

# OBSERVATIONS ON THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

by Jerome Zanchius

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*Jerome Zanchius' theological exploration of God's absolute freedom, omnipotence, and sovereign will, arguing that God's predetermined purposes extend to all aspects of creation and salvation.*

3 Chapters

## Table of Contents

1. 03 - His Eternal Wisdom and Foreknowledge
2. 04 - The Absolute Freedom and Liberty of His Will
3. 05 - The Unchangeableness of Himself

## 03 - His Eternal Wisdom and Foreknowledge

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THE DIVINE WISDOM AND FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD 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 (Hebrews 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. Could either of these be the case, He actually would cease to be God.

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 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."

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.

## 04 - The Absolute Freedom and Liberty of His Will

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### 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-hindrance, 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."

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 (Genesis 22:12), and that Peter should deny his Lord (Matt. 16:34).

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 wills not, or that not be brought to pass, which He wills. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isaiah 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" (Ephesians 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 (1 Samuel 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 (Deuteronomy 2:26, Deuteronomy 2:30). Thus also, to add no more, we find that there have been, and ever will be, some whose eyes God blinds, and whose hearts He hardens, i.e., whom God permits to continue blind and hardened on purpose to prevent their seeing with their eyes and under standing with

their hearts, and to hinder their conversion to God and spiritual healing by Him (Isaiah 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 endeavor 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."

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 His so as to make Him do more or less than it is His pleasure to do; since He does what He pleases

even with the wills of men."

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 " (Revelation 4:11). "Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased " (Psalms 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?" (Daniel 4:35). "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places " (Psalms 135:6). "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father" (Matthew 10:29). To all which Augustine subscribes when he says, "Nothing 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, "God would not be such if He was not almighty, and if anything could be done without Him." And elsewhere, 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 fulfill 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?"

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 " (Matthew 11:25). "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). "I will, be thou clean " (Matthew 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). "Who 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" (Romans 9:15, Romans 9:18). 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 Reformed nato*, 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 God 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."

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, "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 unbiased 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.'"

Position 9.--As God does 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 (Romans 8:1-39.) 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.

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? (Romans 9:1-33.). No one can deny that God permits sin, but He neither permits it ignorantly nor unwillingly, therefore knowingly and willingly. 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 hates, 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 God 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.

We should, therefore, be careful not to give up the omnipotence of God under a pretense 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 God 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 wills sin does 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 Freewill 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."

Exactly consonant to all which are those words of Luther's friend and fellow-laborer, 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 Psalms 135:6; Matthew 10:29; Proverbs 16:1; Matthew 26:54; Luke 12:22; Acts 4:28; Ephesians 1:11; Isaiah 46:10.

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, if 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 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 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, unbiased, 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" (Ephesians 1:6). 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 favor (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 favor. (3) To excite them, from a trust of His goodwill toward them, to love that God who has 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 HONOR and GLORY.

## 05 - The Unchangeableness of Himself

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### 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 God. 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. Therefore, God is unchangeable. And this is the uniform voice of Scripture. "I am the Lord, I change not " (Malachi 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?" (Numbers 23:19). "The Strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent; for He is not a man, that He should repent (1 Samuel 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 " (Ezekiel 24:14). "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance " (Romans 11:29). "He abideth faithful, and cannot deny Himself " (2 Timothy 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 " (Romans 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 shows mercy on whom He decreed to show mercy, and hardens whom He resolved to harden (Romans 9:18); "For His counsel shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure " (Isaiah 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.

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