagan ideas intruding into the church's mainstream. As strong a defender of biblical Christianity as Aurelius Augustine was, one may still find in his work traces of neo-Platonic thought and Manichaeism. This is ironic because the great theologian repudiated both pagan systems and devoted much time to combating their theories. Greek concepts of immortality have crept into classical theology. Modern theology has been influenced by post-Kantian categories of thought, and some contemporary theologians have consciously attempted to synthesize Christianity and Marxism or Christianity and existentialism.

Robert Godfrey, president of Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California, recently suggested that I write a

book about “the myth of influence.” I was startled by the suggestion because I did not know what he meant. He explained that this phrase refers to the modern evangelical penchant to “build bridges” to secular thought or to groups within the larger church that espouse defective theologies.

The mythical element is the naive assumption that one can build bridges that move in one direction only. Bridges are usually built to allow traffic to move in two directions. What often happens when we relate to others is that we become the influencees rather than the influencers. In an effort to win people to Christ and be “winsome,” we may easily slip into the trap of emptying the gospel of its content, accommodating our hearers, and removing the offense inherent in the gospel. To be sure, our own insensitive behavior can add an offense to the gospel that is not properly part of it. We should labor hard to avoid such behavior. But to strip the gospel of those elements that unbelievers find repugnant is not an option.

Martin Luther once remarked that wherever the gospel is preached in its purity, it engenders conflict and controversy. We live in an age that abhors controversy, and we are prone to avoid conflict. How dissimilar this atmosphere is from that which marked the labor of Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles. The prophets were immersed in conflict and controversy precisely because they would not accommodate the Word of God to the demands of a nation caught up in syncretism. The apostles were engaged in conflict continuously. As much as Paul sought to live peaceably with all men, he found rare moments of peace and little respite from controversy.

That we enjoy relative safety from violent attacks against us may indicate a maturing of modern civilization with respect to religious toleration. Or it may indicate that we have so compromised the gospel that we no longer provoke the conflict that true faith engenders.

Our View of Human Beings

Polls taken by George Barna and George H. Gallup Jr. reveal an alarming intrusion of pagan ideas into the beliefs of modern Christians. A majority of professing evangelicals agree with the statement that human beings are basically good, a clear repudiation of the biblical view of human fallenness. The irony here is that while we decry the baleful influence of secular humanism on the culture, we are busy adopting secular humanism's view of man. It is not so much that the secular culture has negotiated away the doctrine of original sin, as that the evangelical church has done so.

Nowhere do we find more clear evidence of the impact of secularism on Christian thinking than in the sphere of anthropology. Christian anthropology rests not merely on the biblical concept of creation, but on the biblical concept of the fall. Virtually every Christian denomination historically has some doctrine of original sin in its creeds and confessions. These confessional statements do not all agree on the scope or extent of original sin, but they all repudiate everything that would be compatible with humanism. Yet polls show that rank and file evangelicals espouse a view of man more in harmony with humanism than with the Bible and the historic creeds of Christendom.

After the Reformation began in the sixteenth century, one of the earliest books Martin Luther wrote was his highly controversial *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. In this volume Luther was sharply critical of the development of sacerdotalism in the Roman Catholic church. He believed that a defective view of the sacraments was leading people away from biblical faith into a foreign gospel.

What would Luther think of the modern heirs of the Reformation? My guess is that he would write on the modern church's captivity to Pelagianism. I think he would see an unholy alliance

between Christianity and humanism that reflects more of a Pelagian view of man than the biblical view. This was the germ of his dispute with the Christian humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam.

Though Luther called the doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) the “article upon which the church stands or falls,” he was convinced that a darker problem was lurking beneath the surface of the debate over justification. He considered his book *The Bondage of the Will* (*De servo arbitrio*) to be his most important. His debate with Erasmus on the will of fallen people was inseparably related to his understanding of the biblical doctrine of election. Luther called the doctrine of election the *cor ecclesiae*, the “heart of the church.”

In Luther’s mind the degree of human fallenness is not a trivial matter but strikes at the heart and soul of the Christian life. Luther saw in the work of Erasmus the specter of Pelagius. Despite the historic condemnations of the teaching of Pelagius, it had a stranglehold on the church of Luther’s day.

In their “Historical and Theological Introduction” to one edition of Luther’s *The Bondage of the Will*, J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston conclude with a question about the contemporary relevance of the debate:

What is the modern reader to make of *The Bondage of the Will*? That it is a brilliant and exhilarating performance, a masterpiece of the controversialist’s difficult art, he will no doubt readily admit; but now comes the question, is Luther’s case any part of God’s truth? and, if so, has it a message for Christians to-day? No doubt the reader will find the way by which Luther leads him to be a strange new road, an approach which in all probability he has never considered, a line of thought which he would normally label “Calvinistic” and hastily pass by. This is what Lutheran orthodoxy itself has done; and the present-day Evangelical Christian (who has semi-Pelagianism in his blood) will be inclined to do the same. But both history and Scripture, if allowed to speak, counsel otherwise.¹

Packer and Johnston describe Luther's treatment of the will as a "strange new road" for the modern reader, an approach never considered by present-day evangelicals who have semi-Pelagianism in their blood. This evaluation echoes Roger Nicole's observation that "we are by nature Pelagian in our thinking." Nor does regeneration automatically cure this natural tendency. Even after the Holy Spirit has liberated us from moral bondage, we tend to discount the severity of that bondage.

Packer and Johnston go on to say: "Historically, it is a simple matter of fact that Martin Luther and John Calvin, and, for that matter, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, and all the leading Protestant theologians of the first epoch of the Reformation, stood on precisely the same ground here. On other points, they had their differences; but in asserting the helplessness of man in sin, and the sovereignty of God in grace, they were entirely at one. To all of them, these doctrines were the very life-blood of the Christian faith."²

The metaphor of "life-blood" is consistent with Luther's metaphor of the "heart" in the *cor ecclesiae*. The Reformers' view of the sinner's moral inability to incline himself toward God's grace was not a secondary or trivial matter to them. In this light they would regard the contemporary evangelical community as suffering from theological hemophilia, in danger of bleeding to death.

We return to Packer and Johnston's introductory essay:

The doctrine of justification by faith was important to them because it safeguarded the principle of sovereign grace; but it actually expressed for them only one aspect of this principle, and that not its deepest aspect. The sovereignty of grace found expression in their thinking at a profounder level still, in the doctrine of monergistic regeneration—the doctrine, that is, that the faith which receives Christ for justification is itself the free gift of a sovereign God, bestowed by spiritual regeneration in the act of

effectual calling. To the Reformers, the crucial question was not simply, whether God justifies believers without works of law. It was the broader question, whether sinners are wholly helpless in their sin, and whether God is to be thought of as saving them by free, unconditional, invincible grace, not only justifying them for Christ's sake when they come to faith, but also raising them from the death of sin by His quickening Spirit in order to bring them to faith. Here was the crucial issue: whether God is the author, not merely of justification, but also of faith; whether, in the last analysis, Christianity is a religion of utter reliance on God for salvation and all things necessary to it, or of self-reliance and self-effort.³

Regeneration and Faith

The classic issue between Augustinian theology and all forms of semi-Pelagianism focuses on one aspect of the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*): What is the relationship between regeneration and faith? Is regeneration a monergistic or synergistic work? Must a person first exercise faith in order to be born again? Or must rebirth occur before a person is able to exercise faith? Another way to state the question is this: Is the grace of regeneration operative or cooperative?

Monergistic regeneration means that regeneration is accomplished by a single actor, God. It means literally a "one-working." Synergism, on the other hand, refers to a work that involves the action of two or more parties. It is a co-working. All forms of semi-Pelagianism assert some sort of synergism in the work of regeneration. Usually God's assisting grace is seen as a necessary ingredient, but it is dependent on human cooperation for its efficacy.

The Reformers taught not only that regeneration does precede faith but also that it must precede faith. Because of the moral

bondage of the unregenerate sinner, he cannot have faith until he is changed internally by the operative, monergistic work of the Holy Spirit. Faith is regeneration's fruit, not its cause.

According to semi-Pelagianism regeneration is wrought by God, but only in those who have first responded in faith to him. Faith is seen not as the fruit of regeneration, but as an act of the will cooperating with God's offer of grace.

Evangelicals are so called because of their commitment to the biblical and historical doctrine of justification by faith alone. Because the Reformers saw *sola fide* as central and essential to the biblical gospel, the term evangelical was applied to them. Modern evangelicals in great numbers embrace the *sola fide* of the Reformation, but have jettisoned the *sola gratia* that undergirded it. Packer and Johnston assert:

“Justification by faith only” is a truth that needs interpretation. The principle of *sola fide* is not rightly understood till it is seen as anchored in the broader principle of *sola gratia*. What is the source and status of faith? Is it the God-given means whereby the God-given justification is received, or is it a condition of justification which is left to man to fulfill? Is it a part of God's gift of salvation, or is it man's own contribution to salvation? Is our salvation wholly of God, or does it ultimately depend on something that we do for ourselves? Those who say the latter (as the Arminians later did) thereby deny man's utter helplessness in sin, and affirm that a form of semi-Pelagianism is true after all. It is no wonder, then, that later Reformed theology condemned Arminianism as being in principle a return to Rome (because in effect it turned faith into a meritorious work) and a betrayal of the Reformation (because it denied the sovereignty of God in saving sinners, which was the deepest religious and theological principle of the Reformers' thought). Arminianism was, indeed, in Reformed eyes a renunciation of New Testament Christianity in favour of New Testament Judaism; for to

rely on oneself for faith is no different in principle from relying on oneself for works, and the one is as un-Christian and anti-Christian as the other. In the light of what Luther says to Erasmus, there is no doubt that he would have endorsed this judgment.⁴

I must confess that the first time I read this paragraph, I blinked. On the surface it seems to be a severe indictment of Arminianism. Indeed it could hardly be more severe than to speak of it as “un-Christian” or “anti-Christian.” Does this mean that Packer and Johnston believe Arminians are not Christians? Not necessarily. Every Christian has errors of some sort in his thinking. Our theological views are fallible. Any distortion in our thought, any deviation from pure, biblical categories may be loosely deemed “un-Christian” or “anti-Christian.” The fact that our thought contains un-Christian elements does not demand the inference that we are therefore not Christians at all.

I agree with Packer and Johnston that Arminianism contains un-Christian elements in it and that their view of the relationship between faith and regeneration is fundamentally un-Christian. Is this error so egregious that it is fatal to salvation? People often ask if I believe Arminians are Christians. I usually answer, “Yes, barely.” They are Christians by what we call a felicitous inconsistency.

What is this inconsistency? Arminians affirm the doctrine of justification by faith alone. They agree that we have no meritorious work that counts toward our justification, that our justification rests solely on the righteousness and merit of Christ, that *sola fide* means justification is by Christ alone, and that we must trust not in our own works, but in Christ’s work for our salvation. In all this they differ from Rome on crucial points.

Packer and Johnston note that later Reformed theology, however, condemned Arminianism as a betrayal of the Reformation

and in principle as a return to Rome. They point out that Arminianism “in effect turned faith into a meritorious work.”

We notice that this charge is qualified by the words “in effect.” Usually Arminians deny that their faith is a meritorious work. If they were to insist that faith is a meritorious work, they would be explicitly denying justification by faith alone. The Arminian acknowledges that faith is something a person does. It is a work, though not a meritorious one. Is it a good work? Certainly it is not a bad work. It is good for a person to trust in Christ and in Christ alone for his or her salvation. Since God commands us to trust in Christ, when we do so we are obeying this command. But all Christians agree that faith is something we do. God does not do the believing for us. We also agree that our justification is by faith insofar as faith is the instrumental cause of our justification. All the Arminian wants and intends to assert is that man has the ability to exercise the instrumental cause of faith without first being regenerated. This position clearly negates *sola gratia*, but not necessarily *sola fide*.

Then why say that Arminianism “in effect” makes faith a meritorious work? Because the good response people make to the gospel becomes the ultimate determining factor in salvation. I often ask my Arminian friends why they are Christians and other people are not. They say it is because they believe in Christ while others do not. Then I inquire why they believe and others do not. “Is it because you are more righteous than the person who abides in unbelief?” They are quick to say no. “Is it because you are more intelligent?” Again the reply is negative. They say that God is gracious enough to offer salvation to all who believe and that one cannot be saved without that grace. But this grace is cooperative grace. Man in his fallen state must reach out and grasp this grace by an act of the will, which is free to accept or reject this grace. Some exercise the will rightly (or righteously),

while others do not. When pressed on this point, the Arminian finds it difficult to escape the conclusion that ultimately his salvation rests on some righteous act of the will he has performed. He has “in effect” merited the merit of Christ, which differs only slightly from the view of Rome.

In concluding their introduction to Luther’s *The Bondage of the Will*, Packer and Johnston write:

These things need to be pondered by Protestants today. With what right may we call ourselves children of the Reformation? Much modern Protestantism would be neither owned nor even recognised by the pioneer Reformers. . . . In the light of [*The Bondage of the Will*], we are forced to ask whether Protestant Christendom has not tragically sold its birthright between Luther’s day and our own. Has not Protestantism to-day become more Erasmian than Lutheran? Do we not too often try to minimise and gloss over doctrinal differences for the sake of inter-party peace? . . . Have we not grown used to an Erasmian brand of teaching from our pulpits—a message that rests on the same shallow synergistic conceptions which Luther refuted, picturing God and man approaching each other almost on equal terms, each having his own contribution to make to man’s salvation and each depending on the dutiful co-operation of the other for the attainment of that end?⁵

Packer and Johnston call for a modern Copernican revolution in our thinking that would radically change our preaching, our evangelism, and the general life of the church. At issue is the grace and glory of God.

Free Will and Election

When the issue of free will is debated in the modern church, the debate usually focuses on the broader issues of election and

predestination. Though these are certainly related matters, they are not exactly the context of the issue between Pelagius and Augustine and later between Erasmus and Luther. The doctrine of election certainly served as the wider issue, but more specifically the issue was the relationship of free will to original sin and to the grace of God.

When free will is debated with reference to predestination, it usually is linked to the sovereignty of God. Can man truly be free if God is sovereign? Some have argued that free will and divine sovereignty are twin truths taught by Scripture that co-exist in the tension of an unresolvable dialectic. They are said to transcend all rational attempts to resolve them. They involve a contradiction or at least a severe paradox.

Though the relationship between divine sovereignty and human freedom may be mysterious, they are by no means contradictory. The antithesis to divine sovereignty is not human freedom, but human autonomy. Autonomy represents a degree of freedom that is unlimited by any higher authority or power.

If God is sovereign, then man cannot be autonomous. Conversely if man is autonomous, then God cannot be sovereign. The two are mutually exclusive concepts. Some argue that God's sovereignty is limited by human freedom. If this were the case, then man, not God, would be sovereign. God would always be limited by human decisions and would be lacking in the power or authority to exercise his will over against the creature's. When it is said that God's sovereignty is limited by human freedom, however, such a crass view as the one mentioned above is not usually what is intended. Most Christians admit that God has both the power and authority to overrule human decisions. What is intended is that God would never impose his will on the creature by using some sort of coercion. Some speak of a self-limiting of God in such matters. He chooses to limit himself, they say, at the level of human decisions.

Augustinian theology is often charged with reducing man to the level of a puppet whose strings are pulled by the sovereign God. Such a creature can hardly exercise moral responsibility. A puppet is merely a piece of wood whose movements are directed by the strings attached to it. It is not hylozoistic; it has no power or ability to move itself. A puppet cannot think, feel, or respond with affections.

The metaphor of the potter and the clay ceases to be a metaphor and becomes a realistic ontological description. If man is a puppet, he is not substantially different from a piece of clay in a potter's hands. The clay has no will at all. It makes no decisions. It has no conscience. It has no inclinations, morally or otherwise. It is inert and completely passive.

The reality of free will goes to the heart of Christian anthropology. No pun is intended here, but Scripture describes man as having a heart and as being a responsible moral agent. Without a functional will, his moral agency perishes. It is reduced to a sham, a mere chimera with no substantive reality.

On the other side of the equation is the character of God. He is sovereign, but he also has other attributes. His sovereignty does not eclipse his holiness and righteousness. It is a holy sovereignty and a righteous sovereignty. It is this righteousness that concerns those who discuss free will. If man has "no choice" and is merely a passive instrument of divine sovereignty, then it certainly seems that God would be unrighteous to hold creatures responsible for their actions and to punish them for doing what they are powerless not to do.

How we understand the will of man, then, touches heavily on our view of our humanity and God's character. The age-old debate between Pelagianism and Augustinianism is played out in the arena of these issues. Any view of the human will that destroys the biblical view of human responsibility is seriously defective. Any view of the human will that destroys the biblical

view of God's character is even worse. The debate will affect our understanding of God's righteousness, sovereignty, and grace. All of these are vital to Christian theology. If we ignore these issues or regard them as trivial, we greatly demean the full character of God as revealed in Scripture. What follows is a historical reconnaissance of the debate over free will as it has played itself out in the history of Christianity.