

## The Bondage of the Will

By [Martin Luther](#)

### THE NECESSITY OF KNOWING GOD AND HIS POWER.

#### Section VIII.

Sect. VIII. — ANOTHER part of the sum of Christianity is, to know, whether God foreknows any thing by contingency, or whether we do all things from necessity. This part also you make to be irreligious, curious, and vain, as all the wicked do: the devils, and the damned also, make it detestable and execrable. And you shew your wisdom in keeping yourself clear from such questions, wherever you can do it. But however, you are but a very poor rhetorician and theologian, if you pretend to speak of “Free-will” without these essential parts of it. I will therefore act as a whetstone, and though no rhetorician myself, will tell a famed rhetorician what he ought to do — If, then, Quintilian, purposing to write on Oratory, should say, “In my judgment, all that superfluous nonsense about invention, arrangement, elocution, memory, pronunciation, need not be mentioned; it is enough to know, that Oratory, is the art of speaking well” — would you not laugh at such a writer? But you act exactly like this: for pretending to write on “Free-will,” you first throw aside, and cast away, the grand substance and all the parts of the subject on which you undertake to write. Whereas, it is impossible that you should know what “Free-will” is, unless you know what the human will does, and what God does or foreknows.

Do not your rhetoricians teach, that he who undertakes to speak upon any subject, ought first to show, whether the thing exist; and then, what it is, what its parts are, what is contrary to it, connected with it, and like unto it, &c.? But you rob that miserable subject in itself, “Free will,” of all these things: and define no one question concerning it, except this first, viz., whether it exist: and even this with such arguments as we shall presently see: and so worthless a book on “Free-will” I never saw, excepting the elegance of the language. The Sophists, in reality, at least argue upon this point better than you, though those of them who have attempted the subject of “Free-will,” are no rhetoricians; for they define all the questions connected with it: whether it exists, what it does, and how it stands with reference to, &c.: although they do not effect what they attempt. In this book, therefore, I will push you, and the Sophists together, until you shall define to me the power of “Free-will,” and what it can do: and I hope I shall so push you, (Christ willing) as to make you heartily repent that you ever published your Diatribe.

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