

There is nothing contrary to God in the whole world, nothing that fights against him, but self-will. This is the strong castle that we all keep garrisoned against heaven in every one of our hearts, which God continually layeth siege unto: and it must be conquered and demolished, before we can conquer heaven. It was by reason of this self-will that Adam fell in Paradise; that those glorious angels, those morning stars, kept not their first station, but dropt down from heaven like falling stars, and sunk into this condition of bitterness, anxiety, and wretchedness in which now they are. They all entangled themselves with the length of their own wings, they would needs will more and otherwise than God would will in them: and going about to make their wills wider, and to enlarge them into greater amplitude, the more they struggled, they found themselves the faster pinioned, and crowded up into narrowness and servility; insomuch that now they are not able to use any wings at all, but, inheriting the serpent's curse, can only creep with their bellies upon the earth. Now our only way to recover God and happiness again is, not to soar up with our understandings, but to destroy this self-will of ours; and then we shall find our wings to grow again, our plumes fairly spread, and ourselves raised aloft into the free air of perfect liberty, which is perfect happiness.

There is nothing in the whole world able to do us good or hurt but God and our own will; neither riches nor poverty, nor disgrace nor honour, nor life nor death, nor angels nor devils; but willing or not willing as we ought to do. Should hell itself cast all its fiery darts against us, if our will be right, if it be informed by the divine will, they can do us no hurt: we have then (if I may so speak)