

A Display of Arminianism

John Owen

Chapter 5

Can the _____ of God be resisted? This is the question that Owen now addresses in chapter 5. Concerning the Arminian answer to the above question Owen writes, *“they affirm that His will may be resisted, He may fail of His intentions, be frustrated of His ends.”*

Before Owen critiques their understanding, he first lays out for us the classic understanding of the will of God. The will of God refers to God’s willing (what He has decided to do and what He desires to be done). Classically the will of God has been understood in two categories: the _____ will of God (the eternal will of God-or will of decree) & the _____ will of God (declarative will or prescriptive will-what God has made known to us about how we as His creatures are to relate to Him). The will of God is one, but it is helpful for us to understand it in terms of this two-fold way. The secret will that which God has decreed to be good and for His glory. The revealed will is the declaring of all that is morally good and brings God glory.

The secret will is “What God will do” & the revealed will is “What we should do”

Now the secret will of God is not entirely secret. This secret will of God can be known in part through both His _____ and His works of _____. It is termed secret because in large part it is secret (we do not see it) and because it is too far above us to comprehend (we do not understand it).

“The secret will of God is His eternal, unchangeable purpose concerning all things which He hath made, to be brought by certain means to their appointed ends...This some call the absolute, efficacious will of God, the will of His good pleasure, always fulfilled; and indeed this is the only proper, eternal, constant, immutable will of God, whose order can neither be broken nor its law transgressed, so long as with Him there is neither change nor shadow of turning.”

“The revealed will of God containeth not His purpose and decree, but our duty,-not what He will do according to His good pleasure, but what we should do if we will please Him; and this, consisting of His word, His precepts and promises, belongeth to us and our children, that we may do the will of God.”

“God hath not imposed on us the observation of His eternal decree and intention; which, as it is utterly impossible for us to transgress or frustrate...”

Understanding this _____ we then can make these statements:

1. *“God may command many things by His word, which He never decreed that they should actually be performed; because in such things, His words are not a revelation of His*

eternal decree and purpose, but only a declaration of some things wherewith His is well-pleased, be it by us performed or no."

2. *"That will of God to which our obedience is required is the revealed will of God contained in His word..."*
3. The secret will of God cannot be resisted, thwarted, or overturned. Man can only resist the declarative will of God.

The display of the Arminian attack on the will of God

Without making this proper distinction, the Arminians err when they declare that God's will can be _____

"We charge the Arminians for affirming that it (the secret will of God) may be resisted,-that is, that God may fail in His purposes, come short of what He earnestly intendeth, or be frustrated of His aim and end..."

"For God converts sinners by His grace, but we can resist God when He would convert us by His grace."

This understanding makes God to be most _____

"When God would have all and every man in the world to come to heaven, to escape the torments of hell, and that with a serious purpose and intention that it shall be so, a vehement affection and fervent natural desire that it should be so, yet, being not in Himself alone able to save one, must be forced to lose His desire, lay down His affection, change His purpose, and see the greatest part of them to perish everlastingly, yea, notwithstanding that He had provided a sufficient means for them all to escape, with a purpose and intention that they should do so..."

Rebuttal

The Scriptures declare that God does all that He _____ to do

"Our God is in the heavens He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased."-Psalm 115:3

"He ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will."-Daniel 4:17

"All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, 'What doest thou?'"-Daniel 4:35

"My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure."-Isaiah 46:10