

**A
TREATISE
TENDING
To show that the Just & Holy God,
may have a Hand in the unjust
actions of
SINFUL MEN
And that in such a way as shall be
without any impeachment of his
Justice & Holiness, or Diminution of
his Power and Providence.**

*"The LORD is righteous in all his ways,
and holy in all his works."*

*"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and
knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his
judgments, and his ways past finding out!"*

Thomas Whitfield, Minister of the Gospel.

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DEDICATION

To the Right Honorable Edward Lord Montagu
of Boughton, a fruitful increase of piety,
prosperity, and all true happiness both
here and hereafter.

My Noble Lord,

It would not a little conduce to the happiness of our lives if our thoughts {which are the immediate and too oft abortive issue of our minds} were rightly employed and improved, for then are they well employed, when they are conversant about the most excellent object; when they are taken up with the contemplation of the wisdom, power, providence, justice, holiness and other excellent attributes of him who is excellency itself; and in the fruition of whom is our highest felicity. This made the sweet singer of Israel to say, "how precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" Psal.139:17. As if he had said, the thoughts of thy wisdom and wonderful workings of thy Providence, {things which before he had mentioned,} are of great price and worth, being things of incomprehensible excellency; yea, they are as rare as precious, the minds of most men being so seldom taken up with them. I am bold to present to your lordship this small treatise, that it might give you occasion to entertain such thoughts as these, as also that it might be a testimony of my thankful acknowledgment of all that honorable

respect I have received from you. Thus humbly imploring the Father of Mercies that he would further enrich you with the true treasure, and enable you inwardly with the graces of his Spirit proportionally to those outward endowments wherewith he has been pleased to dignify you, I resign you to his mercy and rest, Your Honors in all due Observance and Christian Service,

Thomas Whitfield.

THE PREFACE.

It hath been a question much controverted in all ages, how the good and holy God can have a hand in the great evils that are done in the world. It is one of the mysteries and depths of divinity worthy of our searching into. Scripture expressions for the most part hold this forth by way of action, as when it is said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he sent Joseph into Egypt, that he took away Job's cattle which were taken away by the Chaldeans, and the like. Papists and Arminians confine this only to a way of permission without action, and calumniate our orthodox divines, as if they made God the Author of sin, because they bring it within the compass of his will and decree, and make him to have a kind of direct action in it. Thus Bellarmine charges Zuinglius, Calvin, Peter Martyr & Beza. The like imputation also Arminius seeks to fasten on Mr. Perkins. I know quite well that it is far beyond my ability to untie this knot as may give satisfaction to all, but if I may contribute any beam of light towards the clearer discovery of God's manner of proceeding in the production of sin; if I may help to vindicate the innocence and orthodoxy of our worthy writers from the unjust aspiration of their adversaries; especially, if I may in sort vindicate the all wise, and all working Providence and Power of God from that overmuch frightening and diminution which hath been put upon them for the maintaining of his Justice; if, {I say,} I may by this discourse

be helpful in any of these ways, I shall obtain the end which I aim at, whereunto I shall only promise these things briefly.

1. That this discourse is not so much intended for those of the learned sort, {who are better able to inform these lines,} as for such ingenuous Christians, who when they meet with those scriptures wherein by the sound of words, God seems to be made the proper cause of sin, they stumble at them, and not being able to satisfy themselves desire help this way.

2. I shall desire the indifferent reader, that if in this discourse he shall meet with that which may seem to go higher than many of our divines have done, in making God to have an active hand in the actions of sinful men, he would forbear either to reject or censor, until he hath weighed the strength of the arguments brought to prove the thing propounded.

3. If I shall let fall anything in this treatise, which shall not be agreeable to clear evidence of Scripture, and this be made to appear so, I shall not refuse to un-say anything which I have said, and readily to embrace any truth though not agreeing with my former apprehensions. The good Spirit of truth make us all lovers of truth, and lead us into all those ways of truth which may bring us at length to the enjoying of him who is the Author of truth. Amen.

"And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses." Exodus 9:12.

It is a principle privilege belonging to the Covenant of Grace, and a special promise which God hath made unto his people, that he would take away their stony heart from them, and give unto them hearts of flesh. Ezek.36:26. That is, that he would take away the hardness of their hearts. How God should take away the hardness of heart in some, and yet harden the hearts of others, is not easy to apprehend. The scope of this treatise is to show how the just and holy God, may have a hand in the sinful actions of men; and that not only by way of permission, but also by some kind of holy operation and effectual working, and yet this be done without any diminution of his Justice or violation of his Holiness, but still he remains to be most just in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

Chapter 1

SHOWING WHAT HARDNESS OF HEART IS.

Hardness of heart may be said to be an evil quality of the soul, which makes it in a man insensible of the evil which he doth, or the evil which he shall suffer; when either he hath no feeling of it, or feels it not in that measure which he should do; then is his heart affected with hardness. It is man's duty to be sensible of the sin which he commits, and of the suffering which will most certainly follow after. God hath placed in his soul that faculty of conscience for this very end and purpose, to give him warning and make him take notice of both these, that he might be affected accordingly. Now when after the committing of sin, there are no affections of grief, sorrow and trouble of spirit stirring in him, when there is no fear to commit sin, nor care to prevent the evil that sin will bring, for then is the heart hardened.

This hardness of heart is either natural or adventitial and acquired; the first of these we all bring with us into the world, being either altogether insensible of our spiritual misery by reason of sin and suffering, or not so sensible as we should be. Hence the heart of man is said to be a heart of stone.

Acquired hardness is that whereby the natural tendency or inclination of man is increased and augmented. This may in some degree be not only resident in the worst, but in the best of men, which is brought to pass either

by custom in sinning, or by secret judgment, or by both; of this there are various degrees, as.

1. When a man takes liberty, voluntarily and frequently to do such things as he knows to be sinful.

2. When he doth these things against the frequent persuasions, admonitions and calls of the word to the contrary.

3. Against such corrections, punishments and judgments which God shall inflict upon himself, or he shall see inflicted upon others for the same, or for similar sins.

4. When he shall do this against the stirrings and strivings, the checks or rebukes of his own conscience.

5. When notwithstanding all these, he shall take up strong resolutions and confirmed purposes to do as he hath done, namely to maintain his own will against God's will. Thus may wicked men harden their own hearts; and thus it's often said of Pharaoh, that he hardened his heart, and would not let the people go, when he once saw that the judgment was passed.

6. When he shall come to be past all sense and feeling of his sin, and thus the apostle speaks of some, "who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Eph.4:19.

There may be an acquired hardness by the secret judgment of God. Thus it said here that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and of Sihon that, "the LORD thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he

might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day." Deut.2:30. How this is done, more shall be spoken in the due place.

Chapter 2

SHOWING THAT GOD IS NOT, NOR CANNOT BE THE AUTHOR OR PROPER CAUSE OF THIS, OR ANY OTHER SIN.

By another and proper cause I understand one essentially in itself, such a cause as is in itself, and its own nature tends to produce such or such an effect, as the sun is the proper cause of light and heat, the water of moisture and the like. That God cannot thus be the cause of sin, may appear upon these following grounds.

1. God is the author of all good, and therefore he cannot be the author of evil, for out of the same fountain cannot proceed sweet water and bitter. James 3:11. As the sun cannot be the proper cause of light and darkness, no more can the Lord be of good and evil.

2. Sin is a defect. Now God is all action, yea he is the most pure and perfect act, and therefore he cannot be the author of that which is a defect; for however sin cleaves to men's actions, as an adhesive to its subject, yet in and of itself it is a mere defect in a deprivation of what should be.

3. Sin is contrary to those excellent qualities and properties which immediately flow from the pure nature of God. God is light, sin is

darkness. "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." I John 1:5. God is purity and holiness, sin is pollution and filthiness. James 1:21. God is righteous, yea righteousness itself, and all sin is unrighteousness. I John 5:17. God is perfection in the highest degree, all sin is imperfection. Matt.5:48. Now one contrary cannot be the proper cause of another.

4. God is said to be such a God as loveth not wickedness, neither can evil dwell with him; yea, he hates all the workers of iniquity, Psal.5:4-5, hating them because of their sin. Now he cannot hate that which he himself is the author and proper cause thereof.

5. The Lord threatens in his word that he will punish all sin and iniquity, and that he will not hold the wicked innocent, Exod.34:7, but that he will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generation; that the wicked shall not go unpunished, Prov.11:21, that they shall not escape. I Thes.5:3. Now it cannot stand with his justice to punish that which himself is the author and proper cause thereof.

6. Sin makes a separation between God and the soul. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Isa.59:2. It is an aversion of the soul from God. Now God cannot be the author of that which is an aversion from him, for then he

should deny himself, but he cannot lie or deny himself. II Tim.2:13.

7. If God could be the author of sin, he himself might be said to be a sinner; if he were the author of unrighteousness, he himself might be said to be unrighteous, to which the apostle gives an absit, {God forbid, let it be far from the hearts of the faithful,} as a thing blasphemous to speak or think. "Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance, {saith he,} God forbid, for then how shall God judge the world?" Rom.3:5-6.

8. The apostle saith that, "he that committeth sin is of the devil," I John 3:8, and that Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the devil. Now Christ came not into the world to destroy the works of God, therefore sin is none of his work.

9. If God should be the author of sin, then the difference between good and evil would be taken away, both arising from the same cause in the same manner.

10. If God should be the author of sin, then he should seem to disassemble and deal deceitfully with men, because he so often calls off from this as a thing which he loathes and abhors, whilst in the meantime is the parent and producer thereof.

By all these grounds it appears that God cannot be the author and proper cause of sin, though he hath some kind of hand therein.

Chapter 3

SHOWING HOW THAT GOD HATH A HAND IN THE SINFUL ACTIONS OF MEN.

The just and holy God may be said to have a hand in the unjust actions of sinful men in various ways, as.

1. By way of permission, as when he suffers them to follow the sinful inclinations and dispositions of their own wicked natures, and so produce actions accordingly, without restraining or hindering them. Thus it is said that he suffered the Gentiles to walk in their own ways. Acts 14:16.

2. By allowing Satan to tempt and provoke men to sin, and by his temptations to prevail. Thus it is said that he did deliver all that Job had into the hands of Satan, and then Satan stirs up the Chaldeans and Sabeans to take away his oxen and his camels, and to kill his servants. Job 1:12-17. Thus also, he suffered Satan to enter into the heart of Judas, and to stir him up to betray his Master.

3. By withdrawing his grace from men, and not affording a continual supply of his help for their support and sustentation, that they may be preserved from falling. Thus it is said, he took away his spirit from Saul, II Sam.7:15, and that when the ambassadors of the King of Babel came to Hezekiah, the Lord left him to test him, that he might know all that was in his heart. II Chron.32:31. The depraved nature of man is like to a ruinous house that is ready to

fall, if it be not continually under propped and upheld by some supporters, will fall into ultimate ruin. Now God is not bound to yield this support to sinful men, but he may withdraw his helping hand from them as he pleases, which when he doth, then are they ready to fall.

4. God often times punishes one sin with another; thus he punishes the abuse of the ordinances of grace with hardness of heart, and the abuse of light with greater blindness. Thus it is said of the Jews, that God gave them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear. Rom.11:8. And of the Gentiles, that because they abused the light of nature; and when they knew the true God by the works of creation, yet they did not glorify him as God, but withstood the truth in unrighteousness, and therefore God gave them up to vile affections, to do such things which were not seemly. Rom.1:21-26. And in the times of the Antichristian Apostasy, because men received not the love of the truth, therefore God did send them strong delusions to believe the lie. II Thes.2:11-12. And thus much Bellarmine himself grants, for speaking of the incest of Absalom, he saith that God is said to have done it not as it was Absalom's fault, but as it was David's punishment.

5. God may be said to have a hand in the sinful actions of the creature, because he so ordereth them by his holy providence, that he allows sin to be committed in one kind rather than in another; for thus he suffered Joseph's brethren rather to sell their brother into Egypt,

than to kill him; and thus Christ gave leave to the devils, rather to enter into the swine, than into men. Besides he so ordereth and overrules the actions of the sinful creature, as he makes them serve to good uses and purposes; yea sometimes to ends altogether differing; yea even contrary to what they themselves intended. Thus he made the actions of Joseph's brethren in selling him into Egypt for a slave, to be a means of his greater advancement. "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Gen.50:20. And Haman's enmity against Mordecai, and the Jews in getting a decree of the King for their destruction, to be a means of their greater safety and preferment. And the envy of the Jews against Christ, and procuring him to be put to a shameful and cursed death, to be a means and occasion not only of man's salvation, but also of Christ's greater exaltation. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts 2:23.

6. God hath a hand in the sin which man commits so far as he doth sustain and support him in all his natural motions and actions. God being the Author of nature doth support man in all the actions of nature, and that not only in good, but in evil actions. Sin being a defect or privation, and so a kind of non-entity, cleaves itself to something that hath being, to some habit, to some action or motion, as the subject

wherein it is seated. Now all natural actions and motions are in themselves good; hence the rule holds true, that evil is in good, as in the subject thereof. All the works of nature are God's works, for in him we live, and move, and have our being. Acts 17:28. This is true not only in regard of our external, but also of our internal motions and actions; not only of the body, but of the mind, as we cannot move our hand or foot, nor regulate our thoughts, wills and affections without him.

In every sinful action there are two things conjoined and included. The action itself, and the defect or deformity thereof; the inordinancy and obliquity of it. One of these is as it were the matter, the other the form of it, which divines call the material and formal agreement. The former of these is from God, the other from the corrupt will of the creature. It is a true rule that God acts in sin, not as a moral, but as a natural cause; so far only as there is the work of nature in any action. All new actions are new entities and beings, and all beings are from God, who is the first and most perfect Being, and from whom all other beings proceed. All natural motions and actions are creatures, and all creatures are the work of a Creator. Everything that is, so far as it is, hath its production, not only from the creature, but from God. And so far as these actions are beings, and from God they are good. The very being of anything though ever so small is good, because the Chiefest Being is the chiefest good.

Objection: If it be objected that in sins of omission there is no action, therefore in these sins God hath no hand. Answer: It may be answered, though there be no outward action, yet there is an action of the mind and will, for when a man doth omit any duty, he omits it knowingly and willingly, upon deliberation he doth willingly choose rather to let it alone, than perform it. A corrupt minded man will not love his neighbor, he will not go to the holy assemblies; this act of his will, so far as it is an act of nature, is of God.

Thus we have seen how God hath a hand in sin divers ways. The two first are acts of his Sovereignty, whereby he acts as a free agent, as being bound to none. The two second, are acts of his Justice, whereby he inflicts punishment upon such as deserve it. The two last, are acts of his Power and Providence, whereby he doth not only sustain the creatures in their several actions and motions, but guides these with the several adjuncts and additions belonging to them, to such ends as seem best to his wisdom, and in none of these doth he appear in any sort culpable.

Chapter 4

SHOWING HOW THAT GOD HATH A HAND IN THE EVIL ACTIONS OF MEN, MORE THAN BY WAY OF BARE PERMISSION.

That permission is exercised by God in the sinful actions of men is by none denied, {for if he did not suffer them, they could not be,} but whether this permission be accompanied with action, whether he has any kind of efficacy or working in the evil that is done by men is the great question; the affirmative part whereof may thus be proved.

1. The Scripture expressions whereby God is said to have a hand in sin are almost always such as denote action and not a bare permission only. It doth not say that God suffered Pharaoh to harden his own heart, but that God himself hardened Pharaoh's heart. "And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses." Exod.9:12. It is not said that God suffered the Canaanites to harden their hearts against Joshua, but that it was of the Lord that they should harden their hearts to come against Israel, so that they might destroy them, and they might find no favour. "For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses." Jos.11:20. It is not said that he suffered Absalom to commit

wickedness with his father's concubines, but he tells David, what thou hast done in secret, "I will do in the sight of all Israel, and before the sun." II Sam.12:12. It is not said that he suffered the Egyptians to hate his people, but that he turned their hearts to hate them, Psal.105:25, or that he suffered the false prophet to be deceived, but that the Lord himself had deceived him. "And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel." Ezek.14:9. It is not said that he merely suffered the Gentiles to follow their own vile affections, but that he gave them up to vile affections, Rom.1:26, or that he suffered those who received not the love of the truth to be led away with delusions, but that the Lord himself would send them strong delusions to believe a lie. II Thes.2:11. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." Psal.2:4. When our Saviour directs us to pray against temptation, he doth not bid us to pray that God would not suffer us to be led into temptation, but that the Lord himself would not lead us into temptation. Matt.6:13. By these and many other places, where God's working in sin is held forth to us by way of action, it plainly appears that in the sinful actions of men God doth exercise more than a bare permission, else why should the Scripture so constantly use such expressions as denote action? The Scripture doth ever so frequently and constantly speak

improperly upon any subject, where it might as easily have spoken properly.

2. When God is said to harden Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh is said to harden his own heart, if one of these may be taken by way of permission only, why not the other also, and so Pharaoh should have no action in the hardening of his own heart, for though God doth act and work in another manner than Pharaoh himself doth, {as shall more largely be shown afterwards,} yet the same expression being applied to both, it plainly argues that action belongs to both in this hardening, though the manner of their acting be far different.

3. It is granted by all that God doth permit sin to be, otherwise it could not be. Now if he doth permit, then he doth also willingly permit it, for if he should not willingly permit it, then it should come to pass against his will, but it cannot stand with his omnipotency that anything should come to pass outside of his sovereign decree. It is the true rule of Austin that there is nothing done but the omnipotent God will have it to be done, either by doing it himself, or by orchestrating it to be done by others. If he willingly permits it, then he absolutely wills it, {for an act of his will passes upon it,} if he wills it, he in like manner works it, for the Lord is in heaven and does whatsoever he pleases. "But our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." Psal.115:3. So far as he wills anything shall be or come to pass, so far he acts in bringing it to pass, for his will is an active and operative will.

The acts of his will are acts within himself, and all imminent acts are of the same nature with himself, who is altogether efficacious in his acts. How then can it be conceived that such acts as these should be without action? All these imminent acts, namely the acts of his will, counsel and purpose touching things which shall be as they are in him from all eternity, so in time he puts them forth in some outward action and working. Hence it is said that the Lord "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Eph.1:11.

Bellarmino saith, "God is the cause of hardening not positively, but negatively," namely, by way of permission, so that he makes permission to be such a thing wherein God denies and withholds all action, and thus he saith that God hardens. But to harden is an act, and so how can an act be without action, so that this line of reasoning is nothing else but to bring in a clear contradiction for the blinding of the truth, yea he saith furthermore that, "God doth as it were a fit precedent over the evil wills of men, and doth rule, govern, wrest and bend them by working invisibly in them." Is not here a manifest contradiction to his negative permission? For are not all these actions, and can there be action without action? Far more agreeable to truth is the assertion of Dr. Twisse speaking of this subject, "we affirm that God did not only will from all eternity, but did answerable so work in time, and so order the business, that Adam should certainly fall."

4. The Scripture saith that Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the people of Israel were gathered together against Christ, to do whatsoever the hand and counsel of God had determined before time to be done. "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." Acts 4:27-28. What these did to Christ in his suffering was sinful in the highest degree, yet it was done by the determinate counsel of God, and as it is in this, so it is in all other actions of the like nature. Whatever is done in time is determined and decreed before all time. "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Isa.46:10. "Yea, before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand; I will work, and who shall let it?" Isa.43:13. Now the decrees of God are one harmonious and effectual act, for whatever he hath decreed shall be, he in some way or manner procures the being thereof, so that though he be not the author of it if it be evil, yet he hath some kind of efficacy and working therein, for if he should leave it to others, and have no hand at all in the affecting of it, then the thing might never be, and so God might be disappointed of the thing which he decreed. It is a true rule being rightly understood, that if God should decree to permit sin, and that this

permission should be without action, without effectually accomplishing anything therein, then he should decree to do nothing which cannot stand with the nature of a decree.

5. So far as sin makes for the glory of God, so far he hath a hand in effecting it, for he both decrees and works all things which make for his glory, so far as they make for his glory; but sin by God's overruling and directing hand makes much for the glory of God. The Jews crucifying and killing of Christ made way for the glorious work of our redemption. The apostle saith that man's unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God, and that the truth of God abounds through our lie unto his glory. Rom.3:5-6. So far as sin is for God, so far it is from God. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever." Rom.11:36. "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty, for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name." I Chron.29:11-13.

6. The subject of sin, namely the natural motion or action wherein sin cleaves, is such a thing without which sin could not be, {for an action could not be without a subject,} men could not use their tongues to deceit if they

could not speak at all, neither could their feet be swift to shed blood if they could not go at all. But of this natural motion and action God is the author and proper cause, {as hath been showed,} if God wills to yield his concurrence to the substance of any act, it is plain that he wills that act should be done, now without this act the sin that cleaves to the act could not be, therefore he must needs likewise in some way both to will and work in the sin of the act, especially because in many evil actions, not only the action itself simply considered, but the depravity and deformity thereof, makes a way, and is an occasion whereby God gets himself glory.

7. If God's permission of sin should be a bare permission without an action, then he should be a mere spectator of men in their sinful actions, himself not doing anything; and this would much diminish and weaken the work of his Providence in Ruling and Governing the world, by excluding and shutting him out from having any working hand in the greater part of those actions that are done in the world, for the number of wicked men in the world being far greater than the number of good men, the number of evil actions, must needs far exceed the number of good actions; yea, thus the actions of greatest consequence, as the mutation or overthrow of kingdoms, states, commonwealths, {which for the most part are done in a sinful way,} should be exempted and excluded from the working of his providence.

Arminius saith, "those things which God neither wills, nor wills not to be done, these he permits." But is this not to make God an idol spectator of the greatest part of those actions that are done in the world? If a man stands and sees a thing to be done, which he neither would have to be done, nor would not have to be done, wherein he will neither help nor hinder, doth he not here stand as an idol spectator, as one not at all caring whether the thing be done or not? And yet such a kind of carriage and disposition do they attribute to God in regard of the greatest part of those things done, who make his permission to be without action; yea, herein they do after a sort contradict themselves. For Arminius makes permission to be the withholding of an efficacious impediment of such a thing as would certainly hinder the doing of a thing.

Bellarmino saith, "to permit is to deny such effectual grace, as whereby sin may be avoided." But can this withholding of an impediment, and this denial of Efficacious Grace be without any action, at least without the action of God's will, and does he not work all things answerable to his will?

8. It is granted by the adversary that God doth punish one sin with another. Now is it not a ridiculous thing to say that the judge permits only punishment to be inflicted upon a malefactor, for doth he not appoint it as well? And if it be not just, he ought not to permit it. There can be neither appointing nor executing of judgment and punishment without action. By

all these arguments it plainly appears that God doth exercise more than a bare permission in the sin which man commits.

This may further be confirmed by the testimony of some of the most orthodox writers. Calvin saith thus, "that God hardeneth the hearts of men, not only by permitting, but by acting." Likewise that, "God is said to harden reprobates, to turn their hearts to incline and move them. How this is done is not sufficiently explicated, if we fly to prescience and permission only." Again, "when they call to mind that the devil, and the whole train of the ungodly, are, in all directions, held in by the hand of God as with a bridle, so that they can neither conceive any mischief, nor plan what they have conceived, nor how much soever they may have planned, move a single finger to perpetrate, unless in so far as God permits, nay, unless in so far as he commands; that they are not only bound by his fetters, but are even forced to do him service. When the godly think of all these things they have ample sources of consolation." In another place, he saith, "we also note that we should consider the creation of the world so that we may realize that everything is subject to God and ruled by his will and that when the world has done what it may, nothing happens other than what God decrees." "Hence we maintain that, by his providence, not heaven and earth and inanimate creatures only, but also the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly in the course which he has destined." "The hand of God rules the

interior affections no less than it superintends external actions; nor would God have effected by the hand of man what he decreed, unless he worked in their hearts to make them will before they acted." And lastly Calvin writes, "what we must prove is that single events are ordered by God and that every event comes from his intended will. Nothing happens by chance."

So Luther, "God worketh all things in all men even wickedness in the wicked for this is one branch of his own omnipotence," and that, "God effects and moves and impels all things by a necessary and infallible course."

Peter Martyr saith, "there is indeed a permission, but something more is held forth in these strong expressions," namely such as before were mentioned. "If we will speak improperly, God may be said in some way to be either the beginning or the cause of sin; no proper cause indeed, but that which is called the removing of what hinders."

Johannes Piscator saith, "can he be denied to procure a business to be accomplished, by whose counsel and determination the thing is done?"

Mr. Paul Bayne saith, "God's suffering and allowance is not to be understood without his action, for he is a voluntary agent in the things which he suffereth. We must not think his permission to be a bare permission without action."

Yea, not only our modern divines, but that famous ancient Austin himself gives a large suffrage to this truth. "God permits a thing

either willingly or against his will; if against his will, this would be with pain and grief unto him, and then he should have some other greater in power than himself, if he permits willingly, then his permission is some kind of will." Again, "the saints are afflicted according to the will of God, I Pet.3:17, they cannot suffer unless another acts; and he that wills the passion wills the action also, and action proceeds from an agent." Here by the way we may also take notice how ill Bellarmine agrees with Austin in this point, for the writing of the subject and answering to that place, Acts 2:23, where it is said that Christ was delivered to be crucified by the determinate counsel of God, he saith, "that God merely intended to suffer or allow such action," but this crosses Austin, who saith that in the saints suffering, who suffer according to the will of God, "God works actively and efficaciously," and it is contrary to right reason for action and passion are one and the same motion, one cannot be without the other, therefore he that wills the one, must needs will the other also. Further, Austin speaking of that place, Rom.1:26, were God is said to give men up to their vile affections, hath these words, "what is that which he saith when men are said to be delivered up to their own affections and desires? Are they to be understood as left only by the Divine Forbearance of God, and not put forward to sin by the Divine Power as though the same apostle did not join both these together, namely forbearance and power." "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make

one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." Rom.9:21-23. According to Calvin, "when he {Austin} uses the term permission, the meaning which he attaches to it will best appear from a single passage where he proves that the will of God is the supreme and primary cause of all things, because nothing happens without his order."

Thus we see that this learned writer goes as high or rather higher in his expressions touching the manner of God's working in sin than those of our divines have done, who are so much quarreled against by Bellarmine and Arminius.

I know very well that most of our Orthodox writers do seldom use that expression, that God did decree sin, or is the cause of it, but only that he did decree to permit sin; but their meaning must needs be, that God did decree that sin should be effected and brought about in such a way and manner, and by such means, as himself would not be the author or proper cause thereof, but only a cause by way of effect; for if they should mean that he would have no efficacy or working in it at all, then they should make him to exercise a bare permission in it, and so to be only an idle spectator of all the sinful actions done in the

world, which is an opinion that they altogether renounce and reject, as hath been already showed.

The Reformers were accustomed to say, that the wicked actions of men, that is, deeds done by them in disobedience to God's prohibition, and justly exposing them to the punishment which God had denounced against all transgressors, were yet not done without God's knowledge; or against his will, or without his consent, that is, without his having, in some sense, willed that they should take place; or while he looked on simply as an inactive spectator, who took no part, in any sense, in bringing them about.

Doctor Twisse hath a passage where he affirms that though God intends the evil action which man doth, yet he intends not the evil of the action, but his meaning is that he doth not so intend it, as to be the author of it, though he hath a working hand therein, as appears by many other places in his writings, as when he saith, "when it fell out that Adam did sin, this fell out by the will of God." "It is impossible that anything should be done, but that to which God impels the will of man." "To blind is to work and bring it about that a man should be blinded." "Were those things which Satan did ill against Job done only by God's permission? Doth not Job himself profess that God had taken away what he gave?" "The permissive decree is no less efficacious for the ends afore appointed of God than his working decree." These are a few of the statements of that learned man by which

it appears that his meaning in the former words is not as if he denied that God did decree the evil actions of men at all, {for here he grants a decree, and that an efficacious decree,} but only that he doth not so decree the evil of an action, as to be the author or proper cause of it, for if he should not at all intend the evil of men's actions, then the evil of those actions should fall out outside his intention, and then it should be either besides his knowledge, and so he should not be Omniscient, or against his will, and so he should not be Omnipotent.

Chapter 5

SHOWING MORE PARTICULARLY THE MANNER HOW THE RIGHTEOUS GOD HATH A HAND IN THE UNRIGHTEOUS ACTIONS OF SINFUL MEN.

That God is not the author or proper cause of sin, and yet hath done some kind of efficacy and working therein, hath already been showed; and therefore it follows how to show more particularly the manner how he works in the production thereof. The manner of God's working in sinful actions is secret and hidden, not easily to be apprehended, much less to be explicated. Calvin saith, how it was ordained by the Foreknowledge and Decree of God what man's future was without God being implicated as associate in the fault as the author or approver of transgression, is clearly a secret so

much excelling the insight of the human mind, that I am not ashamed to confess ignorance, &c., I daily so meditate on these mysteries of his judgments that curiosity to know anything more does not attract me."

How great a punishment is it to be given up to unseemly passions, whether this be done by way of desertion or by any other inexplicable or inexplicable way; yet there is one way which is not altogether above our apprehension, but therein we may in some sort discern God's manner of working in sinful actions, and that is by administrating occasions, by presenting such objects, and offering to men such things which are in themselves lawful and good, but they making an ill use of them, take occasion by them to be stirred to evil in some kind or other.

God may so carry himself in the administration of things, as he may offer matter and occasion whereby men may be excited either to good or evil, according to the divers quality and temper of their affections. Yea, Bellarmine himself confesses, "that God doth change the mind of princes, by putting some thought that is good, or at least indifferent, whereby they are hindered from their purpose, and so are deceived."

Thus God may administer occasions of sinning either inwardly or outwardly; inwardly by stirring up and suggesting such thoughts to their minds as are in themselves lawful and good, or at least not evil, and yet they take occasion by them to be led to evil.

It was no ill thought for Joseph's brethren to think that their father loved him better than he did them, yet this was the occasion of their envy and hatred against him. Gen.37:4. It was no ill thought for Pharaoh to think that if the Israelites should continue to multiply and increase as they had began, they might in time grow too strong for him, and so depart out of his country whether he would or not; yet hence he takes occasion to oppress them with heavy burdens, and to give command for murdering their male children. Exod.1:10-14. Shimei, whose heart was full of rancor and bitterness against David, because the kingdom was translated from his tribe to the tribe of Judah, when he saw that David was in distress, being driven from Jerusalem by the conspiracy of his son Absalom, and thinking it may be that this came upon David as a just judgment of God for his unjust dealing with Uriah the Hittite, hence takes occasion to vent his spleen by the cursing of David, the hope of impunity likewise compelling him forward. Jeroboam thought if the people should go up early to worship at Jerusalem this might be a means to make them return again to the house of David, this was no evil thought, yet hence he takes occasion to set up the calves at Dan and Bethel, whereby he made Israel to sin. I Kings 12:26-28. If the Jews thought that tomorrow they should die, that is, that destruction would shortly come, {the prophet having denounced it,} this was no ill thought, yet hence they take occasion instead of fasting to fall to feasting, "let us eat and drink

for tomorrow we shall die," say they. Isa.22:13. The Jews thought if they should let Christ alone that all men would follow after him, and this thought was not evil, but hence they take occasion of taking counsel to kill him. John 11:48. God may administer occasions outwardly, and hath both by his works and by his word. By his works divers ways, as the following.

1. By his works of mercy, "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, {saith Solomon,} therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil." Eccl.8:11. "These things hast thou done, {saith the LORD,} and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." Psal.50:21. When God holds his peace at wicked men, when he doth not speak to them in his wrath, nor vex them in his sore displeasure, then they are ready to think that he likes of them well enough, or approves of their ways and courses, so that we see God's patience and longsuffering is an instrumental cause of man's security, or his presumption and boldness in ways that are evil. Hope of impunity, {saith the orators,} is a great allurement to iniquity. And as the Lord's patience and longsuffering is an occasion of presumption, so his bounty of forgetfulness; yea, of rebellion against God. "Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day, lest

when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein." Deut.8:11-12. "Remove far from me vanity and lies, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the LORD, or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Prov.30:8-9. When "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked," then he waxed wanton and rebellious, and it follows, Deut.32:15, thou "hast forgotten God that formed thee." Deut.32:18. "Thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." Deut.32:15.

2. By works of justice. Thus men often times take occasion by the judgments and punishments which God inflicts upon them for sin, to break out further into sin. The Lord led his people through the wilderness and caused them sometimes to meet with want of water, and at other times want of bread, sometimes to be assailed by enemies to humble and to prove them, that he might do them good in their latter end. Deut.8:2. "And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no." Deut.8:2. But the bad ones amongst them, hence took occasion to murmur and rebel against him. When the Lord pours the vials of his wrath upon the followers of the beast, and the adherents of antichrist,

hence they take occasion to blaspheme the God of Heaven for their pains and sores, and repent not of their works. Rev.16:11. When the king of Moab was brought to great straits by the armies of Judah and Israel, {to whom the Lord had promised success in their expedition against him,} he takes his eldest son "that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall." II Kings 3:27.

3. By his works of Providence. It was the work of a favorable providence which caused the Israelites so exceedingly to multiply in Egypt, yet hence Pharaoh takes occasion to oppress them and to murder their male children. It was a work of Providence that brought David in his flight from Saul to Abimelech the priest for relief at such a time when Doeg the Edomite was with him, I Sam.21:7, now hence he takes occasion by his false slanders to stir up Saul to kill all the Lord's priests at Nob, and to make him the instrument thereof. I Sam.22:18. It was a work of Providence that brought David to the sight of a woman washing herself in her garden, when he was walking upon the roof of his house in the evening; and this was an occasion to him of entertaining thoughts of uncleanness, and of putting them forth into action. II Sam.11:2-4. There was no fault at all in offering the occasion, but all the evil arose from David alone, for Joseph had as strong an occasion offered to allure him to the like sin, yet was not at all hurt by it. Gen.39:9.

It was a work of Providence that brought the wise men that came from the East to Jerusalem to inquire after the King of the Jews who was then born, it was a special command of God to direct their going home another way, and not to return again to Jerusalem; yet Herod hence takes occasion to murder all the male children in Bethlehem, and the bordering coasts, that were two years old and under. Matt.2:16.

As God by his providential works administers occasion to men to break forth into sin, so he doth the like by his word; and thus he sent his word and command to Pharaoh, charging him to let the people of Israel go, but hence Pharaoh took an occasion to grow stubborn and rebellious, and more to harden his heart in a resolution not to let them go. Exod.5:2. "I know not the Lord, {saith he,} neither will I let them go," yea, the oftener Moses came to him with command from God for doing it, the more he still hardened his heart against it. As a strong stream becomes the stronger the more it is stopped, for the higher it rises, {though no new water be added to it,} so it is in this case. Thus the Jews, the more they were warned by the prophet of their idolatry, and that they should not go down into Egypt, Jer.42:17, the more obstinate and willful they waxed in both these ways. Jer.44:16. So likewise when Christ's hearers heard that which they thought touched themselves, it is said, that they were filled with wrath, and thrusting him out of the city they led him to the edge of a hill,

with purpose to have thrown him down headlong. Luke 4:29. When Stephen preached so excellently to the Jews, they burst with anger and gnashed upon him with their teeth, running violently upon him. Acts 7:54. So that the preaching of Christ and that of Stephen was an instrumental cause of the wrath of these wicked men, as the stopping of a stream is the cause of the rising thereof.

Hence the apostle speaking of the Law, saith, "where no Law is, there is no transgression," Rom.4:15, and so that sin took occasion by the command, and wrought in him all manner of concupiscence, for without the Law sin is dead, but when the Law came sin revived, Rom.7:8-9, which sin took occasion by the command and deceived him, Rom.7:11, so that the Law quickened sin, put life into it, and set it on work, it lying as it were dead before, and not stirring so strongly as it did after the coming of the Law, by all which it appears that the Law is an instrumental cause of sin. Now so far as the Law works it, God works it, the Law being his agent and instrument.

But here it may be asked, how can it be that the Law which in itself is holy, just and good, should in any way be the cause of evil? This arises from the contrariety that is between the good and holy Law of God, and man's corrupt and wicked heart. There is nothing more pure and holy than the Law of God, {it being a perfect rule of righteousness, and an exact idea of all purity and holiness,} and so in contrast there is nothing more corrupt and impure than

the heart of man, it being the fountain of all pollution and filthiness. Matt.15:19. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Jer.17:9. Now it is a true rule in logic, that when contraries are placed near together, the contraries of their nature doth more appear and put forth itself. Keep fire and water at a distance, and the contraries of their natures doth not much show itself, but bring them together, casting water upon the fire, or putting coals of fire into the water, then they fight one with the other, and the stronger overcomes the weaker. So the more nearer and close the most Pure and Holy Word of God be brought and applied to the corrupt and rebellious will of man, the more is the inmate corruption and rebellion of it irritated and stirred up, and the more strongly doth it put forth itself. The more strongly the command was pressed upon Pharaoh touching letting the Israelites go, the more strongly did his rebellious will rise up against it. This we may see true in the ordinary carriage of wicked men. Let a proud swearer or filthy speaker be rebuked for their ill language, and they will the more break forth into abusive speech. Thus we see how the Law and Word of God, that in its own nature tends to restrain and repress sin, may instrumentally provoke and put men forward to greater eagerness and violence in sinning.

Yea, not only the Law, but the Gospel may instrumentally be an occasion of greater evil. Thus our Saviour tells the Pharisees, "if ye were blind, ye should have no sin, but now ye say, we

see; therefore your sin remaineth." John 9:41. If they had had no means of knowledge, their sin had not been so great, but now the light shined upon them, thereby their sin was increased, because they shut their eyes against it. Hence likewise the apostle saith, that the Gospel was to some the savor of death. II Cor.2:16. In its own nature it did tend to life, but by consequence it became an occasion of death to such as rejected it.

Thus we may see how God may be instrumentally a cause of sin, namely, by administering occasion, and that both inwardly and outwardly, both by his works and by his word. And Bellarmine himself is forced in a manner to acknowledge thus much, for he saith "that the patience of God doth after a sort harden men, but yet he is not said to blind or to harden but only by occasion, for when they do abuse good things they harden themselves." Here Bellarmine grants that God may indeed be said to blind and harden men by accident, as it were, when they abusing his patience and long-suffering take occasion from thence to harden themselves in sin.

Chapter 6

SHOWING THAT SUCH CAUSES AS WORK
INCIDENTLY, MAY HAVE A TRUE EFFICIENCY,
AND YET NOT BE ALTOGETHER BLAMELESS, IN
BLAMEWORTHY ACTIONS.

That incidental actions may have a true efficacy, and yet not be faulty when the effect is faulty, may appear both by Reason and Scripture.

1. The rule of reason tells us that whatsoever hath any power or virtue to bring forth an effect is so far a cause of that effect. Now there be many things which have an efficacy in bringing forth such or such an effect, which yet cannot justly be blamed, though the final effect be evil.

When a man stands so near the fire that he scorches his legs, the fire hath a true efficacy in this scorching, yet not the fire, but the man only is to be blamed; for though it be the natural property of fire to burn, yet the end why the fire was made, was to warm, not to burn those that stand before it, and that it scorches the man's legs, it is his own fault, because he did not stand further off when he might have done it, and the fire was only an instrumental cause of scorching.

When a man wears a sword for his defense, and he in a melancholic or mad humor shall run the sword into his own body; here, not the sword, but the man is to be blamed, because

the end of wearing a sword is the safety, not the hurt of the owner, and though it hath a true efficacy in hurting or wounding him, yet the fault only is his own, because he willingly turned the sword against himself.

When a physician according to the true rules of art shall administer wholesome psychic to his patient for such or such a disease, and this meeting with some hidden distemper or corrupt tumor in the body, shall cause greater pain, or may even cause death, yet here neither the psychic nor the physician are to be blamed, because the work of both these in their own nature tended to health, and was fit to procure it.

When Jason had his impostume {an abscess} cured by the thrusting of a sword into his body, by the hand of his enemy, this was no thanks to his enemy who intended not his health but his death; so on the contrary it is no blame to the physician that intends health, and uses fit means to procure it, though death follows by consequence.

When the same sun beams light upon a garden and a dunghill, and raises a sweet smell from the one, and in ill savor from the other, neither the sun nor the beams thereof are to be blamed, because the efficacy of them did extend to both alike, but the different effect did arise from the difference of the matter whereon they did light.

The like instances also may be brought from Scripture, as when a man is hewing wood with an ax, and the head of the ax slips from the

helve, and slays the stander-by; here neither the ax nor the man are to be blamed, though they have an efficacy in the death of the other, because they are only causes by accident, the scope of neither being to hurt the stander-by. Deut.19:5.

When King Uzziah went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense, Azariah with fourscore other priests, went in after him and withstood him, telling him that it did not belong to him to burn incense to the Lord, then it is said that Uzziah was wroth. II Chron.26:16-19.

When the Pharisees were filled with wrath against Christ, and the breast of the Jews filled with anger against Stephen because they justly reproved them, they were incidental causes of their wrath and anger, but no faulty causes.

The Apostle saith, that the Law causes wrath. "Because the Law worketh wrath, for where no Law is, there is no transgression." Rom.4:15. It causes wrath by means of transgression, {for transgression only properly causes wrath,} as the Law is the cause of wrath, so likewise it is the cause of transgression, namely an incidental cause, yet no faulty cause, for the proper end of the Law was neither to procure wrath, nor to procure transgression, but rather to be a means to preserve man from both of these, by directing him so to walk as he might please God. So when he saith that the "motions of sin were by the Law," {that is, were stirred up by the Law,} Rom.7:5, and that sin took occasion by the commandment, and wrought in him all manner of concupiscence, Rom.7:8, here

sin is said to be stirred up by the Law, and to take occasion by the commandment of working concupiscence, and therefore the Law hath some kind of efficacy in the production of sin, but merely in an incidental way, but not in a way of direct fault.

As the Law is in itself holy, just, and good, Rom.7:12, so it is good that it should be brought to man's understanding by the knowledge of it, and to his will and affections by the right application thereof; but the more this is done, {he being left to himself,} the more doth it irritate and stir up corruptions in him, and his will, {by reason of the contrariety that is in it to the holy Law of God,} waxeth so much more stubborn and rebellious as the Law is more closely applied to it. When the Apostle saith that believers are not under the Law, Rom.6:14, and that they are delivered from the Law, that being dead, {namely that corruption,} wherein we are held, Rom.7:6, this must needs be understood of the incidental work of the Law, whereby, {by means of our corruption,} it stirs up sin in us, for it cannot be understood of the Law as it is a rule of obedience, {because then the Law should be wholly abolished, to which the Apostle gives this answer, "do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the Law," Rom.3:31,} neither can it be understood in this place of the condemning power of the Law, for though it be true that believers are freed from the curse and condemnation of the Law, yet this is an effect of justification, and hath reference to that,

whereas the subject of the Apostle's discourse in these two chapters, where he speaks of freedom from the Law, {namely the sixth and seventh chapter of Romans,} is altogether about sanctification, and he brings many arguments to prove the necessary connection of these two together, and this amongst the rest, because they were not under the Law from which they were delivered from; they must not suffer sin to reign in their mortal bodies, because they were not under the Law but under Grace, Rom.6:14, they were delivered from the Law, {lust and concupiscence being mortified in them, Rom.7:6.} How were they not under the Law? How are they delivered from the Law? So far as they were truly sanctified they were no longer under the work of the Law, whereby it had power to irritate and stir up the rebellion and corruption of their natures, and so to cause sin more to abound in them, being implanted into Christ and made partakers of the virtue of his death and resurrection, their old man was crucified, and their body of sin destroyed, so as they should no longer serve sin, as they did before, Rom.6:6, for whilst they were in the flesh, the motions of sin which were by the Law, {which were stirred up by having the Law brought nearer to them,} did work in their members to bring forth fruit unto death; but now they were delivered from the Law, {and from the incidental and accompanying work of the Law,} that being dead wherein they were held, {their sinful lusts being in part mortified,} that they should serve God in newness of spirit,

and not in the oldness of the letter, Rom.7:5,6, by both which places it appears that the Law hath power to stir up sin and corruption in those that are in a state of corruption, remaining as yet altogether unsanctified, and so the Law is an incidental cause of sin, yet no faulty or sinful cause, that remaining still holy, just and good.

In this sense likewise Christ saith of himself, that he came not to send peace on earth. "I came not to send peace, but a sword," and that he came to "set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law," Matt.10:34-35, and that he came to send fire on the earth. Luke 12:49. How is this to be taken, that Christ came not to send peace but the sword? Is he not the Author and Purchaser of all true peace? Is he not called the Prince of Peace? Isa.9:6. Is it not said of him that Christ himself is our peace? Eph.2:14. How then doth he say, that he came not to send peace? These words must needs therefore be taken with simulation, for Christ came not to send peace, that is, not peace only but the sword also, but especially, his coming was the cause of peace in another manner than it was of the sword. How did it cause the sword? This coming was not the proper cause of the sword, but the sword, {that is, wars and troubles,} broke forth in the world occasionally upon his coming, for after that Christ came and the Gospel was preached in the all the world, some there were that rejected it, others embraced and entertained it, believed and obeyed it, and

accordingly made a profession of Christ and his truth. Now those who did thus came to be hated and maligned, yea to be persecuted and ill-treated by the other; yea by this means it came to pass that those who were joined together by the nearest bond of outward relation came to be divided, and be carried on with the greatest enmity and ill affection one against another, so that the brother did deliver the brother to death, and parents their children, and children did rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. Matt.10:21. By which it is plain, that Christ and his Gospel had a hand in both these, both in sending peace, and sending the sword, because the same expression is used in both. If there were just a bare permission in sending the sword there was permission only in sending peace. If there was efficacy and working in the one, there was so also in the other, although after another manner. In like manner, when Christ saith, that he came to send fire on the earth, {to send persecution, &c.,} and that his desire was that this fire might be kindled, Luke 12:49, it is plain that he hath a working hand herein, for what he intends and earnestly desires, that he likewise in some way or other effectually procures.

If it be asked how the same cause can bring forth contrary affects, how that the same Christ and the same Gospel can bring forth both peace and trouble? The answer is, that though Christ had a sufficiency and work in both, yet it is in a far differing manner, for he is the author and proper cause of peace, this he both

purchased and prayed for, and of this he is the immediate and direct cause thereof; but of the other he is an incidental cause only. The end of his coming and of his causing his Gospel to be preached, being not to bring trouble and persecution, but this arises from the perverse refractory wills of wicked men, who therefore hate the light because their deeds are evil. As the same heat of the sun softens the wax, and hardens the clay; and the same light of the sun helps a good sight to see better, but hurts sore eyes, so it is in this case. Thus also it is said that Christ is set or appointed for the rising and fall of many. Luke 2:34. Not only for the rising of some, but for the fall of others; that he is the cornerstone elect and precious, being made precious to believers, but a stumbling stone and a rock of offense to those that are disobedient. "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious, but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed." I Pet.2:7-8. He hath an efficacy in both these, for the text saith that he is made to both, but of the one he is the author and proper cause, and therefore altogether faultless and blameless, their own willful unbelief being the proper cause of their stumbling.

Chapter 7

SHOWING THAT GOD MAY WORK IN THE SAME BLAMEWORTHY ACTIONS WITH SATAN AND SINFUL MEN, AND YET HIMSELF BE ALTOGETHER BLAMELESS.

That God, who is absolute holiness in and of himself, doth work in the same action with the sinful creature hath already been showed. Not only did Satan move David to number the people, but God also. II Sam.24:1. Jacobs's sons sold their brother into Egypt, so it is said, that God sent him there. Gen.45:7-8. When Job's cattle were taken away by ill instruments, Job saith that, the Lord hath taken them away. Job 1:21.

Now it follows to show yet further how the Lord may be blameless when he works with the creature in the same blameworthy actions. This hath been in part made plain, by that which hath been showed already, namely, that in all these sinful actions the Lord is, as it were, an accidental {incidental} cause, and no proper or immediate cause, which works out of inward principles, and according to its own nature; and this yet will more clearly appear if we consider the differences that are between him and the sinful creature in their working, for though they work together in the same action, yet they differ in the ground, in the manner, and in the end of their working.

1. They differ in the ground of their working. The ground of all God's actions is his own most holy will, his own purpose and good pleasure, for the LORD "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Eph.1:11. "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places." Psal.135:6. "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Isa.46:10. But evil instruments are guided by their own wicked wills, and not by God's will in their evil actions, for they do that which is contrary to his revealed will, and his secret will they know not. If they do the same things God wills, yet not because he wills them, but upon other corrupt principles, as when a wicked man sins he seeks simply to fulfill the will of the flesh, and not at all to fulfill the will of God, Eph.2:2, he doth that which seems good in his own eyes, and not which seems good in God's eyes.

2. They differ in the manner of their working. For in the sinful actions of men God works with evil not as a moral cause, but as a natural cause and consequence only. God nowhere doth counsel or command, or persuade men to do evil, but altogether the contrary. But herein wicked men follow only the dictates of their depraved judgment, the sway of their corrupt will, the motion of their inordinate affections; or are carried on by the councils and persuasions, or examples of others that are like unto themselves.

It belongs to God, {as the author of nature,} to uphold the creature in all its natural motions and actions; and he moves the creatures with a motion agreeable to their several and distinct natures, as irrational creatures, so likewise angels and men. When he moves good men they work according to their natures; when he moves bad men, they work also according to their natures, and this without any iniquity or injustice at all in God, for he is the author and proper cause of the motion; of the obliquity thereof, he is only an incidental cause, as saith Dr. Twisse. It is true that in good actions he uses a further motion and concourse than he doth in other actions, for there he works not only as the author of nature, but of grace; not only by a general influence of nature, but by a distinctive influence of special grace. But in all actions he works as the supporter of nature, whereas wicked men work as the abusers of nature. Bellarmine grants that God has an influx into all the actions that proceed from men, and yet that he is not the author of sin, because he hath only a general, and not a particular influx into the action wherein sin is committed, which being such an influx as is indifferent either to good or evil. But by this reason, as he is not the author of evil, so he should not be the author of good, and if God be the author of nature, he must needs have a particular influx into all natural actions, but into good actions he has a double influx, namely, not only a natural, but a gracious influx.

3. As they differ in the ground and manner of their working, so also in the end of their actings. The end of all God's actions is himself, and his own glory. "The LORD hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." Prov.16:4. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever." Rom.11:36. For this purpose he stirred up Pharaoh that he might show forth his power in him, and might declare his name throughout all the earth. Rom.9:17. And for this end doth he suffer with long patience the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, namely to make his power known. Rom.9:22. Now the end which wicked men aim at in their actions is not God and his glory, but some unworthy and base respects of their own. Wicked men usually make themselves, and the satisfying of their lusts the end of their actions; they prefer their own glory before the glory of the Lord. "The king spake, and said, is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty." Dan.4:30. How far evil instruments when they work in the same action together with God do differ from him in the ground and end of their working will yet further appear if we shall look into some particular instances.

When Satan assailed Job with his temptation, he did it out of hatred against him, and so to drive him to distrust, impatience, and to eventually overthrow and ruin him. But God did this out of love, that thereby he might exercise the faith and patience of Job, and make

way for his greater advancement. When Satan moved David to number the people, he did this out of malice against David and the people, and that hereby he might stir up the anger of God against them, but God did it to humble David, and to make it an occasion of inflicting just punishment upon the people for their many miscarriages. When Joseph's brethren sold him into Egypt, they did it out of envy and hatred, and that they might rid themselves of him, but God did it out of love to Jacob and his family, that it might be an occasion of Joseph's preferment in Egypt, and so of preserving Jacob and his household in the time of extreme famine. When those Jewish high priests and elders delivered up Christ to the soldiers to be crucified, they did it out of envy and ill will, and that they might rid the world of him, but God did it out of love and goodwill to his elect, that they might be saved and delivered out of their lost condition, so that the ends of evil instruments in those actions wherein they work together with God, being all together differing, yea sometimes even contrary to God's ends, they may be justly blameworthy, yet the Lord is altogether blameless.

Objection. But wicked men are blameworthy though they propound good ends to themselves in the bad actions that they do, how then can God be blameless, when he concurs with them in those very same actions, though his end be good? 1. It is because he differs from them not only in the end but also in the ground and manner of his working. 2. There

is not the same reason between God and man, between the Creator and the creature. Man is bound not only to aim at a right end, but also to be guided by a right rule, he is bound to regulate all his actions by the holy Law of God, but though man be bound to yield obedience to the Law, God is not bound to do it, for he made the Law not for himself, but for the creature; not to put himself but man under the subjection thereof, he having no other law but his own most righteous and holy will. "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, what doest thou?" Job 9:12. "Why dost thou strive against him? For he giveth not account of any of his matters." Job 33:13. "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and 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. If the Lord gives no account unto any, then he is not subject to any law, for whoever is subject to the Law must give an account to some or other, else the Law would be of no use. So that this alone is sufficient to make all God's actions good, because the end is always good, namely, himself and his own intrinsic glory. If a man were free from all obligations of a law, and only bound to aim at the glory of God, or the good of his neighbor in the things which he practices, then if he propounded these ends unto himself in all his dealings with God and man, he should be free from blame, but besides this he is obliged to live by a law, and to this law he owes

subjection, which God doth not, for the LORD is a law unto himself.

If this be so understood, as that whatever is the ground and guide of his actions, it is within himself, then it is true, for he borroweth nothing from outside himself, which he makes the motive and ground of any of his actions, but all proceed from his own goodwill and pleasure. But if this be so taken as that whatever God's Law binds man to do, his nature binds him also to do the like, then it holds not, for the Law binds a man to do many things to which God is not bound. It binds man not only not to commit sin, but also to hinder it, {if he hath power to hinder it,} but God is not bound to this, yea, man is bound to employ all the skill and power that he hath to hinder the committing of sin; but if it were so with God then there should never be any sin committed in the world, {for by his omnipotent power he is able to hinder it,} besides, if there were no sin at all, he should lose a great part of his glory, for as he is able to bring light out of darkness, good out of evil, &c., so he daily doth all these things. The Apostle saith that our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God, and that some sins by accident, as it were, make much for the glory of God, as before hath been clearly demonstrated. Besides, the Law binds man to do all the good which he can, to convert all his children and kindred, his friends and neighbors, if we were able to do it. God alone is able to do this, but he doth it not, neither is bound to it. The Lord sustains sinful men in their sinful actions, and

supplies them with natural strength for the acting of them, as in the actions of uncleanness, of drunkenness, &c., but men, {if they were able,} were bound not to do this. So that we see that God may do many things which his Law binds men not to do, and that the other side may not do many things which by his Law men are obliged to do, and therefore he is not subject to it as men are. He is the Supreme Lord, subject to none!

True it is, that God is so a Law to himself that he can do nothing which is contrary to his own nature, as he cannot lie, he cannot deny himself, &c., but there are some things forbidden in the Law which are not contrary to the nature of God. Thus we see how God may work in the same actions with the sinful creature, and yet himself be altogether blameless, for look as when God gets himself glory by the actions of wicked men, {as the Jews crucifying of Christ,} it is no thanks to them because they never intended it; so on the other side, when they abuse his power and providence, {supporting the strength of nature even in sinful actions,} it is no blame to him, because he being the good of nature must sustain nature in all her actions and motions, and because that as the evil which wicked men do is only an incidental cause of his glory, so the good which he affords them, and the help which he administers in upholding their natural strength, is only an incidental cause of the evil which they commit.

Chapter 8

SHOWING HOW THOSE SCRIPTURES ARE TO BE UNDERSTOOD WHICH BY THE SOUND OF WORDS SEEM TO MAKE GOD THE AUTHOR AND PROPER CAUSE OF SIN.

Those Scriptures wherein the same sinful actions are attributed both to God and men, and set forth by the same expressions, {as when God said, that what David had done he would do, II Sam.12:12,} seem to sound so as if both were alike causes of these actions; therefore it will be needful to speak something that may be helpful to weaker apprehensions for the right understanding of these Scriptures, and for the clearing of God's Holiness and Justice. I shall instance only in some of these Scriptures, the principle of them, and what shall be held forth for the clearing of these, may likewise be helpful for the giving satisfaction to other places wherein the like expressions are used.

Objection: In that place, Exodus 9:12, which was propounded for the subject of this discourse, it is said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and afterwards it is said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Exod.9:34. Now it may be asked, since the same action is attributed to both, how both were not causes alike in the production thereof?

The Lord did this in another way than Pharaoh did it; he did it only by administrating

the occasion. He sent Moses with a peremptory command to Pharaoh to let his people go; this did irritate the natural pride and rebellion of Pharaoh's heart, and stir up in him a stronger and more stubborn resolution not to let them go. As the command was holy, just and good, so it was good that it should be applied to Pharaoh, by propounding it, and urging it upon him; but the more this was done, the worse he grew, for the command being holy, and his heart altogether unholy, these two being contrary, the nearer they were brought together, the more they did strive and fight one against another, this being the nature of contraries, as was before showed. But here was no fault at all in the command, for the proper end of the commandment was to inform Pharaoh of his duty, and to stir him up to the performance thereof. But Pharaoh takes a contrary course, for whereas the end of the commandment was to make him willing to let the people go, he takes occasion from it to grow more refractory; either because it put him in mind of the damage which he should receive by their departure, {they being so serviceable in making brick for his buildings,} or that it might appear that he thought not any, {no, not even the Lord himself,} greater than himself; and therefore he scorned to stoop and submit himself to any of his commands. By all which it appears that the commandment was only an occasion or incidental cause of Pharaoh's hardening, but no faulty cause at all. Now as the commandment furnished Pharaoh with

additional spleen against the Israelites, God did that being its agent, and he working by it. Neither God nor his command put any evil into Pharaoh's heart, but by propounding good to him, and not imparting grace to perform it, he takes occasion to become more evil. "God hardeneth not by infusing any evil, but by not bestowing grace," saith Austin.

To this purpose, Dr. Twisse saith well, that "when a man is moved to courses contrary to his corrupt disposition, whether by the word of God, or his works, these motions being only by way of persuasion; and he doth not by grace remove or correct those corrupt notions, in this case to move and to deny grace, is to harden." It is a good thing to move to good actions by outward persuasions, neither is God bound to confer grace inwardly, upon all those whom he doth thus persuade outwardly.

Objection: It is said that God did that which Absalom did when he defiled his father's concubines. 1. As God did it, it was an act of justice in punishing David's sin with Uriah's wife, by suffering Absalom to commit the like sin with his wives. 2. God administered occasion of this action by causing David to leave his concubines to keep his house. There is no evil in this, but hence Ahitophel takes occasion to give that wicked counsel, and Absalom takes occasion to follow it in defiling his father's concubines.

Objection: David saith, that God bid Shimei to go and curse him. II Sam.16:10. 1. This is not to be taken properly, as if Shimei had received a command from God to do this, but

only it shows the efficacy of the Divine Administration of things, even in such things whereof God is only a cause by incident. 2. God did administer occasion to Shimei, for his heart being full of rancor against David; he seeing now David to be brought into distress, thought this a fit time to vent his malice, because now he might do it with hope of impunity, as before was showed. 3. God did it as an act of justice. David had caused the name of the Lord to be blasphemed by the sins which he had committed, and the Lord suffers this wretch to curse and blaspheme him.

Objection: It is said that God turned the heart of the Egyptians to hate his people. Psal.105:25. The Lord is said to do this, not that he infused any hatred into their hearts, but in that he administered occasion, for he caused his people to grow and increase exceedingly both in number and in wealth. Now this gave occasion to the Egyptians to envy and to hate them, and herein the goodness of the Lord to his people stirred up evil affections in them, but this was an expression of their own wickedness, and no fault whatsoever in God's goodness.

Objection: It is said, that if the false prophet is deceived, the Lord hath deceived him. Ezek.14:9. This deceiving of the false prophet is here attributed to God in these respects. 1. In that he withdrew his grace from them, and left him to the deceitfulness of his own heart, which was of itself ready enough to run out into ways of error. 2. He did this to punish the people because they rejected the

doctrine of the true prophets, and would not believe nor obey that truth which they held forth to them. Both these were acts of God's justice. 3. By administering occasions for the judgments threatened by the true prophets, which were not presently or immediately executed, hence the false prophets took occasion to persuade that they should never be. But further, sometimes the true prophets did foretell a peaceful and flourishing estate of Judah and Jerusalem, as when Jerusalem should be called the throne of the Lord, and that all nations should be gathered unto it. Jer.3:17. That Jerusalem should be a praise in the earth, Isa.62:7, and that their land should no more devour the inhabitants thereof. Ezek.36:14. These and many other like promises which were not to be fulfilled until the latter days, the false prophets understood and applied to the present times, and so thereby deceived both themselves and the people; but that they made a false interpretation or application of the doctrine of the true prophets, the fault was only in themselves, and not in the doctrine which the other had truly taught.

Objection: It is said that God gave up the Gentiles to vile affections, Rom.1:26, and that he sent strong delusions to those that lived under the anti-Christian apostasy. II Thes.2:11. These Gentiles had vile affections of their own, and the others lacked the love of the truth, and that God left them to their vile affections, and to the deceitfulness of their own hearts, or to the delusions of false teachers; this was an act

of justice to punish the one for going against the light of nature, and the other for not receiving the truth in love, when it was held forth to them.

Objection: When the evil spirit offered himself to seduce Ahab, the Lord bids him to go and do it. I Kings 22:22. Here is more than a bare permission, here is a direct command, and therefore here the Lord seems to be the author of Ahab's being deceived by the evil spirit, for what a man commands to be done, that he is the author and proper cause thereof. 1. It is plain by this scripture, that the evil spirit was desirous to seduce Ahab, {for he offers himself as an instrument to affect it,} but that he had no power to do it without leave from God. Now when the Lord bids him to go and do so, this hath but the force of an indirect authorization, as if he had said that thou mayest go and do the thing which you desire to do, namely to persuade Ahab to go up to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, that he may fall there. 2. It may be answered, that all this which is here spoken by the prophet Micaiah, of the Lord's sitting upon a throne, and all the host of Heaven appearing before him, and the question and answer here made, that all this, {I say,} is delivered in a parabolical way, and therefore cannot in every breath be taken properly.

"God induces by prosopopoeia," {a figure of speech,} saith Peter Martyr. God is brought in the person of a man, and speaking after the manner of men. Now in parables, the scope of the parable is chiefly to be looked at, and what truth it holds forth; neither is every parabolical

application to be urged as a thing really done, as in the parable of the rich man, being brought in as speaking to Abraham, and Abraham answering him again, which we cannot think was actually done. Luke 16:24-25. So in this place, every circumstance cannot be urged as a thing really acted, touching the Lord's sitting on a throne, and all the host of Heaven standing before him, and the question propounded and answered; but this is brought in by way of resemblance to Kings and Princes, who when they have business of weight in hand, are inclined to consult with their nobles, and those about them. All parables are similitudes, and of them the rule is true, that in every similitude there is something that is different, there is something that is hidden, and therefore they are not to be stretched beyond their bounds, and so urged as if they agreed in everything to that which they are brought to illustrate.

These are the principle scriptures wherein such expressions are used, as seem to make God the author of sin; for others like unto these, they may receive the like answer, namely that when God is said to do the same things which sinful men do, he doth it, either as the author of nature and supporter of it in natural actions, or as the righteous judge by withdrawing of his grace, and punishing one sin with another, or by administering occasions, in all which he is altogether blameless.

Chapter 9

CONTAINING AN ANSWER TO SOME OBJECTIONS WHICH ARISE FROM THAT WHICH HATH BEEN BEFORE DELIVERED TOUCHING THE MANNER HOW GOD HATH A HAND IN SIN.

It hath been showed before that God doth not only permit sin, but that he doth willingly orchestrate it unto his own glory; and so therefore his will is conversant about it, and his will is more than a mere wishing, for what he allots, that he wills with an active will. Against this it may be objected.

1. That will may be said to be evil whose act is evil, that act is evil which hath an evil object, {for all acts receive their information, and so their denomination from their object,} when the act of man's will is carried after things unlawful then is this act evil and so is the will from whence it proceeds. To this it may be answered that sin is not so entirely and absolutely evil, but it may have some respect of good, it may have some good joined with it.

A. For in sinful acts nature's work is good, {as hath been showed,} it is a true rule that the act of sin as it is an entity, it is good in regard of the moral affection or quality thereof, so it is an evil. Secondly, though sin in itself be evil, yet it may be made a means of an occasion of good. God is able to bring good out of it. Hence Augustine saith excellently, "although evil

things so far as they are evil are not good, yet it is good that not only good, but evil should be." Sin is in itself against the glory of God, therefore he cannot will it as it is in itself, and in its own nature, and as wicked men will it. But as the skillful physician can so order and temper some poisons that though they be in themselves destructive to nature, yet he can make them medicinal and helpful; so the wise and mighty God is able to make that which is in itself against his glory, to be serviceable to his glory, he can work out his own glory from the work of men's actions, he can make them useful to the best ends; and so far he may both will them and work them, namely, as he can and will bring good out of them.

Saith Augustine, "the Lord would not suffer evil to be, unless he being omnipotent could bring good out of evil." To the same purpose he says in another place, "God did know that it more befits his omnipotent goodness to bring good out of evil, than not to cause any evil at all to be." Yea, Bellarmine himself acknowledges that "God did draw forth a wonderful great good out of the fall of man." So that we see that sin, although evil in itself, may have some respect of good in it, and some way make for the glory of God. Now in this respect only God wills it, and this he may do and his will still be a just, holy and righteous will.

Objection: If man's sin be the object of God's decree, then man sins necessarily, {for what God hath decreed must necessarily come to pass,} and if the decree of God be the cause

of this necessity, then likewise it is the cause of that sin which follows upon it, and so God shall be the author and proper cause of sin.

To this we answer, that God's decrees do not take away the liberty of man's will, which may appear many ways. 1. Christ death was decreed, for he was delivered by the determinate counsel of God, Acts 2:23, yet he died freely, for he saith of himself, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John 10:17-18. The Lord laid it down willingly and freely; besides if he had not done thus, if Christ's death had not been voluntary, it had not been an act of perfect obedience, and so could not have been meritorious. The steadfastness and firm standing of the heavenly angels in their integrity is a free act, for they are not enforced to it, yet this was decreed for they are the elect angels. The saints are chosen to faith and sanctification, yet they believe and repent freely, not being led to it by any natural or violent necessity. All our natural motions and actions proceed freely from us, yet to deny these to be within the compass of God's decree, were to deny a great part of his providential reign over all things, "for in him we live, and move, and have our being." Acts 17:28. "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the LORD directeth his steps." Prov.16:9. And the Lord doth in time all which he hath determined to do before all time.

2. God's decree is one of those eminent acts which are always within himself, and of these acts the rule holds true, that they do put nothing into the object about which they are conversant. God's decree alone, {being an instrument within himself,} works nothing upon the creature till it comes to execution, till some way or other he doth put forth his purpose by some outward act. Unless therefore it can be showed how God in the execution of his decree, by some outward act upon man doth necessitate man's will, his decree alone will never infer any necessity upon it, and we find the contrary by experience, namely, that we are carried toward to the committing of sin freely as we are to eat our meat, or drink or drink, or perform any action most agreeable to our natures, being led to it neither by any violent or natural necessity.

3. God's decree is so far from infringing the liberty of the second causes that it establishes and strengthens them in their liberty, for he doth not only determine and decree the thing itself, but also the manner thereof, he determining that some things shall come to pass necessarily, other things freely and contingently. That necessary things shall come to pass by necessary causes, contingent things by contingent causes. All things being authorized as from God, with all the adjuncts and properties that belong to them, and he working in all things according to the nature of the things, and therefore in natural agents he causes things to come to pass necessarily, in free agents contingently, so that though God's

will determines man's will, yet it determines to work contingently and freely. Saith Dr. Twisse, "as the will is necessarily moved to act upon supposition of the divine motion, so it is necessarily moved to act freely, because God moves man's will in a way agreeable to his own nature." Upon the determination of God's decree it was necessary that the first man should sin, but it was also necessary that he should sin freely.

Causes by accident, {as it were,} never work necessarily, but contingently. The sun sends forth light necessarily, but darkens weak eyes contingently. The Law is only an inadvertent cause of sin, {as was showed before,} and look how the Law works if God works it, and as he works it so he hath decreed to work it, therefore his decree infers no necessity. Besides a cause by accident never works till such as is properly, and in its own nature of cause, sets it to work. The sword which a madman wears will never move to hurt him, until he himself begins to move it. The wall will never hurt the glass or pot, until the drunken man or some other dashes it against the wall, no more will the Law of God ever hurt a man until he dashes himself against it. Causes by accident are always reducible to other causes, so the last resolution of sin must be in the freewill of man as the true and proper cause thereof.

Objection. But here it may be further objected, that if that which God hath decreed doth not necessarily come to pass, then his

decree may be frustrated. Answer. This objection makes as much against God's foreknowledge, as against his decree, for as he cannot be disappointed in his decree, so he cannot be deceived in his foreknowledge, but it is granted on all sides that God did foresee and foreknow the fall of Adam, {as all other sins,} before it was committed, and therefore his foresight doth not hinder the free working of man's will, no more doth his decree.

Secondly, it follows not that his decree may be frustrated and disappointed, though some things come to pass contingently, because although it be necessary that what God hath decreed should come to pass, yet not that it should come so necessarily, that it should be affected in a necessary manner, and by a necessary means. God having decreed that not a bone of Christ should be broken, it was necessary that this should come to pass, and that Christ's legs should be preserved from breaking, when the others were broken that were crucified with him; but yet this came not to pass necessarily, for both Christ's bones were in their own nature such as might be broken, as also the soldiers did freely abstain from the breaking of them, without any compulsion at all.

But it is not possible that the same effect should come to pass, both necessarily and contingently. Yes, it is possible, as this effect hath reference to divers causes, as the not breaking of Christ's bones had reference to God's decree and appointment, it was necessary, {as hath been showed,} because

that could not be disappointed, but as it had reference to the second cause, namely the freewill of the soldiers, as it was not necessary but contingent. So on the other side, the sun's giving light in the air, and the fire burning of combustible matter are necessary effects as they have reference to the second causes, but contingent as they have reference to the first cause, for God doth freely, not necessarily concur with the sun in its shining, and the fire in its burning.

Hence arises these distinctions so frequent with divines, of an absolute and conditional necessity; a necessity of the cause, and of the consequence. The absolute necessity, or necessity of the cause is, when things are so fast and firmly tied together by the order of the second causes, as according to the course of nature, the effect cannot come to pass otherwise than it doth. As if a man be a man, he must needs be a reasonable creature; if fire be fire, it must needs have the property of burning; if a stone be a stone, the motion of it must needs tend downward. The conditional or consequential necessity is when there is no such fast linking together of the second causes, but that when they work one way, there is a disposition in them to work another way, though one thing doth certainly follow another, yet by no necessary causation, but by a free and contingent manner of working.

Upon supposal of God's Ordination and Appointment the rising of the sun follows the rising of the morning star, and, {in the countries

where we live,} the coming of the warm summer follows the coming in of the swallows amongst us, and this by a consequential necessity, for it is never otherwise, but not by any absolute or causal necessity. God having decreed and appointed concerning Esau and Jacob, that the elder should serve the younger, it was necessary that Jacob should get the birth right and blessing from his brother Esau, but this was affected by as contingent means as might be, for it was no whit necessary that Esau should come in hungry from hunting, that Jacob should have pottage in readiness, that Esau should be desirous of it, and be willing to part with his birthright for it, all these things were done freely on both parts, as there was no necessity that Isaac should mistake Jacob for Esau, and his savory meat for Esau's venison, but all this was done most freely, though guided by a secret Providence.

As was God having determined that the Israelites should spoil the Egyptians of their jewels of silver and jewels of gold at their departure out of Egypt, Exodus 12:35, along with 3:22 & 11:2, which must necessarily come to pass, yet it was accomplished in a most free manner without any enforcement or necessity, for it is said that they asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and that the Lord gave them favour in their eyes, so that they granted their request. So God having decreed the fall of Adam, it was necessary that this should come to pass, but it was also necessary that it should come to pass freely,

and accordingly he did freely and willingly yield to the enticing persuasion of the serpent, without any compulsion at all. For as the power of God, whereby he is able to change the nature of things, doth not hinder the necessary working of necessary causes, so likewise the will of God, {whereby he hath determined the event one way,} doth not hinder the free and contingent working of contingent causes. Besides every necessary truth is an eternal truth, this being a most true rule, that a necessary proposition is that which is always true, and can never be false, that man is a reasonable creature, was a necessary truth before man was born. That Cain should kill his brother was no necessary truth before the thing was done; no more was it a necessary truth that Adam should eat of the forbidden fruit, before he had eaten it, and although it was a truth afterwards, yet no necessary truth, for no circumstance of time can change the nature of things as to make a contingent truth to become necessary, or a necessary truth to become contingent. True it is that when a thing is done it cannot be undone, {for a thing cannot be, and not be both at once,} but it was not necessary that it should be done if it be a thing of a contingent nature. What I now speak or write, is necessary that it should be thus spoken or written when it is once done, but before it was done it was not necessary that I should speak or write in this manner, or speak or write it all, these being acts of freedom and liberty, and so it is in all actions of the like nature, in all contingent actions.

Thus we see that God's determination and decree doth not infringe or obstruct the liberty of man's will, and therefore notwithstanding such a decree, man is no whit less blameworthy, nor God at all faulty in the evil which man doth.

A third objection which may be raised from what hath been delivered is that God hath been said to be an incidental cause of sin, if so, then the sinful actions of men fallout besides his scope and intent, for that is said to be in effect by accident, {as it were,} when some event happens besides the intent of the efficient. Now how can God will or decree sin, if it falls out besides his scope and intents?

To this doubt answer may be made by distinguishing between the intention of work and the workman. Sin is besides the scope of the work which God doth accomplish, but not besides his own intent who is the agent and workman. When he decrees that sin shall be, he intends it shall be by such ways and means by which acts and works, {so far as he works in them,} as in themselves and in their own nature tend only to good, and are mere consequential causes of the evil which men commit by their natural inclination towards that which is contrary to God's holy word. The Law and Word of God, his mercies, judgments and all his dealings with men, in their own nature tend to this end, to make men better not worse; and if they be made worse by them, it is besides the scope and intent whereunto these things in their own nature tend. The Gospel in itself tends to life, when therefore it is the savor of death, it is

besides the proper scope and intent of the Gospel, but though it be besides the intent of the Gospel to be the savor of death, it is not besides God's intent, for he both knows and intends in what effect the Gospel shall have, otherwise he should be defective in his wisdom and providence. Besides, what power the Gospel hath to produce an effect either way, it receives from the Lord himself. Hence it is said to be the power of God unto salvation, Rom.1:16, the powerful instrument which God uses to bring men to a knowledge of salvation, which power he puts into it; and so likewise when he works the other way it is his power as well working effectually. The Lord bids the prophet, to go and "make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed," Isa.6:10, and how should he do this? Namely, by preaching the word unto them, by which it appears that sometimes the word doth harden men's hearts, close their ears and shut their eyes, and that God intends it should do so, and sends it for this very purpose; yet the word in its own nature tends to soften their hearts, to open their ears and eyes, and to make them see and hear better, so that the word here is only an incidental cause, {it being besides the scope and intent of the word to harden,} yet this is not besides God intent, who in all his actions, and in the use of such instruments as are employed in them propounds to himself a most sure and

certain end. By all which it appears as the secret and just judgment of God, and so his infinite wisdom and skill, who can work out his own ends by such means, as in their own nature do tend a contrary way.

Chapter 10

SHOWING SOME USEFUL CONCLUSIONS WHICH DO NECESSARILY FOLLOW FROM WHAT HATH BEEN SPOKEN OF THE SUBJECT.

God so ordereth all things, that in all the sins which are committed by men though he hath a secret working hand therein, yet he works in a most just and holy manner, and doth nothing but what is right and good.

Hence it follows that in all the sin which is committed, in all the evil which is done, either by ourselves or others, we lay all the blame on ourselves or them, not imputing the least miscarriage on God, not so much as even in our thoughts, for the Lord is just in all his ways, and holy in all his works. Whatever he doth is well done, be the instruments never so bad by whom it is done.

In all the evil that befalls us, we have no just reason at all to repine and murmur, to be impatient or discontent, for all his dealings with us, whether by his word or his works, his mercies or his judgments, do in themselves work together for good. Rom.8:28. When therefore any evil comes we must take heed

that we do not charge God foolishly, Job 1:22, but remember that we have procured these things to ourselves, as the prophet tells the people, "hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way." Jer.2:17. Sin is the seed of sorrow, and all the evil of suffering arises from the evil of sinning, and this arises only from ourselves; yea, though sometimes we suffer many evils altogether unjustly as they proceed from men, yet as they come from the hand of the Lord, {who sovereignly guides all the actions of men,} they are done most holy, wisely and justly. Thus Daniel acknowledgeth in regard of himself and the people, "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee." Dan.9:7. Saith Nehemiah, "now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly." Neh.9:32-33. "Let God be true, {saith the Apostle,} but

every man a liar; as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." Rom.3:4. So let God be just and holy, and every man sinful, wicked, and wretched, abundantly worthy of all the evil which comes upon him.

Hence it follows that we ought with all reverence to admire and to adore the infinite wisdom, justice and power of God that is able to work in the most blameworthy actions of sinful men, and yet himself remain altogether blameless, that is able to bring about the best ends by the worst means, that in many great works which hath been done in the world, hath wrought out such ends, as have been altogether different, yea, sometimes contrary to the scope and intent of those who have been the principle actors and agents in them. Little did Joseph's brethren think that when they sold their brother for a slave, this should be the means of making him the greatest man in all the land of Egypt next to Pharaoh. Little did Haman think that when out of his hate and indignation against Mordecai, he giving a decree of destroying all the Jews in the Kings Dominion in one day, that this should be a means and occasion of making them have a hand against their adversaries and of procuring liberty to destroy them; yea, of bringing himself to the gallows. Esther 8:11 & 7:10.

Little did the Jews think that their envy and hatred against Christ should be an occasion of the redemption of mankind, that when they spit upon him, buffeted him, beat him with rods,

crowned him with thorns, caused him to suffer the shameful and accursed death of the cross, that this should be a means of his greater advancement and exaltation. Yet the Scripture saith, that he "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil.2:7-11. What reason therefore have we in a way of admiration to cry out with the Apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom.11:33.

Thirdly, hence it follows that we ought to acknowledge with all thankfulness that infinite goodness of God which does not suffer us to go on in the course of sinning, especially in such a sort as would ruin our souls, and drive us to destruction, for if he should it would be in vain for us to complain against him, he would easily acquit himself and justify his own proceedings, he would be justified in all his words, and overcome when he is judged, {as the Apostle speaks, Rom.3:4,} he would easily convince us that in all the evil which we have done, or shall

suffer, the just blame lies upon our own heads, and our destruction is of ourselves. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help." Hos.13:9. He would cause our mouths to be stopped, and make us, {as all the world,} to be found culpable before him. "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Rom.3:10-11. If the Lord should enter into judgment with us, we should not be able to answer one of thousand. What a mercy it is that he doth not suffer us to fall into sin so frequently, and in so foul a manner as we are ready to do, especially that he doth not charge our sins upon us.

What reason have we to say with David, "bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction, &c., he hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Psal.103:1-4, 10-12. To the Lord alone be all glory now and forevermore!

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