

can call my own, if the will is not mine by which I assert myself for or against something. So, if I do wrong through my will, who is responsible except myself? Since a good God has made me, and I cannot do any good action except by my will, it is fairly clear that it was given for this purpose by the good God.

If the movement by which the will turns in different directions were not voluntary and under our control, a man would not deserve praise or blame, when he, as it were, turns the hinge of his will up or down.⁷ Nor would it be at all necessary to warn him to leave temporal and gain eternal good, or to try to live well and not ill. Yet whoever thinks that such advice should not be given to men, ought to be banished from among men.

GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE

- 2.4 This being so, I am troubled exceedingly by the question how God can have foreknowledge of all future events, and yet how there can be no necessity for us to sin. If anyone says an event can happen contrary to God's foreknowledge, he is attempting to destroy the foreknowledge of God, and this is most inane and blasphemous.

Hence, if God foreknew that the first man would sin—and this must be granted by anyone who agrees with me that God has foreknowledge of all future events—if, therefore, this is so, I do not say that God should not have created him, for He created him good, nor that his sin could in any

way be prejudicial to God, seeing that He created him good. No, in creating him God showed His goodness, and in punishing him He showed His justice, and in saving him He showed His mercy. So I do not say God should not have created him, but I say this: since God had foreknowledge that he would sin, it must have happened of necessity, because God foreknew it would happen. How, then, is the will free, when the necessity seems so inescapable?

- 5 A.—You have knocked vigorously. I hope God in His mercy will come to the door and open it as we stand knocking.⁸ I think, however, that the greater part of mankind is troubled by this question only because they do not inquire in the right spirit, and are quicker to excuse their sins than to confess them.

Some⁹ are glad to suppose that no divine providence presides over human affairs, and, abandoning soul and body to mere chance, they deliver themselves to be buffeted and torn by passions. They deny divine justice and cheat the justice of man; they think they can get rid of their accusers through the help of Fortune. Yet they are accustomed to mould or paint Fortune as blind, so that they may be superior to her whom they believe is their ruler, or may admit that these words and feelings of theirs are equally blind. We can agree without absurdity that all their actions fall out by chance, since each is indeed a fall. However, I think we argued sufficiently in our second discussion against this foolish and unbalanced error.¹⁰

Others, on the other hand, while not daring to deny that God's providence governs men's lives, prefer to commit the crime and the blunder of supposing it is weak or unjust or evil, rather than humbly to confess their sins.

All these people should let themselves be persuaded, when they think of that Being who is most good, just, and powerful, that the goodness, justice, and power of God are far greater than anything they can conceive. They should understand, when they reflect on themselves, that it would be their duty to thank God, even if He had willed them to be a lower kind of being than they are, and they should cry out from the very depths of their hearts: *I said, O Lord, be Thou merciful to me. Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.*¹¹ Thus they would be led to wisdom by the sure paths of God's mercy; they would not be puffed up by success, nor depressed by failure in their inquiries; knowledge would make them more capable of seeing,¹² and ignorance more restrained in the search.

I am sure that you are already persuaded of this; but notice how easily I answer so profound a problem, after you have made a few answers to my questions.

- 3.6 This is no doubt what puzzles and troubles you, the apparent contradiction between saying that God has foreknowledge of all future events, and that we sin freely and not of necessity. If God has foreknowledge that man will sin, then, you say, man must necessarily sin. But if he must do so,

his sin is not a result of choice, but is rather a fixed and inevitable necessity. You fear that the conclusion of this reasoning will be either blasphemous denial of God's foreknowledge of all future events, or, if this is impossible, admission that we sin of necessity and not freely. Is there any other point which troubles you?

E.—Nothing else at present.

A.—So in your opinion everything foreknown by God comes about of necessity, and not freely.

E.—I certainly think so.

A.—Pay attention, then, reflect and tell me, if you can, what will be your will tomorrow—to do wrong or right?

E.—I do not know.

A.—But do you think God does not know?

E.—Certainly not.

A.—Then, if He knows what you will will tomorrow, and foresees what all men will will in the future, whether they exist now or will exist, far more does He foresee what He will do to the just and to the unjust.

E.—Of course, if I say God foreknows my actions, I should say much more confidently that He foreknows His own actions, and foresees clearly what He will do.

A.—Then are you not afraid of the retort that He too will act of necessity and not freely, if everything that God foreknows happens of necessity and not freely?

E.—When I said that everything happened of necessity which God foreknew, I was referring

only to what happens in creation, not to what happens in God Himself. Things do not happen in God, but have eternal being.

A.—So God does nothing in His creation?

E.—He has fixed once for all the order of events in the created universe; He does not make new decisions.

A.—Does He not make anyone happy?

E.—Certainly He does.

A.—Then He is responsible, when the man becomes happy.

E.—Yes.

A.—Then, if, for instance, you will be happy a year from now, He will make you happy a year hence.

E.—Yes.

A.—So He foreknows now what He will do in a year.

E.—He has always foreknown it. Now again I agree that He foreknows this, if this is what will happen.

7 *A.*—Tell me, please: are you not His creature, or will your happiness not occur in you?

E.—Of course I am His creature, and my happiness will occur in me.

A.—Therefore your happiness will occur in you of necessity and not freely through God's action.

E.—His will is my necessity.

A.—So you will be happy against your will.

E.—If it was in my power to be happy, I should be happy now. I wish to be happy now, and am not, because it is not I but God who makes me happy.

A.—The voice of truth speaks clearly in what you say. You could not be aware of anything in our power, if not of our actions when we will. Nothing is so fully in our power as the will itself, for it is ready at once and without delay to act as we will.¹³ We can truly say, we grow old¹⁴ of necessity and not of our own will; or, we are ill of necessity and not of our own will;¹⁵ or, we die of necessity and not of our own will; and so in other matters of the sort; but no one would be so mad as to venture to say, we do not will of our own will.

Therefore, though God foreknows what we shall will in the future, this does not imply that we do not make use of our will. With regard to happiness, you said you do not make yourself happy, as if I denied it. I say that when you will be happy, you will be happy through your will and not against it. Because God foreknows your future happiness, and because nothing can happen otherwise than as He has foreknown—to deny this would be to deny His foreknowledge—it does not follow that we must suppose you will not be happy through your own will. This would be absurd, and very far from true.

The foreknowledge of God, which is certain even to-day of your future happiness, does not take away your will to be happy, when you begin to be happy. So too, if your will in the future is sinful, it will not cease to be your will, because God has foreknown what will happen.

8 I want you to realise how blind we should be if

we said: If God has foreknown my future will, because nothing can happen contrary to His foreknowledge, I must necessarily will what He has foreknown. But, if this is necessary, I must admit that I will of necessity, and not through my will. How utterly foolish this would be! How could it be true that nothing happens contrary to God's foreknowledge, if He foreknows that something will be willed, when nothing will be willed?

I pass over the equally monstrous assertion, which I attributed just now to the same speaker: I am bound to will in this way. He assumes necessity, and tries to eliminate will. If he is bound to will, how can he will, if there is no will?

If, instead of saying this, he says his will itself is not in his power, because he is bound to will, we shall confront him with your own words, when I asked whether you would be happy against your will. You replied that you would be happy already, if it were in your power, for you said you willed it, but could not yet achieve it. I pointed out that the voice of truth spoke in you, for we cannot deny that we have the power, unless the will is absent. But when we will, if the will itself is absent, we do not will. If it is impossible that we should not will when we will, the will must be present when we will. Nothing else is in our power, if not what is present to us when we will. Our will would not be a will, if it were not in our power. Moreover, since it is in our power, it is free. What is not in our power, or may not be in our power, is not free to us.

Hence we do not deny that God has foreknowledge of all future events, and yet that we will what we will. Since He has foreknowledge of our will, that will must exist, of which he has foreknowledge. It will be a will, because He has foreknowledge of a will. Nor could it be a will, if it were not in our power. So He has foreknowledge also of our power over it. My power is not taken away by His foreknowledge, but I shall have it all the more certainly because He whose foreknowledge is not mistaken has foreknown that I shall have it.¹⁶

E.—I do not deny any longer that all God has foreknown comes about necessarily, and that He fore- that our will remains free and in our power.

TO FORESEE SIN IS NOT TO CAUSE IT

- 4.9 *A.*—What, then, is your difficulty? Have you forgotten what we decided in our first discussion? Will you deny that no one compels us to sin, either above us or below us or equal to us, but that we do so through our own will?

E.—I do not venture to deny any of this. Yet, I admit, I do not yet see how these two, God's foreknowledge of our sins and our free will in sinning, knows our sins, yet at the same time in such a way do not contradict one another. We must admit God is just and has foreknowledge. But I should like to know how it can be just to punish sins which are bound to occur, or how future events which He has foreknown, are not bound to occur,