

The Incipency of the Will versus Determinism *

by Harry Conn

The term "free will", or freedom, has been debated for several hundred years with the result that many intellectuals, theologians and psychologists deny this God given, scriptural endowment. John Calvin did more than his share to rid the religious world of the concept of free will by introducing the theological sophisms of unconditional election and irresistible grace.

Free will is one of the main attributes of man who has been created in God's image. "In His image" is a profound phrase, and certainly includes some of God's attributes, such as, free will, intellect, sensibilities (the abilities to experience or feel), conscience, abilities to perceive various relationships, such as family, social, civil, and spiritual relationships. It also includes the function of "spirit" which is the ability man has to communicate with God. Free will is the ability to direct another attribute. The will can choose whether to study electronics instead of geography or quantum mechanics at any given time, or a career or life's mate, or in which direction to walk.

When we say that man is free, (also see Moral Agent, ed.) that freedom does not consist in complete lack of restraint, but in the absence of restraint within mutual and agreed-upon Limits. The "freedom" we are describing is not anarchy, license, or autonomy.

Free will is perhaps the greatest mystery of man and must be guarded very closely because a wise man once wrote that freedom exists only in proportion to a wholesome restraint. Freedom without wholesome restraint leads to license, license leads to licentiousness, and these evaporate freedom and lead to bondage. Man's own appetites, passions, and excesses forge his own fetters of bondage. As Edmund Burke wrote, "It is increasingly evident that if we don't curb, control and regulate our appetites and desires from within, we are controlled increasingly more from without." That control from without will be by guilt, depression, sickness and penal sanctions. We need to remember that an accurate definition of savage is a person who does his own thing without regard for anyone else. The oil that lubricates the machinery of the free society that makes it possible for people to live and work together amicably and productively, is the voluntary observance of both formal and informal codes of conduct which serve the common good.

I realize that there is such a thing as determinism in a limited sense in politics, science, medicine, sports, music, psychology, education, etc. Webster's definition of determinism is that everything, especially one's choice of action, is determined, or caused, by an antecedent sequence of causes independent of one's will. The words in the definition which are wrong are "everything" and "cause". This is because if those two words are correct, then there is no freedom of the will nor is there responsibility or accountability, and all guilt must be false guilt or "guilt of scrupulosity". As usual, the word "cause" is misused because, strictly speaking, it is a word which should only be used in connection with physical action, not moral action. The determinists don't seem to differentiate

between a cause, a reason and an influence. An influence can be resisted, but a cause cannot. A flask of water cannot resist sufficient heat from a Bunsen burner to boil the water. The water has no intellect, or will, it cannot choose. Science has said for several centuries that what is caused cannot be free and what is free cannot be caused. A theologian could also properly say that the behavior of what is really free cannot be predicted with certainty every time, even by God, as the scriptures so often attest. There is a bogus coin in circulation in our high schools, universities and seminaries. On one side it says determinism and on the reverse side it says behaviorism or behavioral science. Behavioral "science" examines human activities in an attempt to discover recurrent patterns and to formulate rules for man's social behavior, it rejects the concept of mind and consciousness.

Determinism says that you did not choose a certain way of acting, but you were caused. Behaviorism claims to know how to study man's behavior to cause him to do what he ought to do by creating the kind of environment which will produce the desired results. Both relieve man of his responsibility and accountability, and seek to destroy man's power of choice, or rather, to convince him that he does not have now, and never had, freedom of choice. The behaviorists have never spent much time in the laboratory or they would learn that sin makes slums; slums are inanimate objects, made sinful and indolent behavior.

The behaviorist and humanist, in their sabotaging of Christianity, and in their ridiculing of its teaching and standards of living, have never learned that any sin is not natural to man, but is a violation of his created design. "Triumphs" over nature exact terrible consequences and our society in its moral descent testifies loudly and clearly to the fact.

The behaviorist, the United States Department of Education and teachers must learn that civilized behavior is a learned behavior and it has to be taught. The proper object of school and college is moral maturity not proficiency in sports.

The behaviorist with no moral absolutes influencing teachers to teach such nonsense that produces such an educational catastrophe as we have with almost no discipline are turning this country into a jungle but forgetting they have to live here also. The pro-choice teachers for abortion are teaching themselves out of jobs. We had 5 schools closed in our city from lack of students recently. Last year there were 700,000 high school "graduates" who could not read their diplomas.

Incipiency of the will

The word "incipiency" means the origination, commencement, beginning, or "to start". In philosophy there is a word for thinkers who originate new ideas or concepts. The word is "seminal". The "incipiency of the will" is man's ability to originate his own choices regardless of any inside or outside influence. This is a result of having been made in the image of God. It is a noumenal concept, that is, it is above and beyond the grasp of the five senses, or of science, but is what we would call an intangible, or purely rational concept.

The Bible teaches that the main choices of life are up to man, for God is not willing that any perish. The word "whosoever" is a great Bible word and is used 174 times in the New Testament and the word "whose" means the same thing and is used 104 times in the Old Testament. The hymn writer was certainly correct when he wrote "Whosoever surely meaneth me."

The concept of the incipency of the will was the secret of the great New England revivals that shook the New England Calvinists out of their theological slumber. The term "New School Theology" or "New School Presbyterianism" refers to the rediscovery of this biblical concept. As Dean Harvey has pointed out, from Jesus day to this, revivals have always involved pointing out doctrinal errors which have become accepted as true or "orthodox" which had put them into spiritual slumber. Incipency of the will is perhaps the most needed concept to be taught to a sleeping, comfortable, inept church in our day. As an example, a man can be born and raised in a fine family, well-taught and trained by good examples in a good environment, and yet he can decide to live for the gratification of the five senses and degenerate to living as low as an animal or even lower. The explanation is that the mind and will which our Lord intended to be such a blessing so we can ascend to great heights of faith, creativity and comprehension can also be used to choose to live lives of perversion.

Many good parents have wept themselves to sleep over the hedonistic, destructive lives of their children and have wondered where they failed in the parenting process. They have not necessarily failed. Their sons or daughters have simply chosen to selfish disregard their good heredity environment and training, and have used their intellect and will in the wrong way as their manner and purpose of life. They "prove" the incipency of the will, albeit in the wrong direction.

Sociology and Behaviorism (called Social Studies in high school) as now taught in our high schools and colleges teach that a person's heredity, environment and training will determine his earthly destiny and that the individual has no choice in it. Communism and Socialism teach that the state will determine each man's earthly destiny. Calvinism with its unconditional election teaches that God determines each man's eternal destiny.

Let's examine a portion of scripture in Mark 6 concerning Jesus' four brothers and two sisters. In my opinion, their heredity (Joseph and Mary) was the very best since Adam and Eve. Their environment (being raised in the home with Joseph, Mary and Jesus) could only be better in heaven. I'm certain Jesus had a real hand in teaching his brothers and sisters truth because He would have sinned if He had not because of the truth He had, with its accompanying responsibility. So they were trained by Joseph, Mary and Jesus, plus the savor of the conduct, concern, attitudes, disposition and worship the three undoubtedly portrayed. We know from the 4th chapter of Luke that the first time Jesus preached in His hometown synagogue the congregation tried to kill Him when He finished. They knew this carpenter. We can infer that he had never made a door out-of-square, always gave more work for His pay than was required, never used unseemly language. He was helpful, highly skilled, and dependable. He had read and reread the Torah. He never missed a Sabbath at the synagogue, never let foul weather affect His

attendance, and delighted in the Sabbath. He also watched over his earthly (but not genetic) rather and mother like a hen watches over her brood.

In many respects, synagogues were like our churches today. They included almost all who wanted to go to be with our heavenly Father when they die, but who often did not take the relationship with Him seriously enough to change their lives, conduct, and purposes. Jesus said that they loved the "approval of men more than the approval of God". So they didn't give God supreme place in their devotion. Jesus' brothers and sisters knew He suffered persecution for His devotion and obedience to Jehovah because all who will live godly shall and do suffer persecution then and now.

So the scriptures say they were offended by Jesus' presence and small ministry and wanted nothing to do with it - Mark 6:6 says Jesus "marveled at their unbelief". If it was predestined for them, there was nothing for Jesus to marvel about.

When His brothers and sisters (half brothers and half sisters because they did not have the same genetic father as Jesus) were offended, they were counting the cost of identifying with Jesus. They knew how He was treated and were simply choosing not to let their splendid heredity, environment and training determine their destiny. They were exercising the incipency of their own will but in the wrong direction.

Scholars say the book of James was written by one of Jesus' half brothers, who was converted after the resurrection. Galatians 1:19 verifies this.

B. F. Skinner's "advances in science" may be found in the writings of Robert Owen (1771-1858) whose major work was "A New Society, or Essay on Principle of the Formation of the Human Character". He expounded the theory that man's character is wholly determined by environment.

In Albert Hobbs' book "Man is Moral Choice," he tells how Pavlov, the Russian "social scientist," famous for conditioning dogs, tells in his papers that many dogs resisted his conditioning, that is, he could not get them to slobber, etc., when he rang the bell. He also said it should not be applied to human beings. Isn't it strange no behaviorist ever told you that? It's like the anthropologist who doesn't explain to you how Margaret Meade put out so much false data about the so-called "lack of moral code" among those "primitives" she studied.

Nor are you told that B. F. Skinner graduated from tiny Hamilton College, tried to make a living as a writer, and found that it was a very skimpy living to say the least. So he changed his mind. He made a choice to change careers and went to Harvard to get a masters in psychology. If that was not a choice, then I wrote this on Mars.

I've tried to write this because so many people have been deluded by the Determinists and Behaviorists. Many well-meaning Christians have swallowed so much liberal error it has rendered them spiritually sterile. Christians should learn that science has boundaries

beyond which it can not penetrate. Theology, the true "queen of the sciences" still sits on the throne but with a very few admirers.

So the verdict of this debate is that what is caused cannot be free will or accountable, responsible or guilty. That which is free cannot be caused, or it isn't free, nor can its behavior be predicted with certainty. That which is free is responsible, accountable, and can become guilty provided it is a sentient being. If you will seek the Lord with all of your heart, then make an enlightened choice of repentance from sin, and of faith toward the Lord Jesus, God will forgive your sins, quicken you and put His Holy Spirit within you. And that will rectify any deficiency in your heredity, environment and training that may be necessary.

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