



Human Nature in Its Fourfold State Thoughts on Augustine's View on the Will

In his famous book, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, the Scottish Puritan, Thomas Boston (1676–1732) tells us that the four states of human nature are: (a) Primitive Integrity; (b) Entire Depravity; (c) Begun Recovery; and (d) Consummate Happiness or Misery.

These four states, which are derived from the Scripture, correspond to the four states of man in relation to sin enumerated by Augustine of Hippo: (a) able to sin, able not to sin (*posse peccare, posse non peccare*); (b) not able not to sin (*non posse non peccare*); (c) able not to sin (*posse non peccare*); and (d) unable to sin (*non posse peccare*). The first state corresponds to the state of man in innocency, before the Fall; the second the state of the natural man after the Fall; the third the state of the regenerate man; and the fourth the glorified man.

It must be noted that in all four states, man is free to choose what to do or not to do according to his will. His will is free because it is not forced or compelled from without. However, his will is determined by his own moral inclinations. This means that while the glorified man will always choose to do good because his heart's inclination is always to glorify God; the natural fallen man will always do what is evil (in God's eyes), because his motives are never pure, and never to glorify God.

Before the Fall, man was able to choose to do either good or evil, his heart, and so his inclination and disposition, being innocent and not tainted by sin. But Adam's state was mutable and when Satan tempted Eve, and then through Eve, tempted him, he chose to sin against God by eating the forbidden fruit and so fell from the estate of innocency.

- Quoted from Pilgrim Covenant Church

Pre-Fall Man	Post-Fall Man	Reborn Man	Glorified Man
able to sin	able to sin	able to sin	able to not sin
able to not sin	unable to not sin	able to not sin	unable to sin

Here is some of what Augustine himself had to say about this.

Man's original capacities included both the power not to sin and the power to sin (*posse non peccare et posse peccare*). In Adam's original sin, man lost the *posse non peccare* (the power not to sin) and retained the *posse peccare* (the power to sin)--which he continues to exercise. In the

fulfillment of grace, man will have the posse peccare taken away and receive the highest of all, the power not to be able to sin, non posse peccare . Cf. On Correction and Grace XXXIII.

Augustine's ENCHIRIDION, CHAP. 118.--THE FOUR STAGES OF THE CHRISTAIN'S LIFE, AND THE FOUR CORRESPONDING STAGES OF THE CHURCH'S HISTORY.

When, sunk in the darkest depths of ignorance, man lives according to the flesh undisturbed by any struggle of reason or conscience, this is his first state. Afterwards, when through the law has come the knowledge of sin, and the Spirit of God has not yet interposed His aid, man, striving to live according to the law, is thwarted in his efforts and falls into conscious sin, and so, being overcome of sin, becomes its slave ("for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage"(4)); and thus the effect produced by the knowledge of the commandment is this, that sin worketh in man all manner of concupiscence, and he is involved in the additional guilt of willful transgression, and that is fulfilled which is written: "The law entered that the Offense might abound."(5) This is man's second state. But if God has regard to him, and inspires him with faith in God's help, and the Spirit of God begins to work in him, then the mightier power of love strives against the power of the flesh; and although there is still in the man's own nature a power that fights against him (for his disease is not completely cured), yet he lives the life of the just by faith, and lives in righteousness so far as he does not yield to evil lust, but conquers it by the love of holiness. This is the third state of a man of good hope; and he who by steadfast piety advances in this course, shall attain at last to peace, that peace which, after this life is over, shall be perfected in the repose of the spirit, and finally in the resurrection of the body. Of these four different stages the first is before the law, the second is under the law, the third is under grace, and the fourth is in full and perfect peace. Thus, too, has the history of God's people been ordered according to His pleasure who disposeth all things in number, and measure, and weight.(6) For the church existed at first before the law; then under the law, which was given by Moses; then under grace, which was first made manifest in the coming of the Mediator. Not, indeed, that this grace was absent previously, but, in harmony with the arrangements of the time, it was veiled and hidden. For none, even of the just men of old, could find salvation apart from the faith of Christ; nor unless He had been known to them could their ministry have been used to convey prophecies concerning Him to us, some more plain, and some more obscure.

From this we conclude, again with Augustine, that:

- the children of God are actuated by His Spirit to do whatever is to be done
- they are drawn by Him, out of an unwilling state to be made willing
- since the fall it is owing only to the grace of God that man draws near to Him
- it is owing only to the same grace that God does not withdraw or recede from him
- we know that no good thing which is our own can be found in our will
- by the magnitude of the first sin, we lost the freedom of the will to believe in God and live holy lives

- therefore “it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs”—not because we ought not to will and to run, but because God effects both the willing and the running.

- Reisinger