

Quiz on the Protestant Doctrine of Sin

Below are listed seven quotations from significant figures and theological documents from throughout history. Each of these quotations pertains to the effect of the fall upon man's will.

NECESSARY DEFINITIONS

Total Inability

"...sin is total in that man is incapable of placing God on his own... Therefore, man's spiritual state is not one of relative neutrality, in which he is able to accept or reject God and his gospel. He is an active hater of God who cannot accept spiritual truth."

— Biblical Doctrine, MacArthur and Mayhue, page 468.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Circle what is said to be man's problem and/or the remedy.
2. Circle whether the quote teaches Total Inability or not.
3. Name where you think this quote comes from or who said it (ex. John Bunyan, The Westminster Confession of Faith, Joseph Smith, The Council of Trent, etc.).

QUOTE #1

When the will is enchained as the slave of sin, it cannot make a movement toward goodness, far less steadily pursue it. Every such movement is the first step in that conversion to God, which in Scripture is entirely ascribed to divine grace. Thus Jeremiah prays, “Turn thou me, and I shall be turned” (Jer 31:18). Hence, too, in the same chapter, describing the spiritual redemption of believers, the prophet says, The Lord has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he” (Jer 31:11); intimating how close the fetters are with which the sinner is bound, so long as he is abandoned by the Lord, and acts under the yoke of the devil. Nevertheless, there remains a will which both inclines and hastens on with the strongest affection toward sin; man, when placed under this bondage, being deprived not of will, but of soundness of will. Bernard says not improperly, that all of us have a will; but to will well is proficiency, to will ill is defect. Thus simply to will is the part of man, to will ill the part of corrupt nature, to will well the part of grace. Moreover, when I say that the will, deprived of liberty, is led or dragged by necessity to evil, it is strange that any should deem the expression harsh, seeing there is no absurdity in it, and it is not at variance with pious use. It does, however, offend those who know not how to distinguish between necessity and compulsion. Were any one to ask them, Is not God necessarily good, is not the devil necessarily wicked, what answer would they give? The goodness of God is so connected with his Godhead, that it is not more necessary to be God than to be good; whereas the devil, by his fall, was so estranged from goodness, that he can do nothing but evil.

1. Circle what is said to be man’s problem and/or the remedy.
2. This quote teaches Total Inability: True / False
3. Quote origin: _____

QUOTE #2

In this state, the Free Will of man towards the True Good is not only wounded, maimed, infirm, bent, and weakened; but it is also imprisoned, destroyed, and lost: And its powers are not only debilitated and useless unless they be assisted by grace, but it has no powers whatever except such as are excited by Divine grace: For Christ has said, "Without me ye can do nothing." St. Augustine, after having diligently meditated upon each word in this passage, speaks thus: "Christ does not say, Without me ye can do BUT LITTLE; neither does He say, Without me ye cannot do ANY ARDUOUS THING, nor Without me ye can do it with difficulty: But He says, Without me ye can do NOTHING! Nor does He say, Without me ye cannot COMPLETE [perfect] any thing; but Without me ye can do NOTHING"... For when a new light and knowledge of God and Christ, and of the Divine Will, have been kindled in his mind; and when new affections, inclinations and motions agreeing with the law of God, have been excited in his heart, and new powers have been [ingenerata] produced in him; it comes to pass, —that, being liberated from the kingdom of darkness, and being now made "light in the Lord," (Ephes. v, 8,) he understands the true and saving Good; — that, after the hardness of his stony heart has been changed into the softness of flesh, and the law of God according to the covenant of grace has been inscribed on it, (Jer. xxxi, 32-35,) he loves and embraces that which is good, just, and holy;-and that, being made capable in Christ, co-operating now with God he prosecutes the Good which he knows and loves, and he begins himself to perform it in deed: But this, whatever it may be of knowledge, holiness and power, is all begotten within him by the Holy Spirit...

1. Circle what is said to be man's problem and/or the remedy.
2. This quote teaches Total Inability: True / False
3. Quote origin: _____

QUOTE #3

...whenever a command requires a certain state or act of the will, and the person commanded, notwithstanding the command and the circumstances under which it is exhibited, still finds his will opposite or wanting... that man is morally unable to obey that command. This is manifest from what was observed in the first part concerning the nature of moral inability, as distinguished from natural: where it was observed, that a man may then be said to be morally unable to do a thing, when he is under the influence or prevalence of a contrary inclination; or has a want of inclination, under such circumstances and views. It is also evident, from what has been before proved, that the will is always, and in every individual act, necessarily determined by the strongest motive; and so is always unable to go against the motive, which, all things considered, has now the greatest strength and advantage to move the will.

1. Circle what is said to be man's problem and/or the remedy.
2. This quote teaches Total Inability: True / False
3. Quote origin: _____

QUOTE #4

That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do any thing that is truly good (such as saving Faith eminently is); but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the Word of Christ, John 15:5, "Without me ye can do nothing."

1. Circle what is said to be man's problem and/or the remedy.
2. This quote teaches Total Inability: True / False
3. Quote origin: _____

QUOTE #5

Humanity was created in the image of God, good and upright, but fell from its original sinless state through willful disobedience, leaving humanity in the state of total depravity, sinful, separated from God, and under the sentence of divine condemnation (Rom 3:23; 6:23; Eph 2:1-3). Total depravity does not mean that human beings are as bad as they could be, but that sin impacts every part of a person's being and that people now have a sinful nature with a natural inclination toward sin. Human beings are fundamentally corrupt at heart. As Scripture tells us, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick" (Jer 17:9; cf. Gen 6:5; Matt 19:17; Luke 11:13). Indeed, human beings are spiritually dead in sins (Eph 2:1-3; Col 2:13) and are slaves to sin (Rom 6:17-20). The Apostle Paul even says, "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (Rom 7:18). Elsewhere he testifies, "as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one'" (Rom 3:10-12; cf. Rom 1:18-32; Eph 4:17-22). In their natural state, human beings are hostile toward God and cannot submit to his Law nor please him (Rom 8:7-8). Thus, human beings are not able to think, will, nor do anything good in and of themselves. We are unable to do anything that merits favor from God and we cannot do anything to save ourselves from the judgment and condemnation of God that we deserve for our sin. We cannot even believe the gospel on our own (John 6:44). If anyone is to be saved, God must take the initiative.

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QUOTE #6

But let us hear Paul interpret himself. In the third chapter, by way of peroration, he says: "What then? are we better than they? In no wise; for we have proved both Jews and Gentiles to be all under sin' (v. 9). Where is "free-will' now? All Jews and Greeks, he says, are under sin! Are there any "figures' or 'knots' here? What can the whole world's 'explanation' avail against this perfectly clear statement? By saying 'all' he excepts none. By describing them all as 'under sin', that is, slaves of sin, he leaves them no goodness. Where did he give this proof that all Jews and Gentiles are under sin? Precisely where I called attention to it, that is, where he says: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men? He there proceeds to prove from experience that men were unthankful to God and enslaved to a host of vices and are, as it were, forced by the fruits of their own ungodliness to admit that they will and do nothing but evil... You cannot find a way out by saying: though they are under sin, yet the best part in them, that is, reason and will, makes endeavors towards good. For if the endeavor that remains to them is good, Paul's statement that they are under sin is false.

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QUOTE #7

Ezekiel exclaims: “Make yourself a new heart, and a new spirit” (Ezekiel 18,31). David in turn cries out: “And a resolute spirit renew within me” (Psalm 50,12) and prays: “And blot out all my iniquities” (Psalm 50,11). John in turn says: “And everyone who has this hope in him makes himself holy just as he also is holy” (1 John 3,3)... Paul says: “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2,12), though in 1 Corinthians 12,6 he says: “[He is] the same God, who works all things in all.” More than six hundred such proofs can be found in Holy Scripture. If man could effect nothing, why do they admonish us to work? If man can effect something, why say that God alone works all things in all? ...Now, if man could do nothing, there would be no room for merit and guilt; consequently also none for punishment and reward. If on the other hand man were to do all, there would be no room for grace, which is very often mentioned and emphasized by Paul... Whoever wants to abolish the freedom of the will, will be interpreting [that] “Make yourself a new heart” (Ezekiel 18,31) signifies that the grace of God will create for you a new heart. “And everyone who has this hope in him makes himself holy” (1 John 3,3) signifies that grace sanctifies him... Now, the quoted passages which seem to contradict each other are easily reconciled, if we join together our will with the help of divine grace... The tendency towards evil existing in most men does not completely cancel out the freedom of the will, even when one cannot overcome evil without the help of divine grace.

1. Circle what is said to be man’s problem and/or the remedy.
2. This quote teaches Total Inability: True / False
3. Quote origin: _____

Answers

QUOTE #1

Circle what is said to be man's problem and/or the remedy:

“...the will is enchained as the slave of sin, it cannot make a movement toward goodness...”

This quote teaches Total Inability:

True

Quote origin:

John Calvin

QUOTE #2

Circle what is said to be man's problem and/or the remedy:

The will's “powers are not only debilitated and useless unless they be assisted by grace, but it has no powers whatever except such as are excited by Divine grace: For Christ has said, ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’”

This quote teaches Total Inability:

True

Quote origin:

Jacob Arminius

QUOTE #3

Circle what is said to be man's problem and/or the remedy:

Man is “morally unable to obey” due to being “under the influence or prevalence of a contrary inclination...”

This quote teaches Total Inability:

True

Quote origin:

Jonathan Edwards

Answers

QUOTE #4

Circle what is said to be man's problem and/or the remedy:

Man “can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do any thing that is truly good (such as saving Faith eminently is)...”

This quote teaches Total Inability:

True

Quote origin:

Remonstrance Article 3

QUOTE #5

Circle what is said to be man's problem and/or the remedy:

“...human beings are not able to think, will, nor do anything good in and of themselves... We cannot even believe the gospel on our own (John 6:44).”

This quote teaches Total Inability:

True

Quote origin:

The FACTS of Salvation, The Society of Evangelical Arminians

QUOTE #6

Circle what is said to be man's problem and/or the remedy:

“...men were unthankful to God and enslaved to a host of vices and are, as it were, forced by the fruits of their own ungodliness to admit that they will and do nothing but evil...”

This quote teaches Total Inability:

True

Quote origin:

Martin Luther

Answers

QUOTE #7

Circle what is said to be man's problem and/or the remedy:

We must “join together our will with the help of divine grace...” For, “...one cannot overcome evil without the help of divine grace.”

This quote teaches Total Inability:

False

Quote origin:

Desiderius Erasmus

EXPLANATION

This quiz is intended to draw out misunderstandings regarding the Protestant Christian view of sin. Six of the seven quotes espouse the doctrine of Total Inability; three of these quotes are from Calvinistic sources, three from Arminian sources. Only one quote denies Total Inability, and only one is not Protestant. Desiderius Erasmus was of course Luther's Roman Catholic opponent, against whom Luther wrote *The Bondage of the Will*. Every authors from the Protestant soteriological spectrum cited above articulates the Augustinian understanding of the inability of the will even to believe the Gospel without the grace of God. It is only the Roman Catholic Erasmus who articulates a Semi-Pelagian doctrine that the, “...tendency towards evil existing in most men does not completely cancel out the freedom of the will...” According only to Erasmus, what man needs is the mere “help of divine grace.” Many today believe that the doctrine of Total Inability is taught only in Calvinism, and that to deny it is a mere tertiary or denominational distinctive which renders one an Arminian. In truth, both Calvinism and Arminianism are built on the Biblical Augustinian teaching that a dead will is a will set on the flesh and unable to please God (Romans 8:6–7). The idea that man can respond positively to the Gospel without God first effectually working grace upon his will was condemned at the Council of Carthage in A.D. 419, and is a non-Christian doctrine (see 1 Corinthians 2:14, 12:3, Romans 8:6–7).

Citations

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