

The Bondage of the Will

By [Martin Luther](#)

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

Section XI.

Sect. XI. — BUT why should these things be abstruse to us Christians, so that it should be considered irreligious, curious, and vain, to discuss and know them, when heathen poets, and the very commonalty, have them in their mouths in the most frequent use? How often does Virgil alone make mention of Fate? “All things stand fixed by law immutable.” Again, “Fixed is the day of every man.” Again, “If the Fates summon you.” And again, “If thou shalt break the binding chain of Fate.” All this poet aims at, is to show, that in the destruction of Troy, and in raising the Roman empire, Fate did more than all the devoted efforts of men. In a word, he makes even their immortal gods subject to Fate. To this, even Jupiter and Juno must, of necessity, yield. Hence they made the three Parcae immutable, implacable, and irrevocable in decree.

Those men of wisdom knew that which the event itself, with experience, proves; that no man’s own counsels ever succeeded but that the event happened to all contrary to what they thought. Virgil’s Hector says, “Could Troy have stood by human arm, it should have stood by mine.” Hence that common saying was on every one’s tongue, “God’s will be done.” Again, “If God will, we will do it.” Again, “Such was the will of God.” “Such was the will of those above.” “Such was your will,” says Virgil. Whence we may see, that the knowledge of predestination and of the prescience of God, was no less left in the world than the notion of the divinity itself. And those who wished to appear wise, went in their disputations so far, that, their hearts being darkened, they became fools,” (Rom. i. 21-22,) and denied, or pretended not to know, those things which their poets, and the commonalty, and even their own consciences, held to be universally known, most certain, and most true.

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