

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE
DIVINE
ATTRIBUTES**

Jerome Zanchius



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Observations On The Divine Attributes

IN ORDER TO OUR BETTER UNDERSTANDING THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION

by **Jerome Zanchius.**

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Although the great and ever-blessed God is a being absolutely simple and infinitely remote from all shadow of composition, He is, nevertheless, in condescension to our weak and contracted faculties, represented in Scripture as possessed of divers Properties, or Attributes, which, though seemingly different from His Essence, are in reality essential to Him, and constitutive of His very Nature.

Of these attributes, those on which we shall now particularly descant (as

being more immediately concerned in the ensuing subject) are the following ones: I., His eternal wisdom and foreknowledge; II., The absolute freedom and liberty of His will; III., The perpetuity and unchangeableness both of Himself and His decrees; IV., His Omnipotence; V., His justice; VI., His mercy.

Without an explication of these, the doctrine of Predestination cannot be so well understood, and we shall, therefore, briefly consider them by way of preliminary to the main subject.

The Divine Wisdom And Foreknowledge of God

I.-With respect to THE DIVINE WISDOM AND FOREKNOWLEDGE, I shall lay down the following positions :-

POSITION 1.-God is, and always was so perfectly wise, that nothing ever did, or does, or can elude His knowledge. He knew, from all eternity, not only what He Himself intended to do, but also what He would incline and permit others to do. "Known unto God are all His works from eternity " (Acts 15:18).

POSITION 2. -Consequently God knows nothing now, nor will know anything hereafter, which He did not know and foresee from everlasting, His foreknowledge being co-eternal with Himself, and extending to everything that is or shall be done (Heb 4:13). All things, which comprises past, present and future, are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

POSITION 3. -This foreknowledge of God is not conjectural and uncertain (for then it would not be foreknowledge), but most sure and infallible, so that whatever He foreknows to be future shall necessarily and undoubtedly come to pass. For His knowledge can no more be frustrated, or His wisdom be deceived, than He can cease to be God. Nay, could either of these be the case, He actually would cease to be God, all mistake and disappointment being absolutely incompatible with the Divine nature.

POSITION 4. -The influence which the Divine foreknowledge has on the certain futurity of the things foreknown does not render the intervention of second causes needless, nor destroy the nature of the things themselves.

My meaning is, that the prescience of God does not lay any coercive necessity on the wills of beings naturally free. For instance, man, even in

his fallen state, is endued with a natural freedom of will, yet he acts, from the first to the last moment of his life, in absolute subserviency (though, perhaps, he does not know it nor design it) to the purposes and decrees of God concerning him, notwithstanding which, he is sensible of no compulsion, but acts as freely and voluntarily as if he was *sui juris*, subject to no control and absolutely lord of himself. This made Luther,*after he had shown how all things necessarily and inevitably come to pass, in consequence of the sovereign will and infallible foreknowledge of God, say that "we should carefully distinguish between a necessity of infallibility and a necessity of coercion, since both good and evil men, though by their actions they fulfil the decree and appointment of God, yet are not forcibly constrained to do any thing, but act willingly."

*De Serv. Arb. cap. 44.

POSITION 5. -God's foreknowledge, taken abstractedly, is not the sole cause of beings and events, but His will and foreknowledge together. Hence we find (Acts 2:23) that His determinate counsel and foreknowledge act in concert, the latter resulting from and being founded on the former.

The Will Of God

We pass on,

II.-To consider THE WILL OF GOD, with regard to which we assert as follows :-

POSITION 1. -The Deity is possessed not only of infinite knowledge, but likewise of absolute liberty of will, so that whatever He does, or permits to be done, He does and permits freely and of His own good pleasure.

Consequently, it is His free pleasure to permit sin, since, without His permission, neither men nor devils can do anything. Now, to permit is, at least, the same as not to hinder, though it be in our power to hinder if we please, and this permission, or non-hinderance, is certainly an act of the Divine will. Hence Augustine* says, "Those things which, seemingly, thwart the Divine will are, nevertheless, agreeable to it, for, if God did not permit them, they could not be done, and whatever God permits, He permits freely and willingly. He does nothing, neither suffers anything to be done, against His own will." And Luther+ observes that "God permitted Adam to fall into sin because He willed that he should so fall."

* Enchir. cap. 100. + De Serv. Arb. c. 153.

POSITION 2. -Although the Will of God, considered in itself, is simply one and the same, yet, in condescension to the present capacities of man, the Divine will is very properly distinguished into secret and revealed. Thus it was His revealed will that Pharaoh should let the Israelites go, that Abraham should sacrifice his son, and that Peter should not deny Christ; but, as was proved by the event, it was His secret will that Pharaoh should not let Israel go (Exodus 4:21), that Abraham should not sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:12), and that Peter should deny his Lord (Mat 26:34).

POSITION 3. -The will of God, respecting the salvation and condemnation of men, is never contrary to itself; He immutably wills the salvation of the elect and *vice versa*; nor can He ever vary or deviate from

His own will in any instance whatever, so as that *that* should be done, which He willeth not, or *that* not he brought to pass, Which He willeth. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isa 46:10). "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of His heart to all generations" (Psalms 33:11). "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth. For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with Him" (Job 23:13,14). " Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will " (Eph 1:11).

Thus, for instance, Hophni and Phineas hearkened not to the voice of their father, who reproveth them for their wickedness, because the Lord *would* slay them (1Sa 2:25), and Sihon, king of Heshbon, would not receive the peaceable message sent him by Moses because the Lord God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into the hand of Israel (Deu 2:26,30). Thus also, to add no more, we find that there have been, and ever will be, some whose eyes God blindeth, and whose hearts He hardeneth, *i.e.*, whom God permits to continue blind and hardened on purpose to prevent their seeing with their eyes and understanding with their hearts, and to hinder their conversion to God and spiritual healing by Him (Isa 6:9; John 12:39,40).

POSITION 4. -Because God's will of precept may, in some instances, appear to thwart His will of determination, it does not follow either (1) that He mocks His creatures, or (2) that they are excusable for neglecting to observe His will of command.

(1) He does not hereby mock His creatures, for if men do not believe His word nor observe His precepts, the fault is not in Him, but in themselves; their unbelief and disobedience are not owing to any ill infused into them by God, but to the vitiosity of their depraved nature and the perverseness of their own wills. Now, if God invited all men to come to Him, and then shut the door of mercy against any who were desirous of entering, His invitation would be a mockery and unworthy of Himself; but we insist on it, that He does not invite all men to come to Him in a saving way, and that every individual person who is, through His gracious influence on his heart, made willing to come to Him, shall sooner or later be surely saved by Him, and that with an everlasting salvation.

(2) Man is not excusable for neglecting God's will of command. Pharaoh was faulty, and therefore justly punishable, for not obeying God's revealed will, though God's secret will rendered that obedience impossible. Abraham would have committed sin had he refused to sacrifice Isaac, and in looking to God's secret will would have acted counter to His revealed One. So Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the reprobate Jews were justly condemned for putting *Christ* to death, inasmuch as it was a most notorious breach of God's revealed will. "Thou shalt do no murder," yet, in slaying the Messiah, they did no more than God's hand and His counsel-i.e., His secret, ordaining will-determined before should be done (Acts 4:27,28); and Judas is justly punished for perfidiously and wickedly betraying Christ, though his perfidy and wickedness were (but not with his design) subservient to the accomplishment of the decree and word of God.

The brief of the matter is this : secret things belong to God, and those that are revealed belong to us; therefore, when we meet with a plain precept, we should simply endeavour to obey it, without tarrying to inquire into God's hidden purpose. Venerable Bucer, after taking notice how God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and making some observations on the apostle's simile of a potter and his clay, adds* that "Though God has at least the same right over His creatures, and is at liberty to make them what He will and direct them to the end that pleaseth Himself, according to His sovereign and secret determination, yet it by no means follows that they do not act freely and spontaneously, or that the evil they commit is to be charged on God."

* Bucer ad Rom 9.

POSITION 5. -God's hidden will is peremptory and absolute, and therefore cannot be hindered from taking effect. God's will is nothing else than God Himself willing, consequently it is omnipotent and unfrustrable. Hence we find it termed by Augustine and the schoolmen, *voluntas omnipotentissima*, because whatever God wills cannot fail of being effected. This made Augustine say, + "Evil men do many things contrary to God's revealed will, but so great is His wisdom, and so inviolable His truth, that He directs all things into those channels which

He foreknew." And again , ++"No free will of the creature can resist the will of God, for man cannot so will or nill as to obstruct the Divine determination or overcome the Divine power." Once more, ~"It cannot be questioned but God does all things, and ever did, according to His own purpose: the human will cannot resist Him so as to make Him do more or less than it is His pleasure to do; *quandoquidem etiam de ipsis hominum voluntatibus quod vult facit*, since He does what He pleases even with the wills of men."

+ De Civ. Dei. 1. 22, c. 1, Vol.2, p. 474, T.T. Clark's Edition

++ De Corr. and Grat. c. 14

~ De Corr. and Grat. 14

POSITION 6. -Whatever comes to pass, comes to pass by virtue of this absolute omnipotent will of God, which is the primary and supreme cause of all things. "Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created " (Rev 4:11). "Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Psa 115:3). "He doeth according to His will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Dan 4:35). "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places" (Psa 135:6). "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father" (Mat 10:29). To all which Augustine subscribes when he says, " No thing is done but what the Almighty wills should be done, either efficiently or permissively." As does Luther, whose words are these, + " This therefore must stand; to wit, the unsearchable will of God, without which nothing exists or acts." And again (c. 160), "God would not be such if He was not almighty, and if anything could be done without Him." And elsewhere (c. 158) he quotes these words of Erasmus "Supposing there was an earthly prince, who could do whatever he would and none were able to resist him, we might safely say of such an one that he would certainly fulfil his own desire; in like manner the will of God, which is the first cause of all things, should seem to lay a kind of necessity upon our wills." This Luther approves of, and subjoins, Thanks be to God for this orthodox passage in Erasmus's discourse! But if this be true, what becomes of his doctrine of free-will, which he, at other times, so strenuously contends for?

* Tom. 3 in Enchir.
+ De Serv. Arb. c.143.

POSITION 7. -The will of God is so the cause of all things, as to be itself without cause, for nothing can be the cause of that which is the cause of everything. So that the Divine will is the *ne plus ultra* of all our inquiries; when we ascend to that, we can go no farther. Hence we find every matter resolved ultimately into the mere sovereign pleasure of God, as the spring and occasion of whatsoever is done in heaven and earth. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Mat 11:25). "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). "I will, be thou clean" (Mat 8:3). "He went up into a mountain, and called unto Him whom He would" (Mark 3:13). "Of His own will begat He us, with the word of truth " (James 1:18). "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Therefore, He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth " (Rom 9:15,18). And no wonder that the will of God should be the main spring that sets all inferior wheels in motion, and should likewise be the rule by which He goes in all His dealings with His creatures, since nothing out of God (*i.e.*, exterior to Himself) can possibly induce Him to will or nill one thing rather than another. Deny this, and you, at one stroke, destroy His immutability and independency, since He can never be independent, who acts *pro re nata*, as emergency requires, and whose will is suspended on that of others; nor unchangeable whose purposes vary, and take all shapes, according as the persons or things vary, who are the objects of those purposes. The only reason, then, that can be assigned *why* the Deity does this or omits that is because it is His own free pleasure. Luther,* in answer to that question, "Whence it was that Adam was permitted to fall and corrupt his whole posterity, when God could have prevented his falling," etc., says : "God is a Being, whose will acknowledges no cause, neither is it for us to prescribe rules to His sovereign pleasure, or call Him to account for what He does. He has neither superior nor equal, and His will is the rule of all things. He did not therefore will such and such things because they were in themselves

right, and He was bound to will them; but they are therefore equitable and right because He wills them. The will of man, indeed, may be influenced and moved, but God's will never can. To assert the contrary is to undeify Him." Bucer+ likewise observes: "God has no other motive for what He does than *ipsa voluntas*, His own mere will, which will is so far from being unrighteous that it is justice itself."

* De Serv. Arb. c.153.

+ Ad Rom. ix.

POSITION 8. -Since, as was lately observed, the determining will of God being omnipotent cannot be obstructed or made void, it follows that He never did, nor does He now, will that every individual of mankind should be saved. If this was His will, not one single soul could ever be lost (for who hath resisted His will?), and He would surely afford all men those effectual means of salvation, without which it cannot be had. Now, God could afford these means as easily to all mankind as to some only, but experience proves that He does not; and the reason is equally plain, namely, that He will not, for whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that does He in heaven and on earth. It is said, indeed, by the apostle, that God "would have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth," i.e., as Augustine*, consistently with other Scriptures, explains the passage, God will save some out of the whole race of mankind," that is, persons of all nations, kindreds and tongues. Nay, He will save all men, *i.e.*, as the same father observes, "Every kind of men, or men of every kind," namely, the whole election of grace, be they bond or free, noble or ignoble, rich or poor, male or female. Add to this that it evidently militates against the majesty, omnipotence and supremacy of God to suppose that He can either will anything in vain, or that anything can take effect against His will; therefore Bucer observes, very rightly (ad Rom 9), God doth not will the salvation of reprobates, seeing He hath not chosen them, neither created them to that end. Consonant to which are those words of Luther+, "This mightily offends our rational nature, that God should, of His own mere unbiassed will, leave some men to themselves, harden them, and then condemn them; but He has given abundant demonstration, and does continually, that this is really the case, namely, that the sole cause why some are saved and others perish proceeds from

His willing the salvation of the former and the perdition of the latter, according to that of Paul, 'He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.'

* Enchir. c.103 and De Cor. and Gr. c.14.

+ De Serv. Arb. c.161.

POSITION 9. -As God doth not will that each individual of mankind should be saved, so neither did He will that Christ should properly and immediately die for each individual of mankind, whence it follows that, though the blood of Christ, from its own intrinsic dignity, was sufficient for the redemption of all men, yet, in consequence of His Father's appointment, He shed it intentionally, and therefore effectually and immediately, for the elect only.

This is self-evident. God, as we have before proved, wills not the salvation of every man, but He gave His Son to die for them whose salvation He willed; therefore His Son did not die for every man. All those for whom Christ died are saved, and the Divine justice indispensably requires that to them the benefits of His death should be imparted; but only the elect are saved, they only partake of those benefits, consequently for them only He died and intercedes. The apostle (Rom 8) asks, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifies," i.e., His elect, exclusively of others; "who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died" for them, exclusive of others. The plain meaning of the passage is that those whom God justifies, and for whom Christ died (justification and redemption being of exactly the same extent), cannot be condemned. These privileges are expressly restrained to the elect: therefore God justifies and Christ died for them alone.

In the same chapter Paul asks, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all [*i.e.*, for all us elect persons], how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?" i.e., salvation and all things necessary to it. Now, it is certain that these are not given to every individual, and yet, if Paul says true, they are given to all those for whom Christ was delivered to death; consequently He was not delivered to death for every individual. To the same purpose Augustine argues in Johan. tract. 45, col. 335. Hence that saying of Ambrose*, *si non credis non tibi passus est, i.e.*, if you are an unbeliever, Christ did not die for

you." Meaning that whoever is left under the power of final unbelief is thereby evidenced to be one of those for whom Christ did not die, but that all for whom He suffered shall be, in this life, sooner or later, indued with faith. The Church of Smyrna, in their letter to the dioceses of Pontus, insist everywhere on the doctrine of special redemption.+ Bucer, in all parts of his works, observes that "Christ died restrictively for the elect only, but for them universally."

* Ambros Tom. 2 de fid, at Grat. 1 4, c. i.

+ Vid. Euseb. Hist. 1. 4, c. 10.

POSITION 10. -From what has been laid down, it follows that Augustine, Luther, Bucer, the scholastic divines, and other learned writers are not to be blamed for asserting that "God may in some sense be said to will the being and commission of sin." For, was this contrary to His determining will of permission, either He would not be omnipotent, or sin could have no place in the world; but He is omnipotent, and sin has a place in the world, which it could not have if God willed otherwise; for who hath resisted His will? (Rom 9). No one can deny that God permits sin, but He neither permits it ignorantly nor unwillingly, therefore knowingly and willingly (vide Aust. Enchir. c. 96). Luther stedfastly maintains this in his book de Serv. Arbitr. and Bucer in Rom. i. However, it should be carefully noticed: (1) That God's permission of sin does not arise from His taking delight in it; on the contrary, sin, as sin, is the abominable thing that His soul hateth, and His efficacious permission of it is for wise and good purposes. Whence that observation of Augustine*, "God, who is no less omnipotent than He is supremely and perfectly holy, would never have permitted evil to enter among His works, but in order that He might do good even with that evil," *i.e.*, over-rule it for good in the end. (2) That God's free and voluntary permission of sin lays no man under any forcible or compulsive necessity of committing it; consequently the Deity can by no means be termed the author of moral evil, to which He is not, in the proper sense of the word, accessory, but only remotely or negatively so, inasmuch as He could, if He pleased, absolutely prevent it.

* Enchir. c.11.

We should, therefore, be careful not to give up the omnipotence of God under a pretence of exalting His holiness; He is infinite in both, and

therefore neither should be set aside or obscured. To say that God absolutely nills the being and commission of sin, while experience convinces us that sin is acted every day, is to represent the Deity as a weak, impotent being, who would fain have things go otherwise than they do, but cannot accomplish His desire. On the other hand, to say that He willeth sin doth not in the least detract from the holiness and rectitude of His nature, because, whatever God wills, as well as whatever He does, cannot be eventually evil: materially evil it may be, but, as was just said, it must ultimately be directed to some wise and just end, otherwise He could not will it; for His will is righteous and good, and the sole rule of right and wrong, as is often observed by Augustine, Luther and others.

POSITION 11. -In consequence of God's immutable will and infallible foreknowledge, whatever things come to pass, come to pass necessarily, though with respect to second causes and us men, many things are contingent, *i.e.*, unexpected and seemingly accidental.

That this was the doctrine of Luther, none can deny who are in any measure acquainted with his works, particularly with his treatise, "De Servo Arbitrio, or Free-will a Slave," the main drift of which book is to prove that the will of man is by nature enslaved to evil only, and because it is fond of that slavery: is therefore said to be free. Among other matters, he proves there that whatever man does, he does necessarily, though not with any sensible compulsion, and that we can only do what God from eternity willed and foreknew we should, which will of God must be effectual and His foresight must be certain." Hence we find him saying,* "It is most necessary and salutary for a Christian to be assured that God foreknows nothing uncertainly, but that He determines, and foresees, and acts in all things according to His own eternal, immutable and infallible will," adding, "Hereby, as with a thunderbolt, is man's free-will thrown down and destroyed." A little after, he shows in what sense he took the word "necessity." "By it," says he, "I do not mean that the will suffers any forcible constraint or co-action, but the infallible accomplishment of those things which the immutable God decreed and foreknew concerning us." He goes on: "Neither the Divine nor human will does anything by constraint, but whatever man does, be it good or bad, he does with as much appetite and willingness as if his will was really free.

But, after all, the will of God is certain and unalterable, and is the governess of ours."

* Cap. 17, in Resp. ad praef.

Exactly consonant to all which are those words of Luther's friend and fellow-labourer, Melancthon*: "All things turn out according to Divine predestination, not only the works we do outwardly, but even the thoughts we think inwardly," adding, in the same place, "There is no such thing as chance or fortune, nor is there a readier way to gain the fear of God, and to put our whole trust in Him, than to be thoroughly versed in the doctrine of predestination." I could cite, to the same purpose, Augustine, Aquinas, and many other learned men, but, for brevity's sake, forbear. That this is the doctrine of Scripture every adept in those sacred books cannot but acknowledge. See particularly Psa 135:6; Mat 10:29; Pro 16:1; Mat 26:54; Luk 22:22; Act 4:28; Eph 1:11; Isa 46:10.

* In Eph 1.

POSITION 12. -As God knows nothing now which He did not know from all eternity, so He wills nothing now which He did not will from everlasting.

This position needs no explanation nor enforcement, it being self-evident that if anything can accede to God *de novo*, i.e., if He can at any time be wiser than He always was, or will that at one time which He did not will from all eternity, these dreadful consequences must ensue: (1) That the knowledge of God is not perfect, since what is absolutely perfect *non recipit magis et minus* cannot admit either of addition or detraction. If I add to anything, it is from a supposal that that thing was not complete before; if I detract from it, it is supposed that that detraction renders it less perfect than it was. But the knowledge of God, being infinitely perfect, cannot, consistently with that perfection, be either increased or lessened. (2) That the will of God is fluctuating, mutable and unsteady; consequently, that God Himself is so, His will coinciding with His essence, contrary to the avowed assurances of Scripture and the strongest dictates of reason, as we shall presently show when we come to treat of the Divine immutability.

POSITION 13. -The absolute will of God is the original spring and

efficient cause of His people's salvation.

I say the original and efficient, for, *sensu complexo*, there are other intermediate causes of their salvation, which, however, all result from and are subservient to this primary one, the Will of God. Such are His everlasting choice of them to eternal life-the eternal covenant of grace, entered into by the Trinity, in behalf of the elect; the incarnation, obedience, death and intercession of Christ for them - all which are so many links in the great chain of causes, and not one of these can be taken away without marring and subverting the whole Gospel plan of salvation by Jesus Christ. We see, then, that the free, unbiassed, sovereign will of God is the root of this tree of life, which bears so many glorious branches and yields such salutary fruits: He therefore loved the elect and ordained them to life because He would; according to that of the apostle, "having predestinated us, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph 1:5). Then, next after God's covenant for His people and promises to them, comes in the infinite merit of Christ's righteousness and atonement, for we were chosen to salvation in Him as members of His mystic body, and through Him, as our Surety and Substitute, by whose vicarious obedience to the moral law and submission to its curse and penalty, all we, whose names are in the book of life, should never incur the Divine hatred or be punished for our sins, but continue to eternity, as we were from eternity, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. But still the Divine grace and favour (and God extends these to whom He will) must be considered as what gave birth to the glorious scheme of redemption, according to what our Lord Himself teaches us, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son," etc. (John 3:16), and that of the apostle, "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that He sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9).

POSITION 14. -Since this absolute will of God is both immutable and omnipotent, we infer that the salvation of every one of the elect is most infallibly certain, and can by no means be prevented. This necessarily follows from what we have already asserted and proved concerning the Divine will, which, as it cannot be disappointed or made void, must undoubtedly secure the salvation of all whom God wills should be saved.

From the whole of what has been delivered under this second head, I would observe that the genuine tendency of these truths is not to make men indolent and careless, or lull them to sleep on the lap of presumption and carnal security, but (1) to fortify the people of Christ against the attacks of unbelief and the insults of their spiritual enemies. And what is so fit, to guard them against these, as the comfortable persuasion of God's unalterable will to save them, and of their unalienable interest in the sure mercies of David? (2) To withdraw them entirely from all dependence whether on themselves or any creature whatever; to make them renounce their own righteousness, no less than their sins, in point of reliance, and to acquiesce sweetly and safely in the certain perpetuity of His rich favour. (3) To excite them, from a trust of His goodwill toward them, to love that God who hath given such great and numberless proofs of His love to men, and, in all their thoughts, words and works, to aim, as much as possible, at His honour and glory.

We were to consider-

The Unchangeableness Of God And His Decrees

III.-THE UNCHANGEABLENESS, WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO HIMSELF AND HIS DECREES.

POSITION 1. -God is essentially unchangeable in Himself. Were He otherwise, He would be confessedly imperfect, since whoever changes must change either for the better or for the worse; whatever alteration any being undergoes, that being must, ipso facto, either become more excellent than it was or lose some of the excellency which it had. But neither of these can be the case with the Deity: He cannot change for the better, for that would necessarily imply that He was not perfectly good before; He cannot change for the worse, for then He could not be perfectly good after that change. Ergo, God is unchangeable. And this is the uniform voice of Scripture. "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal 3:6). "With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). "Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end" (Psalms 102:27)

POSITION 2. -God is likewise absolutely unchangeable with regard to His purposes and promises. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or, hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Num 23:19). "The Strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent; for He is not a man, that He should repent" (1Sa 15:29). "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him?" (Job 23:13). "I, the Lord, have spoken it, it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent" (Eze 24:14). "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom 11:29). "He abideth faithful, and cannot deny Himself" (2Ti 2:13).

By the purpose or decree of God, we mean His determinate counsel, whereby He did from all eternity preordain whatever He should do, or would permit to be done, in time. In particular, it signifies His everlasting appointment of some men to life, and of others to death, which appointment flows entirely from His own free and sovereign will. "The

children not yet being born, neither having done any good or evil (that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth), it was said, the elder shall serve the younger: as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom 9:11).

The apostle, then, in the very next words, anticipates an objection, which he foresaw men of corrupt minds would make to this, "What shall we say then? is there unrighteousness with God?" which he answers with, "God forbid" and resolves the whole of God's procedure with His creatures into His own sovereign and independent will, for He said to Moses, "I Will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

We assert that the decrees of God are not only immutable as to Himself, it being inconsistent with His nature to alter in His purposes or change His mind; but that they are immutable likewise with respect to the objects of those decrees, so that whatsoever God hath determined, concerning every individual person or thing, shall surely and infallibly be accomplished in and upon them. Hence we find that He actually showeth mercy on whom He decreed to show mercy, and hardeneth whom He resolved to harden (Rom 9:18); "For His counsel shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure" (Isa 46:10). Consequently, His eternal predestination of men and things must be immutable as Himself, and, so far from being reversible, can never admit of the least variation.

POSITION 3. -"Although," to use the words of Gregory, "God never swerves from His decree, yet He often varies in His declarations": that is always sure and immoveable; these are sometimes seemingly discordant. So when He gave sentence against the Ninevites by Jonah, saying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," the meaning of the words is not that God absolutely intended, at the end of that space, to destroy the city, but that, should God deal with those people according to their deserts, they would be totally extirpated from the earth, and should be so extirpated unless they repented speedily.

Likewise, when He told King Hezekiah by the prophet Isaiah, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live," the meaning was that with respect to second causes, and, considering the king's bad state of health

and emaciated constitution, he could not, humanly speaking, live much longer. But still the event showed that God had immutably determined that he should live fifteen years more, and in order to that had put it into his heart to pray for the blessing decreed, just as, in the case of Nineveh, lately mentioned, God had resolved not to overthrow that city then; and, in order to the accomplishment of His own purpose in a way worthy of Himself, made the ministry of Jonah the means of leading that people to repentance. All which, as it shows that God's absolute predestination does not set aside the use of means, so does it likewise prove that, however various the declarations of God may appear (to wit, when they proceed on a regard had to natural causes), His counsels and designs stand firm and immovable, and can neither admit of alteration in themselves, nor of hindrance in their execution. See this farther explained by Bucer in Rom 9, where you will find the certainty of the Divine appointment solidly asserted and unanswerably vindicated.

The Omnipotence Of God

IV.-We now come to consider THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD.

POSITION 1. -God is, in the most unlimited and absolute sense of the word, Almighty. "Behold Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee" (Jer 32:17). With God all things are possible" (Mat 19:26). The schoolmen, very properly, distinguish the omnipotence of God into absolute and actual: by the former, God might do many things which He does not; by the latter, He actually does whatever He will. For instance, God might, by virtue of His absolute power, have made more worlds than He has. He might have eternally saved every individual of mankind, without reprobating any; on the other hand, He might, and that with the strictest justice, have condemned all men and saved none. He could, had it been His pleasure, have prevented the fall of angels and men, and thereby have hindered sin from having footing in and among His creatures. By virtue of His actual power He made the universe; executes the whole counsel of His will, both in heaven and earth; governs and influences both men and things, according to His own pleasure; fixes the bounds which they shall not pass, and, in a word, worketh all in all (Isa 45:7; Amo 3:6; Joh 5:17; Act 17:26; 1Co 12:6)

POSITION 2. -Hence it follows that, since all things are subject to the Divine control, God not only works efficaciously on His elect, in order that they may will and do that which is pleasing in His sight, but does, likewise, frequently and powerfully suffer the wicked to fill up the measure of their iniquities by committing fresh sins. Nay, He sometimes, but for wise and gracious ends, permits His own people to transgress, for He has the hearts and wills of all men in His own hand, and inclines them to good or delivers them up to evil, as He sees fit, yet without being the author of sin, as Luther, Bucer, Augustine, and others have piously and Scripturally taught.

This position consists of two parts: (1) That God efficaciously operates on the hearts of His elect, and is thereby the sole Author of all the good they do. (See Eph 3:20; Phi 3:13; 1Th 2:13; Heb 13:21.) St Augustine* takes up no fewer than nineteen chapters in proving that whatever good is in men, and whatever good they are enabled to do, is solely and entirely of God, who, says he, "works in holy persons all their good desires, their pious thoughts, and their righteous actions; and yet these holy persons, though thus wrought upon by God, will and do all these things freely, for it is He who rectifies their wills, which, being originally evil, are made good by Him, and which wills, after He hath set them right and made them good, He directs to good actions and to eternal life, wherein He does not force their Wills, but makes them willing."

* De Grat. and lib. Arb. a c. 1. usque ad c. 20.

(2) That God often lets the wicked go on to more ungodliness, which He does (a) negatively by withholding that grace which alone can restrain them from evil; (b) remotely, by the providential concurrence and mediation of second causes, which second causes, meeting and acting in concert with the corruption of the reprobate's unregenerate nature, produce sinful effects; (c) judicially, or in a way of judgment. "The King's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of waters; He turneth it whithersoever He Will " (Pro 21:1); and if the King's heart, why not the hearts of all men? "Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good?" (Lam 3:38). Hence we find that the Lord bid Shimei curse David (2Sa 16:10); that He moved David himself to number the people (compare 1Ch 21:1 with 2Sa 24:1); stirred up Joseph's brethren to sell him into Egypt (Gen 1:20); positively and immediately hardened the heart of Pharaoh (Exo 4:21); delivered up David's wives to be defiled by Absalom (2Sa 12:11; 16:22); sent a lying spirit to deceive Ahab (1Ki 22:20-23) and mingled a perverse spirit in the midst of Egypt, that is, made that nation perverse, obdurate and stiff-necked (Isa 19:14). To cite other instances would be almost endless, and after these, quite unnecessary, all being summed up in that express passage, "I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things " (Isa 45:7). See farther, 1Sa 16:14; Psa 105:25; Jer 13:12,13; Act 2:23; 4:28; Rom 11:8; 2Th 2:11, every one of which implies more* than a bare permission of sin. Bucer asserts this, not only in the place referred to below, but continually throughout his works,

particularly on Mat 6:2, where this is the sense of his comments on that petition, "Lead us not into temptation": "It is abundantly evident, from most express testimonies of Scripture, that God, occasionally in the course of His providence, puts both elect and reprobate persons into circumstances of temptation, by which temptation are meant not only those trials that are of an outward, afflictive nature, but those also that are inward and spiritual, even such as shall cause the persons so tempted actually to turn aside from the path of duty, to commit sin, and involve both themselves and others in evil. Hence we find the elect complaining, 'O Lord, why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways, and hardened our hearts from Thy fear?' (Isa 63:17). But there is also a kind of temptation, which is peculiar to the non-elect, whereby God, in a way of just judgment, makes them totally blind and obdurate, inasmuch as they are vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." (See also his exposition of Rom 9)

* Vid. Augustin. de Grat. and lib. Arbitr. c. 20 and 21, and Bucer in Rom 1 sect. 7.

Luther* reasons to the very same effect; some of his words are these: " It may seem absurd to human wisdom that God should harden, blind and deliver up some men to a reprobate sense - that He should first deliver them over to evil, and then condemn them for that evil - but the believing spiritual man sees no absurdity at all in this, knowing that God would be never a whit less good, even though He should destroy all men." And again, "God worketh all things in all men, even wickedness in the wicked, for this is one branch of His own omnipotence." He very properly explains how God may be said to harden men, etc., and yet not be the author of their sin. "It is not to be understood," says he, "as if God found men good, wise and tractable, and then made them wicked, foolish and obdurate; but God, finding them depraved, judicially and powerfully excites them just as they are (unless it is His will to regenerate any of them), and, by thus exciting them, they become more blind and obstinate than they were before." (See this whole subject debated at large in the places last referred to.)

* De Serv. Arb. c. 8 and 146 and 147, usq. ad c. 165.

POSITION 3. -God, as the primary and efficient cause of all things, is not only the Author of those actions done by His elect as actions, but also

as they are good actions, whereas, on the other hand, though He may be said to be the Author of all the actions done by the wicked, yet He is not the Author of them in a moral and compound sense as they are sinful; but physically, simply and *sensu diviso* as they are mere actions, abstractedly from all consideration of the goodness or badness of them.

Although there is no action whatever which is not in some sense either good or bad, yet we can easily conceive of an action, purely as such, without adverting to the quality of it, so that the distinction between an action itself and its denomination of good or evil is very obvious and natural.

In and by the elect, therefore, God not only produces works and actions through His almighty power, but likewise, through the salutary influences of His Spirit, first makes their persons good, and then their actions so too; but, in and by the reprobate, He produces actions by His power alone, which actions, as neither issuing from faith nor being wrought with a view to the Divine glory, nor done in the manner prescribed by the Divine Word, are, on these accounts, properly denominated evil. Hence we see that God does not, immediately and *per se*, infuse iniquity into the wicked; but, as Luther expresses it, powerfully excites them to action, and withholds those gracious influences of His Spirit, without which every action is necessarily evil. That God either directly or remotely excites bad men as well as good ones to action cannot be denied by any but Atheists, or by those who carry their notions of free-will and human independency so high as to exclude the Deity from all actual operation in and among His creatures, which is little short of Atheism. Every work performed, whether good or evil, is done in strength and by the power derived immediately from God Himself, "in whom all men live, move, and have their being" (Act 17:28). As, at first, without Him was not anything made which was made, so, now, without Him is not anything done which is done. We have no power or faculty, whether corporal or intellectual, but what we received from God, subsists by Him, and is exercised in subserviency to His will and appointment. It is He who created, preserves, actuates and directs all things. But it by no means follows, from these premises, that God is therefore the cause of sin, for sin is nothing but illegality, want of conformity to the Divine law (1Jo 3:4), a

mere privation of rectitude; consequently, being itself a thing purely negative, it can have no positive or efficient cause, but only a negative and deficient one, as several learned men have observed.

Every action, as such, is undoubtedly good, it being an actual exertion of those operative powers given us by God for that very end; God therefore may be the Author of all actions (as He undoubtedly is), and yet not be the Author of evil. An action is constituted evil three ways- by proceeding from a wrong principle, by being directed to a wrong end, and by being done in a wrong manner. Now, though God, as we have said, is the efficient cause of our actions as actions, yet, if these actions commence sinful, that sinfulness arises from ourselves. Suppose a boy, who knows not how to write, has his hand guided by his master and nevertheless makes false letters, quite unlike the copy set him, though his preceptor, who guides his hand, is the cause of his writing at all, yet his own ignorance and unskilfulness are the cause of his writing so badly. Just so, God is the supreme Author of our action, abstractedly taken, but our own vitiosity is the cause of our acting amiss.

I shall conclude this article with two or three observations, and-

(1) I would infer that, if we would maintain the doctrine of God's omnipotence, we must insist upon that of His universal agency; the latter cannot be denied without giving up the former. Disprove that He is almighty, and then we will grant that His influence and operations are limited and circumscribed. Luther* says, "God would not be a respectable Being if He were not almighty, and the doer of all things that are done, or if anything could come to pass in which He had no hand." God has, at least, a physical influence on whatsoever is done by His creatures, whether trivial or important, good or evil. Judas as truly lived, moved and had his being from God as Peter, and Satan himself as much as Gabriel, for to say that sin exempts the sinner from the Divine government and jurisdiction is abridging the power of God with a witness, nay, is rasing it from its very foundations.

* De Serv. Arb. c. 160

(2) This doctrine of God's omnipotence has a native tendency to awaken in our hearts that reverence for and fear of the Divine Majesty, which

none can either receive or retain, but those who believe Him to be infinitely powerful, and to work all things after the counsel of His own will. This godly fear is a sovereign antidote against sin, for, if I really believe that God, by His unintermitted operation upon my soul, produces actions in me, which, being simply good, receive their malignancy from the corruption of my nature (and even those works that stand opposed to sins are, more or less, infected with this moral leprosy), and if I consider that, should I yield myself a slave to actual iniquity, God can, and justly might, as He has frequently done by others, give me up to a reprobate mind and punish one sin by leaving me to the commission of another, surely such reflections as these must fill me with awful apprehensions of the Divine purity, power and greatness, and make me watch continually as well against the inward risings as the outward appearance of evil.

(3) This doctrine is also useful, as it tends to inspire us with true humility of soul, and to lay us, as impotent dust and ashes, at the feet of sovereign Omnipotence. It teaches us, what too many are fatally ignorant of, the blessed lesson of *self-despair*, i.e., that, in a state of unregeneracy, our wisdom is folly, our strength weakness and our righteousness nothing worth; that therefore we can do nothing, either to the glory of God or the spiritual benefit of ourselves and others, but through the ability which He giveth; that in Him our strength lieth, and from Him all our help must come. Supposing we believe that whatsoever is done below or above, God doeth it Himself; that all things depend both as to their being and operation upon His omnipotent arm and mighty support; that we cannot even sin, much less do any good thing, if He withdrew His aid; and that all men are in His hand, as clay in the hand of the potter-I say, did we really believe all these points and see them in the light of the Divine Spirit, how can it be reasonably supposed that we could wax insolent against this great God, behave contemptuously and superciliously in the world, or boast of anything we have or do? Luther* informs us that "he used frequently to be much offended at this doctrine, because it drove him to *self-despair*, but that he afterwards found that this sort of despair was salutary and profitable, and near akin to Divine grace.

* De Serv. Arb. c. 161.

(4) We are hereby taught not only humility before God, but likewise dependence on Him and resignation to Him. For if we are thoroughly persuaded that of ourselves and in our own strength we cannot either do good or evil, but that, being originally created by God, we are incessantly supported, moved, influenced and directed by Him, this way or that, as He pleases, the natural inference from hence will be that with simple faith we cast ourselves entirely as on the bosom of His providence; commit all our care and solicitude to His hand; praying, without hesitation or reserve, that His will may be done in us, on us, and by us; and that, in all His dealing with us, He may consult His own glory alone. This holy passiveness is the very apex of Christianity. All the desires of our great Redeemer Himself were reducible to these two: that the will of God might be done, and that the glory of God might be displayed. These were the highest and supreme marks at which He aimed throughout the whole course of His spotless life and in conceivably tremendous sufferings. Happy, thrice happy that man who hath thus far attained the mind that was in Christ.

(5) The comfortable belief of this doctrine has a tendency to excite and keep alive within us that fortitude which is so ornamental to, and necessary for us while we abide in this wilderness. For if I believe, with the apostle, that "all things are of God" (2Co 5:18), I shall be less liable to perturbation when afflicted, and learn more easily to possess my soul in patience. This was Job's support; he was not overcome with rage and despair when he received news that the Sabeans had carried off his cattle and slain his servants, and that the remainder of both were consumed with fire; that the Chaldeans had robbed him of his camels, and that his seven sons were crushed to death by the falling of the house where they were sitting: he resolved all these misfortunes into the agency of God, His power and sovereignty, and even thanked Him for doing what He would with His own (Job 1:21). If another should slander me in word, or injure me in deed, I shall not be prone to anger, when, with David, I consider that the Lord hath bidden him (2Sa 16:10).

(6) This should stir us up to fervent and incessant prayer. For, does God work powerfully and benignly in the hearts of His elect? and is He the sole cause of every action they do, which is truly and spiritually good?

Then it should be our prayer that He would work in us likewise both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and if, on self-examination, we find reason to trust that some good thing is wrought in us, it should put us upon thankfulness unfeigned, and cause us to glory, not in ourselves, but in Him. On the other hand, does God manifest His displeasure against the wicked by blinding, hardening and giving them up to perpetrate iniquity with greediness? which judicial acts of God are both a punishment for their sin and also eventual additions to it, we should be the more incited to deprecate these tremendous evils, and to beseech the king of heaven that He would not thus "lead us into temptation." So much concerning the omnipotence of God.

The Justice Of God

V.-I shall now take notice of His JUSTICE.

POSITION 1. -God is infinitely, absolutely and unchangeably just.

The justice of God may be considered either immanently, as it is in Himself, which is, properly speaking, the same with His holiness; or transiently and relatively, as it respects His right conduct towards His creatures, which is properly justice. By the former He is all that is holy, just and good; by the latter, He is manifested to be so in all His dealings with angels and men. For the first, see Deu 32:4; Psa 92:15; for the second, Job 8:3; Psa 145:17. Hence it follows that whatever God either wills or does, however it may, at first sight, seem to clash with our ideas of right and wrong, cannot really be unjust. It is certain that for a season He sorely afflicted His righteous servant Job, and, on the other hand, enriched the Sabeans, an infidel and lawless nation, with a profusion of wealth and a series of success; before Jacob and Esau were born, or had done either good or evil, He loved and chose the former and reprobated the latter; He gave repentance to Peter and left Judas to perish in his sin; and as in all ages, so to this day, "He hath mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth." In all which He acts most justly and righteously, and there is no iniquity with Him.

POSITION 2. -The Deity may be considered in a three fold view: as God of all, as Lord of all, and as Judge of all.

(1) As God of all, He created, sustains and exhilarates the whole universe; causes His sun to shine, and His rain to fall upon the evil and the good (Matt. v.), and is the Preserver of all men (1Ti 4:10). For as He is infinitely and supremely good, so also is He communicative of His goodness, as appears not only from His creation of all things, but especially from His providential benignity. Everything has its being from Him as Creator, and its well-being from Him as a bountiful Preserver.

(2) As Lord or Sovereign of all, He does as He will (and has a most

unquestionable right to do so) with His own, and in particular fixes and determines the everlasting state of every individual person, as He sees fit. It is essential to absolute sovereignty that the sovereign have it in his power to dispose of those over whom his jurisdiction extends, just as he pleases, without being accountable to any; and God, whose authority is unbounded, none being exempt from it, may, with the strictest holiness and justice, love or hate, elect or reprobate, save or destroy any of His creatures, whether human or angelic, according to His own free pleasure and sovereign purpose.

(3) As Judge of all, He ratifies what He does as Lord by rendering to all according to their works, by punishing the wicked, and rewarding those whom it was His will to esteem righteous and to make holy.

POSITION 3. -Whatever things God wills or does are not willed and done by Him because they were in their own nature and previously to His willing them, just and right, or because, from their intrinsic fitness, He ought to will and do them; but they are therefore just, right and proper because He, who is holiness itself, wills and does them.

Hence, Abraham looked upon it as a righteous action to slay his innocent son. Why did he so esteem it, because the law of God authorised murder? No; for, on the contrary, both the law of God and the law of nature peremptorily forbade it; but the holy patriarch well knew that the will of God is the only rule of justice, and that what He pleases to command is, on that very account, just and righteous.*

* Compare also Exo 3:22 with Exo 20:15.

POSITION 4. -It follows that, although our works are to be examined by the revealed will of God, and be denominated materially good or evil, as they agree or disagree with it, yet the works of God Himself cannot be brought to any test whatever; for, His will being the grand universal law, He Himself cannot be, properly speaking, subject to or obliged by any law superior to that. Many things are done by Him, such as choosing and reprobating men, without any respect had to their works; suffering people to fall into sin, when, if it so pleased Him, He might prevent it;

leaving many back sliding professors to go on and perish in their apostacy, when it is in His Divine power to sanctify and set them right; drawing some by His grace, and permitting many others to continue in sin and unregeneracy; condemning those to future misery whom, if He pleased, He could undoubtedly save; with innumerable instances of the like nature (which might be mentioned), and which, if done by us, would be apparently unjust, inasmuch as they would not square with the revealed will of God, which is the great and only safe rule of our practice. But when *He* does these and such like things, they cannot but be holy, equitable and worthy of Himself; for, since His will is essentially and unchangeably just, whatever He does, in consequence of that will, must be just and good likewise. From what has been delivered under this fifth head, I would infer that they who deny the power God has of doing as He will with His creatures, and exclaim against unconditional decrees as cruel, tyrannical and unjust, either know not what they say nor whereof they affirm, or are wilful blasphemers of His name and perverse rebels against His sovereignty, to which, at last, however unwillingly, they will be forced to submit.

The Mercy Of God

VI.-I shall conclude this introduction with briefly considering, in the sixth and last place, THE MERCY OF GOD.

POSITION 1. -The Deity is, throughout the Scriptures, represented as infinitely gracious and merciful (Exo 34:6; Neh 9:17 ; Psa 103:8; 1Pe 1:3).

When we call the Divine mercy infinite, we do not mean that it is, in a way of grace, extended to all men without exception (and supposing it was, even then it would be very improperly denominated infinite on that account, since the objects of it, though all men taken together, would not amount to a multitude strictly and properly infinite), but that His mercy towards His own elect, as it knew no beginning, so is it infinite in duration, and shall know neither period nor intermission.

POSITION 2. -Mercy is not in the Deity, as it is in us, a passion or affection, everything of that kind being incompatible with the purity, perfection, independency and unchangeableness of His nature; but when this attribute is predicated of Him, it only notes His free and eternal will or purpose of making some of the fallen race happy by delivering them from the guilt and dominion of sin, and communicating Himself to them in a way consistent with His own inviolable justice, truth and holiness. This seems to be the proper definition of mercy as it relates to the spiritual and eternal good of those who are its objects.

POSITION 3. -But it should be observed that the mercy of God, taken in its more large and indefinite sense, may be considered (1) as general and (2) as special. His general mercy is no other than what we commonly call His bounty, by which He is, more or less, providentially good to all mankind, both elect and non-elect (Mat 5:45; Luk 6:35; Act 14:17; 17:25,28). By His special mercy He, as Lord of all, hath, in a spiritual sense, compassion on as many of the fallen race as are the objects of His

free and eternal favour, the effects of which special mercy are the redemption and justification of their persons through the satisfaction of Christ, the effectual vocation, regeneration and sanctification of them by His Spirit, the infallible and final preservation of them in a state of grace on earth, and their everlasting glorification in heaven.

POSITION 4. -There is no contradiction, whether real or seeming, between these two assertions (1) that the blessings of grace and glory are peculiar to those whom God hath, in His decree of predestination, set apart for Himself, and (2) that the Gospel declaration runs, that whosoever willeth may take of the water of life freely (Rev 22:17). Since, in the first place, none can will, or unfeignedly and spiritually desire, a part in these privileges but those whom God previously makes willing and desirous; and secondly, that He gives this will to, and excites this desire in, none but His own elect.

POSITION 5. -Since ungodly men, who are totally and finally destitute of Divine grace, cannot know what this mercy is, nor form any proper apprehensions of it, much less by faith embrace and rely upon it for themselves, and since daily experience, as well as the Scriptures of truth, teaches us that God doth not open the eyes of the reprobate as He doth the eyes of His elect, nor savingly enlighten their understandings, it evidently follows that His mercy was never, from the very first, designed for them, neither will it be applied to them; but, both in designation and application, is proper and peculiar to those only who are predestinated to life, as it is written, "the election hath obtained, and the rest were blinded" (Rom 11:7).

POSITION 6. -The whole work of salvation, together with everything that is in order to it or stands in connection with it is sometimes, in Scripture, comprised under the single term mercy, to show that mere love and absolute grace were the grand cause why the elect are saved, and that all merit, worthiness and good qualifications of theirs were entirely excluded from having any influence on the Divine will why they should be chosen, redeemed and glorified above others. When it is said, "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy" (Rom 9), it is as much as if the apostle had said, "God elected, ransomed, justified, regenerates, sanctifies and glorifies whom He pleases," every one of these great

privileges being briefly summed up and virtually included in that comprehensive phrase, "He hath mercy."

POSITION 7. -It follows that, whatever favour is bestowed on us, whatever good thing is in us or wrought by us, whether in will, word or deed, and whatever blessings else we receive from God, from election quite home to glorification, all proceed, merely and entirely, from the good pleasure of His will and His mercy towards us in Christ Jesus. To Him therefore the praise is due, who putteth the difference between man and man by having compassion on some and not on others.

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