

De Servo Arbitrio
“On the Enslaved Will”
Or
The Bondage of the Will
By
Dr. Martin Luther

PREFACE

BY

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PREFACE

THIS excellent work of that eminent servant of God, Martin Luther — one of the noble Reformers is acknowledged to be one of the greatest, if not the greatest of Luther's productions. Luther himself considered it his best publication.

I had purposed writing a short account of each of the Opponents — Erasmus and Luther — who come before us in the book, and of the controversy, but from lack of time owing to many calls, and wishing to get the volume into the hands of lovers of Luther as soon as possible, I had to forego this privilege.

I believe I have succeeded in producing the best English edition of this Masterpiece of Luther that has been published. Cole's translation has been used with slight alterations from Vaughan.

My task has been a difficult one, especially as I am ignorant of the German Language. Luther's Scriptural quotations are of course in the German Tongue, and as he often seemed to quote them from memory and as no references to verses, and sometimes none to chapters are given, and sometimes the wrong name of the Book is given, English Concordances have been of very little help to me, and often no use at all; yet I trust this edition will prove a success in spite of my handicaps.

Although Luther used certain words that I should not employ, yet I have adhered faithfully to his own phraseology as translated by Cole. Luther speaks for himself.

This book is most needful at the present day. The teachings of many so-called Protestants are more in accordance with the Dogmas of the Papists, or the ideas of Erasmus, than with the Principles of the Reformers; they are more in harmony with the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent than with any Protestant or Reformed Confessions of Faith.

If the Lord should be pleased to open the eyes and understanding of some of these so-called Protestants to whom I have referred — through the perusal of this work of the great Reformer — Luther — enabling them to see that they are at present believing and teaching awful delusions contrary to the Word of God, and the Protestant Reformed Religion, and causing them to return to The Old Paths, the labours of "THE SOVEREIGN GRACE UNION" will not have been in vain.

The labour involved in the preparation of this work for publication in its present form has been enjoyable, although it has often been carried out in much pain, and sometimes during sleepless nights. I rejoice in being able to issue it, and do earnestly pray that the Lord will bless it to the Ingathering of His Elect, and to the maintenance of His Cause and Truth in the days in which our lot has been cast.

Grove Chapel Parsonage,
Camberwell Grove, S.E.S.
June, 1931.

PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

THE Translator has long had it in meditation, to present the British Church with an English version of a choice Selection from the Works of that great Reformer, Martin Luther: and in November last, he issued Proposals for such a publication. He considers it however necessary to state, that this Treatise on the Bondage of the Will, formed no part of his design when those Proposals were sent forth. But receiving, subsequently, an application from several Friends to undertake the present Translation, he was induced not only to accede to their request, but also to acquiesce in the propriety of their suggestion, that this work should precede those mentioned in the Proposals. The unqualified encomium bestowed upon it by a Divine so eminent as the late Reverend AUGUSTUS MONTAGUE TOPLADY, who considered it a masterpiece of polemical composition, had justly impressed the minds of those friends with a correct idea of the value of the Treatise; and it was their earnest desire that the plain sentiments and forcible arguments of Luther upon the important subject which it contained, should be presented to the Church, unembellished by any superfluous ornament, and unaltered from the original, except as to their appearance in an English version. In short, they wished to see a correct and faithful Translation of Luther on the Bondage of the Will — without note or comment! In this wish, the Translator fully concurred: and having received and accepted the application, he sat down to the work immediately: which was, on Monday, December 23rd, 1822.

As it respects the character of the version itself — the Translator, after much consideration of the eminence

of his Author as a standard authority in the Church of God, and the importance of deviating from the original text in any shape whatever, at last decided upon translating according to the following principle; to which, it is his design strictly to adhere in every future translation with which he may present the public — to deliver FAITHFULLY the MIND of LUTHER; retaining LITERALLY, as much of his own WORDING, PHRASEOLOGY, and EXPRESSION, as could be admitted into the English version. — With what degree of fidelity he has adhered to this principle in the present work, the public are left to decide.

The addition of the following few remarks shall suffice for observation.

1. The Work is translated from Melancthon's Edition, which he published immediately after Luther's death.
2. The division-heads of the Treatise, which are not distinctively expressed in the original, are so expressed in the Translation, to facilitate the Reader's view of the whole work and all its parts. The Heads are these — Introduction, Preface, Exordium, Discussion part the First, part the Second, part the Third, and Conclusion.
3. The subdividing Sections of the matter, which, in the original, are distinguished by a very large capital at the commencement, are, in the Translation, for typographical reasons, distinguished by Sections I, II, III, IV, &c.
4. The Quotations from the Diatribe, are, in the Translation, preceded and followed by a dash and inverted commas: but with this distinction — where Erasmus' own words are quoted in the original the commas are double; but single, where the substance of his sentiments only is quoted. The reader will observe, however, that this distinction was not adopted till after the first three sheets were printed: which will account for all the quotations, in those sheets, being preceded and followed by double commas. Though it is presumed, there will be no difficulty in discovering which are Erasmus' own words, and which are his sentiments in substance only.
5. The portions of Scripture adduced by Luther, are, in some instances, translated from his own words, and not given according to our English version. This particular was attended to, in those few places where Luther's reading varies a little from our version, as being more consistent with a correct Translation of the author, but not with any view to favour the introduction of innovated and diverse readings of the Word of God.

With these few and brief preliminary observations, the Translator presents this profound Treatise of the immortal Luther on the Bondage of the Will to the Public. And he trusts he has a sincere desire, that his own labour may prove to be, in every respect, a faithful Translation: and that the work itself may be found, under the Divine blessing, to be — an invaluable acquisition to the Church — “a sharp threshing instrument having teeth” for the exposure of subtlety and error — a banner in defence of the truth — and a means of edification and establishment to all those, who are willing to come to the light to have their deeds made manifest, and to be taught according to the oracles of God!

HENRY COLE.

London, March, 1823.

INTRODUCTION.

Martin Luther, to the venerable D. Erasmus of Rotterdam, wishing Grace and Peace in Christ.

THAT I have been so long answering your DIATRIBE on FREE-WILL, venerable Erasmus, has happened contrary to the expectation of all, and contrary to my own custom also. For hitherto, I have not only appeared to embrace willingly opportunities of this kind for writing, but even to seek them of my own accord. Some one may, perhaps, wonder at this new and unusual thing, this forbearance or fear, in Luther, who could not be roused up by so many boasting taunts, and letters of adversaries, congratulating Erasmus on his victory and singing to him the song of Triumph — What that Maccabee, that obstinate assertor, then, has at last found an Antagonist a match for him, against whom he dares not open his mouth!

But so far from accusing them, I myself openly concede that to you, which I never did to any one before: — that you not only by far surpass me in the powers of eloquence, and in genius, (which we all concede to you as your desert, and the more so, as I am but a barbarian and do all things barbarously,) but that you have damped my spirit and impetus, and rendered me languid before the battle; and that by two means. First, by art: because, that is, you conduct this discussion with a most specious and uniform modesty; by which you have met and prevented

me from being incensed against you. And next, because, on so great a subject, you say nothing but what has been said before: therefore, you say less about, and attribute more unto “Free-will,” than the Sophists have hitherto said and attributed: (of which I shall speak more fully hereafter.) So that it seems even superfluous to reply to these your arguments, which have been indeed often refuted by me; but trodden down, and trampled under foot, by the incontrovertible Book of Philip Melancthon “Concerning Theological Questions:” a book, in my judgment, worthy not only of being immortalized, but of being included in the ecclesiastical canon: in comparison of which, your Book is, in my estimation, so mean and vile, that I greatly feel for you for having defiled your most beautiful and ingenious language with such vile trash; and I feel an indignation against the matter also, that such unworthy stuff should be borne about in ornaments of eloquence so rare; which is as if rubbish, or dung, should be carried in vessels of gold and silver. And this you yourself seem to have felt, who were so unwilling to undertake this work of writing; because your conscience told you, that you would of necessity have to try the point with all the powers of eloquence; and that, after all, you would not be able so to blind me by your colouring, but that I should, having torn off the deceptions of language, discover the real dregs beneath. For, although I am rude in speech, yet, by the grace of God, I am not rude in understanding. And, with Paul, I dare arrogate to myself understanding and with confidence derogate it from you; although I willingly, and deservedly, arrogate eloquence and genius to you, and derogate it from myself.

Wherefore, I thought thus — If there be any who have not drank more deeply into, and more firmly held my doctrines, which are supported by such weighty Scriptures, than to be moved by these light and trivial arguments of Erasmus, though so highly ornamented, they are not worthy of being healed by my answer. Because, for such men, nothing could be spoken or written of enough, even though it should be in many thousands of volumes a thousands times repeated: for it is as if one should plough the seashore, and sow seed in the sand, or attempt to fill a cask, full of holes, with water. For, as to those who have drank into the teaching of the Spirit in my books, to them, enough and an abundance has been administered, and they at once contemn your writings. But, as to those who read without the Spirit, it is no wonder if they be driven to and fro, like a reed, with every wind. To such, God would not have said enough, even if all his creatures should be converted into tongues. Therefore it would, perhaps, have been wisdom, to have left these offended at your book, along with those who glory in you and decree to you the triumph.

Hence, it was not from a multitude of engagements, nor from the difficulty of the undertaking, nor from the greatness of your eloquence, nor from a fear of yourself; but from mere irksomeness, indignation, and contempt, or (so to speak) from my judgment of your Diatribe, that my impetus to answer you was damped. Not to observe, in the mean time, that, being ever like yourself, you take the most diligent care to be on every occasion slippery and pliant of speech; and while you wish to appear to assert nothing, and yet, at the same time, to assert something, more cautious than Ulysses, you seem to be steering your course between Scylla and Charybdis. To meet men of such a sort, what, I would ask, can be brought forward or composed, unless any one knew how to catch Proteus himself? But what I may be able to do in this matter, and what profit your art will be to you, I will, Christ cooperating with me, hereafter shew.

This my reply to you, therefore, is not wholly without cause. My brethren in Christ press me to it, setting before me the expectation of all; seeing that the authority of Erasmus is not to be despised, and the truth of the Christian doctrine is endangered in the hearts of many. And indeed, I felt a persuasion in my own mind, that my silence would not be altogether right, and that I was deceived by the prudence or malice of the flesh, and not sufficiently mindful of my office, in which I am a debtor, both to the wise and to the unwise; and especially, since I was called to it by the entreaties of so many brethren.

For although our cause is such, that it requires more than the external teacher, and, beside him that planteth and him that watereth outwardly, has need of the Spirit of God to give the increase, and, as a living Teacher, to teach us inwardly living things, (all which I was led to consider;) yet, since that Spirit is free, and bloweth, not where we will, but where He willeth, it was needful to observe that rule of Paul, “Be instant in season, and out of season.” (2 Tim. iv. 2.) For we know not at what hour the Lord cometh. Be it, therefore, that those who have not yet felt the teaching of the Spirit in my writings, have been overthrown by that Diatribe — perhaps their hour was not yet come.

And who knows but that God may even condescend to visit you, my friend Erasmus, by me His poor weak

vessel; and that I may (which from my heart I desire of the Father of mercies through Jesus Christ our Lord) come unto you by this Book in a happy hour, and gain over a dearest brother. For although you think and write wrong concerning “Free-will,” yet no small thanks are due unto you from me, in that you have rendered my own sentiments far more strongly confirmed, from my seeing the cause of “Free-will” handled by all the powers of such and so great talents, and so far from being bettered, left worse than it was before which leaves an evident proof, that “Free-will” is a downright lie; and that, like the woman in the gospel, the more it is taken in hand by physicians, the worse it is made. Therefore the greater thanks will be rendered to you by me, if you by me gain more information, as I have gained by you more confirmation. But each is the gift of God, and not the work of our own endeavours. Wherefore, prayer must be made unto God, that He would open the mouth in me, and the heart in you and in all; that He would be the Teacher in the midst of us, who may in us speak and hear.

But from you, my friend Erasmus, suffer me to obtain the grant of this request; that, as I in these matters bear with your ignorance, so you in return, would bear with my want of eloquent utterance. God giveth not all things to each; nor can we each do all things. Or, as Paul saith, “there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.” (1 Cor. xii. 4.) It remains, therefore, that these gifts render a mutual service; that the one, with his gift, sustain the burden and what is lacking in the other; so shall we fulfil the law of Christ (Gal. vi. 2.)

ERASMUS’ PREFACE REVIEWED.

Sect. I.—FIRST of all, I would just touch upon some of the heads of your PREFACE; in which, You somewhat disparage our cause and adorn your own. In the first place, I would notice your censuring in me, in all your former books, an obstinacy of assertion; and saying, in this book, — “that you are so far from delighting in assertions, that you would rather at once go over to the sentiments of the skeptics, if the inviolable authority of the Holy Scriptures, and the decrees of the church, would permit you: to which authorities You willingly submit yourself in all things, whether you follow what they prescribe, or follow it not.” — These are the principles that please you.

I consider, (as in courtesy bound,) that these things are asserted by you from a benevolent mind, as being a lover of peace. But if any one else had asserted them, I should, perhaps, have attacked him in my accustomed manner. But, however, I must not even allow you, though so very good in your intentions, to err in this opinion. For not to delight in assertions, is not the character of the Christian mind: nay, he must delight in assertions, or he is not a Christian. But, (that we may not be mistaken in terms) by assertion, I mean a constant adhering, affirming, confessing, defending, and invincibly persevering. Nor do I believe the term signifies any thing else, either among the Latins, or as it is used by us at this day. And moreover, I speak concerning the asserting of those things, which are delivered to us from above in the Holy Scriptures. Were it not so, we should want neither Erasmus nor any other instructor to teach us, that, in things doubtful, useless, or unnecessary; assertions, contentions, and strivings, would be not only absurd, but impious: and Paul condemns such in more places than one. Nor do you, I believe, speak of these things, unless, as a ridiculous orator, you wish to take up one subject, and go on with another, as the Roman Emperor did with his Turbot; or, with the madness of a wicked writer, you wish to contend, that the article concerning “Free-will” is doubtful, or not necessary.

Be skeptics and academics far from us Christians; but be there with us assertors twofold more determined than the stoics themselves. How often does the apostle Paul require that assurance of faith; that is, that most certain, and most firm assertion of Conscience, calling it (Rom. x. 10), confession, “With the mouth confession is made unto salvation?” And Christ also saith, “Whosoever confesseth Me before men, him will I confess before My Father.” (Matt. x. 32.) Peter commands us to “give a reason of the hope” that is in us. (1 Pet. iii. 15.) But why should I dwell upon this; nothing is more known and more general among Christians than assertions. Take away assertions, and you take away Christianity. Nay, the Holy Spirit is given unto them from heaven, that He may glorify Christ, and confess Him even unto death; unless this be not to assert — to die for confession and assertion. In a word, the Spirit so asserts, that He comes upon the whole world and reproves them of sin (John xvi. 8) thus, as it were, provoking to battle. And Paul enjoins Timothy to reprove, and to be instant out of season. (2 Tim. iv. 2.) But how ludicrous to me would be that reprover, who should neither really believe that himself, of which he reproved, nor constantly assert it! — Why I would send him to Anticyra, to be cured.

But I am the greatest fool, who thus lose words and time upon that, which is clearer than the sun. What Chris-

tian would bear that assertions should be contemned? This would be at once to deny all piety and religion together; or to assert, that religion, piety, and every doctrine, is nothing at all. Why therefore do you too say, that you do not delight in assertions, and that you prefer such a mind to any other?

But you would have it understood that you have said nothing here concerning confessing Christ, and His doctrines. — I receive the admonition. And, in courtesy to you, I give up my right and custom, and refrain from judging of your heart, reserving that for another time, or for others. In the mean time, I admonish you to correct your tongue, and your pen, and to refrain henceforth from using such expressions. For, how upright and honest soever your heart may be, your words, which are the index of the heart, are not so. For, if you think the matter of “Free-will” is not necessary to be known, nor at all concerned with Christ, you speak honestly, but think wickedly: but, if you think it is necessary, you speak wickedly, and think rightly. And if so, then there is no room for you to complain and exaggerate so much concerning useless assertions and contentions: for what have they to do with the nature of the cause?

ERASMUS' SCEPTICISM.

Sect. II. — BUT what will you say to these your declarations, when, be it remembered, they are not confined to “Free-will” only, but apply to all doctrines in general throughout the world — that, “if it were permitted you by the inviolable authority of the sacred Writings and decrees of the church, you would go over to the sentiments of the Sceptics?” —

What an all-changeable Proteus is there in these expressions, “inviolable authority” and “decrees of the church!” As though you could have so very great a reverence for the Scriptures and the church, when at the same time you signify, that you wish you had the liberty of being a Sceptic! What Christian would talk in this way? But if you say this in reference to useless and doubtful doctrines, what news is there in what you say? Who, in such things, would not wish for the liberty of the sceptical profession? Nay, what Christian is there who does not actually use this liberty freely, and condemn all those who are drawn away with, and captivated by ever opinion? Unless you consider all Christians to be such (as the term is generally understood) whose doctrines are useless, and for which they quarrel like fools, and contend by assertions. But if you speak of necessary things, what declaration more impious can any one make, than that he wishes for the liberty of asserting nothing in such matters? Whereas, the Christian will rather say this — I am so averse to the sentiments of the Sceptics, that wherever I am not hindered by the infirmity of the flesh, I will not only steadily adhere to the Sacred Writings every where, and in all parts of them, and assert them, but I wish also to be as certain as possible in things that are not necessary, and that lie without the Scripture; for what is more miserable than uncertainty.

What shall we say to these things also, where you add — “To which authorities I submit my opinion in all things; whether I follow what they enjoin, or follow it not.” —

What say you, Erasmus? Is it not enough that you submit your opinion to the Scriptures? Do you submit it to the decrees of the church also? What can the church decree, that is not decreed in the Scriptures? If it can, where then remains the liberty and power of judging those who make the decrees? As Paul, 1 Cor. xiv., teaches “Let others judge.” Are you not pleased that there should be any one to judge the decrees of the church, which, nevertheless, Paul enjoins? What new kind of religion and humility is this, that, by our own example, you would take away from us the power of judging the decrees of men, and give it unto men without judgment? Where does the Scripture of God command us to do this?

Moreover, what Christian would so commit the injunctions of the Scripture and of the church to the winds, — as to say “whether I follow them, or follow them not?” You submit yourself, and yet care not at all whether you follow them or not. But let that Christian be anathema, who is not certain in, and does not follow, that which is enjoined him. For how will he believe that which he does not follow? — Do you here, then, mean to say, that following is understanding a thing certainly, and not doubting of it at all in a sceptical manner? If you do, what is there in any creature which any one can follow, if following be understanding, and seeing and knowing perfectly? And if this be the case, then it is impossible that any one should, at the same time, follow some things, and not follow others: whereas, by following one certain thing, God, he follows all things; that is, in Him, whom whoso followeth not, never followeth any part of His creature.

In a word, these declarations of yours amount to this — that, with you, it matters not what is believed by any one, any where, if the peace of the world be but undisturbed; and if every one be but allowed, when his life, his reputation, or his interest is at stake, to do as he did, who said, “If they affirm, I affirm, if they deny, I deny:” and to look upon the Christian doctrines as nothing better than the opinions of philosophers and men: and that it is the greatest of folly to quarrel about, contend for, and assert them, as nothing can arise therefrom but contention, and the disturbance of the public peace: “that what is above us, does not concern us.” This, I say, is what your declarations amount to. — Thus, to put an end to our fightings, you come in as an intermediate peace-maker, that you may cause each side to suspend arms, and persuade us to cease from drawing swords about things so absurd and useless.

What I should cut at here, I believe, my friend Erasmus, you know very well. But, as I said before, I will not openly express myself. In the mean time, I excuse your very good intention of heart; but do you go no further; fear the Spirit of God, who searcheth the reins and the heart, and who is not deceived by artfully contrived expressions. I have, upon this occasion, expressed myself thus, that henceforth you may cease to accuse our cause of pertinacity or obstinacy. For, by so doing, you only evince that you hug in your heart a Lucian, or some other of the swinish tribe of the Epicureans; who, because he does not believe there is a God himself, secretly laughs at all those who do believe and confess it. Allow us to be assertors, and to study and delight in assertions: and do you favour your Sceptics and Academics until Christ shall have called you also. The Holy Spirit is not a Sceptic, nor are what he has written on our hearts doubts or opinions, but assertions more certain, and more firm, than life itself and all human experience.

Sect. III: — Now I come to the next head, which is connected with this; where you make a “distinction between the Christian doctrines,” and pretend that some are necessary, and some not necessary.” You say, that “some are abstruse, and some quite clear.” Thus you merely sport the sayings of others, or else exercise yourself, as it were, in a rhetorical figure. And you bring forward, in support of this opinion, that passage of Paul, Rom xi. 33, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and goodness of God!” And also that of Isaiah xl. 13, “Who hath holpen the Spirit of the Lord, or who hath been His counselor?”

You could easily say these things, seeing that, you either knew not that you were writing to Luther, but for the world at large, or did not think that you were writing against Luther: whom, however, I hope you allow to have some acquaintance with, and judgment in, the Sacred Writings. But, if you do not allow it, then, behold, I will also twist things thus. This is the distinction which I make; that I also may act a little the rhetorician and logician — God, and the Scripture of God, are two things; no less so than God, and the Creature of God. That there are in God many hidden things which we know not, no one doubts: as He himself saith concerning the last day: “Of that day knoweth no man but the Father.” (Matt. xxiv. 36.) And (Acts i. 7.) “It is not yours to know the times and seasons.” And again, “I know whom I have chosen,” (John xiii. 18.) And Paul, “The Lord knoweth them that are His,” (2 Tim. ii. 19.). And the like.

But, that there are in the Scriptures some things abstruse, and that all things are not quite plain, is a report spread abroad by the impious Sophists by whose mouth you speak here, Erasmus. But they never have produced, nor ever can produce, one article whereby to prove this their madness. And it is with such scare-crows that Satan has frightened away men from reading the Sacred Writings, and has rendered the Holy Scripture contemptible, that he might cause his poisons of philosophy to prevail in the church. This indeed I confess, that there are many places in the Scriptures obscure and abstruse; not from the majesty of the thing, but from our ignorance of certain terms and grammatical particulars; but which do not prevent a knowledge of all the things in the Scriptures. For what thing of more importance can remain hidden in the Scriptures, now that the seals are broken, the stone rolled from the door of the sepulchre, and that greatest of all mysteries brought to light, Christ made man: that God is Trinity and Unity: that Christ suffered for us, and will reign to all eternity? Are not these things known and proclaimed even in our streets? Take Christ out of the Scriptures, and what will you find remaining in them?

All the things, therefore, contained in the Scriptures; are made manifest, although some places, from the words not being understood, are yet obscure. But to know that all things in the Scriptures are set in the clearest light, and then, because a few words are obscure, to report that the things are obscure, is absurd and impious. And, if the words are obscure in one place, yet they are clear in another. But, however, the same thing, which has been most openly declared to the whole world, is both spoken of in the Scriptures in plain words, and also still lies hidden in

obscure words. Now, therefore, it matters not if the thing be in the light, whether any certain representations of it be in obscurity or not, if, in the mean while, many other representations of the same thing be in the light. For who would say that the public fountain is not in the light, because those who are in some dark narrow lane do not see it, when all those who are in the Open market place can see it plainly?

Sect. IV. — WHAT you adduce, therefore, about the darkness of the Corycian cavern, amounts to nothing; matters are not so in the Scriptures. For those things which are of the greatest majesty, and the most abstruse mysteries, are no longer in the dark corner, but before the very doors, nay, brought forth and manifested openly. For Christ has opened our understanding to understand the Scriptures, Luke xxiv. 45. And the Gospel is preached to every creature. (Mark xvi. 15, Col. i. 23.) “Their sound is gone out into all the earth.” (Psalm xix. 4.) And “All things that are written, are written for our instruction.” (Rom. xv. 4.) And again, “All Scripture is inspired from above, and is profitable for instruction.” (2 Tim. iii. 16.)

Therefore come forward, you and all the Sophists together, and produce any one mystery which is still abstruse in the Scriptures. But, if many things still remain abstruse to many, this does not arise from obscurity in the Scriptures, but from their own blindness or want of understanding, who do not go the way to see the all-perfect clearness of the truth. As Paul saith concerning the Jews, 2 Cor. iii. 15. “The veil still remains upon their heart.” And again, “If our gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost, whose heart the god of this world hath blinded.” (2 Cor. iv. 3-4.) With the same rashness any one may cover his own eyes, or go from the light into the dark and hide himself, and then blame the day and the sun for being obscure. Let, therefore, wretched men cease to impute, with blasphemous perverseness, the darkness and obscurity of their own heart to the all-clear Scriptures of God.

You, therefore, when you adduce Paul, saying, “His judgments are incomprehensible,” seem to make the pronoun His (ejus) refer to Scripture (Scriptura). Whereas Paul does not say, The judgments of the Scripture are incomprehensible, but the judgments of God. So also Isaiah xl. 13, does not say, Who has known the mind of the Scripture, but, who has known “the mind of the Lord?” Although Paul asserts that the mind of the Lord is known to Christians: but it is in those things which are freely given unto us: as he saith also in the same place, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 16. You see, therefore, how sleepily you have looked over these places of the Scripture: and you cite them just as aptly as you cite nearly all the passages in defense of “Free-will.”

In like manner, your examples which you subjoin, not without suspicion and bitterness, are nothing at all to the purpose. Such are those concerning the distinction of Persons: the union of the Divine and human natures: the unpardonable sin: the ambiguity attached to which, you say, has never been cleared up. — If you mean the questions of Sophists that have been agitated upon those subjects, well. But what has the all-innocent Scripture done to you, that you impute the abuse of the most wicked of men to its purity? The Scripture simply confesses the Trinity of God, the humanity of Christ, and the unpardonable sin. There is nothing here of obscurity or ambiguity. But how these things are the Scripture does not say, nor is it necessary to be known. The Sophists employ their dreams here; attack and condemn them, and acquit the Scripture. — But, if you mean the reality of the matter, I say again, attack not the Scriptures, but the Arians, and those to whom the Gospel is hid, that, through the working of Satan, they might not see the all-manifest testimonies concerning the Trinity of the Godhead, and the humanity of Christ.

But to be brief. The clearness of the Scripture is twofold; even as the obscurity is twofold also. The one is external, placed in the ministry of the word; the other internal, placed in the understanding of the heart. If you speak of the internal clearness, no man sees one iota in the Scriptures, but he that hath the Spirit of God. All have a darkened heart; so that, even if they know how to speak of, and set forth, all things in the Scripture, yet, they cannot feel them nor know them: nor do they believe that they are the creatures of God, nor any thing else: according to that of Psalm xiv. 1. “The fool hath said in his heart, God is nothing.” For the Spirit is required to understand the whole of the Scripture and every part of it. If you speak of the external clearness, nothing whatever is left obscure or ambiguous; but all things that are in the Scriptures, are by the Word brought forth into the clearest light, and proclaimed to the whole world.

Sect. V. — BUT this is still more intolerable, — Your enumerating this subject of “Free-will” among those things that are “useless, and not necessary;” and drawing up for us, instead of it, a “Form” of those things which you consider “necessary unto Christian piety.” Such a form as, certainly, any Jew or any Gentile utterly ignorant of Christ, might draw up. For of Christ you make no mention in one iota. As though you thought, that there may be Christian piety without Christ, if God be but worshipped with all the powers as being by nature most merciful.

What shall I say here, Erasmus? To me, you breathe out nothing but Lucian, and draw in the gorging surfeit of Epicurus. If you consider this subject “not necessary” to Christians, away, I pray you, out of the field; I have nothing to do with you. I consider it necessary.

If, as you say, it be “irreligious,” if it be “curious,” if it be “superfluous,” to know, whether or not God foreknows any thing by contingency; whether our own will does any thing in those things which pertain unto eternal salvation, or is only passive under the work of grace; whether or not we do, what we do of good or evil, from necessity, or rather from being passive; what then, I ask, is religious; what is grave; what is useful to be known? All this, Erasmus, is to no purpose whatever. And it is difficult to attribute this to your ignorance, because you are now old, have been conversant with Christians, and have long studied the Sacred Writings: therefore you leave no room for my excusing you, or having a good thought concerning you.

And yet the Papists pardon and put up with these enormities in you: and on this account, because you are writing against Luther: otherwise, if Luther were not in the case, they would tear you in pieces tooth and nail. Plato is a friend; Socrates is a friend; but Truth is to be honoured above all. For, granting that you have but little understanding in the Scriptures and in Christian piety, surely even an enemy to Christians ought to know what Christians consider useful and necessary, and what they do not. Whereas you, a theologian, a teacher of Christians, and about to draw up for them a “Form” of Christianity, not only in your sceptical manner doubt of what is necessary and useful to them, but go away into the directly opposite, and, contrary to your own principles, by an unheard of assertion, declare it to be your judgment, that those things are “not necessary:” whereas, if they be not necessary, and certainly known, there can remain neither God, nor Christ, nor Gospel, nor Faith, nor any thing else, even of Judaism, much less of Christianity! In the name of the Immortal God, Erasmus, what an occasion, yea, what a field do you open for acting and speaking against you! What could you write well or correctly concerning “Free-will,” who confess, by these your declarations, so great an ignorance of the Scripture and of Godliness? But I draw in my sails: nor will I here deal with you in my words (for that perhaps I shall do hereafter) but in your own.

Sect. VI. — THE “Form” of Christianity set forth by you, among other things, has this — “That we should strive with all our powers, have recourse to the remedy of repentance, and in all ways try to gain the mercy of God; without which, neither human will, nor endeavour, is effectual.” Also, “that no one should despair of pardon from a God by nature most merciful.” —

These statements of yours are without Christ, without the Spirit, and more cold than ice: so that, the beauty of your eloquence is really deformed by them. Perhaps a fear of the Popes and those tyrants, extorted them from you their miserable vassal, lest you should appear to them a perfect atheist. But what they assert is this — That there is ability in us; that there is a striving with all our powers; that there is mercy in God; that there are ways of gaining that mercy; that there is a God, by nature just, and most merciful, &c. — But if a man does not know what these powers are; what they can do, or in what they are to be passive; what their efficacy, or what their inefficacy is; what can such an one do? What will you set him about doing?

“It is irreligious, curious, and superfluous, (you say) to wish to know, whether our own will does any thing in those things which pertain unto eternal salvation, or whether it is wholly passive under the work of grace.” — But here, you say the contrary: that it is Christian piety to “strive with all the powers;” and that, “without the mercy of God the will is ineffective.”

Here you plainly assert, that the will does something in those things which pertain unto eternal salvation, when you speak of it as striving: and again, you assert that it is passive, when you say, that without the mercy of God it is ineffective. Though, at the same time, you do not define how far that doing, and being passive, is to be understood: thus, designedly keeping us in ignorance how far the mercy of God extends, and how far our own will extends; what our own will is to do, in that which you enjoin, and what the mercy of God is to do. Thus, that prudence of yours, carries you along; by which, you are resolved to hold with neither side, and to escape safely through Scylla and Charybdis; in order that, when you come into the open sea, and find yourself overwhelmed and confounded by the waves, you may have it in your power, to assert all that you now deny, and deny all that you now assert.

THE NECESSITY OF KNOWING GOD AND HIS POWER.

Sect. VII. — BUT I will set your theology before your eyes by a few similitudes. — What if any one, intending to compose a poem, or an oration, should never think about, nor inquire into his abilities, what he could do, and what he could not do, nor what the subject undertaken required; and should utterly disregard that precept of Horace, “What the shoulders can sustain, and what they must sink under;” but should precipitately dash upon the undertaking and think thus — I must strive to get the work done; to inquire whether the learning I have, the eloquence I have, the force of genius I have, be equal to it, is curious and superfluous: — Or, if any one, desiring to have a plentiful crop from his land, should not be so curious as to take the superfluous care of examining the nature of the soil, (as Virgil curiously and in vain teaches in his Georgics,) but should rush on at once, thinking of nothing but the work, and plough the seashore, and cast in the seed wherever the soil was turned up, whether sand or mud: — Or if any one, about to make war, and desiring a glorious victory, or intending to render any other service to the state, should not be so curious as to deliberate upon what it was in his power to do; whether the treasury could furnish money, whether the soldiers were fit, whether any opportunity offered; and should pay no regard whatever to that of the historian, “Before you act, there must be deliberation, and when you have deliberated, speedy execution;” but should rush forward with his eyes blinded, and his ears stopped, only exclaiming war! war! and should be determined on the undertaking: — What, I ask you, Erasmus, would you think of such poets, such husbandmen, such generals, and such heads of affairs? I will add also that of the Gospel — If any one going to build a tower, sits not down first and counts the cost, whether he has enough to finish it, — What does Christ say of such an One? (Luke xiv. 28-32).

Thus you also enjoin us works only. But you forbid us to examine, weigh, and know, first, our ability, what we can do, and what we cannot do, as being curious, superfluous, and irreligious. Thus, while with your over-cautious prudence you pretend to detest temerity, and make a show of sobriety, you go so far, that you even teach the greatest of all temerity. For, although the Sophists are rash and mad in reality while they pursue their curious inquiries, yet their sin is less enormous than yours; for you even teach and enjoin men to be mad, and to rush on with temerity. And to make your madness still greater, you persuade us, that this temerity is the most exalted and Christian piety, sobriety, religious gravity, and even salvation. And you assert, that if we exercise it not, we are irreligious, curious, and vain: although you are so great an enemy to assertions. Thus, in steering clear of Charybdis, you have, with excellent grace, escaped Scylla also. But into this state you are driven by your confidence in your own talents. You believe, that you can by your eloquence, so impose upon the understandings of all, that no one shall discover the design which you secretly hug in your heart, and what you aim at in all those your pliant writings. But God is not mocked, (Gal. vi. 7,) upon whom it is not safe to run.

Moreover, had you enjoined us this temerity in composing poems, in preparing for fruits, in conducting wars or other undertakings, or in building houses; although it would have been intolerable, especially in so great a man, yet you might have been deserving of some pardon, at least from Christians, for they pay no regard to these temporal things. But when you enjoin Christians themselves to become rash workers, and charge them not to be curious about what they can do and what they cannot do, in obtaining eternal salvation; this, evidently, and in reality, is the sin unpardonable. For while they know not what or how much they can do, they will not know what to do; and if they know not what to do, they cannot repent when they do wrong; and impenitence is the unpardonable sin: and to this, does that moderate and sceptical theology of yours lead us.

Therefore, it is not irreligious, curious, or superfluous, but essentially wholesome and necessary, for a Christian to know, whether or not the will does any thing in those things which pertain unto Salvation. Nay, let me tell you, this is the very hinge upon which our discussion turns. It is the very heart of our subject. For our object is this: to inquire what “Free-will” can do, in what it is passive, and how it stands with reference to the grace of God. If we know nothing of these things, we shall know nothing whatever of Christian matters, and shall be far behind all People upon the earth. He that does not feel this, let him confess that he is no Christian. And he that despises and laughs at it, let him know that he is the Christian’s greatest enemy. For, if I know not how much I can do myself, how far my ability extends, and what I can do God-wards; I shall be equally uncertain and ignorant how much God is to do, how far His ability is to extend, and what He is to do toward me: whereas it is “God that worketh all in all.” (1 Cor. xii. 6.) But if I know not the distinction between our working and the power of God, I know not God Himself. And if I know not God, I cannot worship Him, praise Him, give Him thanks, nor serve Him; for I shall not know how much I ought to ascribe unto myself, and how much unto God. It is necessary, therefore, to hold

the most certain distinction, between the power of God and our power, the working of God and our working, if we would live in His fear.

Hence you see, this point, forms another part of the whole sum of Christianity; on which depends, and in which is at stake, the knowledge of ourselves, and the knowledge and glory of God. Wherefore, friend Erasmus, your calling the knowledge of this point irreligious, curious, and vain, is not to be borne in you. We owe much to you, but we owe all to the fear of God. Nay you yourself see, that all our good is to be ascribed unto God, and you assert that in your Form of Christianity: and in asserting this, you certainly, at the same time assert also, that the mercy of God alone does all things, and that our own will does nothing, but is rather acted upon: and so it must be, otherwise the whole is not ascribed unto God. And yet, immediately afterwards, you say, that to assert these things, and to know them, is irreligious, impious, and vain. But at this rate a mind, which is unstable in itself, and unsettled and inexperienced in the things of godliness, cannot but talk.

Sect. VIII. — ANOTHER part of the sum of Christianity is, to know, whether God foreknows any thing by contingency, or whether we do all things from necessity. This part also you make to be irreligious, curious, and vain, as all the wicked do: the devils, and the damned also, make it detestable and execrable. And you shew your wisdom in keeping yourself clear from such questions, wherever you can do it. But however, you are but a very poor rhetorician and theologian, if you pretend to speak of “Free-will” without these essential parts of it. I will therefore act as a whetstone, and though no rhetorician myself, will tell a famed rhetorician what he ought to do — If, then, Quintilian, purposing to write on Oratory, should say, “In my judgment, all that superfluous nonsense about invention, arrangement, elocution, memory, pronounciation, need not be mentioned; it is enough to know, that Oratory, is the art of speaking well” — would you not laugh at such a writer? But you act exactly like this: for pretending to write on “Free-will,” you first throw aside, and cast away, the grand substance and all the parts of the subject on which you undertake to write. Whereas, it is impossible that you should know what “Free-will” is, unless you know what the human will does, and what God does or foreknows.

Do not your rhetoricians teach, that he who undertakes to speak upon any subject, ought first to show, whether the thing exist; and then, what it is, what its parts are, what is contrary to it, connected with it, and like unto it, &c.? But you rob that miserable subject in itself, “Free will,” of all these things: and define no one question concerning it, except this first, viz., whether it exist: and even this with such arguments as we shall presently see: and so worthless a book on “Free-will” I never saw, excepting the elegance of the language. The Sophists, in reality, at least argue upon this point better than you, though those of them who have attempted the subject of “Free-will,” are no rhetoricians; for they define all the questions connected with it: whether it exists, what it does, and how it stands with reference to, &c.: although they do not effect what they attempt. In this book, therefore, I will push you, and the Sophists together, until you shall define to me the power of “Free-will,” and what it can do: and I hope I shall so push you, (Christ willing) as to make you heartily repent that you ever published your Diatribe.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

Sect. IX to Sect. XL

Sect. IX. — THIS, therefore, is also essentially necessary and wholesome for Christians to know: That God foreknows nothing by contingency, but that He foresees, purposes, and does all things according to His immutable, eternal, and infallible will. By this thunderbolt, “Free-will” is thrown prostrate, and utterly dashed to pieces. Those, therefore, who would assert “Free-will,” must either deny this thunderbolt, or pretend not to see it, or push it from them. But, however, before I establish this point by any arguments of my own, and by the authority of Scripture, I will first set it forth in your words.

Are you not then the person, friend Erasmus, who just now asserted, that God is by nature just, and by nature most merciful? If this be true, does it not follow that He is immutably just and merciful? That, as His nature is not changed to all eternity, so neither His justice nor His mercy? And what is said concerning His justice and His mercy, must be said also concerning His knowledge, His wisdom, His goodness, His will, and His other Attributes. If therefore these things are asserted religiously, piously, and wholesomely concerning God, as you say yourself, what has come to you, that, contrary to your own self, you now assert, that it is irreligious, curious, and vain, to say, that God foreknows of necessity? You openly declare that the immutable will of God is to be known, but you forbid

the knowledge of His immutable prescience. Do you believe that He foreknows against His will, or that He wills in ignorance? If then, He foreknows, willing, His will is eternal and immovable, because His nature is so: and, if He wills, foreknowing, His knowledge is eternal and immovable, because His nature is so.

From which it follows unalterably, that all things which we do, although they may appear to us to be done mutably and contingently, and even may be done thus contingently by us, are yet, in reality, done necessarily and immutably, with respect to the will of God. For the will of God is effective and cannot be hindered; because the very power of God is natural to Him, and His wisdom is such that He cannot be deceived. And as His will cannot be hindered, the work itself cannot be hindered from being done in the place, at the time, in the measure, and by whom He foresees and wills. If the will of God were such, that, when the work was done, the work remained but the will ceased, (as is the case with the will of men, which, when the house is built which they wished to build, ceases to will, as though it ended by death) then, indeed, it might be said, that things are done by contingency and mutability. But here, the case is the contrary; the work ceases, and the will remains. So far is it from possibility, that the doing of the work or its remaining, can be said to be from contingency or mutability. But, (that we may not be deceived in terms) being done by contingency, does not, in the Latin language, signify that the work itself which is done is contingent, but that it is done according to a contingent and mutable will — such a will as is not to be found in God! Moreover, a work cannot be called contingent, unless it be done by us unawares, by contingency, and, as it were, by chance; that is, by our will or hand catching at it, as presented by chance, we thinking nothing of it, nor willing any thing about it before.

Sect. X. — I COULD wish, indeed, that we were furnished with some better term for this discussion, than this commonly used term, necessity, which cannot rightly be used, either with reference to the human will, or the divine. It is of a signification too harsh and ill-suited for this subject, forcing upon the mind an idea of compulsion, and that which is altogether contrary to will; whereas, the subject which we are discussing, does not require such an idea: for Will, whether divine or human, does what it does, be it good or evil, not by any compulsion but by mere willingness or desire, as it were, totally free. The will of God, nevertheless, which rules over our mutable will, is immutable and infallible; as Boëtius sings, “Immovable Thyself, Thou movement giv’st to all.” And our own will, especially our corrupt will, cannot of itself do good; therefore, where the term fails to express the idea required, the understanding of the reader must make up the deficiency, knowing what is wished to be expressed — the immutable will of God, and the impotency of our depraved will; or, as some have expressed it, the necessity of immutability, though neither is that sufficiently grammatical, or sufficiently theological.

Upon this point, the Sophists have now laboured hard for many years, and being at last conquered, have been compelled to retreat. All things take place from the necessity of the consequence, (say they) but not from the necessity of the thing consequent. What nothingness this amounts to, I will not take the trouble to show. By the necessity of the consequence, (to give a general idea of it) they mean this — If God wills any thing, that same thing must, of necessity be done; but it is not necessary that the thing done should be necessary: for God alone is necessary; all other things cannot be so, if it is God that wills. Therefore, (say they) the action of God is necessary, where He wills, but the act itself is not necessary; that is, (they mean) it has not essential necessity. But what do they effect by this playing upon words? Only this, that the act itself is not necessary, that is, it has not essential necessity. This is no more than saying, the act is not God Himself. This, nevertheless, remains certain, that if the action of God is necessary, or if there is a necessity of the consequence, every thing takes place of necessity, how much soever the act be not necessary; that is, be not God Himself, or have not essential necessity. For, if I be not made of necessity, it is of little moment with me, whether my existence and being be mutable or not, if, nevertheless, I, that contingent and mutable being, who am not the necessary God, am made.

Wherefore, their ridiculous play upon words, that all things take place from the necessity of the consequence, but not from the necessity of the thing consequent, amounts to nothing more than this — all things take place of necessity, but all the things that do take place are not God Himself. But what need was there to tell us this? As though there were any fear of our asserting, that the things done were God Himself, or possessed divine or necessary nature. This asserted truth, therefore, stands and remains invincible — that all things take place according to the immutable will of God! which they call the necessity of the consequence. Nor is there here any obscurity or ambiguity. In Isaiah he saith, “My counsel shall stand, and My will shall be done.” (Isa. xlvi. 10.) And what school-boy does not understand the meaning of these expressions, “Counsel,” “will,” “shall be done,” “shall stand?”

Sect. XI. — BUT why should these things be abstruse to us Christians, so that it should be considered irreligious, curious, and vain, to discuss and know them, when heathen poets, and the very commonalty, have them in their mouths in the most frequent use? How often does Virgil alone make mention of Fate? “All things stand fixed by law immutable.” Again, “Fixed is the day of every man.” Again, “If the Fates summon you.” And again, “If thou shalt break the binding chain of Fate.” All this poet aims at, is to show, that in the destruction of Troy, and in raising the Roman empire, Fate did more than all the devoted efforts of men. In a word, he makes even their immortal gods subject to Fate. To this, even Jupiter and Juno must, of necessity, yield. Hence they made the three Parcae immutable, implacable, and irrevocable in decree.

Those men of wisdom knew that which the event itself, with experience, proves; that no man’s own counsels ever succeeded but that the event happened to all contrary to what they thought. Virgil’s Hector says, “Could Troy have stood by human arm, it should have stood by mine.” Hence that common saying was on every one’s tongue, “God’s will be done.” Again, “If God will, we will do it.” Again, “Such was the will of God.” “Such was the will of those above.” “Such was your will,” says Virgil. Whence we may see, that the knowledge of predestination and of the prescience of God, was no less left in the world than the notion of the divinity itself. And those who wished to appear wise, went in their disputations so far, that, their hearts being darkened, they became fools,” (Rom. i. 21-22,) and denied, or pretended not to know, those things which their poets, and the commonalty, and even their own consciences, held to be universally known, most certain, and most true.

Sect. XIII. — Do you now, then, only observe, friend Erasmus, to what that most moderate, and most peace-loving theology of yours would lead us. You call us off, and forbid our endeavouring to know the prescience of God, and the necessity that lies on men and things, and counsel us to leave such things, and to avoid and disregard them; and in so doing, you at the same time teach us your rash sentiments; that we should seek after an ignorance of God, (which comes upon us of its own accord, and is engendered in us), disregard faith, leave the promises of God, and account the consolations of the Spirit and the assurances of conscience, nothing at all! Such counsel scarcely any Epicure himself would give!

Moreover, not content with this, you call him who should desire to know such things, irreligious, curious, and vain; but him who should disregard them, religious, pious, and sober. What else do these words imply, than that Christians are irreligious, curious, and vain? And that Christianity is a thing of nought, vain, foolish, and plainly impious? Here again, therefore, while you wish by all means to deter us from temerity, running, as fools always do, directly into the contrary, you teach nothing but the greatest temerity, impiety, and perdition. Do you not see, then, that in this part, your book is so impious, blasphemous, and sacrilegious, that its like is not any where to be found.

I do not, as I have observed before, speak of your heart; nor can I think that you are so lost, that from your heart, you wish these things to be taught and practiced. But I would shew you what enormities that man must be compelled unknowingly to broach, who undertakes to support a bad cause. And moreover, what it is to run against divine things and truths, when, in mere compliance with others and against our own conscience, we assume a strange character and act upon a strange stage. It is neither a game nor a jest, to undertake to teach the sacred truths and godliness: for it is very easy here to meet with that fall which James speaks of, “he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all.” (James ii. 10.) For when we begin to be, in the least degree, disposed to trifle, and not to hold the sacred truths in due reverence, we are soon involved in impieties, and overwhelmed with blasphemies: as it has happened to you here, Erasmus — May the Lord pardon, and have mercy upon you!

That the Sophists have given birth to such numbers of reasoning questions upon these subjects, and have intermingled with them many unprofitable things, many of which you mention, I know and confess, as well as you: and I have inveighed against them much more than you have. But you act with imprudence and rashness, when you liken the purity of the sacred truths unto the profane and foolish questions of the impious, and mingle and confound it with them. “They have defiled the gold with dung, and changed the good colour,” (Lam. iv. 1., as Jeremiah saith.) But the gold is not to be compared unto, and cast away with the dung; as you do it. The gold must be wrested from them, and the pure Scripture separated from their dregs and filth; which it has ever been my aim to do, that the divine truths may be looked upon in one light, and the trifles of these men in another. But it ought not to be considered of any service to us, that nothing has been effected by these questions, but their causing us to favour them less with the whole current of our approbation, if, nevertheless, we still desire to be wiser than we ought. The question with us is not how much the Sophists have effected by their reasonings, but how we may become good

men, and Christians. Nor ought you to impute it to the Christian doctrine that the impious do evil. That is nothing to the purpose: you may speak of that somewhere else, and spare your paper here.

Sect. XII. — I OBSERVE further, not only how true these things are (concerning which I shall speak more at large hereafter out of the Scriptures) but also how religious, pious, and necessary it is to know them; for if these things be not known there can be neither faith, nor any worship of God: nay, not to know them, is to be in reality ignorant of God, with which ignorance salvation, it is well known, cannot consist. For if you doubt, or disdain to know that God foreknows and wills all things, not contingently, but necessarily and immutably, how can you believe confidently, trust to, and depend upon His promises? For when He promises, it is necessary that you should be certain that He knows, is able, and willing to perform what He promises; otherwise, you will neither hold Him true nor faithful; which is unbelief, the greatest of wickedness, and a denying of the Most High God!

And how can you be certain and secure, unless you are persuaded that He knows and wills certainly, infallibly, immutably, and necessarily, and will perform what He promises? Nor ought we to be certain only that God will necessarily and immutably, and will perform, but also to glory in the same; as Paul, (Rom. iii. 4,) “Let God be true, but every man a liar.” And again, “For the word of God is not without effect.” (Rom. ix. 6.) And in another place, “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His.” (2 Tim. ii. 19.) And, “Which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” (Titus i. 2.) And, “He that cometh, must believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that hope in Him.” (Heb. xi. 6.)

If, therefore, we are taught, and if we believe, that we ought not to know the necessary prescience of God, and the necessity of the things that are to take place, Christian faith is utterly destroyed, and the promises of God and the whole Gospel entirely fall to the ground; for the greatest and only consolation of Christians in their adversities, is the knowing that God lies not, but does all things immutably, and that His will cannot be resisted, changed, or hindered.

Sect. XIV. — UNDER your third head, you attempt to make us some of those very modest and quiet Epicureans. With a different kind of advice indeed, but no better than that, with which the two forementioned particulars are brought forward: — “Some things (you say) are of that nature, that, although they are true in themselves, and might be known, yet it would not be prudent to prostitute them to the ears of every one.” —

Here again, according to your custom, you mingle and confound every thing, to bring the sacred things down to a level with the profane, without making any distinction whatever: again falling into the contempt of, and doing an injury to God. As I have said before, those things which are either found in the sacred Writings, or may be proved by them, are not only plain, but wholesome; and therefore may be, nay, ought to be, spread abroad, learnt, and known. So that your saying, that they ought not to be prostituted to the ears of every one, is false: if, that is, you speak of those things which are in the Scripture: but if you speak of any other things, they are nothing to me, and nothing to the purpose: you lose time and paper in saying any thing about them.

Moreover, you know that I agree not with the Sophists in any thing: you may therefore spare me, and not bring me in at all as connected with their abuse of the truth. You had, in this book of yours, to speak against me. I know where the Sophists are wrong, nor do I want you for my instructor, and they have been sufficiently inveighed against by me: this, therefore, I wish to be observed once for all, whenever you shall bring me in with the Sophists, and disparage my side of the subject by their madness. For you do me an injury; and that you know very well.

Sect. XV. — NOW let us see your reasons for giving this advice — ‘you think, that, although it may be true, that God, from His nature, is in a beetle’s hole, or even in a sink, (which you have too much holy reverence to say yourself, and blame the Sophists for talking in such a way) no less than in Heaven, yet it would be unreasonable to discuss such a subject before the multitude.’ —

First of all, let them talk thus, who can talk thus. We do not here argue concerning what are facts in men, but concerning justice and law: not that we may live, but that we may live as we ought. Who among us lives and acts rightly? But justice and the doctrine of law are not therefore condemned: but rather they condemn us. You fetch from afar these irrelevant things, and scrape together many such from all quarters, because you cannot get over this one point, the prescience of God: and since you cannot overthrow it in any way, you want, in the mean time, to tire out the reader with a multiplicity of empty observation. But of this, no more. Let us return to the point.

What then is your intention, in observing that there are some things which ought not to be spoken of openly? Do you mean to enumerate the subject of “Free-will” among those things? If you do, the whole that I have just

said concerning the necessity of knowing what "Free-will" is, will turn round upon you. Moreover, if so, why do you not keep to your own principles, and have nothing to do with your Diatribe? But, if you do well in discussing "Free-will," why do you speak against such discussion? and if it is a bad subject, why do you make it worse? But if you do not enumerate it among those things, then, you leave your subject-point; and like an orator of words only, talk about those irrelevant things that have nothing to do with the subject.

Sect. XVI. — NOR are you right in the use of this example; nor in condemning the discussion of this subject before the multitude, as useless — that God is in a beetle's hole and even in a sink! For your thoughts concerning God are too human. I confess indeed, that there are certain fantastical preachers, who, not from any religion, or fear of God, but from a desire of vain-glory, or from a thirst after some novelty, or from impatience of silence, prate and trifle in the lightest manner. But such please neither God nor men, although they assert that God is in the Heaven of Heavens. But when there are grave and pious preachers, who teach in modest, pure, and sound words; they, without any danger, nay, unto much profit, speak on such a subject before the multitude.

Is it not the duty of us all to teach, that the Son of God was in the womb of the Virgin, and proceeded forth from her belly? And in what does the human belly differ from any other unclean place? Who, moreover, may not describe it in filthy and shameless terms? But such persons we justly condemn; because, there are numberless pure words, in which we speak of that necessary subject, even with decency and grace. The body also of Christ Himself was human, like ours. Than which body, what is more filthy? But shall we, therefore, not say what Paul saith, that God dwelt in it bodily? (Col. ii. 9.) What is more unclean than death? What more horrible than hell? Yet the prophet glorieth that God was with him in death, and left him not, in hell. (Ps. xvi. 10, Ps. cxxxix. 8.)

The pious mind, therefore, is not shocked at hearing that God was in death and in hell: each of which is more horrible, and more loathsome, than either a hole or a sink. Nay, since the Scripture testifies that God is every where, and fills all things, such a mind, not only says that He is in those places, but will, of necessity learn and know that He is there. Unless we are to suppose that if I should at any time be taken and cast into a prison or a sink, (which has happened to many saints,) I could not there call upon God, or believe that He was present with me, until I should come into some ornamented church. If you teach us that we are thus to trifle concerning God, and if you are thus offended at the places of His essential presence, by and by you will not even allow that He dwells with us in Heaven. Whereas, "the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Him," (1 Kings viii. 27.); or, they are not worthy. But, as I said before, you, according to your custom, thus maliciously point your sting at our cause, that you may disparage and render it hateful, because you find it stands against you insuperable, and invincible.

Sect. XVII. — IN the example concerning confession and satisfaction, it is wonderful to observe with what dexterous prudence you proceed. Throughout the whole, according to your custom, you move along on the tip-toe of caution, lest you should seem, neither plainly to condemn my sentiments nor to oppose the tyranny of the Popes: a path which you found to be by no means safe. Therefore, throwing off, in this matter, both God and conscience, (for what are these things to Erasmus? What has he to do with them? What profit are they to him?) you rush upon the external bugbear, and attack the commonalty.

- 'That they, from their depravity, abuse the preaching of a free confession and of satisfaction, to an occasion of the flesh. But, nevertheless, (you say) by the necessity of confessing, they are, in a measure, restrained.' —

O memorable and excellent speech! Is this teaching theology? To bind souls by laws, and, (as Ezekiel saith, xiii. 18,) to hunt them to death, which are not bound by God! Why, by this speech you bring upon us the universal tyranny of the laws of the Popes, as useful and wholesome; because, that by them also the depravity of the commonalty is restrained.

But I will not inveigh against this place as it deserves. I will descant upon it thus briefly — A good theologian teaches, that the commonalty are to be restrained by the external power of the sword, where they do evil: as Paul teaches. (Rom. xiii. 1-4.) But their consciences are not to be fettered by false laws, that they might be tormented with sins where God wills there should be no sins at all. For consciences are bound by the law of God only. So that, that intermediate tyranny of Popes, which falsely terrifies and murders the souls within, and vainly wearies the bodies without is to be taken entirely out of the way. Because, although it binds to confession and other things, outwardly, yet the mind is not, by these things restrained, but exasperated the more into the hatred both of God and men. And in vain does it butcher the body by external things, making nothing but hypocrites. — So that tyrants, with laws of this kind, are nothing else but ravening wolves, robbers, and plunderers of souls. And yet you,

an excellent counselor of souls, recommend these to us again: that is, you are an advocate for these most barbarous soul-murderers, who fill the world with hypocrites, and with such as blaspheme God and hate Him in their hearts, in order that they may restrain them a little from outward sin. As though there were no other way of restraining, which makes no hypocrites, and is wrought without any destroying of consciences.

Sect. XVIII. — HERE you produce similitudes (in which you aim at appearing to abound, and to use very appropriately); that is, — ‘that there are diseases, which may be borne with less evil than they can be cured: as the leprosy, &c.’ You add, moreover, the example of Paul, who makes a distinction between those things that are lawful, and those that are not expedient. “It is lawful (you say) to speak the truth; but, before every one, at all times, and in every way, it is not expedient.” —

How copious an orator! And yet you understand nothing of what you are saying. In a word, you treat this discussion, as though it were some matter between you and me only, about the recovering of some money that was at stake, or some other trivial thing, the loss of which, as being of much less consideration than the general peace of the community, ought not so to concern any one, but that he may yield, act and suffer upon the occasion, in any way that may prevent the necessity of the whole world being thrown into a tumult. Wherein, you plainly evince, that this peace and tranquillity of the flesh, are, with you, a matter of far greater consideration than faith, than conscience, than salvation, than the Word of God, than the glory of Christ, than God Himself! Wherefore, let me tell you this; and I entreat you to let it sink deep into your mind — I am, in this discussion, seeking an object solemn and essential; nay, such, and so great, that it ought to be maintained and defended through death itself; and that, although the whole world should not only be thrown into tumult and set in arms thereby, but even if it should be hurled into chaos and reduced to nothing. — If you cannot receive this, or if you are not affected by it, do you mind your own business, and allow us to receive it and to be affected by it, to whom it is given of God.

For, by the grace of God, I am not so great a fool or madman, as to have desired to sustain and defend this cause so long, with so much fortitude and so much firmness, (which you call obstinacy) in the face of so many dangers of my life, so much hatred, so many traps laid for me; in a word, in the face of the fury of men and devils — I have not done this for money, for that I neither have nor desire; nor for vain-glory, for that, if I wished, I could not obtain in a world so enraged against me, nor for the life for my body, for that cannot be made sure of for an hour. — Do you think, then, that you only have a heart that is moved by these tumults? Yet, I am not made of stone, nor was I born from the Marpesian rocks. But since it cannot be otherwise, I choose rather to be battered in temporal tumult, happy in the grace of God, for God’s word’s sake, which is to be maintained with a mind incorrupt and invincible, than to be ground to powder in eternal tumult, under the wrath of God and torments intolerable! May Christ grant, what I desire and hope, that your heart may not be such — but certainly your words imply, that, with Epicurus, you consider the Word of God and a future life, to be mere fables. For, in your instructions, you would have us, for the sake of the Popes, the heads, and the peace of the community, to put off, upon an occasion, and depart from the all-certain word of God: whereas, if we put off that, we put off God, faith, salvation and all Christianity together. How far different from this is the instruction of Christ: that, we should rather despise the whole world!

Sect. XIX. — BUT you say these things, because you either do not read or do not observe, that such is most constantly the case with the word of God, that because of it, the world is thrown into tumult. And that Christ openly declares: “I came not (says He) to send peace but a sword.” (Matt. x. 34.) And in Luke, “I came to send fire upon the earth.” (Luke xii. 49.) And Paul, (2 Cor. vi. 5,) “In tumults,” &c. And the Prophet, in the Second Psalm, abundantly testifies the same: declaring, that the nations are in tumult, the people roaring, the kings rising up, and the princes conspiring against the Lord and against His Christ. As though He had said, multitude, height, wealth, power, wisdom, righteousness, and whatever is great in the world, sets itself against the word of God.

Look into the Acts of the Apostles, and see what happened in the world on account of the word of Paul only (to say nothing of the other apostles): how he alone throws both the Gentiles and Jews into commotion: or, as the enemies themselves express it, “turns the world upside down.” (Acts xvii. 6.) Under Elijah, the kingdom of Israel was thrown into commotion: as king Ahab complains. (1 Kings xviii. 17.) What tumult was there under the other prophets, while they are all either killed at once or stoned to death; while Israel is taken captive into Assyria, and Judah also to Babylon! Was all this peace? The world and its god (2 Cor. iv. 4,) cannot and will not bear the Word of the true God: and the true God cannot and will not keep silence. While, therefore, these two Gods are at war with each other, what can there be else in the whole world, but tumult?

Therefore, to wish to silence these tumults, is nothing else, than to wish to hinder the Word of God, and to take it out of the way. For the Word of God, wherever it comes, comes to change and to renew the world. And even heathen writers testify, that changes of things cannot take place, without commotion and tumult, nor even without blood. It therefore belongs to Christians, to expect and endure these things, with a stayed mind: as Christ says, “When ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be not dismayed, for these things must first come to pass, but the end is not yet.” (Matt. xxiv. 6.) And as to myself, if I did not see these tumults, I should say the Word of God was not in the world. But now, when I do see them, I rejoice from my heart, and fear them not: being surely persuaded, that the kingdom of the Pope, with all his followers, will fall to the ground: for it is especially against this, that the word of God, which now runs, is directed.

I see indeed, my friend Erasmus, that you complain in many books of these tumults, and of the loss of peace and concord; and you attempt many means whereby to afford a remedy, and (as I am inclined to believe) with a good intention. But this gouty foot laughs at your doctoring hands. For here, in truth, as you say, you sail against the tide; nay, you put out fire with straw. Cease from complaining, cease from doctoring; this tumult proceeds, and is carried on, from above, and will not cease until it shall make all the adversaries of the word as the dirt of the streets. Though I am sorry that I find it necessary to teach you, so great a theologian, these things, like a disciple, when you ought to be a teacher of others.

Your excellent sentiment, then, that some diseases may be borne with less evil than they can be cured applies here: which sentiment you do not appositely use. Rather call these tumults, commotions, perturbations, seditions, discords, wars, and all other things of the same kind with which the world is shaken and tossed to and fro on account of the Word of God, — the diseases. These things, I say, as they are temporal, are borne with less evil than inveterate and evil habits; by which all souls must be destroyed if they be not changed by the word of God: which being taken away, eternal good, God, Christ, and the Spirit, must be taken away with it.

But how much better is it to lose the whole world, than to lose God the Creator of the world, who can create innumerable worlds again, and is better than infinite worlds? For what are temporal things when compared with eternal? This leprosy of temporal things, therefore, is rather to be borne, than that every soul should be destroyed and eternally damned, and the world kept in peace, and preserved from these tumults, by their blood and perdition: whereas, one soul cannot be redeemed with the price of the whole world!

You certainly have command of elegant and excellent similitudes, and sentiments: but, when you are engaged in sacred discussions, you apply them childishly, nay, pervertedly: for you crawl upon the ground, and enter in thought into nothing above what is human. Whereas, those things which God works, are neither puerile, civil, nor human, but divine; and they exceed human capacity. Thus, you do not see, that these tumults and divisions increase throughout the world, according to the counsel, and by the operation of God; and therefore, you fear lest heaven should tumble about our ears. But I, by the grace of God, see these things clearly; because, I see other tumults greater than these that will arise in the age to come in comparison of which, these appear but as the whispering of a breath of air, or the murmuring of a gentle brook.

Sect. XX. — BUT, the doctrine concerning the liberty of confession and satisfaction, you either deny, or know not that there is the Word of God. — And here arises another inquiry. But we know, and are persuaded, that there is a Word of God, in which the Christian liberty is asserted, that we might not suffer ourselves to be ensnared into bondage by human traditions and laws. This I have abundantly shewn elsewhere. But if you wish to enter the lists, I am prepared to discuss the point with you, and to fight it out. Though upon these subjects I have books extant not a few.

But, — “the laws of the Popes (you say,) may at the same time be borne with and observed, in charity; if perchance thus, eternal salvation by the word of God, and the peace of the world, may together consist, without tumult.” —

I have said before, that cannot be. The prince of this world will not allow the Pope and his high priests, and their laws to be observed in liberty, but his design is, to entangle and bind consciences. This the true God will not bear. Therefore, the Word of God, and the traditions of men, are opposed to each other with implacable discord; no less so, than God Himself and Satan; who each destroy the works and overthrow the doctrines of the other, as regal kings each destroying the kingdom of the other. “He that is not with Me (saith Christ) is against Me.” (Luke xi. 23.)

And as to — “a fear that many who are depravedly inclined, will abuse this liberty” —

This must be considered among those tumults, as a part of that temporal leprosy which is to be borne, and of that evil which is to be endured. But these are not to be considered of so much consequence, as that, for the sake of restraining their abuse, the word of God should be taken out of the way. For if all cannot be saved, yet some are saved; for whose sake the word of God is sent; and these, on that account, love it the more fervently, and assent to it the more solemnly. For, what evils did not impious men commit before, when there was no word? Nay, what good did they do? Was not the world always drowned in war, fraud, violence, discord, and every kind of iniquity? For if Micah (vii. 4) compares the best among them to a thorn hedge, what do you suppose he would call the rest?

But now the Gospel is come, men begin to impute unto it, that the world is evil. Whereas, the truth is, that by the good Gospel, it is more manifest how evil it was, while, without the Gospel, it did all its works in darkness. Thus also the illiterate attribute it to learning, that, by its flourishing, their ignorance becomes known. This is the return we make for the word of life and salvation! — And what fear must we suppose there was among the Jews, when the Gospel freed all from the law of Moses? What occasion did not this great liberty seem to give to evil men? But yet, the Gospel was not, on that account, taken away; but the impious were left, and it was preached to the pious, that they might not use their liberty to an occasion of the flesh. (Gal. v. 13.)

Sect. XXI. — NOR is this part of your advice, or your remedy, to any purpose, where you say — “It is lawful to speak the truth but it is not expedient, either before every one, or at all times, or in every manner.” And ridiculously enough, you adduce Paul, where he says, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.” — (1 Cor. vi. 12.)

But Paul does not there speak of teaching doctrine or the truth; as you would confound his words, and twist them which way you please. On the contrary, he will have the truth spoken every where, at all times, and in every manner. So that he even rejoices that Christ is preached even through envy and strife. Nay, he declares in plain words, that he rejoices, let Christ be preached in any way. (Phil. i. 15-18.)

Paul is speaking of facts, and the use of doctrine: that is, of those, who, seeking their own, had no consideration of the hurt and offence given to the weak. Truth and doctrine, are to be preached always, openly, and firmly, and are never to be dissembled or concealed; for there is no offence in them; they are the staff of uprightness. — And who gave you the power, or committed to you, the right, of confining the Christian doctrine to persons, places, times, and causes, when Christ wills it to be proclaimed, and to reign freely, throughout the world? For Paul saith, “the Word of God is not bound,” (2 Tim. ii. 9,) but Erasmus bounds the word. Nor did God give us the word that it should be had with respect of places, persons, or times: for Christ saith, “Go ye out into the whole world,”: He does not say, as Erasmus does, — go to this place and not to that. Again, “Preach the Gospel to every creature.” (Mark xvi. 15.) He does not say — preach it to some and not to others. In a word, you enjoin, in the administration of the word of God, a respect of persons, a respect of places, a respect of customs, and a respect of times: whereas, the one and especial part of the glory of the word consists in this, — that, as Paul saith, there is, with it, no respect of persons; and that God is no respecter of persons. You see therefore, again, how rashly you run against the Word of God, as though you preferred far before it, your own counsel and cogitations.

Hence, if we should demand of you that you would determine for us, the times in which, the persons to whom, and the manner in which, the truth is to be spoken, when would you come to an end? The world would sooner compute the termination of time and its own end, than you would settle upon any one certain rule. In the meantime, where would remain the duty of teaching? Where that of teaching the soul? And how could you, who know nothing of the nature of persons, times, and manner, determine upon any rule at all? And even if you should know them perfectly, yet you could not know the hearts of men. Unless, with you, the manner, the time, and the person be this: — teaching the truth so, that the Pope be not indignant, Caesar be not enraged, and that many be not offended and made worse! But what kind of counsel this is, you have seen above. — I have thus rhetorically figured away in these vain words, lest you should appear to have said nothing at all.

How much better is it for us wretched men to ascribe unto God, who knoweth the hearts of all men, the glory of determining the manner in which, the persons to whom, and the times in which the truth is to be spoken. For He knows what is to be spoken to each, and when, and how it is to be spoken. He then, determines that His Gospel which is necessary unto all, should be confined to no place, no time; but that it should be preached unto all, at all times and in all places. And I have already proved, that those things which are handed down to us in the Scriptures, are such, that they are quite plain and wholesome, and of necessity to be proclaimed abroad; even as you yourself

determined in your Paraclesis was right to be done; and that, with much more wisdom than you advise now. But let those who would not that souls should be redeemed, such as the Pope and his adherents — let it be left to them to bind the Word of God, and hinder men from life and the kingdom of heaven, that they might neither enter in themselves nor suffer others to enter: — to whose fury you, Erasmus, by this advice of yours, are perniciously subservient.

Sect. XXII. — OF the same stamp with this, is that prudence of yours also, with which you next give it as your advice — ‘that, if any thing were settled upon, in the councils, that was wrong, it ought not to be openly confessed: lest, a handle should be thereby afforded, for contemning the authority of the fathers.’ —

This, indeed, is just what the Pope wished you to say! And he hears it with greater pleasure than the Gospel itself, and will be a most ungrateful wretch, if he do not honour you in return, with a cardinal’s cap together with all the revenues belonging to it. But in the mean time, friend Erasmus, what will the souls do that shall be bound and murdered by that iniquitous statute? Is that nothing to you? But however, you always think, or pretend to think, that human statutes can be observed together with the Word of God, without peril. If they could, I would at once go over to this your sentiment.

But if you are yet in ignorance, I tell you again, that human statutes cannot be observed together with the Word of God: because, the former bind consciences, the latter looses them. They are directly opposed to each other, as water to fire. Unless, indeed, they could be observed in liberty; that is, not to bind the conscience. But this the Pope wills not, nor can he will it, unless he wishes his kingdom to be destroyed and brought to an end: for that stands only in ensnaring and binding those consciences, which the Gospel pronounces free. The authority of the fathers, therefore, is to be accounted nought: and those statutes which have been wrongly enacted, (as all have been that are not according to the Word of God) are to be rent in sunder and cast away: for Christ is better than the authority of the fathers. In a word, if it be concerning the Word of God that you think thus, you think impiously; if it be concerning other things, your verbose disputing about your sentiment is nothing to me: I am disputing concerning the Word of God!

Sect. XXIII. — IN the last part of your Preface, where you deter us from this kind of doctrine, you think your victory is almost gained.

“What (you say) can be more useless than that this paradox should be proclaimed openly to the world — that whatever is done by us, is not done by Free-will, but from mere necessity. And that of Augustine also — that God works in us both good and evil: that He rewards His good works in us, and punishes His evil works in us.” (You are mightily copious here in giving, or rather, in expostulating concerning a reason.) “What a flood-gate of iniquity (you say) would these things, publicly proclaimed, open unto men! What bad man would amend his life! Who would believe that he was loved of God! Who would war against his flesh!”

I wonder, that in so great vehemency, and contending zeal, you did not remember our main subject, and say — where then would be found “Free-will.”

My friend, Erasmus! here, again, I also say, if you consider that these paradoxes are the inventions of men, why do you contend against them? Why are you so enraged? Against whom do you rail? Is there any man in the world, at this day, who has inveighed more vehemently against the doctrines of men, than Luther! This admonition of yours, therefore, is nothing to me! But if you believe that those paradoxes are the words of God, where is your countenance, where is your shame, where is, I will not say your modesty, but that fear of, and that reverence which is due to the true God, when you say, that nothing is more useless to be proclaimed than that Word of God! What! shall your Creator, come to learn of you His creature, what is useful, and what not useful to be preached? What! did that foolish and unwise God, know not what is necessary to be taught, until you His instructor prescribed to Him the measure, according to which He should be wise, and according to which He should command? What! did He not know before you told Him, that that which you infer would be the consequence of this His paradox? If, therefore, God willed that such things should be spoken of and proclaimed abroad, without regarding what would follow, — who art thou that forbiddest it?

The apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, discourses on these same things, not “in a corner,” but in public and before the whole world, and that with a freely open mouth, nay in the harshest terms, saying, “whom He will He hardeneth.” (Rom. ix. 18.) And again, “God, willing to shew forth His wrath,” &c. (Rom ix. 22.) What is more severe, that is to the flesh, than that word of Christ “Many are called but few chosen?” (Matt. xxii. 14.) And again,

“I know whom I have chosen?” (John xiii. 18.) According to your judgment then, all these things are such, that nothing can be more uselessly spoken; because that by these things, impious men may fall into desperation, hatred, and blasphemy.

Here then, I see, you suppose that the truth and the utility of the Scripture are to be weighed and judged of according to the opinion of men, nay, of men the most impious; so that, what pleases them or seems bearable, should be deemed true, divine, and wholesome: and what has the contrary effect upon them, should at once be deemed useless, false, and pernicious. What else do you mean by all this, than that the words of God should depend on, stand on, and fall by, the will and authority of men? Whereas the Scripture, on the contrary saith, that all things stand and fall by the will and authority of God: and in a word, that “all the earth keeps silence before the face of the Lord.” (Hab. ii. 20.) He who could talk as you do, must imagine that the living God is nothing but a kind of trifling and inconsiderate pettifogger declaiming on a certain rostrum, whose words you may if you be disposed, interpret, understand, and refute as you please, because He merely spoke as He saw a set of impious men to be moved and affected.

Here you plainly discover how much your advice above, — ‘that the majesty of the judgments of God should be revered,’ — was from your heart! There, when we were speaking of the doctrines of the Scripture only, where there was no need of reverencing things abstruse and hidden, because there were no such doctrines, you awed us, in the most religious terms, with the darkness of the Corycian cavern, lest we should rush forward with too much curiosity; so that, by the awe, you well nigh frightened us from reading the Scriptures altogether; (to the reading of which Christ and His apostles urge and persuade us, as well as you do yourself elsewhere.) But here, where we are come not to the doctrines of the Scripture, nor to the Corycian cavern only, but to the very, and greatly to be revered secrets of the divine Majesty, viz., why He works thus? — here, as they say, you burst open all bars and rush in; all but, openly blaspheming! What indignation against God do you not discover, because you cannot see His reason why, and His design in this His counsel! Why do you not here frame, as an excuse, obscurity and ambiguity? Why do you not restrain yourself, and deter others from prying into these things which God wills should be hidden from us, and which He has not delivered to us in the Scriptures? It is here the hand is to be laid upon the mouth, it is here we are to reverence what lies hidden, to adore the secret counsels of the divine Majesty, and to exclaim with Paul, “Who art thou, O man, that contendest with God?” (Rom. ix. 20.)

Sect. XXIV. — “WHO (you say) will endeavour to amend his life?” — I answer, No man! no man can! For your self-amenders without the Spirit, God regardeth not, for they are hypocrites. But the Elect, and those that fear God, will be amended by the Holy Spirit; the rest will perish unamended. Nor does Augustine say, that the works of none, nor that the works of all are crowned, but the works of some. Therefore, there will be some, who shall amend their lives.

“Who will believe (you say) that he is loved of God?” — I answer, no man will believe it! No man can! But the Elect shall believe it; the rest shall perish without believing it, filled with indignation and blaspheming, as you here describe them. Therefore, there will be some who shall believe it.

And as to your saying that — “by these doctrines the flood-gate of iniquity is thrown open unto men” — be it so. They pertain to that leprosy of evil to be borne, spoken of before. Nevertheless, by the same doctrines, there is thrown open to the Elect and to them that fear God, a gate unto righteousness, — an entrance into heaven — a way unto God! But if, according to your advice, we should refrain from these doctrines, and should hide from men this Word of God, so that each, deluded by a false persuasion of salvation, should never learn to fear God, and should never be humbled, in order that through this fear he might come to grace and love; then, indeed, we should shut up your flood-gate to purpose! For in the room of it, we should throw open to ourselves and to all, wide gates, nay, yawning chasms and sweeping tides, not only unto iniquity, but unto the depths of hell! Thus, we should not enter into Heaven ourselves, and them that were entering in we should hinder.

“What utility therefore (you say) is there in, or necessity for proclaiming such things openly, when so many evils seem likely to proceed therefrom?” —

I answer. It were enough to say — God has willed that they should be proclaimed openly: but the reason of the divine will is not to be inquired into, but simply to be adored, and the glory to be given unto God: who, since He alone is just and wise, doth evil to no one, and can do nothing rashly or inconsiderately, although it may appear far otherwise unto us. With this answer those that fear God are content. But that, from the abundance of answering

matter which I have, I may say a little more than this, which might suffice; — there are two causes which require such things to be preached. The first is, the humbling of our pride, and the knowledge of the grace of God. The second is, Christian faith itself.

First, God has promised certainly His grace to the humbled: that is, to the self-deploring and despairing. But a man cannot be thoroughly humbled, until he comes to know that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, counsel, endeavours, will, and works, and absolutely depending on the will, counsel, pleasure, and work of another, that is, of God only. For if, as long as he has any persuasion that he can do even the least thing himself towards his own salvation, he retain a confidence in himself and do not utterly despair in himself, so long he is not humbled before God; but he proposes to himself some place, some time, or some work, whereby he may at length attain unto salvation. But he who hesitates not to depend wholly upon the good-will of God, he totally despairs in himself, chooses nothing for himself, but waits for God to work in him; and such an one, is the nearest unto grace, that he might be saved.

These things, therefore, are openly proclaimed for the sake of the Elect: that, being by these means humbled and brought down to nothing, they might be saved. The rest resist this humiliation; nay, they condemn the teaching of self desperation; they wish to have left a little something that they may do themselves. These secretly remain proud, and adversaries to the grace of God. This, I say, is one reason — that those who fear God, being humbled, might know, call upon, and receive the grace of God.

The other reason is — that faith is, in things not seen. Therefore, that there might be room for faith, it is necessary that all those things which are believed should be hidden. But they are not hidden more deeply, than under the contrary of sight, sense, and experience. Thus, when God makes alive, He does it by killing; when He justifies, He does it by bringing in guilty: when He exalts to Heaven, He does it by bringing down to hell: as the Scripture saith, “The Lord killeth and maketh alive, He bringeth down to the grave and raiseth up,” (1 Sam. ii. 6.); concerning which, there is no need that I should here speak more at large, for those who read my writings, are well acquainted with these things. Thus He conceals His eternal mercy and loving-kindness behind His eternal wrath: His righteousness, behind apparent iniquity.

This is the highest degree of faith — to believe that He is merciful, who saves so few and damns so many; to believe Him just, who according to His own will, makes us necessarily damnable, that He may seem, as Erasmus says, ‘to delight in the torments of the miserable, and to be an object of hatred rather than of love.’ If, therefore, I could by any means comprehend how that same God can be merciful and just, who carries the appearance of so much wrath and iniquity, there would be no need of faith. But now, since that cannot be comprehended, there is room for exercising faith, while such things are preached and openly proclaimed: in the same manner as, while God kills, the faith of life is exercised in death. Suffice it to have said thus much upon your PREFACE.

In this way, we shall more rightly consult for the benefit of those who dispute upon these paradoxes, than according to your way: whereby, you wish to indulge their impiety by silence, and a refraining from saying any thing: which is to no profit whatever. For if you believe, or even suppose these things to be true, (seeing they are paradoxes of no small moment,) such is the insatiable desire of mortals to search into secret things, and the more so the more we desire to keep them secret, that, by this admonition of yours, you will absolutely make them public; for all will now much more desire to know whether these paradoxes be true or not: thus they will, by your contending zeal, be so roused to inquiry, that not one of us ever afforded such a handle for making them known, as you yourself have done by this over-religious and zealous admonition. You would have acted much more prudently, had you said nothing at all about being cautious in mentioning these paradoxes, if you wished to see your desire accomplished. But, since you do not directly deny that they are true, your aim is frustrated: they cannot be concealed: for, by their appearance of truth, they will draw all men to search into them. Therefore, either deny that they are true altogether, or else hold your own tongue first, if you wish others to hold theirs.

Sect XXV. — AS to the other paradox you mention, — that, ‘whatever is done by us, is not done by Free-will, but from mere necessity’ — .

Let us briefly consider this, lest we should suffer any thing most perniciously spoken, to pass by unnoticed. Here then, I observe, that if it be proved that our salvation is apart from our own strength and counsel, and depends on the working of God alone, (which I hope I shall clearly prove hereafter, in the course of this discussion,) does it not evidently follow, that when God is not present with us to work in us, every thing that we do is evil, and

that we of necessity do those things which are of no avail unto salvation? For if it is not we ourselves, but God only, that works salvation in us, it must follow, whether or no, that we do nothing unto salvation before the working of God in us.

But, by necessity, I do not mean compulsion; but (as they term it) the necessity of immutability, not of compulsion; that is, a man void of the Spirit of God, does not evil against his will as by violence, or as if he were taken by the neck and forced to it, in the same way as a thief or cut-throat is dragged to punishment against his will; but he does it spontaneously, and with a desirous willingness. And this willingness and desire of doing evil he cannot, by his own power, leave off, restrain, or change; but it goes on still desiring and craving. And even if he should be compelled by force to do any thing outwardly to the contrary, yet the craving will within remains averse to, and rises in indignation against that which forces or resists it. But it would not rise in indignation, if it were changed, and made willing to yield to a constraining power. This is what we mean by the necessity of immutability: — that the will cannot change itself, nor give itself another bent; but rather the more it is resisted, the more it is irritated to crave; as is manifest from its indignation. This would not be the case if it were free, or had a “Free-will.” Ask experience, how hardened against all persuasion they are, whose inclinations are fixed upon any one thing. For if they yield at all, they yield through force, or through something attended with greater advantage; they never yield willingly. And if their inclinations be not thus fixed, they let all things pass and go on just as they will.

But again, on the other hand, when God works in us, the will, being changed and sweetly breathed on by the Spirit of God, desires and acts, not from compulsion, but responsively, from pure willingness, inclination, and accord; so that it cannot be turned another way by any thing contrary, nor be compelled or overcome even by the gates of hell; but it still goes on to desire, crave after, and love that which is good; even as before, it desired, craved after, and loved that which was evil. This, again, experience proves. How invincible and unshaken are holy men, when, by violence and other oppressions, they are only compelled and irritated the more to crave after good! Even as fire, is rather fanned into flames than extinguished, by the wind. So that neither is there here any willingness, or “Free-will,” to turn itself into another direction, or to desire any thing else, while the influence of the Spirit and grace of God remain in the man.

In a word, if we be under the god of this world, without the operation and Spirit of God, we are led captives by him at his will, as Paul saith. (2 Tim. ii. 26.) So that, we cannot will any thing but that which he wills. For he is that “strong man armed,” who so keepeth his palace, that those whom he holds captive are kept in peace, that they might not cause any motion or feeling against him; otherwise, the kingdom of Satan, being divided against itself, could not stand; whereas, Christ affirms it does stand. And all this we do willingly and desiringly, according to the nature of will: for if it were forced, it would be no longer will. For compulsion is (so to speak) unwillingness. But if the “stronger than he” come and overcome him, and take us as His spoils, then, through the Spirit, we are His servants and captives (which is the royal liberty) that we may desire and do, willingly, what He wills.

Thus the human will is, as it were, a beast between the two. If God sit thereon, it wills and goes where God will: as the Psalm saith, “I am become as it were a beast before thee, and I am continually with thee.” (Ps. lxxiii. 22-23.) If Satan sit thereon, it wills and goes as Satan will. Nor is it in the power of its own will to choose, to which rider it will run, nor which it will seek; but the riders themselves contend, which shall have and hold it.

Sect. XXVI. — AND now, what if I prove from your own words, on which you assert the freedom of the will, that there is no such thing as “Free-will” at all! What if I should make it manifest that you unknowingly deny that, which, with so much policy, you labour to affirm. And if I do not this, actually, I vow that I will consider all that I advance in this book against you, revoked; and all that your Diatribe advances against me, and aims at establishing, confirmed.

You make the power of “Free-will” to be — ‘that certain small degree of power, which, without the grace of God, is utterly ineffective.’

Do you not acknowledge this? — Now then, I ask and demand of you, if the grace of God be wanting, or, if it be taken away from that certain small degree of power, what can it do of itself? ‘It is ineffective (you say) and can do nothing of good.’ Therefore, it cannot do what God or His grace wills. And why? because we have now separated the grace of God from it; and what the grace of God does not, is not good. And hence it follows, that “Free-will,” without the grace of God is, absolutely, not FREE; but, immutably, the servant and bond-slave of evil; because, it cannot turn itself unto good. This being determined, I will allow you to make the power of “Free-will,” not only a

certain small degree of power, but to make it evangelical if you will, or, if you can, to make it divine: provided that, you add to it this doleful appendage — that, without the grace of God, it is ineffective. Because, then you will at once take from it all power: for, what is ineffective power, but plainly, no power at all?

Therefore, to say, that the will is FREE, and that it has indeed power, but that it is ineffective, is what the sophists call ‘a direct contrariety.’ As if one should say, “Free-will” is that which is not free. Or as if one should term fire cold, and earth hot. For if fire had the power of heat, yea of the heat of hell, yet, if it did not burn or scorch, but were cold and produced cold, I should not call it fire, much less should I term it hot; unless, indeed, you were to mean an imaginary fire, or a fire represented in a picture. — But if we call the power of “Free-will” that, by which a man is fitted to be caught by the Spirit, or to be touched by the grace of God, as one created unto eternal life or eternal death, may be said to be; this power, that is, fitness, or, (as the Sophists term it) ‘disposition-quality,’ and ‘passive aptitude,’ this I also confess. And who does not know, that this is not in trees or beasts? For, (as they say) Heaven was not made for geese.

Therefore, it stands confirmed, even by your own testimony, that we do all things from necessity, not from “Free-will:” seeing that, the power of “Free-will” is nothing, and neither does, nor can do good, without grace. Unless you wish efficacy to bear a new signification, and to be understood as meaning perfection: that is, that “Free-will” can, indeed, will and begin, but cannot perfect: which I do not believe: and upon this I shall speak more at large hereafter.

It now then follows, that Free-will is plainly a divine term, and can be applicable to none but the divine Majesty only: for He alone “doth, (as the Psalm sings) what He will in Heaven and earth.” (Ps. cxxxv. 6.) Whereas, if it be ascribed unto men, it is not more properly ascribed, than the divinity of God Himself would be ascribed unto them: which would be the greatest of all sacrilege. Wherefore, it becomes Theologians to refrain from the use of this term altogether, whenever they wish to speak of human ability, and to leave it to be applied to God only. And moreover, to take this same term out of the mouths and speech of men; and thus to assert, as it were, for their God, that which belongs to His own sacred and holy Name.

But if they must, whether or no, give some power to men, let them teach, that it is to be called by some other term than “Free-will”; especially since we know and clearly see, that the people are miserably deceived and seduced by that term, taking and understanding it to signify something far different from that which Theologians mean and understand by it, in their discussions. For the term, “Free-will,” is by far too grand, copious, and full: by which, the people imagine is signified (as the force and nature of the term requires) that power, which can freely turn itself as it will, and such a power as is under the influence of, and subject to no one. Whereas, if they knew that it was quite otherwise, and that by that term scarcely the least spark or degree of power was signified, and that, utterly ineffective of itself, being the servant and bond-slave of the devil, it would not be at all surprising if they should stone us as mockers and deceivers, who said one thing and meant something quite different; nay, who left it uncertain and unintelligible what we meant. For “he who speaks sophistically (the wise man saith) is hated,” and especially if he does so in things pertaining to godliness, where eternal salvation is at stake.

Since, therefore, we have lost the signification of so grand a term and the thing signified by it, or rather, never had them at all, (which the Pelagians may heartily wish had been the case, being themselves illuded by this term,) why do we so tenaciously hold an empty word, to the peril and mockery of the believing people? There is no more wisdom in so doing, than there is in kings and potentates retaining, or claiming and boasting of, empty titles of kingdoms and countries, when they are at the same time mere beggars, and any thing but the possessors of those kingdoms and countries. But however, this is bearable, since they deceive and mock no one thereby, but only feed themselves on vanity without any profit. But here, is a peril of salvation, and the most destructive mockery.

Who would not laugh at, or rather hold up to hatred, that most untimely innovator of terms, who, contrary to all established use, should attempt to introduce such a mode of speaking, as by the term ‘beggar,’ to have understood, ‘wealthy;’ not because such an one has any wealth himself, but because some king may, perchance, give him his wealth? And what if such an one should really do this, not by any figure of speech, as by periphrasis or irony, but in plain serious meaning? In the same way, speaking of one ‘sick unto death,’ he may wish to be understood as meaning, one in ‘perfect health:’ giving this as his reason, because the one may give the other his health. So also, he may, by ‘illiterate idiot,’ mean ‘most learned;’ because some other may perchance give him his learning. Of precisely the same nature is this: — man has a “Free-will:” for this reason, if perchance God should give him His. By

this abuse of the manner of speaking, any one may boast that he has any thing: that He is the Lord of heaven and earth — if perchance God should give this unto him. But this is not the way in which Theologians should proceed, this is the way of stage-players and public informers. Our words ought to be proper words, pure and sober; and, as Paul saith, “sound speech that cannot be condemned.” (Titus ii. 7-8.)

But, if we do not like to leave out this term altogether, (which would be most safe, and also most religious) we may, nevertheless, with a good conscience teach, that it be used so far as to allow man a “Free-will,” not in respect of those which are above him, but in respect only of those things which are below him: that is, he may be allowed to know, that he has, as to his goods and possessions the right of using, acting, and omitting, according to his “Free-will;” although, at the same time, that same “Free-will” is overruled by the Free-will of God alone, just as He pleases: but that, God-ward, or in things which pertain unto salvation or damnation, he has no “Free-will,” but is a captive, slave, and servant, either to the will of God, or to the will of Satan.

Sect. XXVII. — THESE observations have I made upon the heads of your PREFACE, which, indeed, themselves, may more properly be said to embrace the whole subject, than the following body of the book. But however, the whole of these observations in reply, might have been summed up and made in this one short compendious answer to you. — Your Preface complains, either of the Words of God, or of the word of men. If of the words of men, the whole is written in vain; if of the Words of God, the whole is impious. Wherefore, it would have saved much trouble, if it had been plainly mentioned, whether we were disputing concerning the Words of God, or the words of men. But this, perhaps, will be handled in the EXORDIUM which follows, or in the body of the discussion itself.

But the hints which you have thrown together in the conclusion of your Preface, have no weight whatever.

— Such as, your calling my doctrines ‘fables, and useless:’ and saying, ‘that Christ crucified should rather be preached, after the example of Paul: that wisdom is to be taught among them that are perfect that the language of Scripture is attempered to the various capacities of hearers: and your therefore thinking, that it should be left to the prudence and charity of the teacher, to teach that which may be profitable to his neighbour’ —

All this you advance senselessly, and away from the purpose. For rather do we teach anything but Christ crucified. But Christ crucified, brings all these things along with Himself, and that ‘wisdom also among them that are perfect:’ for there is no other wisdom to be taught among Christians, than that which is ‘hidden in a mystery:’ and this belongs to the ‘perfect,’ and not to the sons of the Jewish and legal generation, who, without faith, glory in their works, as Paul, 1 Cor. ii., seems to think! Unless by preaching Christ crucified, you mean nothing else but calling out these words — Christ is crucified!

And as to your observing — ‘that, God is represented as being angry, in a fury, hating, grieving, pitying, repenting, neither of which, nevertheless, ever takes place in Him’ —

This is only purposely stumbling on plain ground. For these things neither render the Scriptures obscure, nor necessary to be attempered to the various capacities of hearers. Except that, many like to make obscurities where there are none. For these things are no more than grammatical particulars, and certain figures of speech, with which even school-boys are acquainted. But we, in this disputation, are contending, not about grammatical figures, but about doctrines of truth.

EXORDIUM.

Sect. XXVIII. — AT your entrance, then, upon the disputation, you promise — ‘that you will go according to the Canonical Scriptures: and that, because Luther is swayed by the authority of no other writer whatever’ —

Very well! I receive your promise! But however, you do not make the promise on this account, because you judge that these same writers are of no service to your subject; but that you might not enter upon a field of labour in vain. For you do not, I know, quite approve of this audacity of mine, or, by what other term soever you choose to designate this my mode of discussion.

For you say — ‘so great a number of the most learned men, approved by the consent of so many ages, has no little weight with you. Among whom were, some of the most extensively acquainted with the sacred writings, and also some of the most holy martyrs, many renowned for miracles, together with the more recent theologians, and so many colleges, councils, bishops, and popes: so that, in a word, on your side of the balance are (you say) learning, genius, multitude, greatness, highness, fortitude, sanctity, miracles, and what not! — But that, on my side, are

only a Wycliffe and a Laurentius Valla (although Augustine also, whom you pass by, is wholly on my side), who in comparison with the others, are of no weight whatever; that Luther, therefore, stands alone, a private individual, an upstart, with his followers, in whom there is neither that learning nor that genius, nor multitude, nor magnitude, nor sanctity, nor miracles. 'For they have not ability enough (you say) to cure a lame horse. They make a show of Scripture, indeed; concerning which, however, they are as much in doubt as those on the other side of the question. They boast of the Spirit also, which however, they never show forth.' — And many other things, which, from the length of your tongue, you are able to enumerate in great profusion. But these things have no effect upon us, for we say to you, as the wolf did to the nightingale, which he devoured, "You are Sound, and that's all!" — "They say (you observe,) and upon this only, they would have us believe them."

I confess, my friend Erasmus, that you may well be swayed by all these. These had such weight with me for upwards of ten years, that I think no other mortal was ever so much under their sway. And I myself thought it incredible that this Troy of ours, which had for so long a time, and through so many wars stood invincible, could ever be taken. And I call God for a record upon my soul, that I should have continued so, and have been under the same influence even unto this day, had not an urging conscience and an evidence of things, forced me into a different path. And you may easily imagine that my heart was not of stone; and that, if it had been of stone, it would at least have been softened in struggling against so many tides, and being dashed to and fro by so many waves, when I was daring that, which, if I accomplished, I saw that the whole authority of those whom you have just enumerated, would be poured down upon my head like an overwhelming flood.

But this is not a time for setting forth a history of my own life or works; nor have I undertaken this discussion for the purpose of commending myself, but that I might exalt the grace of God. What I am, and with what spirit and design I have been led to these things, I leave to Him who knows, that all this is carrying on according to his own Free-will, not according to mine: though even the world itself ought to have found that out already. And certainly, by this Exordium of yours, you throw me into a very offensive situation, out of which, unless I speak in favour of myself, and to the disparagement of so many fathers, I shall not easily extricate myself. But I will do it in a few words. — According to your own judgment of me, then, I stand apart from all such learning, talents, multitude, authority, and every thing else of the kind.

Now, if I were to demand of you these three things, What is the Manifestation of the Spirit? What are Miracles? What is Sanctification? As far as I have known you from your letters and books, you would appear so great a novice and ignoramus that you would not be able to give three syllables of explanation. Or, if I should put it to you closely, and demand of you, which one among all those of whom you boast, you could to a certainty bring forth, either as being or having been a saint, or as having possessed the Spirit, or as having wrought miracles, I apprehend you would have hot work of it, and all in vain. You bring forth many things that have been handed about in common use and in public sermons; but you do not credit, how much of their weight and authority they lose, when they are brought to the judgment of conscience. There is an old proverb, "Many were accounted saints on earth, whose souls are now in hell!"

Sect. XXIX. — BUT we will grant you, if you please 'that they were all saints, that they all had the Spirit, that they all wrought miracles'(which, however, you do not require.) But tell me this — was any one of them made a saint, did any one of them receive the Spirit or work miracles, in the name, or by virtue of "Free-will," or to confirm the doctrine of "Free-will"? Far be such a thought (you will say,) but in the name, and by virtue of Jesus Christ, and for the confirmation of the doctrine of Christ, all these things were done. Why then do you bring forward the sanctity, the spirit, 'and the miracles of these, in confirmation of the doctrine of "Free-will,"' for which they were not wrought and given?

Their miracles, Spirit, and sanctity, therefore, belong to us who preach Jesus Christ, and not the ability and works of men. And now, what wonder if those who were thus holy, spiritual, and wonderful for miracles, were sometimes under the influence of the flesh, and spoke and wrought according to the flesh; since that happened, not once only, to the very apostles under Christ Himself. For you do not deny, but assert, that "Free-will" does not belong to the Spirit, or to Christ, but is human; so that, the Spirit who is promised to glorify Christ, cannot preach "Free will." If, therefore, the fathers have at any time preached "Free-will," they have certainly spoken from the flesh, (seeing they were men,) not from the Spirit of God; much less did they work miracles for its confirmation. Wherefore, your allegation concerning the sanctity, the Spirit, and the miracles of the fathers is nothing to the pur-

pose, because “Free-will” is not proved thereby, but the doctrine of Jesus Christ against the doctrine of “Free-will.”

But come, shew forth still, you that are on the side of “Free-will,” and assert that a doctrine of this kind is true, that is, that it proceeds from the Spirit of God — shew forth still, I say, the Spirit, still work miracles, still evidence sanctity. Certainly you who make the assertion owe this to us, who deny these things. The Spirit, sanctity, and miracles ought not to be demanded of us who maintain the negative, but from you who assert in the affirmative. The negative proposes nothing, is nothing, and is bound to prove nothing, nor ought to be proved: it is the affirmative that ought to be proved. You assert the power of “Free-will” and the human cause: but no miracle was ever seen or heard of, as proceeding from God, in support of a doctrine of the human cause, only in support of the doctrines of the divine cause. And we are commanded to receive no doctrine whatever, that is not first proved by signs from on high. (Deut. xviii. 15-22.) Nay, the Scripture calls man “vanity,” and “a lie:” which is nothing less than saying, that all human things are vanities and lies. Come forward then! come forward! I say, and prove, that your doctrine, proceeding from human vanity and a lie, is true. Where is now your shewing forth the Spirit! Where is your sanctity! Where are your miracles! I see your talents, your erudition, and your authority; but those things God has given alike unto all the world!

But however, we will not compel you to work great miracles, nor “to cure a lame horse,” lest you should plead, as an excuse, the carnality of the age. Although God is wont to confirm His doctrines by miracles, without any respect to the carnality of the age: nor is He at all moved, either by the merits or demerits of a carnal age, but by pure mercy and grace, and a love of souls which are to be confirmed, by solid truth, unto their glory. But we give you the choice of working any miracles, as small an one as you please.

But come! I, in order to irritate your Baal into action, insult, and challenge you to create even one frog, in the name, and by virtue of “Free-will;” of which, the Gentile and impious Magi in Egypt, could create many. I will not put you to the task of creating lice; which, neither could they produce. But I will descend a little lower yet. Take even one flea, or louse, (for you tempt and deride our God by your ‘curing of the lame horse,’) and if, after you have combined all the powers, and concentrated all the efforts both of your god and your advocates, you can, in the name and by virtue of “Free-will,” kill it, you shall be victors; your cause shall be established; and we also will immediately come over and adore that god of yours, that wonderful killer of the louse. Not that I deny, that you could even remove mountains; but it is one thing to say, that a certain thing was done by “Free-will,” and another to prove it.

And, what I have said concerning miracles, I say also concerning sanctity. — If you can, out of such a series of ages, men, and all the things which you have mentioned, shew forth one work, (if it be but the lifting a straw from the earth,) or one word, (if it be but the syllable MY,) or one thought of “Free-will,” (if it be but the faintest sigh,) by which men applied themselves unto grace, or by which they have merited the Spirit, or by which they have obtained pardon, or by which they have prevailed with God even in the smallest degree, (I say nothing about being sanctified thereby,) again, I say, you shall be victors, and we vanquished; and that, as I repeat, in the name and by virtue of “Free-will.”

For what things soever are wrought in men by the power of divine creation, are supported by Scripture testimonies in abundance. And certainly, you ought to produce the same: unless you would appear such ridiculous teachers, as to spread abroad throughout the world, with so much arrogance and authority, doctrines concerning that, of which you cannot produce one proof. For such doctrines will be called mere dreams, which are followed by nothing: than which, nothing can be more disgraceful to men of so many ages, so great, so learned, so holy, and so miraculous! And if this be the case, we shall rank even the stoics before you: for although they took upon them to describe such a wise man as they never saw, yet they did attempt to set forth some part of the character. But you cannot set forth any thing whatever, not even the shadow of your doctrine.

The same also I observe concerning the Spirit. If you can produce one out of all the assertors of “Free-will,” who ever had a strength of mind and affection, even in the smallest degree, so as, in the name and by virtue of “Free-will,” to be able to disregard one farthing, or to be willing to be without one farthing, or to bear one word or sign of injury, (I do not speak of the stoical contempt of riches, life, and fame,) again, the palm of victory shall be yours, and we, as the vanquished, will willingly pass under the spear. And these proofs you, who with such trumpeting mouths sound forth the power of “Free-will,” are bound to produce before us. Or else, again, you will appear to be striving to give establishment to a nothing: or to be acting like him, who sat to see a play in an empty theatre.

Sect. XXX. — BUT I will easily prove to you the contrary of all this: — that such holy men as you boast of, whenever they approach God, either to pray or to do, approach Him, utterly forgetful of their own “Free-will” and despairing of themselves, crying unto Him for pure grace only, feeling at the same time that they deserve everything that is the contrary. In this state was Augustine often; and in the same state was Bernard, when, at the point of death, he said, “I have lost my time, because I have lived wrong.” I do not see, here, that there was any power spoken of which could apply itself unto Grace, but that all power was condemned as being only averse; although those same saints, at the time when they disputed concerning “Free-will,” spoke otherwise. And the same I see has happened unto all, that, when they are engaged in words and disputations, they are one thing; but another, when they come to experience and practice. In the former, they speak differently from what they felt before; in the latter, they feel differently from what they spoke before. But men, good as well as bad, are to be judged of, more from what they feel, than from what they say.

But we will indulge you still further. We will not require miracles, the Spirit, and sanctity. We return to the doctrine itself. We only require this of you: — that you would at least explain to us, what work, what word, what thought, that power of “Free-will” can move, attempt, or perform, in order to apply itself unto grace. For it is not enough to say, there is! there is! there is a certain power of “Free-will!” For what is more easily said than this? Nor does such a way of proceeding become men the most learned, and the most holy, who have been approved by so many ages, but must be called baby-like (as we say in a German proverb.) It must be defined, what that power is, what it can do, in what it is passive, and what takes place. To give you an example (for I shall press you most homely) this is what is required: — Whether that power must pray, or fast, or labour, or chastise the body, or give alms; or what other work of this kind it must do, or attempt. For if it be a power it must do some kind of work. But here you are more dumb than Seriphian frogs and fishes. And how should you give the definition, when, according to your own testimony, you are at an uncertainty about the power itself, at difference among each other, and inconsistent with yourselves? And what must become of the definition, when the thing to be defined has no consistency in itself?

But be it so, that since the time of Plato, you are at length agreed among yourselves concerning the power itself; and that its work may be defined to be praying, or fasting, or something of the same kind, which perhaps, still lies undiscovered in the ideas of Plato. Who shall certify us that such is truth, that it pleases God, and that we are doing right, in safety? Especially when you yourselves assert that there is a human cause which has not the testimony of the Spirit, because of its having been handled by philosophers, and having existed in the world before Christ came, and before the Spirit was sent down from heaven. It is most certain, then, that this doctrine was not sent down from heaven with the Spirit, but sprung from the earth long before: and therefore, there is need of weighty testimony, whereby it may be confirmed to be true and sure.

We will grant, therefore, that we are private individuals and few, and you public characters and many; we ignorant, and you the most learned: we stupid, and you the most acute: we creatures of yesterday, and you older than Deucalion; we never received, and you approved by so many ages; in a word, we sinners, carnal, and dolts, and you awe-striking to the very devils for your sanctity, spirit, and miracles. — Yet allow us the right at least of Turks and Jews, to ask of you that reason for your doctrine, which your favourite Peter has commanded you to give. We ask it of you in the most modest way: that is, we do not require it to be proved by sanctity, by the Spirit, and by miracles, (which however, we could do in our own right, seeing that you yourselves require that of others): nay, we even indulge you so far, as not to require you to produce any example of a work, a word, or a thought, in confirmation of your doctrine but only to explain to us the doctrine itself, and merely to tell us plainly, what you would have to be understood by it, and what the form of it is. If you will not, or cannot do this, then let us at least attempt to set forth an example of it ourselves. For you are as bad as the Pope himself, and his followers, who say, “You are to do as we say, but not to do, as we do.” In the same manner you say, that that power requires a work to be done: and so, we shall be set on to work, while you remain at your ease. But will you not grant us this, that the more you are in numbers, the longer you are in standing, the greater you are, the farther you are on all accounts superior to us, the more disgraceful it is to you, that we, who in every respect are as nothing in your eyes, should desire to learn and practice your doctrine, and that you should not be able to prove it, either by any miracle, or by the killing of a louse, or by any the least motion of the Spirit, or by any the least work of sanctity, nor even to bring forth any example of it, either in work or word? And further, (a thing unheard of before) that you should not be able to tell us

plainly of what form the doctrine is, and how it is to be understood? — O excellent teachers of “Free-will!” What are you, now, but “Sound only!” Who now, Erasmus, are they who “boast of the Spirit but shew it not forth?” Who “say only, and then wish men to believe them?” Are not your friends they, who are thus extolled to the skies, and who can say nothing, and yet, boast of, and exact such great things?

We entreat, therefore, you and yours, my friend Erasmus, that you will allow us to stand aloof and tremble with fear, alarmed at the peril of our conscience; or, at least, to wave our assenting to a doctrine, which, as you yourself see, even though you should succeed to the utmost, and all your arguments should be proved and established, is nothing but an empty term, and a sounding of these syllables — ‘There is a power of “Free-will!”’ — There is a power of “Free-will!” — Moreover, it still remains an uncertainty among your own friends themselves, whether it be a term even, or not: for they differ from each other, and are inconsistent with themselves. It is most iniquitous, therefore, nay, the greatest of miseries, that our consciences, which Christ has redeemed by His blood, should be tormented by the ghost of one term, and that, a term which has no certainty in it. And yet, if we should not suffer ourselves to be thus tormented, we should be held as guilty of unheard-of pride, for disregarding so many fathers of so many ages, who have asserted “Free-will.” Whereas, the truth is, as you see from what has been said, they never defined any thing what ever concerning “Free-will”: but the doctrine of “Free-will” is erected under the covering, and upon the basis of their name: of which, nevertheless, they can shew no form, and for which, they can fix no term: and thus they delude the world with a term, that is a lie!

Sect. XXXI. — AND here, Erasmus, I call to your remembrance your own advice. You just now advised — ‘that questions of this kind be omitted; and that, Christ crucified be rather taught, and those things which suffice unto Christian piety’ — but this, we are now seeking after and doing. What are we contending for, but that the simplicity and purity of the Christian doctrine should prevail, and that those things should be left and disregarded, which have been invented, and introduced with it, by men? But you who give this advice, do not act according to it yourself: nay you act contrary to it: you write Diatribes: you exalt the decrees of the Popes: you honour the authority of man: and you try all means to draw us aside into these strange things and contrary to the Holy Scriptures: but you consider not the things that are necessary, how that, by so doing we should corrupt the simplicity and sincerity of the Scriptures, and confound them with the added inventions of men. From which, we plainly discover, that you did not give us that advice, from your heart; and that you write nothing seriously, but take it for granted that you can, by the empty bulls of your words, turn the world as you please. Whereas you turn them no where: for you say nothing whatever but mere contradictions, in all things, and every where. So that he would be most correct, who should call you, the very Proteus himself, or Vertumnus: or should say with Christ, ‘Physician, heal thyself.’ — ‘The teacher, whose own faults his ignorance prove, has need to hide his head!’ —

Until, therefore, you shall have proved your affirmative, we stand fast in our negative. And in the judgment, even of all that company of saints of whom you boast, or rather, of the whole world, we dare to say, and we glory in saying, that it is our duty not to admit that which is nothing, and which cannot, to a certainty, be proved what it is. And you must all be possessed of incredible presumption or of madness, to demand that to be admitted by us, for no other reason, than because you, as being many, great, and of long standing, choose to assert that, which you yourselves acknowledge to be nothing. As though it were a conduct becoming Christian teachers, to mock the miserable people, in things pertaining to godliness, with that which is nothing, as if it were a matter that essentially concerned their salvation. Where is that former acumen of the Grecian talent, which heretofore, at least covered lies under some elegant semblage of truth — it now lies in open and naked words! Where is that former dexterously laboured Latinity — it now thus deceives, and is deceived, by one most empty term!

But thus it happens to the senseless, or the malicious readers, of books: all those things which were the infirmities of the fathers or of the saints, they make to be of the highest authority: the fault, therefore, is not in the authors, but in the readers. It is as though one relying on the holiness and the authority of St. Peter, should contend that all that St. Peter ever said was true: and should even attempt to persuade us that it was truth, when, (Matt. xvi. 22.) from the infirmity of the flesh, he advised Christ not to suffer. Or that: where he commanded Christ to depart from him out of the ship. (Luke v. 8.) And many other of those things, for which he was rebuked of Christ.

Men of this sort are like unto them, who, for the sake of ridicule, idly say, that all things that are in the Gospel are not true. And they catch hold of that, (John viii. 48.): where the Jews say unto Christ, “Do we not say well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” Or that: “He is guilty of death.” Or that: “We found this fellow perverting

our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar.” These, do the same thing as those assertors of “Free-will,” but for a different end, and not willfully, but from blindness and ignorance; for they, so catch at that which the fathers, falling by the infirmity of the flesh, have said in favour of “Free-will,” that they even oppose it to that which the same fathers have elsewhere, in the power of the Spirit, said against “Free-will”: nay, they so urge and force it, that the better is made to give way to the worse. Hence it comes to pass, that they give authority to the worse expressions, because they fall in with their fleshly mind; and take it from the better, because they make against their fleshly mind.

But why do we not rather select the better? For there are many such in the fathers. — To produce an example. What can be more carnally, nay, what more impiously, sacrilegiously, and blasphemously spoken, than that which Jerome is wont to say — ‘Virginity peoples heaven, and marriage, the earth.’ As though the earth, and not heaven, was intended for the patriarchs, the apostles, and Christian husbands. Or, as though heaven was designed for gentile vestal virgins, who are without Christ. And yet, these things and others of the same kind, the Sophists collect out of the fathers that they may procure unto them authority, carrying all things more by numbers than by judgment. As that disgusting carpenter of Constance did, who lately made that jewel of his, the Stable of Augeas, a present to the public, that there might be a something to cause nausea and vomit in the pious and the learned.

Sect. XXXII. — AND now, while I am making these observations, I will reply to that remark of yours, where you say — ‘that it is not to be believed, that God would overlook an error in His Church for so many ages, and not reveal to any one of His saints that, which we contend for as being the grand essential of the Christian doctrine’ —

In the first place, we do not say that this error was overlooked of God in His Church, or in any one of His Saints. For the Church is ruled by the Spirit of God, and the Saints are led by the Spirit of God. (Rom. viii. 14.) And Christ is with His Church even unto the end of the world. (Matt. xxviii. 20.) And the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Tim. iii. 15.) These things, I say, we know; for the Creed which we all hold runs thus, “I believe in the holy Catholic Church;” so that, it is impossible that she can err even in the least article. And even if we should grant, that some of the Elect are held in error through the whole of their life; yet they must, of necessity, return into the way of truth before their death; for Christ says, (John x. 28,) “No one shall pluck them out of My hand.” But this is the labour, this the point — whether it can be proved to a certainty, that those, whom you call the church, were the Church; or, rather, whether, having been in error throughout their whole life, they were at last brought back before death. For this will not easily be proved, if God suffered all those most learned men whom you adduce, to remain in error through so long a series of ages — Therefore, God suffered His Church to be in error.

But, look at the people of Israel: where, during so many kings and so long a time, not one king is mentioned who never was in error. And under Elijah the Prophet, all the people and every thing that was public among them, had so gone away into idolatry, that he thought that he himself was the only one left: whereas, while the kings, the princes, the prophets, and whatever could be called the people or the Church of God was going to destruction, God was reserving to Himself “seven thousand.” (Rom. xi. 4.) But who could see these or know them to be the people of God? And who, even now, dares to deny that God, under all these great men, (for you make mention of none but men in some high office, or of some great name,) was reserving to Himself a Church among the commonalty, and suffering all those to perish after the example of the kingdom of Israel? For it is peculiar to God, to restrain the elect of Israel, and to slay their fat ones: but, to preserve the refuse and remnant of Israel, (Ps. lxxviii. 31.; Isaiah i. 9., x. 20-22., xi. 11-16.)

What happened under Christ Himself, when all the Apostles were offended at Him, when He was denied and condemned by all the people, and there were only a Joseph, a Nicodemus, and a thief upon the cross preserved? Were they then said to be the people of God? There was, indeed, a people of God remaining, but it was not called the people of God; and that which was so called, was not the people of God. And who knows who are the people of God, when throughout the whole world, from its origin, the state of the church was always such, that those were called the people and saints of God who were not so while others among them, who were as a refuse, and were not called the people and saints of God, were the People and Saints of God? as is manifest in the histories of Cain and Abel, of Ishmael and Isaac, of Esau and Jacob.

Look again at the age of the Arians, when scarcely five catholic bishops were preserved throughout the whole world, and they, driven from their places, while the Arians reigned, every where bearing the public name and office of the church. Nevertheless, under these heretics, Christ preserved His Church: but so, that it was the least thought

or considered to be the Church.

Again, shew me, under the kingdom of the Pope, one bishop discharging his office. Shew me one council in which their transactions were, concerning the things pertaining to godliness, and not rather, concerning gowns, dignities, revenues, and other baubles, which they could not say, without being mad, pertained to the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless they are called the church, when all, at least who live as they do, must be reprobates and any thing but the church. And yet, even under them Christ preserved His Church, though it was not called the Church. How many Saints must you imagine those of the inquisition have, for some ages, burnt and killed, as John Huss and others, in whose time, no doubt, there lived many holy men of the same spirit!

Why do you not rather wonder at this, Erasmus, that there ever were, from the beginning of the world, more distinguished talents, greater erudition, more ardent pursuit among the world in general than among Christians or the people of God? As Christ Himself declares, "The children of this world are wiser than the children of light." (Luke xvi. 8.) What Christian can be compared (to say nothing of the Greeks) with Cicero alone for talents, for erudition, or for indefatigability? What shall we say, then, was the preventive cause that no one of them was able to attain unto grace, who certainly exerted "Free-will" with its utmost powers? Who dares say, that there was no one among them who contended for truth with all his efforts? And yet we must affirm that no one of them all attained unto it. Will you here too say, it is not to be believed, that God would utterly leave so many great men, throughout such a series of ages, and permit them to labour in vain? Certainly, if "Free-will" were any thing, or could do any thing, it must have appeared and wrought something in those men, at least in some one instance. But it availed nothing, nay it always wrought in the contrary direction. Hence by this argument only, it may be sufficiently proved, that "Free-will" is nothing at all, since no proof of it can be produced even from the beginning of the world to the end!

Sect. XXXIII. — BUT to return — What wonder, if God should leave all the elders of the church to go their own ways, who thus permitted all the nations to go their own ways, as Paul saith, Acts xiv. 16; xvii. 30? — But, my friend Erasmus, THE CHURCH OF GOD INDEED, IS NOT SO COMMON A THING AS THIS TERM, CHURCH OF GOD: NOR ARE THE SAINTS OF GOD INDEED, EVERY WHERE TO BE FOUND LIKE THE TERM, SAINTS OF GOD. THEY ARE PEARLS AND PRECIOUS JEWELS, WHICH THE SPIRIT DOES NOT CAST BEFORE SWINE; BUT WHICH, (AS THE SCRIPTURE EXPRESSES IT,) HE KEEPS HIDDEN, THAT THE WICKED SEE NOT THE GLORY OF GOD! Otherwise, if they were openly known of all, how could it come to pass that they should be thus vexed and afflicted in the world? As Paul saith, (1 Cor. ii. 8.) "Had they known Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

I do not say these things, because I deny that those whom you mention are the saints and church of God; but because it cannot be proved, if any one should deny it, that they really are saints, but must be left quite in uncertainty; and because, therefore, the position deduced from their holiness, is not sufficiently credible for the confirmation of my doctrine. I call them saints, and look upon them as such: I call them the church, and look upon them as such — according to the law of Charity, but not according to the law of Faith. That is, charity, which always thinks the best of every one, and suspects not, but believeth and presumes all things for good concerning its neighbour, calls every one who is baptized, a saint. Nor is there any peril if she err, for charity is liable to err; seeing that she is exposed to all the uses and abuses of all; an universal handmaid, to the good and to the evil, to the believing and to the unbelieving, to the true and to the false. — But faith, calls no one a saint but him who is declared to be so by the judgment of God, for faith is not liable to be deceived. Therefore, although we ought all to be looked upon as saints by each other by the law of charity, yet no one ought to be decreed a saint by the law of faith, so as to make it an article of faith that such or such an one is a Saint. For in this way, that adversary of God, the Pope, canonized his minions whom he knows not to be saints, setting himself in the place of God. (2 Thess. ii. 4.) .

All that I say concerning those saints of yours, or rather, ours, is this: — that since they have spoken differently from each other, those should rather be selected who have spoken the best: that is, who have spoken in defense of Grace, and against "Free-will": and those left, who, through the infirmity of the flesh, have borne witness of the flesh rather than of the Spirit. And also, that those who are inconsistent with themselves, should be selected and caught at, in those parts of their writings where they speak from the Spirit, and left, where they savour of the flesh. This is what becomes a Christian reader, and a 'clean beast dividing the hoof and chewing the cud.' (Lev. xi. 3., Deut. xiv. 6.) Whereas now, laying aside judgment, we swallow down all things together, or, what is worse, by a

perversion of judgment, we cast away the best and receive the worst, out of the same authors; and moreover, affix to those worst parts, the title and authority of their sanctity; which sanctity, they obtained, not on account of “Free-will” or the flesh, but on account of the best things, even of the Spirit only.

Sect. XXXIV. — BUT as you say — “what therefore shall we do? The Church is hidden, the Saints are unknown! What, and whom shall we believe? Or, as you most sharply dispute, who will certify us? How shall we search out the Spirit? If we look to erudition, all are rabbins! If we look to life, all are sinners! If we look to the Scripture, they each claim it as belonging to them! But however, our discussion is not so much concerning the Scripture (which is not itself sufficiently clear,) but concerning the sense of the Scripture. And though there are men of every order at hand, yet, as neither numbers, nor erudition, nor dignity, is of any service to the subject, much less can paucity, ignorance, and mean rank avail any thing.” —

Well then! I suppose the matter must be left in doubt, and the point of dispute remain before the judge so that, we should seem to act with policy if we should go over to the sentiments of the Sceptics. Unless, indeed, we were to act as you wisely do, for you pretend that you are so much in doubt, that you professedly desire to seek and learn the truth; while, at the same time, you cleave to those who assert “Freewill,” until the truth be made glaringly manifest.

But no! I here in reply to you observe, that you neither say all, nor nothing. For we shall not search out the Spirit by the arguments of erudition, of life, of talent, of multitude, of dignity, of ignorance, of inexperience, of paucity, or of meanness of rank. And yet, I do not approve of those, whose whole resource is in a boasting of the Spirit. For I had the last year, and have still, a sharp warfare with those fanatics who subject the Scriptures to the interpretation of their own boasted spirit. On the same account also, I have hitherto determinately set myself against the Pope, in whose kingdom, nothing is more common, or more generally received than this saying: — ‘that the Scriptures are obscure and ambiguous, and that the Spirit, as the Interpreter, should be sought from the apostolical see of Rome!’ than which, nothing could be said that was more destructive; for by means of this saying, a set of impious men have exalted themselves above the Scriptures themselves; and by the same, have done whatever pleased them; till at length, the Scriptures are absolutely trodden under foot, and we compelled to believe and teach nothing but the dreams of men that are mad. In a word, that saying is no human invention, but a poison poured forth into the world by a wonderful malice of the devil himself, the prince of all demons.

We hold the case thus: — that the spirits are to be tried and proved by a twofold judgment. The one, internal; by which, through the Holy Spirit, or a peculiar gift of God, any one may illustrate, and to a certainty, judge of, and determine on, the doctrines and sentiments of all men, for himself and his own personal salvation concerning which it is said. (1 Cor. ii. 15.) “The spiritual man judgeth all things, but he himself is judged of no man.” This belongs to faith, and is necessary for every, even private, Christian. This, we have above called, ‘the internal clearness of the Holy Scripture.’ And it was this perhaps to which they alluded, who, in answer to you said, that all things must be determined by the judgment of the Spirit. But this judgment cannot profit another, nor are we speaking of this judgment in our present discussion; for no one, I think, doubts its reality.

The other, then, is the external judgment; by which, we judge, to the greatest certainty, of the spirits and doctrines of all men; not for ourselves only, but for others also, and for their salvation. This judgment is peculiar to the public ministry of the Word and the external office, and especially belongs to teachers and preachers of the Word. Of this we make use, when we strengthen the weak in faith, and when we refute adversaries. This is what we before called, ‘the external clearness of the Holy Scripture.’ Hence we affirm that all spirits are to be proved in the face of the church, by the judgment of Scripture. For this ought, above all things, to be received, and most firmly settled among Christians: — that the Holy Scriptures are a spiritual light by far more clear than the sun itself, especially in those things which pertain unto salvation or necessity.

Sect. XXXV. — BUT, since we have been persuaded to the contrary of this, by that pestilent saying of the Sophists, ‘the Scriptures are obscure and ambiguous;’ we are compelled, first of all, to prove that first grand principle of ours, by which all other things are to be proved: which, among the Sophists, is considered absurd and impossible to be done.

First then, Moses saith, (Deut. xvii. 8.) that, ‘if there arise a matter too hard in judgment, men are to go to the place which God shall choose for His name, and there to consult the priests, who are to judge of it according to the law of the Lord.’

He saith, “according to the law of the Lord” — but how will they judge thus, if the law of the Lord be not externally most clear, so as to satisfy them concerning it? Otherwise, it would have been sufficient, if he had said, according to their own spirit. Nay, it is so in every government of the people, the causes of all are adjusted according to laws. But how could they be adjusted, if the laws were not most certain, and absolutely, very lights to the people? But if the laws were ambiguous and uncertain, there would not only be no causes settled, but no certain consistency of manners. Since, therefore, laws are enacted that manners may be regulated according to a certain form, and questions in causes settled, it is necessary that that, which is to be the rule and standard for men in their dealings with each other, as the law is, should of all things be the most certain and most clear. And if that light and certainty in laws, in profane administrations where temporal things only are concerned, are necessary, and have been, by the goodness of God, freely granted to the whole world; how shall He not have given to Christians, that is to His own Elect, laws and rules of much greater light and certainty, according to which they might adjust and settle both themselves and all their causes? And that more especially, since He wills that all temporal things should, by His, be despised. And “if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven,” how much more shall He clothe us? (Matt. vi. 30) — But, let us proceed, and drown that pestilent saying of the Sophists, in Scriptures.

Psalm xix. 8, saith, “The commandment of the Lord is clear (or pure), enlightening the eyes.” And surely, that which enlightens the eyes, cannot be obscure or ambiguous!

Again, Psalm cxix. 130, “The door of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.” Here, it is ascribed unto the words of God, that they are a door, and something open, which is quite plain to all and enlightens even the simple.

Isaiah viii. 20, sends all questions “to the law and to the testimony;” and threatens that if we do not this, the light of the east shall be denied us.

In Malachi, ii. 7, commands, ‘that they should seek the law from the mouth of the priest, as being the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.’ But a most excellent messenger indeed of the Lord of Hosts he must be, who should bring forth those things, which were both so ambiguous to himself and so obscure to the people, that neither he should know what he himself said, nor they what they heard!

And what, throughout the Old Testament, in the 119th Psalm especially, is more frequently said in praise of the Scripture, than that, it is itself a most certain and most clear light? For Ps. cxix. 105, celebrates its clearness thus: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my paths.” He does not say only — thy Spirit is a lamp unto my feet; though he ascribes unto Him also His office, saying, “Thy good Spirit shall lead me into the land of uprightness.” (Ps. cxliii. 10.) Thus the Scripture is called a “way” and a “path:” that is from its most perfect certainty.

Sect. XXXVI. NOW let us come to the New Testament. Paul saith, (Rom. i. 2,) that the Gospel was promised “by the Prophets in the Holy Scriptures.” And, (Rom. iii. 21,) that the righteousness of faith was testified “by the law and the Prophets.” But what testimony is that, if it be obscure? Paul, however, throughout all his epistles makes the Gospel, the word of light, the Gospel of clearness; and he professedly and most copiously sets it forth as being so, 2 Cor. iii. and iv.; where he treats most gloriously concerning the clearness both of Moses and of Christ.

Peter also saith, (2 Pet. i. 19,) “And we certainly have more surely the word of prophecy; unto which, ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place.” Here Peter makes the Word of God a clear lamp, and all other things darkness: whereas, we make obscurity and darkness of the Word.

Christ also often calls Himself, the “light of the world;” (John viii. 12. ix. 5,) and John the Baptist, a “burning and a shining light,” (John v. 35.) Certainly, not on account of the holiness of his life, but on account of the word which he ministered. In the same manner Paul calls the Philippians shining “lights of the world.” (Phil. ii. 15), because (says he,) ye “hold forth the word of life.” (16.) For life without the word is uncertain and obscure.

And what is the design of the apostles in proving their preaching by the Scriptures? Is it that they may obscure their own darkness by still greater darkness? What was the intention of Christ, in teaching the Jews to “search the Scriptures” (John v. 39,) as testifying of Him? Was it that He might render them doubtful concerning faith in Him? What was their intention, who having heard Paul, searched the Scriptures night and day, “to see if these things were so?” (Acts xvii. 11.) Do not all these things prove that the Apostles, as well as Christ Himself, appealed to the Scriptures as the most clear testimonies of the truth of their discourses? With what face then do we make them ‘obscure?’

Are these words of the Scripture, I pray you, obscure or ambiguous: “God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. i. 1). “The Word was made flesh.” (John i. 14,) and all those other words which the whole world receives as articles of faith? Whence then, did they receive them? Was it not from the Scriptures? And what do those who at this day preach? Do they not expound and declare the Scriptures? But if the Scripture which they declare, be obscure, who shall certify us that their declaration is to be depended on? Shall it be certified by another new declaration? But who shall make that declaration? — And so we may go on ad infinitum.

In a word, if the Scripture be obscure or ambiguous, what need was there for its being sent down from heaven? Are we not obscure and ambiguous enough in ourselves, without an increase of it by obscurity, ambiguity, and darkness being sent down unto us from heaven? And if this be the case, what will become of that of the apostle, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction?” (2 Tim. iii. 16.) Nay, Paul, thou art altogether useless, and all those things which thou ascribest unto the Scripture, are to be sought for out of the fathers approved by a long course of ages, and from the Roman see! Wherefore, thy sentiment must be revoked, where thou writest to Titus, (chap. i. 9) ‘that a bishop ought to be powerful in doctrine, to exhort and to convince the gainsayers, and to stop the mouths of vain talkers, and deceivers of minds.’ For how shall he be powerful, when thou leavest him the Scriptures in obscurity — that is, as arms of tow and feeble straws, instead of a sword? And Christ must also, of necessity, revoke His word where He falsely promises us, saying, “I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist,” (Luke xxi. 15.) For how shall they not resist when we fight against them with obscurities and uncertainties? And why do you also, Erasmus, prescribe to us a form of Christianity, if the Scriptures be obscure to you!

But I fear I must already be burdensome, even to the insensible, by dwelling so long and spending so much strength upon a point so fully clear; but it was necessary, that that impudent and blasphemous saying, ‘the Scriptures are obscure,’ should thus be drowned. And you, too, my friend Erasmus, know very well what you are saying, when you deny that the Scripture is clear, for you at the same time drop into my ear this assertion: ‘it of necessity follows therefore, that all your saints whom you adduce, are much less clear.’ And truly it would be so. For who shall certify us concerning their light, if you make the Scriptures obscure? Therefore they who deny the all-clearness and all-plainness of the Scriptures, leave us nothing else but darkness.

Sect. XXXVII. — BUT here, perhaps, you will say — all that you have advanced is nothing to me. I do not say that the Scriptures are every where obscure (for who would be so mad?) but that they are obscure in this, and the like parts. — I answer: I do not advance these things against you only, but against all who are of the same sentiments with you. Moreover, I declare against you concerning the whole of the Scripture, that I will have no one part of it called obscure: and, to support me, stands that which I have brought forth out of Peter, that the word of God is to us a “lamp shining in a dark place.” (2 Peter i. 19.) But if any part of this lamp do not shine, it is rather a part of the dark place than of the lamp itself. For Christ has not so illuminated us, as to wish that any part of His word should remain obscure, even while He commands us to attend to it: for if it be not shinningly plain, His commanding us to attend to it is in vain.

Wherefore, if the doctrine concerning “Free-will” be obscure and ambiguous, it does not belong unto Christians and the Scriptures, and is, therefore to be left alone entirely, and classed among those “old wives’ fables” (1 Tim. iv. 7.) which Paul condemns in contentious Christians. But if it do belong unto Christians and the Scriptures, it ought to be clear, open, and manifest, and in every respect like unto all the other most evident articles of faith. For all the articles of faith which belong unto Christians ought to be such, as may not only be most evident to themselves but so defended by manifest and clear Scriptures against the adversaries, as to stop the mouths of them all, that they shall not be able in any thing to gainsay. And this Christ has promised us, saying, “I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist.” But if our mouth be weak in this part, that the adversaries are able to resist, His saying, that no adversary shall be able to resist our mouth, is false. In the doctrine of “Free-will,” therefore, we shall either have no adversaries, (which will be the case if it belong not unto us;) or, if it belong unto us, we shall have adversaries indeed, but such as will not be able to resist.

But concerning the inability of our adversaries to resist, (as that particular falls in here,) I would, by the way, observe that it is thus: — It does not mean, that they are forced to yield with the heart, or to confess, or be silent. For who can compel men against their will to yield, confess their error, and be silent? ‘What (saith Augustine), is more loquacious than vanity?’ But what is meant by their mouths being stopped, their not having a word to

gainsay, and their saying many things, and yet, in the judgment of common sense, saying nothing, will be best illustrated by examples.

When Christ, put the Sadducees to silence by proving the resurrection from the dead, out of that Scripture of Moses. (Matt. xxii. 23-32.) “I am the God of Abraham, &c., God is not the God of the dead but of the living;” (Exod. iii. 6,) this they were not able to resist, nor had they a word to gainsay. But did they, therefore, cease from their opinion?

And how often did he, by the most evident Scriptures and arguments, so confute the Pharisees, that the very people saw them to be confuted openly, and they themselves felt it. Nevertheless, they still perseveringly continued His adversaries.

Stephen, (Acts vi. 10,) so spoke, that, according to the testimony of Luke, “they could not resist the spirit and the wisdom with which he spake.” But what did they? Did they yield? No! from their shame of being overcome and their inability to resist, they became furious, and shutting their eyes and ears they suborned false witnesses against him. (Acts vi. 11-13.)

Behold how the same apostle, standing in the council, confutes his adversaries, while he enumerates to that people the mercies of God unto them from their beginning, and proves to them, that God never commanded a temple to be built unto Him: (for it was upon that point they then held him as guilty, and that was the subject in dispute.) At length however, he grants, that there was a temple built under Solomon. But then he takes up the point in this way: “but the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” And to prove this, he brings forward Isaiah the prophet, lxvi. 1, “What is the house that ye build unto Me?” And, tell me, what could they here say against a Scripture so manifest? Yet still, not at all moved by it, they stood fixed in their own opinion. Wherefore, he then launches forth on them saying, “Ye uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, &c.” (Acts vii 51.) He saith, “ye do resist,” although they were not able to resist.

But let us come to our own times. John Huss preached thus against the Pope from Matt. xvi. 18 — “The gates of hell shall not prevail against my church. Is there there any obscurity or ambiguity? But the gates of hell do prevail against the Pope and his, for they are notorious throughout the world of their open impiety and iniquities. Is there any obscurity here either? ERGO: THE POPE AND HIS, ARE NOT THE CHURCH CONCERNING WHICH CHRIST SPEAKS.’ — What could they gainsay here? How could they resist the mouth that Christ had given him? Yet, they did resist, and persist until they had burnt him: so far were they from yielding to Him, in heart. And this is the kind of resistance to which Christ alludes when He saith, “Your adversaries shall not be able to resist.” (Luke xxi. 15.) He says they are “adversaries;” therefore they will resist, for otherwise, they would not remain adversaries, but would become friends, And yet He says, they “shall not be able to resist.” What is this else but saying — though they resist, they shall not be able to resist?

If therefore, I also shall be enabled so to refute the doctrine of “Free-will,” that the adversaries shall not be able to resist, although they persist in their opinion, and go on to resist contrary to their conscience, I shall have done enough. For I know well, by experience, how unwilling every one is to be overcome; and (as Quintillian says,) ‘that there is no one, who would not rather appear to know, than to be taught.’ Although, now-a-days all men, in all places, have this proverb on their tongue, but more from use, or rather abuse, than from heart-reality — ‘I am willing to learn, and I am ready to follow what is better, when I am taught it by admonition: I am man, and liable to err.’ Because, under this mask, this fair semblance of humility, they can with plausible confidence say; ‘I am not fully satisfied of it.’ ‘I do not comprehend it.’ ‘He does violence to the Scriptures.’ ‘He asserts so obstinately.’ And they nestle under this confidence, taking it for granted, that no one would ever suspect, that souls of so much humility could, ever pertinaciously resist and determinately impugn the known truth. Hence their not yielding in heart, is not to be imputed to their malice, but to the obscurity and duplicity of their arguments.

In the same manner did the philosophers of the Greeks, act; who, that the one might not appear to give up to the other, though evidently confuted, began, as Aristotle records, to deny first principles. In the same way we would mildly persuade ourselves and others, that there are in the world many good men, who would willingly embrace the truth, if there were but one who could plainly shew which it is; and that, it is not to be supposed, that so many learned men, in such a course of ages, were all in error, and did not know that truth. — As though we knew not, that the world is the kingdom of Satan, where, in addition to the natural blindness that is engendered in our flesh, and those most wicked spirits also which have dominion over us, we grow hardened in that very blindness,

and are bound in a darkness, no longer human, but devilish.

Sect. XXXVIII. — BUT you ask — “if then the Scripture be quite clear, why have men of renowned talent, through so many ages, been blind upon this point?” I answer: they have been thus blind, to the praise and glory of “Free-will;” in order that, that highly boasted-of ‘power,’ by which a man is ‘able to apply himself unto those things that pertain unto eternal salvation,’ might be eminently displayed; that very exalted power, which neither sees those things which it sees, nor hears those things which it hears, and much less, understands and seeks after them. For to this power, applies that which Christ and the evangelists so often bring forward out of Isaiah vi. 9, “Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive.” What is this else but saying, that “Free-will;” or the human heart, is so bound by the power of Satan, that, unless it be quickened up in a wonderful way by the Spirit of God, it cannot of itself see or hear those things which strike against the eyes and ears so manifestly, as to be as it were palpable by the hand? So great is the misery and blindness of the human race! Thus also the Evangelists themselves, when they wondered how it could be that the Jews were not won over by the works and words of Christ, which were evidently incontrovertible and undeniable, satisfied themselves from that place of the Scripture, where it is shewn, that man, left to himself, seeing seeth not, and hearing heareth not. And what can be more monstrous! “The light (saith Christ) shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.” (John i. 5.) Who could believe this? Who hath heard the like — that the light should shine in darkness, and yet, the darkness still remain darkness, and not be enlightened!

Wherefore, it is no wonder in divine things, that through so many ages, men renowned for talent remained blind. It might have been a wonder in human things, but in divine things, it would rather have been a wonder if there had been one here and there that did not remain blind: that they all remained utterly blind alike, is no wonder at all. For what is the whole human race together, without the Spirit, but the kingdom of the devil (as I have said) and a confused chaos of darkness? And therefore it is, that Paul, (Ephes. vi. 12,) calls the devils, “the rulers of this darkness.” And, (1 Cor. ii. 8,) he saith, that none of the princes of this world knew the wisdom of God. What then must he think of the rest, who asserts that the princes of this world are the slaves of darkness? For by princes, he means those greatest and highest ones, whom you call ‘men renowned for talent.’ And why were all the Arians blind? Were there not among them men renowned for talent? Why was Christ foolishness to the nations? Are there not among the nations men renowned for talent? “God (saith Paul) knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain,” (1 Cor. iii. 20.) He chose not to say “of men,” as the text to which he refers has it, but would point to the first and greatest among men, that from them we might form a judgment of the rest. — But upon these points more at large, perhaps, hereafter.

Suffice it thus to have premised, in Exordium, that the Scriptures are most clear, and that by them, our doctrines can be so defended that the adversaries cannot resist: but those doctrines that cannot be thus defended, are nothing to us, for they belong not unto Christians. But if there be any who do not see this clearness, and are blind, or offend under this sun, they, if they be wicked, manifest how great that dominion and power of Satan is over the sons of men, when they can neither hear nor comprehend the all-clear words of God, but are as one cheated by a juggler, who is made to think that the sun is a cold cinder, or to believe that a stone is gold. But if they fear God, they are to be numbered among those elect, who, to a certain degree, are led into error that the power of God may be manifest in us, without which, we can neither see nor do any thing whatever. For the not comprehending the words of God, does not arise, as you pretend, from weakness of mind; nay, nothing is better adapted to the receiving of the words of God, than a weakness of the mind; for it was on account of these weak ones, and to these weak ones, that Christ came, and it is to them he sends His Word. But it is the wickedness of Satan enthroned and reigning in our weakness, and resisting the Word of God: — for if Satan did not do this, a whole world of men might be converted by one Word of God once heard, nor could there be need of more.

Sect. XXXIX. — BUT why do I go on enlarging? Why do I not conclude this discussion with this Exordium, and give my sentence against you in your own words, according to that saying of Christ, “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned?” (Matt. xii. 37.) For you say that the Scripture is not quite clear upon this point. And then, suspending all declaration of your own sentiment, you discuss each side of the subject, what may be said for, and what against, and nothing else whatever do you do, in the whole of this book of yours; which, for that very reason, you wished to call DIATRIBE (The Collation) rather than APOPHASIS (The Denial), or something of that kind; because, you wrote with a design to collect all things, and to assert nothing.

But if the Scripture be not quite clear upon this point, why do those of whom you boast, not only remain blind to their side of the subject, but rashly and as fools, define and assert “Free-will,” as though proved by a certain and all-sure testimony of Scripture, — that numberless series of the most learned men, I mean, whom the consent of so many ages has approved, even unto this day, and many of whom, in addition to an admirable acquaintance with the Sacred Writings, a piety of life commends? — Some have given, by their blood, a testimony of that doctrine of Christ, which they had defended by Scriptures. If you say what you say, from your heart, it is surely a settled point with you, that “Free-will” has assertors, who are endowed with a wonderful understanding in the sacred writings, and who even gave testimony of that doctrine by their blood. If this be true, they certainly had clear Scripture on their side, else, where would be their admirable understanding in the Sacred Writings? Moreover, what lightness and temerity of spirit must it be, to shed ones blood for a matter uncertain and obscure? This is not to be the martyrs of Christ, but the martyrs of devils!

Now then, do you just set the matter before you, and weigh it in your mind, and say, to which of the two you consider the greater credit should be given; to the prejudices of so many learned men, so many orthodox divines, so many saints, so many martyrs, so many theologians old and recent, so many colleges, so many councils, so many bishops and high-priest Popes, who were of opinion that the Scriptures are quite clear, and who (according to you) confirmed the same by their writings and by their blood; or to your own private judgment, who deny that the Scriptures are quite clear, and who, perhaps, never spent one single tear or sigh for the doctrine of Christ, in the whole of your life? If you believe they were right in their opinion, why do you not follow them in it? If you do not believe they were right, why do you boast of them with such a trumpeting mouth, and such a torrent of language, as though you would overwhelm us head and ears with a certain storm or flood of eloquence? Which flood, however, will the more heavily rush back upon your own head, whilst my Ark is borne along in safety on the top of the waters! Moreover, you attribute to so many and great men, the utmost folly and temerity. For when you speak of them as being men of the greatest understanding in the Scripture, and as having asserted it by their pen, by their life, and by their death; and yet at the same time contend yourself, that the same Scripture is obscure and ambiguous, this is nothing less than making those men most ignorant in understanding, and most stupid in assertion. Thus I, their poor private despiser, do not pay them such an ill compliment, as you do, their public flatterer.

Sect. XL. — HERE, therefore, I hold you fast in a last-pinch syllogism (as they say). For either the one or the other of your assertions must be false. Either that, where you say, ‘those men were admirable for their understanding in the Sacred Writings, for their life, and for their martyrdom;’ or that, where you say, that ‘the Scriptures are not quite clear.’ But since you are drawn more this latter way, that is, to believe that the Scriptures are not quite clear, (for this is what you harp upon throughout the whole of your book), it remains evident, that it was either from your own natural inclination towards them, or for the sake of flattering them, but by no means from seriousness, that you called those men, ‘men of the greatest understanding in the Scripture, and martyrs of Christ;’ merely in order that you might blind the eyes of the inexperienced commonalty, and make work for Luther by loading his cause with empty words, odium, and contempt. But, however, I aver that neither of your assertions are true, and that both are false. For, first of all, I aver, that the Scriptures are quite clear: and next, that those men, as far as they asserted “Free-will,” were most ignorant of the Sacred Writings: and moreover, that they neither asserted it by their life, nor by their death, but by their pen only; and that, while their heart was travelling another road.

Wherefore this small part of the Disputation I conclude thus. — By the Scripture, as being obscure, nothing ever has hitherto, nor ever can be defined concerning “Free-will;” according to your own testimony. Moreover, nothing has ever been manifested in confirmation of “Free-will,” in the lives of all the men from the beginning of the world; as we have proved above. To teach, then, a something which is neither described by one word within the Scriptures, nor evidenced by one fact without the Scriptures, is that, which does not belong to the doctrines of Christians, but to the very fables of Lucian. Except, however, that Lucian, as he amuses only with ludicrous stories from wit and policy) deceives and injures no one. But these friends of ours, in a matter of importance which concerns eternal salvation, madly trifle to the perdition of souls innumerable.

Thus I might here have concluded the whole of this discussion, even with the testimony of my adversaries making for me, and against themselves. For no proof can be more decisive, than the very confession and testimony of the guilty person against himself. But however, as Paul commands us to stop the mouths of vain talkers, let us now enter upon the Discussion itself, and handle the subject in the order in which the Diatribe proceeds: that we

may, FIRST, confute the arguments adduced in support of “Free-will”: SECONDLY, defend our arguments that are confuted: and, LASTLY, contend for the Grace of God against “Free-will.”

DISCUSSION.

FIRST PARTS Sect. XLI. to Sect. LXXV

Sect. XLI. — AND, first of all, let us begin regularly with your definition: according to which, you define “Free-will” thus,

— “Moreover I consider Free-will in this light: that it is a power in the human will, by which, a man may apply himself to those things which lead unto eternal salvation, or turn away from the same.” —

With a great deal of policy indeed, you have here stated a mere naked definition, without declaring any part of it, (as all others do); because, perhaps, you feared more shipwrecks than one. I therefore am compelled to state the several parts myself. The thing defined itself, if it be closely examined, has a much wider extent than the definition of it: and such a definition, the Sophists would call faulty: that is, when the definition does not fully embrace the thing defined. For I have shown before, that “Free-will” cannot be applied to any one but to God only. You may, perhaps, rightly assign to man some kind of will, but to assign unto him “Free-will” in divine things, is going too far. For the term “Free-will,” in the judgment of the ears of all, means, that which can, and does do God-ward, whatever it pleases, restrainable by no law and no command. But you cannot call him Free, who is a servant acting under the power of the Lord. How much less, then, can we rightly call men or angels free, who so live under the all-outruling command of God, (to say nothing of sin and death,) that they cannot consist one moment by their own power.

Here then, at the outset, the definition of the term, and the definition of the thing termed, militate against each other: because the term signifies one thing, and the thing termed is, by experience, found to be another. It would indeed be more properly termed “Vertible-will,” or “Mutable-will.” For in this way Augustine, and after him the Sophists, diminished the glory and force of the term, free; adding thereby this detriment, that they assign vertibility to “Free-will.” And it becomes us thus to speak, lest, by inflated and lofty terms of empty sound, we should deceive the hearts of men. And, as Augustine also thinks, we ought to speak according to a certain rule, in sober and proper words; for in teaching, simplicity and propriety of argumentation is required, and not highflown figures of rhetorical persuasion.

Sect. XLII. — BUT that we might not seem to delight in a mere war of words, we cede to that abuse, though great and dangerous, that “Free-will means “Vertible-will.” We will cede also that to Erasmus, where he makes “Free-will” ‘a power of the human will:’ (as though angels had not a “Free-will” too, merely because he designed in this book to treat only on the “Free-will” of men!) We make this remark, otherwise, even in this part, the definition would be too narrow to embrace the thing defined.

We come then to those parts of the definition, which are the hinge upon which the matter turns. Of these things some are manifest enough; the rest shun the light, as if conscious to themselves that they had every thing to fear: because, nothing ought to be expressed more clearly, and more decisively, than a definition; for to define obscurely, is the same thing as defining nothing at all.

The clear parts of the definition then are these: — ‘power of human will:’ and ‘by which a man can:’ also, ‘unto eternal salvation.’ But these are Andabatae: — ‘to apply:’ and, ‘to those things which lead:’ also, ‘to turn away.’ What shall we divine that this ‘to apply’ means? And this ‘to turn away,’ also? And also what these words mean, ‘which pertain unto eternal salvation?’ Into what dark corner have these withdrawn their meaning? I seem as if I were engaged in dispute with a very Scotinian, or with Heraclitus himself, so as to be in the way of being worn out by a twofold labour. First, that I shall have to find out my adversary by groping and feeling about for him in pits and darkness, (which is an enterprise both venturous and perilous,) and if I do not find him, to fight to no purpose with ghosts, and beat the air in the dark. And, secondly, if I should bring him out into the light, that then, I shall have to fight with him upon equal ground, when I am already worn out with hunting after him.

I suppose, then, what you mean by the ‘power of the human will’ is this: — a power, or faculty, or disposition, or

aptitude, to will or not to will, to choose or refuse, to approve or disapprove, and what other actions soever belong to the will. Now then, what it is for this same power 'to apply itself,' or 'to turn away,' I do not see: unless it be the very, willing or not willing, choosing or refusing, approving or disapproving; that is, the very action itself of the will. But may we suppose, that this power is a kind of medium, between the will itself and the action itself; such as, that by which the will itself allures forth the action itself of willing or not willing, or by which the action itself of willing or not willing is allured forth? Any thing else beside this, it is impossible for one to imagine or think of. And if I am deceived, let the fault be my author's who has given the definition, not mine who examine it. For it is justly said among lawyers, 'his words who speaks obscurely, when he can speak more plainly, are to be interpreted against himself.' And here I wish to know nothing of our moderns and their subtleties, for we must come plainly to close quarters in what we say, for the sake of understanding and teaching.

And as to those words, 'which lead unto eternal salvation,' I suppose by them are meant the words and works of God, which are offered to the human will, that it might either apply itself to them, or turn away from them. But I call both the Law and the Gospel the words of God. By the Law, works are required; and by the Gospel, faith. For there are no other things which lead either unto the grace of God, or unto eternal salvation, but the word and the work of God: because grace or the spirit is the life itself, to which we are led by the word and the work of God.

Sect. XLIII. — BUT this life or salvation is an eternal matter, incomprehensible to the human capacity: as Paul shews, out of Isaiah, (1 Cor. ii. 9.) "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." For when we speak of eternal life, we speak of that which is numbered among the chiefest articles of our faith. And what "Freewill" avails in this article Paul testifies, (1 Cor. ii. 10.) Also: "God (saith he) hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." As though he had said, the heart of no man will ever understand or think of any of those things, unless the Spirit shall reveal them; so far is it from possibility, that he should ever apply himself unto them or seek after them.

Look at experience. What have the most exalted minds among the nations thought of a future life, and of the resurrection? Has it not been, that the more exalted they were in mind, the more ridiculous the resurrection and eternal life have appeared to them? Unless you mean to say, that those philosophers and Greeks at Athens, who, (Acts xvii. 18.) called Paul, as he taught these things, a "babbling" and a "setter forth of strange gods," were not of exalted minds. Portius Festus, (Acts xxvi. 24.) calls out that Paul is "mad," on account of his preaching eternal life. What does Pliny bark forth, Book vii.? What does Lucian also, that mighty genius? Were not they men wondered at? Moreover to this day there are many, who, the more renowned they are for talent and erudition, the more they laugh at this article; and that openly, considering it a mere fable. And certainly, no man upon earth, unless imbued with the Holy Spirit, ever secretly knows, or believes in, or wishes for, eternal salvation, how much soever he may boast of it by his voice and by his pen. And may you and I, friend Erasmus, be free from this boasting leaven. So rare is a believing soul in this article! — Have I got the sense of this definition?

Sect. XLIV. — UPON the authority of Erasmus, then, "Free-will," is a power of the human will, which can, of itself, will and not will to embrace the word and work of God, by which it is to be led to those things which are beyond its capacity and comprehension. If then, it can will and not will, it can also love and hate. And if it can love and hate, it can, to a certain degree, do the Law and believe the Gospel. For it is impossible, if you can will and not will, that you should not be able by that will to begin some kind of work, even though, from the hindering of another, you should not be able to perfect it. And therefore, as among the works of God which lead to salvation, death, the cross, and all the evils of the world are numbered, human will can will its own death and perdition. Nay, it can will all things while it can will the embracing of the word and work of God. For what is there that can be any where beneath, above, within, and without the word and work of God, but God Himself? And what is there here left to grace and the Holy Spirit? This is plainly to ascribe divinity to "Free-will." For to will to embrace the Law and the Gospel, not to will sin, and to will death, belongs to the power of God alone: as Paul testifies in more places than one.

Wherefore, no one, since the Pelagians, has written more rightly concerning "Free-will" than Erasmus. For I have said above, that "Free-will" is a divine term, and signifies a divine power. But no one hitherto, except the Pelagians, has ever assigned to it that power. Hence, Erasmus by far outstrips the Pelagians themselves: for they assign that divinity to the whole of "Free-will," but Erasmus to the half of it only. They divide "Free-will" into two parts; the power of discerning, and the power of choosing; assigning the one to reason, and the other to will; and

the Sophists do the same. But Erasmus, setting aside the power of discerning, exalts the power of choosing alone, and thus makes a lame, half-membered “Free-will,” God himself! What must we suppose then he would have done, had he set about describing the whole of “Free-will.”

But, not contented with this, he outstrips even the philosophers. For it has never yet been settled among them, whether or not any thing can give motion to itself; and upon this point, the Platonics and Peripatetics are divided in the whole body of philosophy. But according to Erasmus, “Freewill” not only of its own power gives motion to itself, but ‘applies itself’ to those things which are eternal; that is, which are incomprehensible to itself! A new and unheard-of definer of “Freewill,” truly, who leaves the philosophers, the Pelagians, the Sophists, and all the rest of them, far behind him! Nor is this all. He does not even spare himself, but dissents from, and militates against himself, more than against all the rest together. For he had said before, that ‘the human will is utterly ineffective without grace;’ (unless perhaps this was said only in joke!) but here, where he gives a serious definition, he says, that ‘the human will has that power by which it can effectively apply itself to those things which pertain unto eternal salvation;’ that is, which are incomparably beyond that power. So that, in this part, Erasmus outstrips even himself!

Sect. XLV. — DO you see, friend Erasmus, that by this definition, you (though unwittingly I presume,) betray yourself, and make it manifest that you either know nothing of these things whatever, or that, without any consideration, and in a mere air of contempt, you write upon the subject, not knowing what you say nor whereof you affirm? And as I said before, you say less about, and attribute more to “Free-will,” than all others put together; for you do not describe the whole of “Free-will,” and yet you assign unto it all things. The opinion of the Sophists, or at least of the father of them, Peter Lombard, is far more tolerable: he says, “Free-will” is the faculty of discerning, and then choosing also good, if with grace, but evil if grace be wanting.’ He plainly agrees in sentiment with Augustine, that “Freewill,” of its own power, cannot do any thing but fall, nor avail unto any thing but to sin.’ Wherefore Augustine also, Book ii., against Julian, calls “Free-will” ‘under bondage,’ rather than ‘free.’ — But you make the power of “Free-will” equal in both respects: that it can, by its own power, without grace, both apply itself unto good, and turn itself from evil. For you do not imagine how much you assign unto it, by this pronoun itself, and by itself, when you say ‘can apply itself:’ for you utterly exclude the Holy Spirit with all His power, as a thing superfluous and unnecessary. Your definition, therefore, is condemnable even by the Sophists; who, were they not so blinded by hatred and fury against me, would be enraged at your book rather than at mine. But now, as your intent is to oppose Luther, all that you say is holy and catholic, even though you speak against both yourself and them, — so great is the patience of holy men!

Not that I say this, as approving the sentiments of the Sophists concerning “Free-will,” but because I consider them more tolerable, for they approach nearer to the truth. For though they do not say, as I do, that “Free-will” is nothing at all, yet since they say that it can of itself do nothing without grace, they militate against Erasmus, nay, they seem to militate against themselves, and to be tossed to and fro in a mere quarrel of words, being more earnest for contention than for the truth, which is just as Sophists should be. But now, let us suppose that a Sophist of no mean rank were brought before me, with whom I could speak upon these things apart, in familiar conversation, and should ask him for his liberal and candid judgment in this way: — ‘If any one should tell you, that that was free, which of its own power could only go one way, that is, the bad way, and which could go the other way indeed, that is, the right way, but not by its own power, nay, only by the help of another — could you refrain from laughing in his face, my friend?’ — For in this way, I will make it appear, that a stone, or a log of wood has “Freewill,” because it can go upwards and downwards; although, by its own power, it can go only downwards, but can go upwards only by the help of another. And, as I said before, by meaning at the same time the thing itself, and also something else which may be joined with it or added to it, I will say, consistently with the use of all words and languages — all men are no man, and all things are nothing!

Thus, by a multiplicity of argumentation, they at last make “Free-will,” free by accident; as being that, which may at some time be set free by another. But our point in dispute is concerning the thing itself, concerning the reality of “Free-will.” If this be what is to be solved, there now remains nothing, let them say what they will, but the empty name of “Free-will.”

The Sophists are deficient also in this — they assign to “Free-will,” the power of discerning good from evil. Moreover, they set light by regeneration, and the renewing of the Spirit, and give that other external aid, as it were, to “Freewill:” but of this hereafter. — Let this be sufficient concerning the definition. Now let us look into the ar-

guments that are to exalt this empty thing of a TERM.

Sect. XLVI. — FIRST of all, we have that of Ecclesiasticus xv. 15-18. — “God from the beginning made man, and left him in the hand of his own counsel. He gave him also His commandments, and His precepts: saying, If thou wilt keep My commandments, and wilt keep continually, the faith that pleaseth Me, they shall preserve thee. He hath set before thee fire and water; and upon which thou wilt, stretch forth thine hand. Before man is life and death, good and evil; and whichsoever pleaseth him, shall be given unto him.” —

Although I might justly refuse this book, yet, nevertheless, I receive it; lest I should, with loss of time, involve myself in a dispute concerning the books that are received into the canon of the Hebrews: which canon you do not a little reproach and deride, when you compare the Proverbs of Solomon, and the Love-song, (as, with a double-meaning sneer, you call it,) with the two books Esdras and Judith, the History of Susannah, of the Dragon, and the Book of Esther, though they have this last in their canon, and according to my judgment, it is much more worthy of being there, than any one of those that are considered not to be in the canon.

But I would briefly answer you here in your own words, ‘The Scripture, in this place, is obscure and ambiguous;’ therefore, it proves nothing to a certainty. But however, since I stand in the negative, I call upon you to produce that place which declares, in plain words, what “Free-will” is, and what it can do. And this perhaps you will do by about the time of the Greek Calends. — In order to avoid this necessity, you spend many fine sayings upon nothing; and moving along on the tip-toe of prudence, cite numberless opinions concerning “Free-will,” and make of Pelagius almost an Evangelist. Moreover, you vamp up a four-fold grace, so as to assign a sort of faith and charity even to the philosophers. And also that new fable, a three-fold law; of nature, of works, and of faith, so as to assert with all boldness, that the precepts of the philosophers agree with the precepts of the Gospel. Again, you apply that of Psalm iv. 6. “The light of Thy countenance is settled upon us,” which speaks of the knowledge of the very countenance of the Lord, that is, of faith, to blinded reason. All which things together, if taken into consideration by any Christian, must compel him to suspect, that you are mocking and deriding the doctrines and religion of Christians: For to attribute these things as so much ignorance to him, who has illustrated all our doctrines with so much diligence, and stored them up in memory, appears to me very difficult indeed. But however, I will here abstain from open exposure, contented to wait until a more favourable opportunity shall offer itself. Although I entreat you, friend Erasmus, not to tempt me in this way like one of those who say — who sees us? For it is by no means safe in so great a matter, to be continually mocking every one with Vertumnities of words. But to the subject.

Sect. XLVII. — OUT of the ONE opinion concerning “Free-will” you make THREE. You say — ‘that THE FIRST OPINION, of those who deny that man can will good without special grace, who deny that it can begin, who deny that it can make progress, perfect, &c., seems to you severe, though it may be VERY PROBABLE.’ And this you prove, as leaving to man the desire and the effort, but not leaving what is to be ascribed to his own power. ‘That THE SECOND OPINION of those who contend, that “Free-will” avails unto nothing but to sin, and that grace alone works good in us, &c. is more severe still.’ And THIRDLY ‘that the opinion of those who say that “Free-will” is an empty term, for that God works in us both good and evil, is most severe. And, that, it is against these last that you profess to write.’ —

Do you know what you are saying, friend Erasmus? You are here making three different opinions as if belonging to three different sects: because you do not know that it is the same subject handled by us same professors of the same sect, only by different persons, in a different way and in other words. But let me just put you in remembrance, and set before you the yawning inconsiderateness, or stupidity of your judgment.

How does that definition of “Free-will,” let me ask you, which you gave us above, square with this first opinion which you confess to be, ‘very probable?’ For you said that “Free-will” is a power of the human will, by which a man can apply himself unto good;’ whereas here, you say and approve the saying, that ‘man, without grace, cannot will good!’ The definition, therefore, affirms what its example denies. And hence there are found in your “Free-will” both a YEA and a NAY:” so that, in one and the same doctrine and article, you approve and condemn us, and approve and condemn yourself. For do you think, that to ‘apply itself to those things which pertain unto eternal salvation,’ which power your definition assigns to “Free-will,” is not to do good, when, if there were so much good in “Free-will,” that it could apply itself unto good, it would have no need of grace? Therefore, the “Free-will” which you define is one, and the “Free-will” you defend is another. Hence then, Erasmus, outstripping all others, has two “Free-wills;” and they, militating against each other!

Sect. XLVIII. — BUT, setting aside that “Free-will” which the definition defines, let us consider that which the opinion proposes as contrary to it. You grant, that man, without special grace, cannot will good: (for we are not now discussing what the grace of God can do, but what man can do without grace:) you grant, then, that “Free-will” cannot will good. This is nothing else but granting that it cannot ‘apply itself to those things which pertain unto eternal salvation,’ according to the tune of your definition. Nay, you say a little before, ‘that the human will after sin, is so depraved, that having lost its liberty, it is compelled to serve sin, and cannot recall itself into a better state.’ And if I am not mistaken, you make the Pelagians to be of this opinion. Now then I believe, my Proteus has here no way of escape: he is caught and held fast in plain words: — ‘that the will, having lost its liberty, is tied and bound a slave to sin.’ O noble Free-will! which, having lost its liberty, is declared by Erasmus himself, to be the slave of sin! When Luther asserted this, ‘nothing was ever heard of so absurd;’ ‘nothing was more useless than that this paradox should be proclaimed abroad!’ So much so, that even a Diatribe must be written against him!

But perhaps no one will believe me, that these things are said by Erasmus. If the Diatribe be read in this part, it will be admired: but I do not so much admire it. For he who does not treat this as a serious subject, and is not interested in the cause, but is in mind alienated from it, and grows weary of it, cold in it, and disgusted with it, how shall not such an one everywhere speak absurdities, follies, and contrarities, while, as one drunk or slumbering over the cause, he belches out in the midst of his snoring, It is so! it is not so! just as the different words sound against his ears? And therefore it is, that rhetoricians require a feeling of the subject in the person discussing it. Much more then does theology require such a feeling, that it may make the person vigilant, sharp, intent, prudent, and determined.

If therefore “Free-will” without grace, when it has lost its liberty, is compelled to serve sin and cannot will good, I should be glad to know, what that desire is, what that endeavour is, which that first ‘probable opinion’ leaves it. It cannot be a good desire or a good endeavour, because it cannot will good, as the opinion affirms, and as you grant. Therefore, it is an evil desire and an evil endeavour that is left, which, when the liberty is lost, is compelled to serve sin. — But above all, what, I pray, is the meaning of this saying: ‘this opinion leaves the desire and the endeavour, but does not leave what is to be ascribed to its own power.’ Who can possibly conceive in his mind what this means? If the desire and the endeavour be left to the power of “Free-will,” how are they not ascribed to the same? If they be not ascribed to it, how can they be left to it? Are then that desire and that endeavour before grace, left to grace itself that comes after, and not to “Free-will” so as to be at the same time left, and not left, to the same “Free-will?” If these things be not paradoxes, or rather enormities, then pray what are enormities?

Sect. XLIX. — BUT perhaps the Diatribe is dreaming this, that between these two ‘can will good’ and ‘cannot will good’ there may be a medium; seeing that, to will is absolute, both in respect of good, and evil. So that thus, by a certain logical subtlety, we may steer clear of the rocks, and say, in the will of man there is a certain willing, which cannot indeed will good without grace, but which, nevertheless, being without grace, does not immediately will nothing but evil, but is a sort of mere abstracted willing, vertible, upwards unto good by grace, and downwards unto evil by sin. But then, what will become of that which you have said, that, ‘when it has lost its liberty it is compelled to serve sin?’ What will become of that desire and endeavour which are left? Where will be that power of ‘applying itself to those things which pertain unto eternal salvation?’ For that power of applying itself unto salvation, cannot be a mere willing, unless the salvation itself be said to be a nothing. Nor, again, can that desire and endeavour be a mere willing; for desire must strive and attempt something, (as good perhaps,) and cannot go forth into nothing, nor be absolutely inactive.

In a word, which way soever the Diatribe turns itself, it cannot keep clear of inconsistencies and contradictory assertions; nor avoid making that very “Free-will” which it defends, as much a bond-captive as it is a bond-captive itself. For, in attempting to liberate “Free-will,” it is so entangled, that it is bound, together with “Free-will,” in bonds indissoluble.

Moreover, it is a mere logical figment that in man there is a medium, a mere willing, nor can they who assert this prove it; it arose from an ignorance of things and an observance of terms. As though the thing were always in reality, as it is set forth in terms; and there are with the Sophists many such misconceptions. Whereas the matter rather stands as Christ saith, “He that is not with Me is against Me.” (Matt. xii. 30.) He does not say, He that is not with Me is yet not against Me, but in the medium. For if God be in us, Satan is from us, and it is present with us to will nothing but good. But if God be not in us, Satan is in us, and it is present with us to will evil only, Neither God

nor Satan admit of a mere abstracted willing in us; but, as you yourself rightly said, when our liberty is lost we are compelled to serve sin: that is, we will sin and evil, we speak sin and evil, we do sin and evil.

Behold then! invincible and all-powerful truth has driven the witless Diatribe to that dilemma, and so turned its wisdom into foolishness, that whereas, its design was to speak against me, it is compelled to speak for me against itself; just in the same way as “Free-will” does any thing good; for when it attempts so to do, the more it acts against evil the more it acts against good. So that the Diatribe is, in saying, exactly what “Freewill” is in doing. Though the whole Diatribe itself, is nothing else but a notable effort of “Free-will,” condemning by defending, and defending by condemning: that is, being a twofold fool, while it would appear to be wise.

This, then, is the state of the first opinion compared with itself: — it denies that a man can will any thing good; but yet that a desire remains; which desire, however, is not his own! .

Sect. L. — NOW let us compare this opinion with the remaining two.

The next of these, is that opinion ‘more severe still,’ which holds, that “Free-will” avails unto nothing but to sin. And this indeed is Augustine’s opinion, expressed, as well in many other places, as more especially, in his book “Concerning the Spirit and the Letter;” in (if I mistake not) the fourth or fifth chapter, where he uses those very words.

The third, is that ‘most severe’ opinion; that “Free-will” is a mere empty term, and that every thing which we do, is done from necessity under the bondage of sin. — It is with these two that the Diatribe conflicts.

I here observe, that perhaps it may be, that I am not able to discuss this point intelligibly, from not being sufficiently acquainted with the Latin or with the German. But I call God to witness, that I wish nothing else to be said or to be understood by the words of the last two opinions than what is said in the first opinion: nor does Augustine wish any thing else to be understood, nor do I understand any thing else from his words, than that which the first opinion asserts: so that, the three opinions brought forward by the Diatribe are with me nothing else than my one sentiment. For when it is granted and established, that “Free-will,” having once lost its liberty, is compulsively bound to the service of sin, and cannot will any thing good: I, from these words, can understand nothing else than that “Free-will” is a mere empty term, whose reality is lost. And a lost liberty, according to my grammar, is no liberty at all. And to give the name of liberty to that which has no liberty, is to give it an empty term. If I am wrong here, let him set me right who can. If these observations be obscure or ambiguous, let him who can, illustrate and make them plain. I for my part, cannot call that health which is lost, health; and if I were to ascribe it to one who was sick, I should think I was giving him nothing else than an empty name,

But away with these enormities of words. For who would bear such an abuse of the manner of speaking, as that we should say a man has “Free-will,” and yet at the same time assert, that when that liberty is once lost, he is compulsively bound to the service of sin, and cannot will any thing good? These things are contrary to common sense, and utterly destroy the common manner of speaking. The Diatribe is rather to be condemned, which in a drowsy way, foists forth its own words without any regard to the words of others. It does not, I say, consider what it is, nor how much it is to assert, that man, when his liberty is lost, is compelled to serve sin and cannot will any thing good. For if it were at all vigilant or observant, it would plainly see, that the sentiment contained in the three opinions is one and the same, which it makes to be diverse and contrary. For if a man, when he has lost his liberty, is compelled to serve sin, and cannot will good, what conclusion concerning him can be more justly drawn, than that he can do nothing but sin, and will evil? And such a conclusion, the Sophists themselves would draw, even by their syllogisms. Wherefore, the Diatribe, unhappily, contends against the last two opinions, and approves the first; whereas, that is precisely the same as the other two; and thus again, as usual, it condemns itself and approves my sentiments, in one and the same article.

Sect. LI. — LET us now come to that passage in Ecclesiasticus, and also with it compare that first ‘probable opinion.’ The opinion saith, ‘Freewill cannot will good.’ The passage in Ecclesiasticus is adduced to prove, that “Free-will” is something, and can do something. Therefore, the opinion which is to be proved by Ecclesiasticus, asserts one thing; and Ecclesiasticus, which is adduced to prove it, asserts another. This is just as if any one, setting about to prove that Christ was the Messiah, should adduce a passage which proves that Pilate was governor of Syria, or any thing else equally discordant. It is in the same way that “Free-will” is here proved. But, not to mention my having above made it manifest, that nothing clear or certain can be said or proved concerning “Free-will,” as to what it is, or what it can do, it is worth while to examine the whole passage thoroughly.

First he saith, “God made man in the beginning.” Here he speaks of the creation of man; nor does he say any thing, as yet, concerning either “Free-will” or the commandments.

Then he goes on, “and left him in the hand of his own counsel.” And what is here? Is “Freewill” built upon this? But there is not here any mention of commandments, for the doing of which “Free-will” is required; nor do we read any thing of this kind in the creation of man. If any thing be understood by “the hand of his own counsel,” that should rather be understood which is in Genesis i. and ii.: that man was made lord of all things that he might freely exercise dominion over them: and as Moses saith, “Let us make man, and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea:” nor can any thing else be proved from those words: for it is in these things only that man may act of his own will, as being subject unto him. And moreover, he calls this man’s counsel, in contradiction as it were to the counsel of God. But after this, when He has said, that man was made and left thus in the hand of his own counsel — he adds,

“He added moreover His commandments and His precepts.” Unto what did He add them? Certainly unto that counsel and will of man, and over and above unto that constituting of His dominion over other things. By which commandments He took from man the dominion over one part of His creatures, (that is, over the tree of knowledge of good and evil,) and willed rather that he should not be free. — Having added the commandments, He then comes to the will of man towards God and towards the things of God.

“If thou wilt keep the commandments they shall preserve thee,” &c. From this part, therefore, “If thou wilt,” begins the question concerning “Free-will.” So that, from Ecclesiasticus we learn, that man is constituted as divided into two kingdoms. — The one, is that in which he is led according to his own will and counsel, without the precepts and the commandments of God: that is, in those things which are beneath him. Here he has dominion and is lord, as “left in the hand of his own counsel.” Not that God so leaves him to himself, as that He does not co-operate with him; but He commits unto him the free use of things according to his own will, without prohibiting him by any laws or injunctions. As we may say, by way of similitude, the Gospel has left us in the hands of our own counsel, that we may use, and have dominion over all things as we will. But Moses and the Pope left us not in that counsel, but restrained us by laws, and subjected us rather to their own will. — But in the other kingdom, he is not left in the hand of his own counsel, but is directed and led according to the Will and Counsel of God. And as, in his own kingdom, he is led according to his own will, without the precepts of another; so, in the kingdom of God, he is led according to the precepts of another, without his own will. And this is what Ecclesiasticus means, when he says, “He added moreover His commandments and His precepts: saying, If thou wilt,” &c.

If, therefore, these things be satisfactorily clear, I have made it fully evident, that this passage of Ecclesiasticus does not make for “Freewill,” but directly against it: seeing that, it subjects man to the precepts and will of God, and takes from him his “Free-will.” But if they be not satisfactorily clear, I have at least made it manifest, that this passage cannot make for “Freewill;” seeing that, it may be understood in a sense different from that which they put upon it, that is, in my sense already stated, which is not absurd, but most holy and in harmony with the whole Scripture. Whereas, their sense militates against the whole Scripture, and is fetched from this one passage only, contrary to the tenor of the whole Scripture. I stand therefore, secure in the good sense, the negative of “Free-will,” until they shall have confirmed their strained and forced affirmative.

When, therefore, Ecclesiasticus says, “If thou wilt keep the commandments, and keep the faith that pleaseth Me, they shall preserve thee,” I do not see that “Free-will” can be proved from those words. For, “if thou wilt,” is a verb of the subjunctive mood, which asserts nothing: as the logicians say, ‘a conditional asserts nothing indicatively:’ such as, if the devil be God, he is deservedly worshipped: if an ass fly, an ass has wings, so also, if there be “Free-will,” grace is nothing at all. Therefore, if Ecclesiasticus had wished to assert “Free-will,” he ought to have spoken thus: — man is able to keep the commandments of God, or, man, has the power to keep the commandments.

Sect. LII. — BUT here the Diatribe will sharply retort — “Ecclesiasticus by saying, “if thou wilt keep,” signifies that there is a will in man, to keep, and not to keep: otherwise, what is the use of saying unto him who has no will, “if thou wilt?” Would it not be ridiculous if any were to say to a blind man, if thou wilt see, thou mayest find a treasure? Or, to a deaf man, if thou wilt hear, I will relate to thee an excellent story? This would be to laugh at their misery” — .

I answer: These are the arguments of human reason, which is wont to shoot forth many such sprigs of wisdom. Wherefore, I must dispute now, not with Ecclesiasticus, but with human reason concerning a conclusion; for she,

by her conclusions and syllogisms, interprets and twists the Scriptures of God just which way she pleases. But I will enter upon this willingly, and with confidence, knowing, that she can prate nothing but follies and absurdities; and that more especially, when she attempts to make a shew of her wisdom in these divine matters.

First then, if I should demand of her how it can be proved, that the freedom of the will in man is signified and inferred, wherever these expressions are used, 'if thou wilt,' 'if thou shalt do,' 'if thou shalt hear,' she would say, because the nature of words, and the common use of speech among men, seem to require it. Therefore, she judges of divine things and words according to the customs and things of men; than which, what can be more perverse; seeing that, the former things are heavenly, the latter earthly. Like a fool, therefore, she exposes herself, making it manifest that she has not a thought concerning God but what is human.

But, what if I prove, that the nature of words and the use of speech even among men, are not always of that tendency, as to make a laughing stock of those to whom it is said, 'if thou wilt,' 'if thou shalt do it,' 'if thou shalt hear?' — How often do parents thus play with their children, when they bid them come to them, or do this or that, for this purpose only, that it may plainly appear to them how unable they are to do it, and that they may call for the aid of the parent's hand? How often does a faithful physician bid his obstinate patient do or omit those things which are either injurious to him or impossible, to the intent that, he may bring him, by an experience, to the knowledge of his disease or his weakness? And what is more general and common, than to use words of insult or provocation, when we would show either enemies or friends, what they can do and what they cannot do?

I merely go over these things, to shew Reason her own conclusions, and how absurdly she tacks them to the Scriptures: moreover, how blind she must be not to see, that they do not always stand good even in human words and things. But the case is, if she see it to be done once, she rushes on headlong, taking it for granted, that it is done generally in all the things of God and men, thus making, according to the way of her wisdom, of a particularity an universality.

If then God, as a Father, deal with us as with sons, that He might shew us who are in ignorance our impotency, or as a faithful physician, that He might make our disease known unto us, or that He might insult His enemies who proudly resist His counsel; and for this end, say to us by proposed laws (as being those means by which He accomplishes His design the most effectually) 'do,' 'hear,' 'keep,' or, 'if thou wilt,' 'if thou wilt do,' 'if thou wilt hear,' can this be drawn herefrom as a just conclusion — therefore, either we have free power to act, or God laughs at us? Why is this not rather drawn as a conclusion — therefore, God tries us, that by His law He might bring us to a knowledge of our impotency, if we be His friends; or, He thereby righteously and deservedly insults and derides us, if we be His proud enemies.' For this, as Paul teaches, is the intent of the divine legislation. (Rom. iii. 20; v. 20. Gal. iii. 19, 24.) Because human nature is blind, so that it knows not its own powers, or rather its own diseases. Moreover, being proud, it self-conceitedly imagines, that it knows and can do all things. To remedy which pride and ignorance, God can use no means more effectual than His proposed law: of which we shall say more in its place: let it suffice to have thus touched upon it here, to refute this conclusion of carnal and absurd wisdom: — 'if thou wilt' — therefore thou art able to will freely.

The Diatribe dreams, that man is whole and sound, as, to human appearance, he is in his own affairs; and therefore, from these words, 'if thou wilt,' 'if thou wilt do,' 'if thou wilt hear,' it pertly argues, that man, if his will be not free, is laughed at. Whereas, the Scripture describes man as corrupt and a captive; and added to that, as proudly contemning and ignorant of his corruption and captivity: and therefore, by those words, it goads him and rouses him up, that he might know, by a real experience, how unable he is to do any one of those things.

Sect. LIII. — BUT I will attack the Diatribe itself. If thou really think, O Madam Reason! that these conclusions stand good, 'If thou wilt — therefore thou hast a free power,' why dost thou not follow the same thyself? For thou sayest, according to that 'probable opinion,' that "Free-will" cannot will any thing good. By what conclusion then can such a sentiment flow from this passage also, 'if thou wilt keep,' when thou sayest that the conclusion flowing from this, is, that man can will and not will freely? What! can bitter and sweet flow from the same fountain? Dost thou not here much more deride man thyself, when thou sayest, that he can keep that, which he can neither will nor choose? Therefore, neither dost thou, from thy heart, believe that this is a just conclusion, 'if thou wilt — therefore thou hast a free power,' although thou contendest for it with so much zeal, or, if thou dost believe it, then thou dost not, from thy heart, say, that that opinion is 'probable,' which holds that man cannot will good. Thus, reason is so caught in the conclusions and words of her own wisdom, that she knows not what she says, nor concerning

what she speaks: nay, knows nothing but that which it is most right she should know — that “Free-will” is defended with such arguments as mutually devour, and put an end to each other; just as the Midianites destroyed each other by mutual slaughter, when they fought against Gideon and the people of God. Judges vii.

Nay, I will expostulate more fully with this wisdom of the Diatribe. Ecclesiasticus does not say, ‘if thou shalt have the desire and the endeavour of keeping,’ (for this is not to be ascribed to that power of yours, as you have concluded) but he says, “if thou wilt keep the commandments they shall preserve thee.” Now then, if we, after the manner of your wisdom, wish to draw conclusions, we should infer thus: — therefore, man is able to keep the commandments. And thus, we shall not here make a certain small degree of desire, or a certain little effort of endeavour to be left in man, but we shall ascribe unto him the whole, full, and abundant power of keeping the commandments. Otherwise, Ecclesiasticus will be made to laugh at the misery of man, as commanding him to ‘keep,’ who, he knows, is not able to ‘keep.’ Nor would it have been sufficient if he had supposed the desire and the endeavour to be in the man, for he would not then have escaped the suspicion of deriding him, unless he had signified his having the full power of keeping.

But however, let us suppose that that desire and endeavour of “Free-will” are a real something. What shall we say to those, (the Pelagians, I mean) who, from this passage, have denied grace in toto, and ascribed all to “Free-will?” If the conclusion of the Diatribe stand good, the Pelagians have evidently established their point. For the words of Ecclesiasticus speak of keeping, not of desiring or endeavouring. If, therefore, you deny the Pelagians their conclusion concerning keeping, they, in reply, will much more rightly deny you your conclusion concerning endeavouring. And if you take from them the whole of “Free-will,” they will take from you your remnant particle of it: for you cannot assert a remnant particle of that, which you deny in toto. In what degree soever, therefore, you speak against the Pelagians, who from this passage ascribe the whole to “Freewill,” in the same degree, and with much more determination, shall we speak against that certain small remnant desire of your “Free-will.” And in this, the Pelagians themselves will agree with us, that, if their opinion cannot be proved from this passage, much less will any other of the same kind be proved from it: seeing, that if the subject be to be conducted by conclusions, Ecclesiasticus, above all makes the most forcibly for the Pelagians: for he speaks in plain words concerning keeping only, “If thou wilt keep the commandments:” nay, he speaks also concerning faith, “If thou wilt keep the faith:” so that, by the same conclusion, keeping the faith ought also to be in our power, which, however, is the peculiar and precious gift of God.

In a word, since so many opinions are brought forward in support of “Free-will,” and there is no one that does not catch at this passage of Ecclesiasticus in defence of itself; and since they are diverse from, and contrary to each other, it is impossible but that they must make Ecclesiasticus contradictory to, and diverse from themselves in the self same words; and therefore, they can from him prove nothing. Although, if that conclusion of yours be admitted, it will make for the Pelagians against all the others; and consequently, it makes against the Diatribe; which, in this passage, is stabbed by its own sword!

Sect. LIV. — BUT, as I said at first, so I say here: this passage of Ecclesiasticus is in favour of no one of those who assert “Free-will,” but makes against them all. For that conclusion is not to be admitted, ‘If thou wilt — therefore thou art able;’ but those words, and all like unto them, are to be understood thus: — that by them man is admonished of his impotency; which, without such admonitions, being proud and ignorant, he would neither know nor feel.

For he here speaks, not concerning the first man only, but concerning any man: though it is of little consequence whether you understand it concerning the first man, or any others. For although the first man was not impotent, from the assistance of grace, yet, by this commandment, God plainly shews him how impotent he would be without grace. For if that man, who had the Spirit, could not by his new will, will good newly proposed, that is, obedience, because the Spirit did not add it unto him, what can we do without the Spirit toward the good that is lost! In this man, therefore, it is shewn, by a terrible example for the breaking down of our pride, what our “Free-will” can do when it is left to itself, and not continually moved and increased by the Spirit of God. He could do nothing to increase the Spirit who had its first-fruits, but fell from the first-fruits of the Spirit. What then can we who are fallen, do towards the first-fruits of the Spirit which are taken away? Especially, since Satan now reigns in us with full power, who cast him down, not then reigning in him, but by temptation alone! Nothing can be more forcibly brought against “Free-will,” than this passage of Ecclesiasticus, considered together with the fall of Adam.

But we have no room for these observations here, an opportunity may perhaps offer itself elsewhere. Meanwhile, it is sufficient to have shewn, that Ecclesiasticus, in this place, says nothing whatever in favour of “Free-will” (which nevertheless they consider as their principal authority), and that these expressions and the like, ‘if thou wilt,’ ‘if thou hear,’ ‘if thou do,’ shew, not what men can do, but what they ought to do! .

Sect. LV. — ANOTHER passage is adduced by our Diatribe out of Gen. iv. 7.: where the Lord saith unto Cain, “Under thee shall be the desire of sin, and thou shalt rule over it.” — “Here it is shewn (saith the Diatribe) that the motions of the mind to evil can be overcome, and that they do not carry with them the necessity of sinning.” —

These words, ‘the motions of the mind to evil can be overcome’ though spoken with ambiguity, yet, from the scope of the sentiment, the consequence, and the circumstances, must mean this: — that “Free-will,” has the power of overcoming its motions to evil; and that, those motions do not bring upon it the necessity of sinning. Here, again; what is there excepted which is not ascribed unto “Free-will?” What need is there of the Spirit, what need of Christ, what need of God, if “Free-will” can overcome the motions of the mind to evil! And where, again, is that ‘probable opinion’ which affirms, that “Free-will” cannot so much as will good? For here, the victory over evil is ascribed unto that, which neither wills nor wishes for good. The inconsiderateness of our Diatribe is really — too — too bad!

Take the truth of the matter in a few words. As I have before observed, by such passages as these, it is shewn to man what he ought to do, not what he can do. It is said, therefore, unto Cain, that he ought to rule over his sin, and to hold its desires in subjection under him. But this he neither did nor could do, because he was already pressed down under the contrary dominion of Satan. — It is well known, that the Hebrews frequently use the future indicative for the imperative: as in Exod. xx. 1-17. “Thou shalt, have none other gods but Me,” “Thou shalt not kill,” “Thou shalt not commit adultery;” and in numberless other instances of the same kind. Otherwise, if these sentences were taken indicatively, as they really stand, they would be promises of God; and as He cannot lie, it would come to pass that no man could sin; and then, as commands, they would be unnecessary; and if this were the case, then our interpreter would have translated this passage more correctly thus: — “let its desire be under thee, and rule thou over it,” (Gen. iv. 7.) Even as it then ought also to be said concerning the woman, “Be thou under thy husband, and let him rule over thee,” (Gen. iii. 16.) But that it was not spoken indicatively unto Cain is manifest from this: — it would then have been a promise. Whereas, it was not a promise; because, from the conduct of Cain, the event proved the contrary.

Sect. LVI. — THE third passage is from Moses, (Deut. xxx. 19.) “I have set before thy face life and death, choose what is good, &c.” — “What words (says the Diatribe) can be more plain? It leaves to man the liberty of choosing.” —

I answer: What is more plain, than, that you are blind? How, I pray, does it leave the liberty of choosing? Is it by the expression ‘choose’? — Therefore, as Moses saith ‘choose,’ does it immediately come to pass that they do choose? Then, there is no need of the Spirit. And as you so often repeat and inculcate the same things, I shall be justified in repeating the same things also. — If there be a liberty of choosing, why has the ‘probable opinion’ said that “Freewill” cannot will good? Can it choose not willing or against its will? But let us listen to the similitude, —

— “It would be ridiculous to say to a man standing in a place where two ways met, Thou seest two roads, go by which thou wilt, when one only was open.” —

This, as I have before observed, is from the arguments of human reason, which thinks, that a man is mocked by a command impossible: whereas I say, that the man, by this means, is admonished and roused to see his own impotency. True it is, that we are in a place where two ways meet, and that one of them only is open, yea rather neither of them is open. But by the law it is shewn how impossible the one is, that is, to good, unless God freely give His Spirit; and how wide and easy the other is, if God leave us to ourselves. Therefore, it would not be said ridiculously, but with a necessary seriousness, to the man thus standing in a place where two ways meet, ‘go by which thou wilt,’ if he, being in reality impotent, wished to seem to himself strong, or contended that neither way was hedged up.

Wherefore, the words of the law are spoken, not that they might assert the power of the will, but that they might illuminate the blindness of reason, that it might see that its own light is nothing, and that the power of the will is nothing. “By the law (saith Paul) is the knowledge of sin,” (Rom. iii. 20.): he does not say — is the abolition of, or the escape from sin. The whole nature and design of the law is to give knowledge only, and that of nothing else save of sin, but not to discover or communicate any power whatever. For knowledge is not power, nor does it

communicate power, but it teaches and shows how great the impotency must there be, where there is no power. And what else can the knowledge of sin be, but the knowledge of our evil and infirmity? For he does not say — by the law comes the knowledge of strength or of good. The whole that the law does, according to the testimony of Paul, is to make known sin.

And this is the place, where I take occasion to enforce this my general reply: — that man, by the words of the law, is admonished and taught what he ought to do, not what he can do: that is, that he is brought to know his sin, but not to believe that he has any strength in himself. Wherefore, friend Erasmus, as often as you throw in my teeth the Words of the law, so often I throw in yours that of Paul, “By the law is the knowledge of sin,” — not of the power of the will. Heap together, therefore, out of the large Concordances all the imperative words into one chaos, provided that, they be not words of the promise but of the requirement of the law only, and I will immediately declare, that by them is always shewn what men ought to do, not what they can do, or do do. And even common grammarians and every little school-boy in the street knows, that by verbs of the imperative mood, nothing else is signified than that which ought to be done, and that, what is done or can be done, is expressed by verbs of the indicative mood.

Thus, therefore, it comes to pass, that you theologians, are so senseless and so many degrees below even school-boys, that when you have caught hold of one imperative verb you infer an indicative sense, as though what was commanded were immediately and even necessarily done, or possible to be done. But how many slips are there between the cup and the lip! So that, what you command to be done, and is therefore quite possible to be done, is yet never done at all. Such a difference is there, between verbs imperative and verbs indicative, even in the most common and easy things. Whereas you, in these things which are as far above those, as the heavens are above the earth, so quickly make indicatives out of imperatives, that the moment you hear the voice of him commanding, saying, “do,” “keep,” “choose,” you will have, that it is immediately kept, done, chosen, or fulfilled, or, that our powers are able so to do.

Sect. LVII. — IN the fourth place, you adduce from Deuteronomy xxx. many passages of the same kind which speak of choosing, of turning away from, of keeping; as, ‘If thou shalt keep,’ ‘if thou shalt turn away from,’ ‘if thou shalt choose.’ — “All these expressions (you say) are made use of preposterously if there be not a “Free-will” in man unto good” —

I answer: And you, friend Diatribe, preposterously enough also conclude from these expressions the freedom of the will. You set out to prove the endeavour and desire of “Free-will” only, and you have adduced no passage which proves such an endeavour. But now, you adduce those passages, which, if your conclusion hold good, will ascribe all to “Free-will.”

Let me here then again make a distinction, between the words of the Scripture adduced, and the conclusion of the Diatribe tacked to them. The words adduced are imperative, and they say nothing but what ought to be done. For, Moses does not say, ‘thou hast the power and strength to choose.’ The words ‘choose,’ ‘keep,’ ‘do,’ convey the precept ‘to keep,’ but they do not describe the ability of man. But the conclusion tacked to them by that wisdom-aping Diatribe, infers thus: — therefore, man can do those things, otherwise the precepts are given in vain. To whom this reply must be made: — Madam Diatribe, you make a bad inference, and do not prove your conclusion, but the conclusion and the proof merely seem to be right to your blind and inadvertent self. But know, that these precepts are not given preposterously nor in vain; but that proud and blind man might, by them, learn the disease of his own impotency, if he should attempt to do what is commanded. And hence your similitude amounts to nothing where you say.

— “Otherwise it would be precisely the same, as if any one should say to a man who was so bound that he could only stretch forth his left arm, — Behold! thou hast on thy right hand excellent wine, thou hast on thy left poison; on which thou wilt stretch forth thy hand” — .

These your similitudes I presume are particular favourites of yours. But you do not all the while see, that if the similitudes stand good, they prove much more than you ever purposed to prove, nay, that they prove what you deny and would have to be disproved: — that “Free-will” can do all things. For by the whole scope of your argument, forgetting what you said, ‘that “Free-will” can do nothing without grace,’ you actually prove that “Free-will” can do all things without grace. For your conclusions and similitudes go to prove this: — that either “Free-will” can of itself do those things which are said and commanded, or they are commanded in vain, ridiculously, and

preposterously. But these are nothing more than the old songs of the Pelagians sung over again, which even the Sophists have exploded, and which you have yourself condemned. And by all this your forgetfulness and disorder of memory, you do nothing but evince how little you know of the subject, and how little you are affected by it. And what can be worse in a rhetorician, than to be continually bringing forward things wide of the nature of the subject, and not only so, but to be always declaiming against his subject and against himself?

Sect. LVIII. — WHEREFORE I observe, finally, the passages of Scripture adduced by you are imperative, and neither prove any thing, nor determine any thing concerning the ability of man, but enjoin only what things are to be done, and what are not to be done. And as to your conclusions or appendages, and similitudes, if they prove any thing they prove this: — that “Free-will” can do all things without grace. Whereas this you did not undertake to prove, nay, it is by you denied. Wherefore, these your proofs are nothing else but the most direct confutations.

For, (that I may, if I can, rouse the Diatribe from its lethargy) suppose I argue thus — If Moses say, ‘Choose life and keep the commandment’, unless man be able to choose life and keep the commandment, Moses gives that precept to man ridiculously. — Have I by this argument proved my side of the subject, that “Free-will” can do nothing good, and that it has no external endeavour separate from its own power? Nay, on the contrary, I have proved, by an assertion sufficiently forcible, that either man can choose life and keep the commandment as it is commanded, or Moses is a ridiculous law-giver? But who would dare to assert that Moses was a ridiculous law-giver? It follows therefore, that man can do the things that are commanded.

This is the way in which the Diatribe argues throughout, contrary to its own purposed design; wherein, it promised that it would not argue thus, but would prove a certain endeavour of “Freewill;” of which however, so far from proving it, it scarcely makes mention in the whole string of its arguments; nay, it proves the contrary rather; so that it may itself be more properly said to affirm and argue all things ridiculously.

And as to its making it, according to its own adduced similitude, to be ridiculous, that a man ‘having his right arm bound, should be ordered to stretch forth his right hand when he could only stretch forth his left.’ — Would it, I pray, be ridiculous, if a man, having both his arms bound, and proudly contending or ignorantly presuming that he could do any thing right or left, should be commanded to stretch forth his hand right and left, not that his captivity might be derided, but that he might be convinced of his false presumption of liberty and power, and might be brought to know his ignorance of his captivity and misery?

The Diatribe is perpetually setting before us such a man, who either can do what is commanded, or at least knows that he cannot do it. Whereas, no such man is to be found. If there were such an one, then indeed, either impossibilities would be ridiculously commanded, or the Spirit of Christ would be in vain.

The Scripture, however, sets forth such a man, who is not only bound, miserable, captive, sick, and dead, but who, by the operation of his lord, Satan, to his other miseries, adds that of blindness: so that he believes he is free, happy, at liberty, powerful, whole, and alive. For Satan well knows that if men knew their own misery he could retain no one of them in his kingdom: because, it could not be, but that God would immediately pity and succour their known misery and calamity: seeing that, He is with so much praise set forth, throughout the whole Scripture as, being near unto the contrite in heart, that Isaiah lxi. 1-3, testifies, that Christ was sent “to preach the Gospel to the poor, and to heal the broken hearted.”

Wherefore, the work of Satan is, so to hold men, that they come not to know their misery, but that they presume that they can do all things which are enjoined. But the work of Moses the legislator is the contrary, even that by the law he might discover to man his misery, in order that he might prepare him, thus bruised and confounded with the knowledge of himself, for grace, and might send him to Christ to be saved. Wherefore, the office of the law is not ridiculous, but above all things serious and necessary.

Those therefore who thus far understand these things, understand clearly at the same time, that the Diatribe, by the whole string of its arguments effects nothing whatever; that it collects nothing from the Scriptures but imperative passages, when it understands, neither what they mean nor wherefore they are spoken; and that, moreover, by the appendages of its conclusions and carnal similitudes it mixes up such a mighty mass of flesh, that it asserts and proves more than it ever intended, and argues against itself. So that there were no need to pursue particulars any further, for the whole is solved by one solution, seeing that the whole depends on one argument. But however, that it may be drowned in the same profusion in which it attempted to drown me, I will proceed to touch upon a few particulars more.

De Servo Arbitrio “On the Enslaved Will” or The Bondage of Will

Sect. LIX. — THERE is that of Isaiah i. 19., “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the fat of the land:” — ‘Where, (according to the judgment of the Diatribe,) if there be no liberty of the will, it would have been more consistent, had it been said, If I will, if I will not.’

The answer to this may be plainly found in what has been said before. Moreover, what consistency would there then have been, had it been said, ‘If I will, ye shall eat the fat of the land?’ Does the Diatribe from its so highly exalted wisdom imagine, that the fat of the land can be eaten contrary to the will of God? Or, that it is a rare and new thing, that we do not receive of the fat of the land but by the will of God.

So also, that of Isaiah xxx. 21. “If ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.” — “To what purpose is it (saith the Diatribe) to exhort those who are not in any degree in their own power? It is just like saying to one bound in chains, Move thyself to this place.” —

Nay, I reply, to what purpose is it to cite passages which of themselves prove nothing, and which, by the appendage of your conclusion, that is, by the perversion of their sense, ascribe all unto “Free-will,” when a certain endeavour only was to be ascribed unto it, and to be proved?

- “The same may be said (you observe) concerning that of Isaiah xlv. 20. “Assemble yourselves and come.” “Turn ye unto me and ye shall be saved.” And that also of Isaiah lii. 1-2. “Awake! awake!” “shake thyself from the dust,” “loose the bands of thy neck.” And that of Jeremiah xv. 19. “If thou wilt turn, then will I turn thee; and if thou shalt separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth.” And Malachi more evidently still, indicates the endeavour of “Free-will” and the grace that is prepared for him who endeavours, “Turn ye unto Me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord.’ (Mal. iii. 7.).

Sect. LX. — IN these passages, our friend Diatribe makes no distinction whatever, between the voice of the Law and the voice of the Gospel: because, forsooth, it is so blind and so ignorant, that it knows not what is the Law and what is the Gospel. For out of all the passages from Isaiah, it produces no one word of the law, save this, ‘If thou wilt;’ all the rest is Gospel, by which, as the word of offered grace, the bruised and afflicted are called unto consolation. Whereas, the Diatribe makes them the words of the law. But, I pray thee, tell me, what can that man do in theological matters, and the Sacred Writings, who has not even gone so far as to know what is Law and what is Gospel, or, who, if he does know, condemns the observance of the distinction between them? Such an one must confound all things, heaven with hell, and life with death; and will never labour to know any thing of Christ. Concerning which, I shall put my friend Diatribe a little in remembrance, in what follows.

Look then, first, at that of Jeremiah and Malachi “If thou wilt turn, then will I turn thee:” and, “turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you.” Does it then follow from “turn ye” — therefore, ye are able to turn? Does it follow also from “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart” — therefore, thou art able to love with all thine heart? If these arguments stand good, what do they conclude, but that “Free-will” needs not the grace of God, but can do all things of its own power? And then, how much more right would it be that the words should be received as they stand — ‘If thou shalt turn, then will I also turn thee?’ That is; — if thou shalt cease from sinning, I also will cease from punishing; and if thou shalt be converted and live well, I also will do well unto thee in turning away thy captivity and thy evils. But even in this way, it does not follow, that man can turn by his own power, nor do the words imply this; but they simply say, “If thou wilt turn;” by which, a man is admonished of what he ought to do. And when he has thus known and seen what he ought to do but cannot do, he would ask how he is to do it, were it not for that Leviathan of the Diatribe (that is, that appendage, and conclusion it has here tacked on) which comes in and between and says, — ‘therefore, if man cannot turn of his own power, “turn ye” is spoken in vain.’ But, of what nature all such conclusion is, and what it amounts to, has been already fully shewn.

It must, however, be a certain stupor or lethargy which can hold, that the power of “Free-will” is confirmed by these words “turn ye,” “if thou wilt turn,” and the like, and does not see, that for the same reason, it must be confirmed by this Scripture also, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart,” seeing that, the meaning of Him who commands and requires is the same in both instances. For the loving of God, is not less required than our conversion, and the keeping of all the commandments; because, the loving of God is our real conversion. And yet, no one attempts to prove “Free-will” from that command ‘to love,’ although from those words “if thou wilt,” “if thou wilt hear,” “turn ye,” and the like, all attempt to prove it. If therefore from that word, “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” it does not follow that “Free-will” is any thing or can do anything, it is certain that it neither fol-

lows from these words, “if thou wilt,” “if thou wilt hear,” “turn ye,” and the like, which either require less, or require with less force of importance, than these words “Love God!” “Love the Lord!”

Whatever, therefore, is said against drawing a conclusion in support of “Free-will” from this word “love God,” the same must be said against drawing a conclusion in support of “Free-will” from every other word of command or requirement. For, if by the command ‘to love,’ the nature of the law only be shewn, and what we ought to do, but not the power of the will or what we can do, but rather, what we cannot do, the same is shewn by all the other Scriptures of requirement. For it is well known, that even the schoolmen, except the Scotinians and moderns, assert, that man cannot love God with all his heart. Therefore, neither can he perform any one of the other precepts, for all the rest, according to the testimony of Christ, hang on this one. Hence, by the testimony even of the doctors of the schools, this remains as a settled conclusion: — that the words of the law do not prove the power of “Free-will,” but shew what we ought to do, and what we cannot do. .

Sect. LXI. — BUT our friend Diatribe, proceeding to still greater lengths of inconsiderateness, not only infers from that passage of Malachi iii. 7., “turn ye unto me,” an indicative sense, but also, goes on with zeal to prove therefrom,

the endeavour of “Free-will,” and the grace prepared for the person endeavouring.

Here, at last, it makes mention of the endeavour and by a new kind of grammar, ‘to turn,’ signifies, with it, the same thing as ‘to endeavour:’ so that the sense is, “turn ye unto me,” that is, endeavour ye to turn; “and I will turn unto you,” that is, I will endeavour to turn unto you: so that, at last, it attributes an endeavour even unto God, and perhaps, would have grace to be prepared for Him upon His endeavouring: for if turning signify endeavouring in one place, why not in every place?

Again, it says, that from Jeremiah xv. 19., “If thou shalt separate the precious from the vile,” not the endeavour only, but the liberty of choosing is proved; which, before, it declared was ‘lost,’ and changed into a ‘necessity of serving sin.’ You see, therefore, that in handling the Scriptures the Diatribe has a “Free-will” with a witness: so that, with it, words of the same kind are compelled to prove endeavour in one place, and liberty in another, just as the turn suits.

But, to away with vanities, the word TURN is used in the Scriptures in a twofold sense, the one legal, the other evangelical. In the legal sense, it is the voice of the exactor and commander, which requires, not an endeavour, but a change in the whole life. In this sense Jeremiah frequently uses it, saying, “Turn ye now every one of you from his evil way:” and, “Turn ye unto the Lord:” in which, he involves the requirement of all the commandments; as is sufficiently evident. In the evangelical sense, it is the voice of the divine consolation and promise, by which nothing is demanded of us, but in which the grace of God is offered unto us. Of this kind is that of Psalm cxxvi. 1, “When the Lord shall turn again the captivity of Zion;” and that of Psalm cxvi. 7, “Turn again into thy rest, O my soul.” Hence, Malachi, in a very brief compendium, has set forth the preaching both of the law and of grace. It is the whole sum of the law, where he saith, “Turn ye unto me;” and it is grace, where he saith, “I will turn unto you.” Wherefore, as much as “Free-will” is proved from this word, “Love the Lord,” or from any other word of particular law, just so much is it proved from this word of summary law,

“TURN YE.” It becomes a wise reader of the Scriptures, therefore, to observe what are words of the law and what are words of grace, that he might not be involved in confusion like the unclean Sophists, and like this sleepily-yawning Diatribe.

Sect. LXII. NOW observe, in what way the Diatribe handles that single passage in Ezekiel xviii. 23, “As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.” In the first place — “if (it says) the expressions “shall turn away,” “hath done,” “hath committed,” be so often repeated in this chapter, where are they who deny that man can do any thing?” —

Only remark, I pray, the excellent conclusion! It set out to prove the endeavour and the desire of “Free-will,” and now it proves the whole work, that all things are fulfilled by “Free-will! “Where now, I pray, are those who need grace and the Holy Spirit? For it pertly argues thus: saying, ‘Ezekiel says, “If the wicked man shall turn away, and shall do righteousness and judgment, he shall live.” Therefore, the wicked man does that immediately and can do it.’ Whereas Ezekiel is signifying, what ought to be done, but the Diatribe understands it as being done, and having been done. Thus teaching us, by a new kind of grammar, that ought to be is the same as having been, being exacted the same as being performed, and being required the same as being rendered.

And then, that voice of the all-sweet Gospel, “I desire not the death of a sinner,” &c., it perverts thus: — “Would the righteous Lord deplore that death of His people which He Himself wrought in them? If, therefore, He wills not our death, it certainly is to be laid to the charge of our own will, if we perish. For, what can you lay to the charge of Him, who can do nothing either of good or evil?”

It was upon this same string that Pelagius harped long ago, when he attributed to “Free-will” not a desire nor an endeavour only, but the power of doing and fulfilling all things. For as I have said before, these conclusions prove that power, if they prove any thing; so that, they make with equal, nay with more force against the Diatribe which denies that power of “Free-will,” and which attempts to establish the endeavour only, than they do, against us who deny “Free-will” altogether. — But, to say nothing of the ignorance of the Diatribe, let us speak to the subject.

It is the Gospel voice, and the sweetest consolation to miserable sinners, where Ezekiel saith, “I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather, that he should be converted and live,” and it is in all respects like unto that of Psalm xxx. 5.; “For His wrath is but for a moment, in His willingness is life.” And that of Psalm xxxvi. 7., “How sweet is thy loving-kindness, O God.” Also, “For I am merciful,” And that of Christ, (Matt. xi. 28.) “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And also that of Exodus xx. 6, “I will shew mercy unto thousands of them that love me.”

And what is more than half of the Holy Scripture, but mere promises of grace, by which, mercy, life, peace, and salvation, are extended from God unto men? And what else is the whole word of promise but this: — “I desire not the death of a sinner?” Is not His saying, “I am merciful,” the same as saying, I am not angry, I am unwilling to punish, I desire not your death, My will is to pardon, My will is to spare? And if there were not these divine promises standing, by which consciences, afflicted with a sense of sin and terrified at the fear of death and judgment might be raised up, what place would there be for pardon or for hope! What sinner would not sink in despair! But as “Free-will” is not proved from any of the other words of mercy, of promise, and of comfort, so neither is it from this: — “I desire not the death of a sinner,” &c.

But our friend Diatribe, again making no distinction between the words of the law, and the words of the promise, makes this passage of Ezekiel the voice of the law, and expounds it thus: — “I desire not the death of a sinner:” that is, I desire not that he should sin unto death, or should become a sinner guilty of death; but rather, that he should be converted from sin, if he have committed any, and thus live. For if it do not expound the passage thus, it will make nothing to its purpose. But this is utterly to destroy and take away that most sweet place of Ezekiel, “I desire not the death.” If we in our blindness will read and understand the Scriptures thus, what wonder if they be ‘obscure and ambiguous.’ Whereas God does not say, “I desire not the sin of man, but, I desire not the death of a sinner,” which manifestly shews that He is speaking of the punishment of sin, of which the sinner has a sense on account of his sin, that is, of the fear of death; and that He is raising up and comforting the sinner lying under this affliction and desperation, that He might not “break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax,” but raise him to the hope of pardon and salvation, in order that he might be further converted, that is, by the conversion unto salvation from the fear of death, and that he might live, that is, might be in peace and rejoice in a good conscience.

And this is also to be observed, that as the voice of the law is not pronounced but upon those who neither feel nor know their sins, as Paul saith, “By the law is the knowledge of sin;” (Rom. iii. 20,) so, the word of grace does not come but unto those, who, feeling their sins, are distressed and exercised with desperation. Therefore, in all the words of the law, you will find sin to be implied while it shews what we ought to do; as on the contrary, in all the words of the promise, you will find the evil to be implied under which the sinners, or those who are raised up, labour: as here, “I desire not the death of a sinner,” clearly points out the death and the sinner, both the evil itself which is felt, and the sinner himself who feels it. But by this, ‘Love God with all thine heart,’ is shewn what good we ought to do, not what evil we feel, in order that we might know, how far we are from doing good.

Sect. LXIII. — NOTHING, therefore, could be more absurdly adduced in support of “Free-will” than this passage of Ezekiel, nay, it makes with all possible force directly against “Free-will.” For it is here shewn, in what state “Free-will” is, and what it can do under the knowledge of sin, and in turning itself from it: — that is, that it can only go on to worse, and add to its sins desperation and impenitency, unless God soon come in to help, and to call back, and raise up by the word of promise. For the concern of God in promising grace to recall and raise up the sinner, is itself an argument sufficiently great and conclusive, that “Free-will,” of itself, cannot but go on to worse, and (as the Scripture saith) ‘fall down to hell.’ unless, indeed, you imagine that God is such a trifler, that He pours forth so

great an abundance of the words of promise, not from any necessity of them unto our salvation, but from a mere delight in loquacity! Wherefore, you see, that not only all the words of law stand against “Free-will,” but also, that all the words of the promise utterly confute it; that is, that, the whole Scripture makes directly against it.

Hence, you see, this word, “I desire not the death of a sinner,” does nothing else but preach and offer divine mercy to the world, which none receive with joy and gratitude but those who are distressed and exercised with the fears of death, for they are they in whom the law has now done its office, that is, in bringing them to the knowledge of sin. But they who have not yet experienced the office of the law, who do not yet know their sin nor feel the fears of death, despise the mercy promised in that word.

Sect. LXIV. — BUT, why it is, that some are touched by the law and some are not touched, why some receive the offered grace and some despise it, that is another question which is not here treated on by Ezekiel; because, he is speaking of THE PREACHED AND OFFERED MERCY OF GOD, not of that SECRET AND TO BE FEARED WILL OF GOD, who, according to His own counsel, ordains whom, and such as He will, to be receivers and partakers of the preached and offered mercy: which WILL, is not to be curiously inquired into, but to be adored with reverence as the most profound SECRET of the divine Majesty, which He reserves unto Himself and keeps hidden from us, and that, much more religiously than the mention of ten thousand Corycian caverns.

But since the Diatribe thus pertly argues — “Would the righteous Lord deplore that death of His people, which He Himself works in them? This would seem quite absurd” —

I answer, as I said before, — we are to argue in one way, concerning the WILL OF GOD preached, revealed, and offered unto us, and worshipped by us; and in another, concerning GOD HIMSELF not preached, not revealed, not offered unto us, and worshipped by us. In whatever, therefore, God hides Himself and will be unknown by us, that is nothing unto us ‘and here, that sentiment’ stands good — ‘What is above us, does not concern us.’

And that no one might think that this distinction is my own, I follow Paul, who, writing to the Thessalonians concerning Antichrist, saith, (2 Thess. ii. 4.) “that he should exalt himself above all that is God, as preached and worshipped:” evidently intimating, that any one might be exalted above God as He is preached and worshipped, that is, above the word and worship of God, by which He is known unto us and has intercourse with us. But, above God not worshipped and preached, that is, as He is in our own nature and majesty, nothing can be exalted, but all things are under His powerful hand.

God, therefore, is to be left to remain in His own Nature and Majesty; for in this respect, we have nothing to do with Him, nor does He wish us to have, in this respect, anything to do with Him: but we have to do with Him, as far as He is clothed in, and delivered to us by, His Word; for in that He presents Himself unto us, and that is His beauty and His glory, in which the Psalmist celebrates Him as being clothed. Wherefore, we say, that the righteous God does not ‘deplore that death of His people which He Himself works in them;’ but He deplores that death which He finds in His people, and which He desires to remove from them. For GOD PREACHED desires this: — that, our sin and death being taken away, we might be saved; “He sent His word and healed them.” (Psalm cvii. 20.) But GOD HIDDEN IN MAJESTY neither deplores, nor takes away death, but works life and death and all things: nor has He, in this Character, defined Himself in His Word, but has reserved unto Himself, a free power over all things.

But the Diatribe is deceived by its own ignorance, in not making a distinction between GOD PREACHED and GOD HIDDEN: that is, between the word of God and God Himself. God does many things which He does not make known unto us in His word: He also wills many things which He does not in His word make known unto us that He wills. Thus, He does not ‘will the death of a sinner,’ that is, in His word; but He wills it by that will inscrutable. But in the present case, we are to consider His word only, and to leave that will inscrutable; seeing that, it is by His word, and not by that will inscrutable, that we are to be guided; for who can direct himself according to a will inscrutable and incomprehensible? It is enough to know only, that there is in God a certain will inscrutable: but what, why, and how far that will wills, it is not lawful to inquire, to wish to know, to be concerned about, or to reach unto — it is only to be feared and adored!

Therefore it is rightly said, ‘if God does not desire our death, it is to be laid to the charge of our own will, if we perish:’ this, I say, is right, if you speak of GOD PREACHED. For He desires that all men should be saved, seeing that, He comes unto all by the word of salvation, and it is the fault of the will which does not receive Him: as He saith. (Matt. xxiii. 37.) “How often would I have gathered thy children together, and thou wouldest not!” But WHY that Majesty does not take away or change this fault of the will IN ALL, seeing that, it is not in the power of man

to do it; or why He lays that to the charge of the will, which the man cannot avoid, it becomes us not to inquire, and though you should inquire much, yet you will never find out: as Paul saith, (Rom. ix, 20,) “Who art thou that repliest against God!” — Suffice it to have spoken thus upon this passage of Ezekiel. Now let us proceed to the remaining particulars.

Sect. LXV. — THE Diatribe next argues — “If what is commanded be not in the power of every one, all the numberless exhortations in the Scriptures, and also all the promises, threatenings, expostulations, reproofs, asseverations, benedictions and maledictions, together with all the forms of precepts, must of necessity stand coldly useless.” —

The Diatribe is perpetually forgetting the subject point, and going on with that which is contrary to its professed design: and it does not see, that all these things make with greater force against itself than against us. For from all these passages, it proves the liberty and ability to fulfil all things, as the very words of the conclusion which it draws necessarily declare: whereas, its design was, to prove ‘that “Free-will” is that, which cannot will any thing good without grace, and is a certain endeavour that is not to be ascribed to its own powers.’ But I do not see that such an endeavour is proved by any of these passages, but that as I have repeatedly said already, that only is required which ought to be done’ unless it be needful to repeat it again, as often as the Diatribe harps upon the same string, putting off its readers with a useless profusion of words.

About the last passage which it brings forward out of the Old Testament, is that of Deut. xxx. 11-14. “This commandment which I command thee this day, is not above thee, neither is it far off. Neither is it in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who of us shall ascend up into heaven and bring it down unto us, that we may hear it and do it. But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.” The Diatribe contends — ‘that it is declared by this passage, that what is commanded is not only placed in us, but is down-hill work, that is, easy to be done, or at least, not difficult.’ —

I thank the Diatribe for such wonderful erudition! For if Moses so plainly declare, that there is in us, not only an ability, but also a power to keep all the commandments with ease, why have I been toiling all this time! Why did I not at once produce this passage and assert “Free-will” before the whole world! What need now of Christ! What need of the Spirit! We have now found a passage which stops the mouths of all, and, which not only plainly asserts the liberty of the will, but teaches that the observance of all the commandments is easy! — What need was there for Christ to purchase for us, even with His own blood, the Spirit, as though necessary, in order that He might make the keeping of the commandments easy unto us, when we were already thus qualified by nature! Nay, here, the Diatribe itself recants its own assertions, where it affirmed, that “Freewill” cannot will any thing good without grace,’ and now affirms, that “Free-will” is of such power, that it can, not only will good, but keep the greatest, nay, all the commandments, with ease.

Only observe, I pray, what a mind does, where the heart is not in the cause, and how impossible it is that it should not expose itself! And can there still be any need to confute the Diatribe? Who can more effectually confute it, than it confutes itself! This truly, is that beast that devours itself! How true is the proverb, that ‘A liar should have a good memory!’

I have already spoken upon this passage of Deuteronomy, I shall now treat upon it briefly; if indeed, there be any need so far to set aside Paul, who, Rom. x. 5-11, so powerfully handles this passage. — You can see nothing here to be said, nor one single syllable to speak, either of the ease or difficulty, of the power or impotency of “Free-will” or of man, either to keep or not to keep the commandments. Except that those, who entangle the Scriptures in their own conclusions and cogitations, make them obscure and ambiguous to themselves, that they might thus make of them what they please. But, if you cannot turn your eyes this way, turn your ears, or feel out what I am about to say with your hands. — Moses saith, “it is not above thee,” “neither is it far from thee,” “neither is it in heaven,” “neither is it beyond the sea.” Now, what is the meaning of this, “above thee?” What, of this “far from thee?” What, of this “in heaven?” What, of this “beyond the sea?” Will they then make the most commonly used terms, and even grammar so obscure unto us, that we shall not be able to speak any thing to a certainty, merely that they might establish their assertion, that the Scriptures are obscure?

According to my grammar, these terms signify neither the quality nor the quantity of human powers, but the distance of places only. For “above thee” does not signify a certain power of the will, but a certain place which is above us. So also “far from thee,” “in heaven,” “beyond the sea,” do not signify any thing of ability in man, but a

certain place at a distance above us, or on our right hand, or on our left hand, or behind us, or over against us. Some one may perhaps laugh at me for disputing in so plain a way, thus setting, as it were, a ready-marked-out lesson before such great men, as though they were little boys learning their alphabet, and I were teaching them how to put syllables together — but what can I do, when I see darkness to be sought for in a light so clear, and those studiously desiring to be blind, who boastfully enumerate before us such a series of ages, so much talent, so many saints, so many martyrs, so many doctors, and who with so much authority boast of this passage, and yet will not deign to look at the syllables, or to command their cogitations so far, as to give the passage of which they boast one consideration? Let the Diatribe now go home and consider, and say, how it can be, that one poor private individual should see that, which escaped the notice of so many public characters, and of the greatest men of so many ages. This passage surely, even in the judgment of a school-boy, proves that they must have been blind not very unfrequently!

What therefore does Moses mean by these most plain and clear words, but, that he has worthily performed his office as a faithful law-giver; and that therefore, if all men have not before their eyes and do not know all the precepts which are enjoined, the fault does not rest with him; that they have no place left them for excuse, so as to say, they did not know, or had not the precepts, or were obliged to seek them elsewhere; that if they do not keep them, the fault rests not with the law, or with the law-giver, but with themselves, seeing that the law is before them, and the law-giver has taught them; and that they have no place left for excusation of ignorance, only for accusation of negligence and disobedience? It is not, saith he, necessary to fetch the laws down from heaven, nor from lands beyond the sea, nor from afar, nor can you frame as an excuse, that you never had them nor heard them, for you have them nigh unto you; they are they which God hath commanded, which you have heard from my mouth, and which you have had in your hearts and in your mouths continually; you have heard them treated on by the Levites in the midst of you, of which this my word and book are witnesses; this, therefore only remains — that you do them. — What, I pray you, is here attributed unto “Free-will?” What is there, but the ‘demanding that it would do the laws which it has, and the taking away from it the excuse of ignorance and the want of the laws?’

These passages are the sum of what the Diatribe brings forward out of the Old Testament in support of “Free-will,” which being answered, there remains nothing that is not answered at the same time, whether it have brought forward, or wished to bring forward more; seeing that, it could bring forward nothing but imperative, or conditional, or optative passages, by which is signified, not what we can do, or do do, (as I have so often replied, to the so often repeating Diatribe) but what we ought to do, and what is required of us, in order that we might come to the knowledge of our impotency, and that there might be wrought in us the knowledge of our sin. Or, if they do prove any thing, by means of the appended conclusions and similitudes invented by human reason, they prove this: — that “Free-will” is not a certain small degree of endeavour or desire only, but a full and free ability and power to do all things, without the grace of God, and without the Holy Spirit.

Thus, nothing less is proved by the whole sum of that copious, and again and again reiterated and inculcated argumentation, than that which was aimed at to be proved, that is, the PROBABLE OPINION; by which, “Free-will” is defined to be of that impotency, ‘that it cannot will any thing good without grace, but is compelled into the service of sin; though it has an endeavour, which, nevertheless, is not to be ascribed to its own powers.’ — A monster truly! which, at the same time, can do nothing by its own power, and yet, has an endeavour within its own power: and thus, stands upon the basis of a most manifest contradiction!

De Servo Arbitrio “On the Enslaved Will” or The Bondage of Will

Sect. LXVII. — BUT here Reason, who is always very knowing and loquacious, will say, — This is an excellently invented scape-gap; that, as often as we are pressed close by the force of arguments, we might run back to that to-be-revered will of Majesty, and thus silence the disputant as soon as he becomes troublesome; just as astrologers, do, who, by their invented epicycles, elude all questions concerning the motion of the whole heaven. —

I answer: It is no invention of mine, but a command supported by the Holy Scriptures. Paul, (Rom. ix. 19,) speaks thus: “Why therefore doth God find fault; for who hath resisted His will? Nay, but O man, who art thou that contendest with God?” “Hath not the potter power?” And so on. And before him, Isaiah lviii. 2, “Yet they seek Me daily, and desire to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice, and desire to approach unto God.”

From these words it is, I think, sufficiently manifest that it is not lawful for men to search into that will of

Majesty. And this subject is of that nature, that perverse men are here the most led to pry into that to-be-revered will, and therefore, there is here the greatest reason why they should be exhorted to silence and reverence. In other subjects, where those things are handled for which we can give a reason, and for which we are commanded to give a reason, we do not this. And if any one still persist in searching into the reason of that will, and do not choose to hearken to our admonition, we let him go on, and, like the giants, fight against God; while we look on to see what triumph he will gain, persuaded in ourselves, that he will do nothing, either to injure our cause or to advance his own. For it will still remain unalterable, that he must either prove that "Free-will" can do all things, or that the Scriptures which he adduces must make against himself. And, which soever of the two shall take place, he vanquished, lies prostrate, while we as conquerors "stand upright!"

Sect. LXVIII. — ANOTHER passage is that of Matt. xix. 17, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." — "With what face, (says the Diatribe,) can "if thou wilt" be said to him who has not a Free-will?" —

To which I reply: — Is, therefore, the will, according to this word of Christ, free? But you wish to prove, that "Free-will" cannot will any thing good; and that, without grace, it of necessity serves sin. With what face, then, do you now make will wholly free?

The same reply will be made to that also — "If thou wilt be perfect," "If any one will come after me," "He that will save his life," "If ye love me," "If Ye shall continue." In a word, as I said before, (to ease the Diatribe's labour in adducing such a load of words) let all the conditional ifs and all the imperative verbs be collected together. — "All these precepts (says the Diatribe) stand coldly useless, if nothing be attributed to the human will. How ill does that conjunctive if accord with mere necessity?" —

I answer: If they stand coldly useless, it is your fault that they stand coldly useless, who, at one time, assert that nothing is to be attributed to "Free-will," while you make "Free-will" unable to will good, and who, on the contrary, here make the same "Free-will" able to will all good; nay, you thus make them to stand as nothing at all: unless, with you, the same words stand coldly useless and warmly useful at the same time, while they at once assert all things and deny all things.

I wonder how any author can delight in repeating the same things so continually, and to be as continually forgetting his subject design: unless perhaps, distrusting his cause, he wishes to overcome his adversary by the bulk of his book, or to weary him out with the tedium and toil of reading it. By what conclusion, I ask, does it follow, that will and power must immediately take place as often as it is said, 'If thou wilt,' 'If any one will,' 'If thou shalt?' Do we not most frequently imply in such expressions impotency rather, and impossibility? For instance. — If thou wilt equal Virgil in singing, my friend Mevius, thou must sing in another strain. — If thou wilt surpass Cicero, friend Scotus, instead of thy subtle jargon, thou must have the most exalted eloquence. If thou wilt stand in competition with David, thou must of necessity produce Psalms like his. Here are plainly signified things impossible to our own powers, although, by divine power, all these things may be done. So it is in the Scriptures, that by such expressions, it might be shewn what we cannot do ourselves, but what can be done in us by the power of God.

Moreover, if such expressions should be used in those things which are utterly impossible to be done, as being those which God would never do, then, indeed, they might rightly be called either coldly useless, or ridiculous, because they would be spoken in vain. Whereas now, they are so used, that by them, not only the impotency of "Free-will" is shewn, by which no one of those things can be done, but it is also signified, that a time will come when all those things shall be done, but by a power not our own, that is, by the divine power; provided that, we fully admit, that in such expressions, there is a certain signification of things possible and to be done: as if any one should interpret them thus: — "If thou wilt keep the commandments, (that is, if thou shalt at any time have the will to keep the commandments, though thou wilt have it, not of thyself, but of God, who giveth it to whom He will,) they also shall preserve thee."

But, to take a wider scope. — These expressions, especially those which are conditional, seem to be so placed also, on account of the Predestination of God, and to involve that as being unknown to us. As if they should speak thus: — "If thou desire," "If thou wilt:" that is, if thou be such with God, that he shall deign to give thee this will to keep the commandments, thou shalt be saved. According to which manner of speaking, it is given us to understand both truths. — That we can do nothing ourselves; and that, if we do any thing, God works that in us. This is what I would say to those, who will not be content to have it said, that by these words our impotency only is shewn, and who will contend, that there is also proved a certain power and ability to do those things which are commanded.

And in this way, it will also appear to be truth, that we are not able to do any of the things which are commanded, and yet, 'that we are able to do them all: that is, speaking of the former, with reference to our own powers, and of the latter, with reference to the grace of God.

Sect. LXIX. — THE third particular that moves the Diatribe is this: — "How there can be (it observes) any place for mere necessity there, where mention is so frequently made of good works and of bad works, and where there is mention made of reward, I cannot understand; for neither nature nor necessity can have merit." —

Nor can I understand any thing but this: — that that 'probable opinion,' asserts 'mere necessity' where it affirms that "Free-will" cannot will any thing good, and yet, nevertheless, here attributes to it even 'merit.' Hence, "Free-will" gains ground so fast, as the book and argumentation of the Diatribe increases, that now, it not only has an endeavour and desire of its own, 'though not by its own powers,' nay, not only wills good and does good, but also merits eternal life according to that saying of Christ, (Matt. v. 12,) "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." "Your reward," that is, the reward of "Free-will." For the Diatribe so understands this passage, that Christ and the Spirit of God are nothing. For what need is there of them, if we have good works and merit by "Free-will!" I say these things, that we may see, that it is no rare thing for men of exalted talent, to be blind in a matter which is plainly manifest even to one of a thick and uninformed understanding; and that we may also see, how weak, arguments drawn from human authority are in divine things, where the authority of God alone avails.

But we have here to speak upon two things. First, upon the precepts of the New Testament. And next, upon merit. We shall touch upon each briefly, having already spoken upon them more fully elsewhere.

The New Testament, properly, consists of promises and exhortations, even as the Old, properly, consists of laws and threatenings. For in the New Testament, the Gospel is preached; which is nothing else than the word, by which, are offered unto us the Spirit, grace; and the remission of sins obtained for us by Christ crucified; and all entirely free, through the mere mercy of God the Father, thus favouring us unworthy creatures, who deserve damnation rather than any thing else.

And then follow exhortations, in order to animate those who are already justified, and who have obtained mercy, to be diligent in the fruits of the Spirit and of righteousness received, to exercise themselves in charity and good works, and to bear courageously the cross and all the other tribulations of this world. This is the whole sum of the New Testament. But how little Erasmus understands of this matter is manifest from this: — it knows not how to make any distinction between the Old Testament and the New, for it can see nothing any where but precepts, by which, men are formed to good manners only. But what the new-birth is, the new-creature, regeneration, and the whole work of the Spirit, of all this it sees nothing whatever. So that, I am struck with wonder and astonishment, that the man, who has spent so much time and study upon these things, should know so little about them.

This passage therefore, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven," agrees as well with "Free-will" as light does with darkness. For Christ is there exhorting, not "Free-will," but His apostles, (who were not only raised above "Free-will" in grace, and justified, but were stationed in the ministry of the Word, that is, in the highest degree of grace,) to endure the tribulations of the world. But we are now disputing about "Free-will," and that particularly, as it is without Grace; which, by laws and threats, or the Old Testament, is instructed in the knowledge of itself only, that it might flee to the promises presented to it in the New Testament.

Sect. LXX. — AS to merit, or a proposed reward, what is it else but a certain promise? But that promise does not prove that we can do any thing; it proves nothing more than this: — if any one shall do this thing or that, he shall then have a reward. Whereas, our subject inquiry is, not what reward is to be given, or how it is to be given, but, whether or not we can do those things, for the doing of which the reward is to be given. This is the point to be settled and proved. Would not these be ridiculous conclusions? — The prize is set before all that run in the race: therefore, all can so run as to obtain. — If Cæsar shall conquer the Turks, he shall gain the kingdom of Syria: therefore, Cæsar can conquer, and does conquer the Turks. — If "Free-will" shall gain dominion over sin, it shall be holy before the Lord: therefore "Free-will" is holy before the Lord.

But away with things so stupid and openly absurd: (except that, "Free-will" deserves to be proved what it is by arguments so excellent) let us rather speak to this point: — 'that necessity, has neither merit nor reward.' If we speak of the necessity of compulsion, it is true: if we speak of the necessity of immutability, it is false. For who would bestow a reward upon, or ascribe merit to, an unwilling workman? But with respect to those who do good or evil willingly, even though they cannot alter that necessity by their own power, the reward or punishment follows

naturally and necessarily: as it is written “thou shalt render unto every man according to his works.” (Pro. xxiv. 12.) It naturally follows — if thou remain under water, thou wilt be suffocated; if thou swim out, thou wilt be saved.

To be brief: As it respects merit or reward, you must speak, either of the worthiness or of the consequence. If you speak of the worthiness, there is no merit, no reward. For if “Free-will” cannot of itself will good, but wills good by grace alone, (for we are speaking of “Free-will” apart from grace and inquiring into the power which properly belongs to each) who does not see, that that good-will, merit, and reward, belong to grace alone. Here then, again, the Diatribe dissents from itself, while it argues from merit the freedom of the will; and with me, against whom it fights, it stands in the same condemnation as ever; that is, its asserting that there is merit, reward, and liberty, makes the same as ever directly against itself; seeing that, it asserted above, that it could will nothing good, and undertook to prove that assertion.

If you speak of the consequence, there is nothing either good or evil which has not its reward. And here arises an error, that, in speaking of merits and rewards, we agitate opinions and questions concerning worthiness, which has not existence, when we ought to be disputing concerning consequences. For there remains, as a necessary consequence the judgment of God and a hell for the wicked, even though they themselves neither conceive nor think of such a reward for their sins, nay, they utterly detest it; and, as Peter saith, execrate it. (2 Pet. ii. 10-14.) .

In the same manner, there remains a kingdom for the just, even though they themselves neither seek it nor think of it; seeing that, it was prepared for them by their Father, not only before they themselves existed, but before the foundation of the world. Nay, if they should work good in order to obtain the Kingdom, they never would obtain it, but would be numbered rather with the wicked, who, with an evil and mercenary eye, seek the things of self even in God. Whereas, the sons of God, do good with a free-will, seeking no reward, but the glory and will of God only; ready to do good, even if (which is impossible) there were neither a Kingdom nor a hell.

These things are, I believe, sufficiently confirmed even from that saying of Christ only, which I have just cited, Matt. xxv. 34, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” — How can they merit that, which is theirs, and prepared for them before they had existence? So that we might much more rightly say, the kingdom of God merits us its possessors; and thus, place the merit where these place the reward, and the reward where these place the merit. For the kingdom is not merited, but before prepared: and the sons of the kingdom are before prepared for the kingdom, but do not merit the kingdom for themselves: that is, the kingdom merits the sons, not the sons the kingdom. So also hell more properly merits and prepares its sons, seeing that, Christ saith, “Depart, ye cursed, into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matt. xxv. 41.)

Sect. LXXI. — BUT, says the Diatribe — “what then mean all those Scriptures which promise a kingdom and threaten hell? Why is the word reward so often repeated in the Scriptures; as, “Thou hast thy reward,” “I am thy exceeding great reward?” Again, “Who rendereth unto every man according to his work;” and Paul, Rom. ii. 6, “Who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for eternal life,” and many of the same kind?” (Rom. ii. 6, 7.) —

It is answered: By all these passages, the consequence of reward is proved and nothing else, but by no means the worthiness of merit: seeing that, those who do good, do it not from a servile and mercenary principle in order to obtain eternal life, but they seek eternal life, that is, they are in that way, in which they shall come unto and find eternal life. So that seeking, is striving with desire, and pursuing with ardent diligence, that, which always leads unto eternal life. And the reason why it is declared in the Scriptures, that those things shall follow and take place after a good or bad life, is, that men might be instructed, admonished, awakened, and terrified. For as “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. iii. 20,) and an admonition of our impotency, and as from that, it cannot be inferred that we can do any thing ourselves; so, by these promises and threats, there is conveyed an admonition, by which we are taught, what will follow sin and that impotency made known by the law; but there is not, by them, any thing of worthiness ascribed unto our merit .

Wherefore, as the words of the law are for instruction and illumination, to teach us what we ought to do, and also what we are not able to do; so the words of reward, while they signify what will be hereafter, are for exhortation and threatening, by which the just are animated, comforted, and raised up to go forward, to persevere, and to conquer; that they might not be wearied or disheartened either in doing good or in enduring evil; as Paul exhorts his Corinthians, saying, “Be ye steadfast, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Cor. xv. 58.) So also God supports Abraham, saying “I am thy exceeding great reward.” (Gen. xv. 1.) Just in the same manner as

you would console any one, by signifying to him, that his works certainly pleased God, which kind of consolation the Scripture frequently uses; nor is it a small consolation for any one to know, that he so pleases God, that nothing but a good consequence can follow, even though it seem to him impossible.

Sect. LXXII. — TO this point pertain all those words which are spoken concerning the hope and expectation, that those things which we hope for will certainly come to pass. For the pious do not hope because of these words themselves, nor do they expect such things because they hope for them. So also the wicked by the words of threatening, and of a future judgment, are only terrified and cast down that they might cease and abstain from sin, and not become proud, secure, and hardened in their sins.

But if Reason should here turn up her nose and say — Why does God will these things to be done by His words, when by such words nothing is effected, and when the will can turn itself neither one way nor the other? Why does He not do what He does without the Word, when He can do all things without the Word? For the will is of no more power, and does no more with the Word, if the Spirit to move within be wanting; nor is it of less power, nor does it do less without the Word, if the Spirit be present, seeing that, all depends upon the power and operation of the Holy Spirit.

I answer: Thus it pleaseth God — not to give the Spirit without the Word, but through the Word; that He might have us as workers together with Him, while we sound forth in the Word without, what He alone works by the breath of His Spirit within, wheresoever it pleaseth Him; which, nevertheless, He could do without the Word, but such is not His will. And who are we that we should inquire into the cause of the divine will? It is enough for us to know, that such is the will of God; and it becomes us, bridling the temerity of reason, to reverence, love, and adore that will. For Christ, (Matt. xi. 25-26,) gives no other reason why the Gospel is hidden from the wise, and revealed unto babes, than this: — So it pleased the Father! In the same manner also, He might nourish us without bread; and indeed He has given a power which nourishes us without bread, as Matt. iv. 4, saith, “Man doth not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God:” but yet, it hath pleased Him to nourish us by His Spirit within, by means of the bread, and instead of the bread used without.

It is certain, therefore, that merit cannot be proved from the reward, at least out of the Scriptures; and that, moreover, “Free-will” cannot be proved from merit, much less such a “Free-will” as the Diatribe set out to prove, that is, ‘which of itself cannot will any thing good!’ And even if you grant merit, and add to it, moreover, those usual similitudes and conclusions of reason, such as, ‘it is commanded in vain,’ ‘the reward is promised in vain,’ ‘threatenings are denounced in vain,’ if there be no “Free-will:” all these, I say, if they prove any thing, prove this: — that “Free-will” can of itself do all things. But if it cannot of itself do all things, then that conclusion of reason still remains — therefore, the precepts are given in vain, the promises are made in vain, and the threatenings are denounced in vain.

Thus, the Diatribe is perpetually arguing against itself, as often as it attempts to argue against me. For God alone by His Spirit works in us both merit and reward, but He makes known and declares each, by His external Word, to the whole world; to the intent that, His power and glory and our impotency and vileness might be proclaimed even among the wicked, the unbelieving, and the ignorant, although those alone who fear God receive these things into their heart, and keep them faithfully; the rest despise them

Sect. LXXIII. — IT would be too tedious to repeat here each imperative passage which the Diatribe enumerates out of the New Testament, always tacking to them her own conclusions, and vainly arguing, that those things which are so said are ‘to no purpose,’ are ‘superfluous,’ are ‘coldly useless,’ are ‘ridiculous,’ are ‘nothing at all,’ if the will be not free. And I have already repeatedly observed, even to disgust, that nothing whatever is effected by such arguments; and that if any thing be proved, the whole of “Free-will” is proved. And this is nothing less than overthrowing the Diatribe altogether; seeing that, it set out to prove such a “Free-will” as cannot of itself do good, but serves sin; and then goes on to prove such a “Free-will” as can do all things; thus, throughout, forgetting and not knowing itself.

It is mere cavillation where it makes these remarks — “By their fruits, saith the Lord, ‘ye shall know them.’ (Matt. vii. 16, 20.) He calls works fruits, and He calls them ours, but they are not ours if all things be done by necessity.” —

I pray you, are not those things most rightly called ours, which we did not indeed make ourselves, but which we received from others? Why should not those works be called ours, which God has given unto us by His Spirit?

Shall we then not call Christ ours, because we did not make Him, but only received Him? Again: if we made all those things which are called ours — therefore, we made our own eyes, we made our own hands, we made our own feet: unless you mean to say, that our eyes, our hands, and our feet are not called our own! Nay, “What have we that we did not receive,” saith Paul. (1 Cor. iv. 7.) Shall we then say, that those things are either not ours, or else we made them ourselves? But suppose they are called our fruits because we made them, where then remain grace and the Spirit? — Nor does He say, “By their fruits, which are in a certain small part their own, ye shall know them.” This cavillation rather is ridiculous, superfluous, to no purpose, coldly useless, nay, absurd and detestable, by which the holy words of God are defiled and profaned.

In the same way also is that saying of Christ upon the cross trifled with, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke xxiii. 34.) Here, where some assertion might have been expected which should make for “Free-will,” recourse is again had to conclusions — “How much more rightly (says the Diatribe) would He have excused them on this ground — because they have not a Free-will, nor can they if they willed it, do otherwise.” —

No! nor is that “Free-will” which ‘cannot will any thing good,’ concerning which we are disputing, proved by this conclusion either; but that “Free-will” is proved by it which can do all things; concerning which no one disputes, to except the Pelagians.

Here, where Christ openly saith, “they know not what they do,” does He not testify that they could not will good? For how can you will that which you do not know? You certainly cannot desire that of which you know nothing! What more forcible can be advanced against “Free-will,” than that it is such a thing of nought, that it not only cannot will good, but cannot even know what evil it does, and what good is? Is there then any obscurity in this saying, “they know not what they do?” What is there remaining in the Scriptures which may not, upon the authority of the Diatribe, declare for “Free-will,” since this word of Christ is made to declare for it, which is so clearly and so directly against it? In the same easy way any one might affirm that this word declares for “Free-will” — “And the earth was without form and void.” (Gen. i. 2.) or this, “And God rested on the seventh day.” (Gen. ii. 2,) or any word of the same kind. Then, indeed, the Scriptures; would be obscure and ambiguous, nay, would be nothing at all. But to dare to make use of the Scriptures in this way, argues a mind that is in a signal manner, a contemner both of God and man, and that deserves no forbearance whatever.

Sect. LXXIV. — AGAIN the Diatribe receives that word of John i. 12, “To them gave He power to become the sons of God,” thus — “How can there be power given unto them, to become the sons of God, if there be no liberty in our will?” —

This word also, is a hammer that beats down “Free-will,” as is nearly the whole of the evangelist John, and yet, even this is brought forward in support of “Free-will.” Let us, I pray you, just took into this word. John is not speaking concerning any work of man, either great or small but concerning the very renewal and transformation of the old man who is a son of the devil, into the new man who is a son of God. This man is merely passive (as the term is used), nor does he do any thing, but is wholly made: and John is speaking of being made: he saith we are made the sons of God by a power given unto us from above, not by the power of “Free-will” inherent in ourselves.

Whereas, our friend Diatribe here concludes, that “Free-will” is of so much power, that it makes us the sons of God; if not, it is prepared to aver, that the word of John is ridiculous and stands coldly useless. But who ever so exalted “Freewill” as to assign unto it the power of making us the sons of God, especially such a “Free-will as cannot even will good, which “Free-will” it is that the Diatribe has taken upon itself to establish? But let this conclusion be gone after the rest which have been so often repeated; by which, nothing else is proved, if any thing be proved at all, than that which the Diatribe denies — that “Free-will” can do all things.

The meaning of John is this. — That by the coming of Christ into the world by His Gospel, by which grace was offered, but not works required, a full opportunity was given to all men of becoming the sons of God, if they would believe. But as to this willing and this believing on His name, as “Free-will” never knew it nor thought of it before, so much less could it then do it of its own power. For how could reason then think that faith in Jesus as the Son of God and man was necessary, when even at this day it could neither receive nor believe it, though the whole Creation should cry out together — there is a certain person who is both God and man! Nay it is rather offended at such a saying, as Paul affirms. (1 Cor. i. 17-31.) so far is it from possibility that it should either will it, or believe it.

John, therefore, is preaching, not the power of “Free-will,” but the riches of the kingdom of God offered to the world by the Gospel; and signifying at the same time, how few there are who receive it; that is, from the enmity of

the “Free-will” against it; the power of which is nothing else than this: — Satan reigning over it and causing it to reject grace, and the Spirit which fulfils the law. So excellently do its ‘endeavour’ and ‘desire’ avail unto the fulfilling of the law.

But we shall hereafter shew more fully what a thunderbolt this passage of John is against “Freewill.” Yet I am not a little astonished that passages which make so signally and so forcibly against “Free-will” are brought forward by the Diatribe in support of “Free-will;” whose stupidity is such, that it makes no distinction whatever between the promises, and the words of the law: for it most ridiculously sets up “Free-will” by the words of the law, and far more absurdly still confirms it by the words of the promise. But how this absurdity is, may be immediately solved, if it be but considered with what an unconcerned and contemptuous mind the Diatribe is here disputing: With whom, it matters not, whether grace stand or fall, whether “Free-will” lie prostrate or sit in state, if it can but, by words of vanity, serve the turn of tyrants, to the odium of the cause!

Sect. LXXV. — AFTER this, it comes to Paul also, the most determined enemy to “Free-will,” and even he is dragged in to confirm “Free-will;” “Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance?” — (Rom. ii. 4.) — “How (says the Diatribe) can the despising of the commandment be imputed where there is not a Free-will? How can God invite to repentance, who is the author of impenitence? How can the damnation be just, where the judge compels unto evil doing?” —

I answer: Let the Diatribe see to these questions itself. What are they unto us! The Diatribe said according to that ‘probable opinion.’ that “Free-will” cannot will good, and is of necessity compelled to serve sin.’ How, therefore, can the despising of the commandment be charged on the will, if it cannot will good, and has no liberty, but is necessarily compelled to the service of sin? How can God invite to repentance who is the author of the reason why it cannot repent, while it leaves, or does not give grace to, that, which cannot of itself will good? How can the damnation be just, where the judge, by taking away his aid, compels the wicked man to be left in his wickedness who cannot of his own power do otherwise?

All these conclusions therefore recoil back upon the head of the Diatribe. Or, if they prove any thing, as I said, they prove that “Free-will” can do all things: which, however, is denied by the Diatribe and by all. Thus these conclusions of reason torment the Diatribe, throughout all the passages of Scripture: seeing that, it must appear ridiculous and coldly useless, to enforce and exact with so much vehemence, when there is no one to be found who can perform: for the apostle’s intent is, by means of these threats, to bring the impious and proud to a knowledge of themselves and of their impotency, that he might prepare them for grace when humbled by the knowledge of sin.

And what need is there to speak of, singly, all those parts which are brought forward out of Paul, seeing that, they are only a collection of imperative or conditional passages, or of those by which Paul exhorts Christians to the fruits of faith? Whereas the Diatribe, by its appended conclusions, forms to itself a power of “Free-will,” such and so great, which can, without grace, do all things which Paul in his exhortations prescribes. Christians, however, are not led by “Free-will,” but by the Spirit of God (Rom. viii. 14): and to be led, is not to lead, but to be impelled, as a saw or an axe is impelled by a carpenter.

And that no one might doubt whether or not Luther asserted things so absurd, the Diatribe recites his own words; which, indeed, I acknowledge. For I confess that that article of Wycliffe, ‘all things take place from necessity, that is, from the immutable will of God, and our will is not compelled indeed, but it cannot of itself do good,’ was falsely condemned by the Council of Constance, or that conspiracy or cabal rather. Nay the Diatribe itself defends the same together with me, while it asserts, ‘that Free-will cannot by its own power will any thing good,’ and that, it of necessity serves sin: although in furnishing this defence, it all the while designs the direct contrary.

Suffice it to have spoken thus in reply to the FIRST PART of the Diatribe, in which it has endeavoured to establish “Free-will.” Let us now consider the latter part in which our arguments are refuted, that is, those by which “Free-will” is utterly overthrown. — Here you will see, what the smoke of man can do, against the thunder and lightning of God!

DISCUSSION.

Sect. LXXVI. — THE Diatribe, having thus first cited numberless passages of Scripture, as it were a most formidable army in support of “Free-will,” in order that it might inspire courage into the confessors and martyrs, the men saints and women saints on the side of “Free-will,” and strike terror into all the fearful and trembling deniers of, and transgressors against “Free-will,” imagines to itself a poor contemptible handful only standing up to oppose “Free-will:” and therefore it brings forward no more than two Scriptures, which seem to be more prominent than the rest, to stand up on their side: intent only upon slaughter, and that, to be executed without much trouble. The one of these passages is from Exod. ix. 13, “The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh:” the other is from Malachi i. 2-3, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” Paul has explained at large both these passages in the Romans ix. 11-17. But, according to the judgment of the Diatribe, what a detestable and useless discussion has he made of it! So that, did not the Holy Spirit know a little something of rhetoric, there would be some danger, lest, being broken at the outset by such an artfully managed show of contempt, he should despair of his cause, and openly yield to “Free-will” before the sound of the trumpet for the battle. But, however, I, as a recruit taken into the rear of those two passages, will display the forces on our side. Although, where the state of the battle is such, that one can put to flight ten thousand, there is no need of forces. If therefore, one passage shall defeat “Free-will,” its numberless forces will profit it nothing.

Sect. LXXVII. — IN this part of the discussion, then, the Diatribe has found out a new way of eluding the most clear passages: that is, it will have that there is, in the most simple and clear passages, a trope. And as, before, when speaking in defence of “Free-will,” it eluded all the imperative and conditional sentences of the law by means of conclusions tacked, and similitudes added to them; so now, where it designs to speak against us, it twists all the words of the divine promise and declaration just which way it pleases, by means of a trope which it has invented; thus, being everywhere an incomprehensible Proteus! Nay, it demands with a haughty brow, that this permission should be granted it, saying, that we ourselves, when pressed closely, are accustomed to get off by means of invented tropes: as in these instances: — “On which thou wilt, stretch forth thine hand:” (Ex. viii. 5,) that is, grace shall extend thine hand on which it will. “Make you a new heart:” (Ezek. xviii. 31,) that is, grace shall make you a new heart: and the like. It seems, therefore, an indignity offered, that Luther should be allowed to give forth an interpretation so forced and twisted, and that it should not be far more allowable to follow the interpretations of the most approved doctors.

You see then, that here, the contention is not for the text itself, no, nor for conclusions and similitudes, but for tropes and interpretations. When then shall we ever have any plain and pure text, without tropes and conclusions, either for or against “Free-will?” Has the Scriptures no such texts anywhere? And shall the cause of “Freewill” remain for ever in doubt, like a reed shaken with the wind, as being that which can be supported by no certain text, but which stands upon conclusions and tropes only, introduced by men mutually disagreeing with each other?

But let our sentiment rather be this: — that neither conclusion nor trope is to be admitted into the Scriptures, unless the evident strife of the particulars, or the absurdity of any particular as militating against an article of faith, require it: but, that the simple, pure, and natural meaning of the words is to be adhered to, which is according to the rules of grammar, and to that common use of speech which God has given unto men. For if every one be allowed, according to his own lust, to invent conclusions and tropes in the Scriptures, what will the whole Scripture together be, but a reed shaken with the wind, or a kind of Vertumnus? Then, in truth, nothing could, to a certainty, be determined on or proved concerning any one article of faith, which you might not subject to cavillation by means of some trope. But every trope ought to be avoided as the most deadly poison, which is not absolutely required by the Scriptures itself.

See what happened to that trope-inventor, Origen, in expounding the Scriptures. What just occasion did he give the calumniator Porphyry, to say, ‘those who favour Origen, can be no great friends to Hieronymus.’ What happened to the Arians by means of that trope, according to which, they made Christ God nominally? What happened in our own times to those new prophets concerning the words of Christ, “This is my body?” One invented a trope in the word “this,” another in the word “is,” another in the word “body.” I have therefore observed this: — that all heresies and errors in the Scriptures, have not arisen from the simplicity of the words, as is the general report throughout the world, but from men not attending to the simplicity of the words, and hatching tropes and conclusions out of their own brain.

For example. “On which soever thou wilt, stretch forth thine hand.” I, as far as I can remember, never put upon

these words so violent an interpretation, as to say, 'grace shall extend thine hand on which soever it will:' "Make yourselves a new heart," 'that is, grace shall make you a new heart, and the like;' although the Diatribe traduces me thus in a public work, from being so carried away with, and illuded by its own tropes and conclusions, that it knows not what it says about any thing. But I said this: — that by the words, 'stretch forth thine hand,' simply taken as they are, without tropes or conclusions, nothing else is signified than what is required of us in the stretching forth of our hand, and what we ought to do; according to the nature of an imperative expression, with grammarians, and in the common use of speech.

But the Diatribe, not attending to this simplicity of the word, but with violence adducing conclusions and tropes, interprets the words thus: — "Stretch forth thine hand;" that is, thou art able by thine own power to stretch forth thine hand. "Make you a new heart," that is, ye are able to make a new heart. 'Believe in Christ,' that is, ye are able to believe in Christ. So that, with it, what is spoken imperatively, and what is spoken indicatively, is the same thing; or else, it is prepared to aver, that the Scripture is ridiculous and to no purpose. And these interpretations, which no grammarian will bear, must not be called, in Theologians, violent or invented, but the productions of the most approved doctors received by so many ages.

But it is easy for the Diatribe to admit and follow tropes in this part of the discussion, seeing that, it cares not at all whether what is said be certain or uncertain. Nay, it aims at making all things uncertain; for its design is, that the doctrines concerning "Free-will" should be left alone, rather than searched into. Therefore, it is enough for it, to be enabled in any way to avoid those passages by which it finds itself closely pressed.

But as for me, who am maintaining a serious cause, and who am inquiring what is, to the greatest certainty, the truth, for the establishing of consciences, I must act very differently. For me, I say, it is not enough that you say there may be a trope here: but I must inquire, whether there ought to be, or can be a trope there. For if you cannot prove that there must, of necessity, be a trope in that passage, you will effect nothing at all. There stands there this word of God — "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh." (Ex. iv. 21, Rom. ix. 17-18.) If you say that it can be understood or ought to be understood thus: — I will permit it to be hardened: I hear you say, indeed, that it may be so understood. And I hear this trope used by every one, 'I destroyed you, because I did not correct you immediately when you began to do wrong.' But here, there is no place for that interpretation. We are not here inquiring, whether that trope be in use; we are not inquiring whether any one can use it in that passage of Paul: but this is the point of inquiry — whether or not it be sure and safe to use this passage plainly as it stands, and whether Paul would have it so used. We are not inquiring into the use of an indifferent reader of this passage, but into the use of the author Paul himself.

What will you do with a conscience inquiring thus? — Behold God, as the Author, saith, "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh:" the meaning of the word "harden" is plain and well known. But a man, who reads this passage, tells me, that in this place, 'to harden,' signifies 'to give an occasion of becoming hardened,' because, the sinner is not immediately corrected. But by what authority does he this? With what design, by what necessity, is the natural signification of this passage thus twisted? And suppose the reader and interpreter should be in error, how shall it be proved that such a turn ought to be given to this passage? It is dangerous, nay, impious, thus to twist the Word of God, without necessity and without authority. Would you then comfort a poor soul thus labouring, in this way? — Origen thought so and so. Cease to search into such things, because they are curious and superfluous. But he would answer you, this admonition should have been given to Moses or Paul before they wrote, and so also to God Himself, for it is they who vex us with these curious and superfluous Scriptures.

Sect. LXXVIII. — THIS miserable scape-gap of tropes, therefore, profits the Diatribe nothing. But this Proteus of ours must here be held fast, and compelled to satisfy us fully concerning the trope in this passage; and that, by Scriptures the most clear, or by miracles the most evident. For as to its mere opinion, even though supported by the laboured industry of all ages, we give no credit to that whatever. But we urge on and press it home, that there can be here no trope whatever, but that the Word of God is to be understood according to the plain meaning of the words. For it is not given unto us (as the Diatribe persuades itself to turn the words of God backwards and forwards according to our own lust: if that were the case, what is there in the whole Scripture, that might not be resolved into the philosophy of Anaxagoras — 'that any thing might be made from any thing?' And thus I will say, "God created the heavens and the earth:" that is, He stationed them, but did not make them out of nothing. Or, "He created the heavens and the earth;" that is, the angels and the devils; or the just and the wicked. Who, I ask, if

this were the case, might not become a theologian at the first opening of a book?

Let this, therefore, be a fixed and settled point: — that since the Diatribe cannot prove, that there is a trope in these our passages which it utterly destroys, it is compelled to cede to us, that the words are to be understood according to their plain meaning; even though it should prove, that the same trope is contained in all the other passages of Scripture, and used in common by every one. And by the gaining of this one point, all our arguments are at the same time defended, which the Diatribe designed to refute; and thus, its refutation is found to effect nothing, to do nothing, and to be nothing.

Whenever, therefore, this passage of Moses, “I will harden the heart of Pharaoh,” is interpreted thus: — My long-suffering, by which I bear with the sinner, leads, indeed, others unto repentance, but it shall render Pharaoh more hardened in iniquity: — it is a pretty interpretation, but it is not proved that it ought to be so interpreted. But I am not content with what is said, I must have the proof.

And that also of Paul, “He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth,” (Rom. ix. 18,) is plausibly interpreted thus: — that is, God hardens when He does not immediately punish the sinner; and he has mercy when He immediately invites to repentance by afflictions. — But how is this interpretation proved?

And also that of Isaiah lxiii. 17, “Why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways and hardened our heart from Thy fear?” Be it so, that Jerome interprets it thus from Origen: — He is said to ‘make to err’ who does not immediately recall from error. But who shall certify us that Jerome and Origen interpret rightly? It is, therefore, a settled determination with me, not to argue upon the authority of any teacher whatever, but upon that of the Scripture alone. What Origen and Jerome does the Diatribe, then, forgetting its own determination, set before us! especially when, among all the ecclesiastical writers, there are scarcely any who have handled the Holy Scriptures less to the purpose, and more absurdly, than Origen and Jerome.

In a word: this liberty of interpretation, by a new and unheard-of kind of grammar, goes to confound all things. So that, when God saith, “I will harden the heart of Pharaoh,” you are to change the persons and understand it thus: — Pharaoh hardens himself by My long-suffering. God hardeneth our hearts; — that is, we harden ourselves by God’s deferring the punishment. Thou, O Lord, has made us to err; — that is, we have made ourselves to err by Thy not punishing us. So also, God’s having mercy, no longer signifies His giving grace, or showing mercy, or forgiving sin, or justifying, or delivering from evil, but, on the contrary, signifies bringing on evil and punishing.

In fact, by these tropes matters will come to this: — you may say, that God had mercy upon the children of Israel when He sent them into Assyria and to Babylon; because, He there punished the sinners, and there invited them, by afflictions, to repentance: and that, on the other hand, when He delivered them and brought them back, He had not then mercy upon them, but hardened them; that is, by His long-suffering and mercy He gave them an occasion of becoming hardened. And also, God’s sending the Saviour Christ into the world, will not be said to be the mercy, but the hardening of God; because, by this mercy, He gave men an occasion of hardening themselves. On the other hand, His destroying Jerusalem, and scattering the Jews even unto this day, is His having mercy on them; because, He punishes the sinners and invites them to repentance. Moreover, His carrying the saints away into heaven at the day of judgment, will not be in mercy, but in hardening; because, by His long-suffering, He will give them an occasion of abusing it. But His thrusting the wicked down to hell, will be His mercy; because, He punishes the sinners. — Who, I pray you, ever heard of such examples of the mercy and wrath of God as these?

And be it so, that good men are made better both by the long-suffering and by the severity of God; yet, when we are speaking of the good and the bad promiscuously, these tropes, by an utter perversion of the common manner of speaking, will make, out of the mercy of God His wrath, and His wrath out of His mercy; seeing that, they call it the wrath of God when He does good, and His mercy when He afflicts.

Moreover, if God be said then to harden, when He does good and endures with long-suffering, and then to have mercy when He afflicts and punishes, why is He more particularly said to harden Pharaoh than to harden the children of Israel, or than the whole world? Did He not do good to the children of Israel? Does He not do good to the whole world? Does He not bear with the wicked? Does He not rain upon the evil and upon the good? Why is He rather said to have mercy upon the children of Israel than upon Pharaoh? Did He not afflict the children of Israel in Egypt, and in the desert? — And be it so, that some abuse, and some rightly use, the goodness and the wrath of God; yet, according to your definition, to harden, is the same as, to indulge the wicked by long-suffering and goodness; and to have mercy, is, not to indulge, but to visit and punish. Therefore, with reference to God, He,

by His continual goodness, does nothing but harden; and by His perpetual punishment, does nothing but shew mercy.

Sect. LXXIX. — BUT this is the most excellent statement of all — ‘that God is said to harden, when He indulges sinners by long-suffering; but to have mercy upon them, when He visits and afflicts, and thus, by severity, invites to repentance.’ —

What, I ask, did God leave undone in afflicting, punishing, and calling Pharaoh to repentance? Are there not, in His dealings with him, ten plagues recorded? If, therefore, your definition stand good, that shewing mercy, is punishing and calling the sinner immediately, God certainly had mercy upon Pharaoh! Why then does not God say, I will have mercy upon Pharaoh? Whereas He saith, “I will harden the heart of Pharaoh.” For, in the very act of having mercy upon him, that is, (as you say) afflicting and punishing him, He saith, “I will harden” him; that is, as you say, I will bear with him and do him good. What can be heard of more enormous! Where are now your tropes? Where are your Origenes? Where are your Jeromes? Where are all your most approved doctors whom one poor creature, Luther, daringly contradicts? — But at this rate the flesh must unawares impel the man to talk, who trifles with the words of God, and believes not their solemn importance!

The text of Moses itself, therefore, incontrovertibly proves, that here, these tropes are mere inventions and things of nought, and that by those words, “I will harden the heart of Pharaoh,” something else is signified far different from, and of greater importance than, doing good, or affliction and punishment; because, we cannot deny, that both were tried upon Pharaoh with the greatest care and concern. For what wrath and punishment could be more instant, than his being stricken by so many wonders and with so many plagues, that, as Moses himself testifies, the like had never been? Nay, even Pharaoh himself, repenting, was moved by them more than once; but he was not effectually moved, nor did he persevere. And what long-suffering or goodness of God could be greater, than His taking away the plagues so easily, hardening his sin so often, so often bringing back the good, and so often taking away the evil? Yet neither is of any avail, He still saith, “I will harden the heart of Pharaoh!” You see, therefore, that even if your hardening and mercy, that is, your glosses and tropes, be granted to the greatest extent, as supported by use and by example, and as seen in the case of Pharaoh, there is yet a hardening that still remains; and that the hardening of which Moses speaks must, of necessity, be one, and that of which you dream, another.

Sect LXXX. — BUT since I have to fight with fiction-framers and ghosts, let me turn to ghost-raising also. Let me suppose (which is an impossibility) that the trope of which the Diatribe dreams avails in this passage; in order that I may see, which way the Diatribe will elude the being compelled to declare, that all things take place according to the will of God alone, and from necessity in us; and how it will clear God from being Himself the author and cause of our becoming hardened. — For if it be true that God is then said to “harden” when He bears with long-suffering, and does not immediately punish, these two positions still stand firm.

First, that man, nevertheless, of necessity serves sin. For when it is granted that “Free-will” cannot will any thing good, (which kind of Free-will the Diatribe undertook to prove) then, by the goodness of a long-suffering God, it becomes nothing better, but of necessity worse. — Wherefore, it still remains that all that we do, is done from necessity. .

And next, that God appears to be just as cruel in this bearing with us by His long-suffering, as He does by being preached, as willing to harden, by that will inscrutable. For when He sees that, “Free-will” cannot will good, but becomes worse by His enduring with long-suffering; by this very long-suffering He appears to be most cruel, and to delight in our miseries; seeing that, He could remedy them if He willed, and might not thus endure with long-suffering if He willed, nay, that He could not thus endure unless He willed; for who can compel Him against His will? That will, therefore, without which nothing is done, being admitted, and it being admitted also, that “Free-will” cannot will any thing good, all is advanced in vain that is advanced, either in excusation of God, or in accusation of “Free-will.” For the language of “Free-will” is ever this: — I cannot, and God will not. What can I do! If He have mercy upon me by affliction, I shall be nothing benefited, but must of necessity become worse, unless He give me His Spirit. But this He gives me not, though He might give it me if He willed. It is certain, therefore, that He wills, not to give.

Sect. LXXXI. — NOR do the similitudes adduced make any thing to the purpose, where it is said by the Diatribe — “As under the same sun, mud is hardened and wax melted; as by the same shower, the cultivated earth brings forth fruit, and the uncultivated earth thorns; so, by the same long-suffering of God, some are hardened

and some converted.” —

For, we are not now dividing “Free-will” into two different natures, and making the one like mud, the other like wax; the one like cultivated earth, the other like uncultivated earth; but we are speaking concerning that one “Free-will” equally impotent in all men; which, as it cannot will good, is nothing but mud, nothing but uncultivated earth. Nor does Paul say that God, as the potter, makes one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour, out of different kinds of clay, but He saith, “Out of the same lump, &c.” (Rom. ix. 21.) Therefore, as mud always becomes harder, and uncultivated earth always becomes more thorny; even so “Free-will,” always becomes worse, both under the hardening sun of long-suffering, and under the softening shower of rain.

If, therefore, “Free-will” be of one and the same nature and impotency in all men, no reason can be given why it should attain unto grace in one, and not in another; if nothing else be preached to all, but the goodness of a long-suffering and the punishment of a mercy-shewing God. For it is a granted position, that “Free-will” in all, is alike defined to be, ‘that which cannot will good.’ And indeed, if it were not so, God could not elect any one, nor would there be any place left for Election; but for “Free-will” only, as choosing or refusing the long-suffering and anger of God. And if God be thus robbed of His power and wisdom to elect, what will there be remaining but that idol Fortune, under the name of which, all things take place at random! Nay, we shall at length come to this: that men may be saved and damned without God’s knowing anything at all about it; as not having determined by certain election who should be saved and who should be damned; but having set before all men in general His hardening goodness and long-suffering, and His mercy shewing correction and punishment, and left them to choose for themselves whether they would be saved or damned; while He, in the mean time, should be gone, as Homer says, to an Ethiopian feast!

It is just such a God as this that Aristotle paints out to us; that is, who sleeps Himself, and leaves every one to use or abuse His long-suffering and punishment just as He will. Nor can reason, of herself, form any other judgment than the Diatribe here does. For as she herself snores over, and looks with contempt upon, divine things; she thinks concerning God, that He sleeps and snores over them too; not exercising His wisdom, will, and presence, in choosing, separating, and inspiring, but leaving the troublesome and irksome business of accepting or refusing His long-suffering and His anger, entirely to men. This is what we come to, when we attempt, by human reason, to limit and make excuses for God, not revering the secrets of His Majesty, but curiously prying into them — being lost in the glory of them, instead of making one excuse for God, we pour forth a thousand blasphemies! And forgetting ourselves, we prate like madmen, both against God and against ourselves; when we are all the while supposing, that we are, with a great deal of wisdom, speaking both for God and for ourselves.

Here then you see, what that trope and gloss of the Diatribe, will make of God. And moreover, how excellently consistent the Diatribe is with itself; which before, by its one definition, made “Free-will” one and the same in all men: and now, in the course of its argumentation, forgetting its own definition, makes one “Free-will” to be cultivated and the other uncultivated, according to the difference of works, of manners, and of men: thus making two different “Free-wills”; the one, that which cannot do good, the other, that which can do good, and that by its own powers before grace: whereas, its former definition declared, that it could not, by those its own powers, will any thing good whatever. Hence, therefore, it comes to pass, that while we do not ascribe unto the will of God only, the will and power of hardening, shewing mercy, and doing all things; we ascribe unto “Freewill” itself the power of doing all things without grace; which, nevertheless, we declared to be unable to do any good whatever without grace.

The similitudes, therefore, of the sun and of the shower, make nothing at all to the purpose. The Christian would use those similitudes more rightly, if he were to make the sun and the shower to represent the Gospel, as Psalm xix. does, and as does also Hebrews vi. 7; and were to make the cultivated earth to represent the elect, and the uncultivated the reprobate; for the former are, by the word, edified and made better, while the latter are offended and made worse. Or, if this distinction be not made, then, as to “Free-will” itself, that, is in all men uncultivated earth and the kingdom of Satan.

Sect. LXXXII. — BUT let us now inquire into the reason why this trope was invented in this passage. — “It appears absurd (says the Diatribe) that God, who is not only just but also good, should be said to have hardened the heart of a man, in order that, by his iniquity, He might shew forth His own power. The same also occurred to Origin; who confesses, that the occasion of becoming hardened was given of God, but throws all the fault upon

Pharaoh. He has, moreover, made a remark upon that which the Lord saith, “For this very purpose have I raised thee up.” He does not say, (he observes) For this very purpose have I made thee: otherwise, Pharaoh could not have been wicked, if God had made him such an one as he was, for God beheld all His works, and they were “very good” — thus the Diatribe.

It appears then, that one of the principal causes why the words of Moses and of Paul are not received, is their absurdity. But against what article of faith does that absurdity militate? Or, who is offended at it? It is human Reason that is offended; who, being blind, deaf, impious, and sacrilegious in all the words and works of God, is, in the case of this passage, introduced as a judge of the words and works of God. According to the same argument of absurdity, you will deny all the Articles of Faith: because, it is of all things the most absurd, and as Paul saith, foolishness to the Gentiles, and a stumbling-block to the Jews, that God should be man, the son of a virgin, crucified, and sitting at the right hand of His Father: it is, I say, absurd to believe such things. Therefore, let us invent some tropes with the Arians, and say, that Christ is not truly God. Let us invent some tropes with the Manichees, and say, that He is not truly man, but a phantom introduced by means of a virgin; or a reflection conveyed by glass, which fell, and was crucified. And in this way, we shall handle the Scriptures to excellent purpose indeed!

After all, then, the tropes amount to nothing; nor is the absurdity avoided. For it still remains absurd, (according to the judgment of reason,) that that God, who is just and good, should exact of “Free-will” impossibilities and that, when “Freewill” cannot will good and of necessity serves sin, that sin should yet be laid to its charge and that, moreover, when He does not give the Spirit, He should, nevertheless, act so severely and unmercifully, as to harden, or permit to become hardened: these things, Reason will still say, are not becoming a God good and merciful. Thus, they too far exceed her capacity; nor can she so bring herself into subjection as to believe, and judge, that the God who does such things, is good; but setting aside faith, she wants, to feel out, and see, and comprehend how He can be good, and not cruel. But she will comprehend that, when this shall be said of God: — He hardens no one, He damns no one; but He has mercy upon all, He saves all; and He has so utterly destroyed hell, that no future punishment need be dreaded. It is thus that Reason blusters and contends, in attempting to clear God, and to defend Him as just and good.

But faith and the Spirit judge otherwise; who believe, that God would be good, even though he should destroy all men. And to what profit is it, to weary ourselves with all these reasonings, in order that we might throw the fault of hardening upon “Free-will”? Let all the “Free-will” in the world, do all it can with all its powers, and yet, it never will give one proof, either that it can avoid being hardened where God gives not His Spirit, or merit mercy where it is left to its own powers. And what does it signify whether it be hardened, or deserve being hardened, if the hardening be of necessity, as long as it remains in that impotency, in which, according to the testimony of the Diatribe, it cannot will good? Since, therefore, the absurdity is not taken out of the way by these tropes; or, if it be taken out of the way, greater absurdities still are introduced in their stead, and all things are ascribed unto “Free-will”; away with such useless and seducing tropes, and let us cleave close to the pure and simple Word of God!

Sect. LXXXIII. — AS to the other point — ‘that those things which God has made, are very good: and that God did not say, for this purpose have I made thee, but “For this purpose have I raised thee up.”’ —

I observe, first of all, that this, Gen. i., concerning the works of God being very good, was said before the fall of man. But it is recorded directly after, in Gen. iii. how man became evil, — when God departed from him and left him to himself. And from this one man thus corrupt, all the wicked were born, and Pharaoh also: as Paul saith, “We were all by nature the children of wrath even as others.” (Eph. ii. 8). Therefore God made Pharaoh wicked; that is, from a wicked and corrupt seed: as He saith in the Proverbs of Solomon, xvi. 4, “God hath made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.” that is, not by creating evil in them, but by forming them out of a corrupt seed, and ruling over them. This therefore is not a just conclusion — God made man wicked: therefore, he is not wicked. For how can he not be wicked from a wicked seed? As Ps. li. 5, saith, “Behold I was conceived in sin.” And Job xiv. 4, “Who can make that clean which is conceived from unclean seed?” For although God did not make sin, yet, He ceases not to form and multiply that nature, which, from the Spirit being withdrawn, is defiled by sin. And as it is, when a carpenter makes statues of corrupt wood; so such as the nature is, such are the men made, when God creates and forms them out of that nature. Again: If you understand the words, “They were very good,” as referring to the works of God after the fall, you will be pleased to observe, that this was said, not with reference to us, but with reference to God. For it is not said, Man saw all the things that God had made, and behold they

were very good. Many things seem very good unto God, and are very good, which seem unto us very evil, and are considered to be very evil. Thus, afflictions, evils, errors, hell, nay, all the very best works of God, are, in the sight of the world, very evil, and even damnable. What is better than Christ and the Gospel? But what is more execrated by the world? And therefore, how those things are good in the sight of God, which are evil in our sight, is known only unto God and unto those who see with the eyes of God; that is, who have the Spirit. But there is no need of argumentation so close as this, the preceding answer is sufficient.

Sect. LXXXIV. — BUT here, perhaps, it will be asked, how can God be said to work evil in us, in the same way as He is said to harden us, to give us up to our own desires, to cause us to err, &c.?

We ought, indeed, to be content with the Word of God, and simply to believe what that saith; seeing that, the works of God are utterly unspeakable. But however, in compliance with Reason, that is, human foolery, I will just act the fool and the stupid fellow for once, and try, by a little babbling, if I can produce any effect upon her.

First, then, both Reason and the Diatribe grant, that God works all in all; and that, without Him, nothing is either done or effective, because He is Omnipotent; and because, therefore, all things come under His Omnipotence, as Paul saith to the Ephesians.

Now then, Satan and man being fallen and left of God, cannot will good; that is, those things which please God, or which God wills; but are ever turned the way of their own desires, so that they cannot but seek their own. This, therefore, their will and nature, so turned from God, cannot be a nothing: nor are Satan and the wicked man a nothing: nor are the nature and the will which they have a nothing, although it be a nature corrupt and averse. That remnant of nature, therefore, in Satan and the wicked man, of which we speak, as being the creature and work of God, is not less subject to the divine omnipotence and action, than all the rest of the creatures and works of God.

Since, therefore, God moves and does all in all, He necessarily moves and does all in Satan and the wicked man. But He so does all in them, as they themselves are, and as He finds them: that is, as they are themselves averse and evil, being carried along by that motion of the Divine Omnipotence, they cannot but do what is averse and evil. Just as it is with a man driving a horse lame on one foot, or lame on two feet; he drives him just so as the horse himself is; that is, the horse moves badly. But what can the man do? He is driving along this kind of horse together with sound horses; he, indeed, goes badly, and the rest well; but it cannot be otherwise, unless the horse be made sound.

Here then you see, that, when God works in, and by, evil men, the evils themselves are inwrought, but yet, God cannot do evil, although He thus works the evils by evil men; because, being good Himself He cannot do evil; but He uses evil instruments, which cannot escape the sway and motion of His Omnipotence. The fault, therefore, is in the instruments, which God allows not to remain action-less; seeing that, the evils are done as God Himself moves. Just in the same manner as a carpenter would cut badly with a saw-edged or broken-edged axe. Hence it is, that the wicked man cannot but always err and sin; because, being carried along by the motion of the Divine Omnipotence, he is not permitted to remain motionless, but must will, desire, and act according to his nature. All this is fixed certainty, if we believe that God is Omnipotent!

It is, moreover, as certain, that the wicked man is the creature of God; though being averse and left to himself without the Spirit of God, he cannot will or do good. For the Omnipotence of God makes it, that the wicked man cannot evade the motion and action of God, but, being of necessity subject to it, he yields; though his corruption and aversion to God, makes him that he cannot be carried along and moved unto good. God cannot suspend His Omnipotence on account of his aversion, nor can the wicked man change his aversion. Wherefore it is, that he must continue of necessity to sin and err, until he be amended by the Spirit of God. Meanwhile, in all these, Satan goes on to reign in peace, and keeps his palace undisturbed under this motion of the Divine Omnipotence.

De Servo Arbitrio “On the Enslaved Will” or The Bondage of Will

Sect. LXXXV. — BUT now follows the act itself of hardening, which is thus: — The wicked man (as we have said) like his prince Satan, is turned totally the way of selfishness, and his own; he seeks not God, nor cares for the things of God; he seeks his own riches, his own glory, his own doings, his own wisdom, his own power, and, in a word, his own kingdom; and wills only to enjoy them in peace. And if any one oppose him or wish to diminish any of these things, with the same aversion to God under which he seeks these, with the same is he moved, enraged, and roused to indignation against his adversary. And he is as much unable to overcome this rage, as he is to overcome his desire of self-seeking; and he can no more avoid this seeking, than he can avoid his own existence; and this he cannot do, as being the creature of God, though a corrupt one.

The same is that fury of the world against the Gospel of God. For, by the Gospel, comes that “stronger than he,” who overcomes the quiet possessor of the palace, and condemns those desires of glory, of riches, of wisdom, of self-righteousness, and of all things in which he trusts. This very irritation of the wicked, when God speaks and acts contrary to what they willed, is their hardening and their galling weight. For as they are in this state of aversion from the very corruption of nature, so they become more and more averse, and worse and worse, as this aversion is opposed or turned out of its way. And thus, when God threatened to take away from the wicked Pharaoh his power, he irritated and aggravated him, and hardened his heart the more, the more He came to him with His word by Moses, making known His intention to take away his kingdom and to deliver His own people from his power: because He did not give him His Spirit within, but permitted his wicked corruption, under the dominion of Satan, to grow angry, to swell with pride, to burn with rage, and to go on still in a certain secure contempt.

Sect. LXXXVI. — LET no one think, therefore, that God, where He is said to harden, or to work evil in us (for to harden is to do evil), so does the evil as though He created evil in us anew, in the same way as a malignant liquor-seller, being himself bad, would pour poison into, or mix it up in, a vessel that was not bad, where the vessel itself did nothing but receive, or passively accomplish the purpose of the malignity of the poison-mixer. For when people hear it said by us, that God works in us both good and evil, and that we from mere necessity passively submit to the working of God, they seem to imagine, that a man who is good, or not evil himself, is passive while God works evil in him: not rightly considering that God, is far from being inactive in all His creatures, and never suffers any one of them to keep holiday.

But whoever wishes to understand these things let him think thus: — that God works evil in us, that is, by us, not from the fault of God, but from the fault of evil in us: — that is, as we are evil by nature, God, who is truly good, carrying us along by His own action, according to the nature of His Omnipotence, cannot do otherwise than do evil by us, as instruments, though He Himself be good; though by His wisdom, He overrules that evil well, to His own glory and to our salvation.

Thus God, finding the will of Satan evil, not creating it so, but leaving it while Satan sinningly commits the evil, carries it along by His working, and moves it which way He will; though that will ceases not to be evil by this motion of God.

In this same way also David spoke concerning Shimei. “Let him curse, for God hath bidden him to curse David.” (2 Samuel xvi. 10). How could God bid to curse, an action so evil and virulent! There was no where an external precept to that effect. David, therefore, looks to this: — the Omnipotent God saith and it is done: that is, He does all things by His external word. Wherefore, here, the divine action and omnipotence, the good God Himself, carries along the will of Shimei, already evil together with all his members, and before incensed against David, and, while David is thus opportunely situated and deserving such blasphemy, commands the blasphemy, (that is, by his word which is his act, that is, the motion of his action), by this evil and blaspheming instrument.

Sect. LXXXVII. — IT is thus God hardens Pharaoh — He presents to his impious and evil will His word and His work, which that will hates; that is, by its engendered and natural corruption. And thus, while God does not change by His Spirit that will within, but goes on presenting and enforcing; and while Pharaoh, considering his own resources, his riches and his power, trusts to them from the same naturally evil inclination; it comes to pass, that being inflated and uplifted by the imagination of his own greatness on the one hand, and swollen into a proud contempt of Moses coming in all humility with the unostentatious word of God on the other, he becomes hardened; and then, the more and more irritated and chafed, the more Moses advances and threatens: whereas, this his evil will would not, of itself, have been moved or hardened at all. But as the omnipotent Agent moved it by that His inevitable motion, it must of necessity will one way or the other. — And thus, as soon as he presented to it outwardly, that which naturally irritated and offended it, then it was, that Pharaoh could not avoid becoming hardened; even as he could not avoid the action of the Divine Omnipotence, and the aversion or enmity of his own will.

Wherefore, the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart by God, is wrought thus: — God presents outwardly to his enmity, that which he naturally hates; and then, He ceases not to move within, by His omnipotent motion, the evil will which He there finds. He, from the enmity of his will, cannot but hate that which is contrary to him, and trust to his own powers; and that, so obstinately, that he can neither hear nor feel, but is carried away, in the possession of Satan, like a madman or a fury.

If I have brought these things home with convincing persuasion, the victory in this point is mine. And hav-

ing exploded the tropes and glosses of men, I understand the words of God simply; so that, there is no necessity for clearing God or accusing Him of iniquity. For when He saith, "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh," He speaks simply: as though He Should say, I will so work, that the heart of Pharaoh shall be hardened: or, by My operation and working, the heart of Pharaoh shall be hardened. And how this was to be done, we have heard: — that is, by My general motion, I will so move his very evil will, that he shall go on in his course and lust of willing, nor will I cease to move it, nor can I do otherwise. I will, nevertheless, present to him My word and work; against which, that evil impetus will run; for he, being evil, cannot but will evil while I move him by the power of My Omnipotence.

Thus God with the greatest certainty knew, and with the greatest certainty declared, that Pharaoh would be hardened; because, He with the greatest certainty knew, that the will of Pharaoh could neither resist the motion of His Omnipotence, nor put away its own enmity, nor receive its adversary Moses; and that, as that evil will still remained, he must, of necessity, become worse, more hardened, and more proud, while, by his course and impetus, trusting to his own powers, he ran against that which he would not receive, and which he despised.

Here therefore, you see, it is confirmed even by this very Scripture, that "Free-will" can do nothing but evil, while God, who is not deceived from ignorance nor lies from iniquity, so surely promises the hardening of Pharaoh; because, He was certain, that an evil will could will nothing but evil, and that, as the good which it hated was presented to it, it could not but wax worse and worse.

Sect. LXXXVIII. — IT now then remains, that perhaps some one may ask — Why then does not God cease from that motion of His Omnipotence, by which the will of the wicked is moved to go on in evil, and to become worse? I answer: this is to wish that God, for the sake of the wicked, would cease to be God; for this you really desire, when you desire His power and action to cease; that is, that He should cease to be good, lest the wicked should become worse.

Again, it may be asked — Why does He not then change, in His motion, those evil wills which He moves? This belongs to those secrets of Majesty, where "His judgments are past finding out." Nor is it ours to search into, but to adore these mysteries. If "flesh and blood" here take offence and murmur, let it murmur, but it will be just where it was before. God is not, on that account, changed! And if numbers of the wicked be offended and "go away," yet, the elect shall remain!

The same answer will be given to those who ask — Why did He permit Adam to fall? And why did He make all of us to be infected with the same sin, when He might have kept him, and might have created us from some other seed, or might first have cleansed that, before He created us from it? —

God is that Being, for whose will no cause or reason is to be assigned, as a rule or standard by which it acts; seeing that, nothing is superior or equal to it, but it is itself the rule of all things. For if it acted by any rule or standard, or from any cause or reason, it would be no longer the will of GOD. Wherefore, what God wills, is not therefore right, because He ought or ever was bound so to will; but on the contrary, what takes place is therefore right, because He so wills. A cause and reason are assigned for the will of the creature, but not for the will of the Creator; unless you set up, over Him, another Creator.

Sect. LXXXIX. — BY these arguments, I presume, the trope-inventing Diatribe, together with its trope, are sufficiently confuted. Let us, however, come to the text itself, for the purpose of seeing, what agreement there is between the text and the trope. For it is the way with all those who elude arguments by means of tropes, to hold the text itself in sovereign contempt, and to aim only, at picking out a certain term, and twisting and crucifying it upon the cross of their own opinion, without paying any regard whatever, either to circumstance, to consequence, to precedence, or to the intention or object of the author. Thus the Diatribe, in this passage, utterly disregarding the intention of Moses and the scope of his words, tears out of the text this term, "I will harden," and makes of it just what it will, according to its own lust: not at all considering, whether that can be again inserted so as to agree and square with the body of the text. And this is the reason why the Scripture was not sufficiently clear to those most received and most learned men of so many ages. And no wonder, for even the sun itself would not shine, if it should be assailed by such arts as these.

But (to say nothing about that, which I have already proved from the Scriptures, that Pharaoh cannot rightly be said to be hardened, 'because, being borne with by the long-suffering of God, he was not immediately punished,' seeing that, he was punished by so many plagues;) if hardening be 'bearing with divine long-suffering and not immediately punishing;' what need was there that God should so many times promise that He would then

harden the heart of Pharaoh when the signs should be wrought, who now, before those signs were wrought, and before that hardening, was such, that, being inflated with his success, prosperity and wealth, and being borne with by the divine long-suffering and not punished, inflicted so many evils on the children of Israel? You see, therefore, that this trope of yours makes not at all to the purpose in this passage; seeing that, it applies generally unto all, as sinning because they are borne with by the divine long-suffering. And thus, we shall be compelled to say, that all are hardened, seeing that, there is no one who does not sin; and that, no one sins, but he who is borne with by the divine long-suffering. Wherefore, this hardening of Pharaoh, is another hardening, independent of that general hardening as produced by the long-suffering of the divine goodness.

Sect. XC. — THE more immediate design of Moses then is, to announce, not so much the hardening of Pharaoh, as the veracity and mercy of God; that is, that the children of Israel might not distrust the promise of God, wherein He promised, that He would deliver them. (Ex. vi. 1). And since this was a matter of the greatest moment, He foretells them the difficulty, that they might not fall away from their faith; knowing, that all those things which were foretold must be accomplished in the order in which, He who had made the promise, had arranged them. As if He had said, I will deliver you, indeed, but you will with difficulty believe it; because, Pharaoh will so resist, and put off the deliverance. Nevertheless, believe ye; for the whole of his putting off shall, by My way of operation, only be the means of My working the more and greater miracles to your confirmation in faith, and to the display of My power; that henceforth, ye might the more steadily believe Me upon all other occasions.

In the same way does Christ also act, when, at the last supper, He promises His disciples a kingdom. He foretells them numberless difficulties, such as, His own death and their many tribulations; to the intent that, when it should come to pass, they might afterwards the more steadily believe.

And Moses by no means obscurely sets forth this meaning, where he saith, “But Pharaoh shall not send you away, that many wonders might be wrought in Egypt.” And again, “For this purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew in thee My power; that My name might be declared throughout all the earth.” (Ex. ix. 16; Rom. ix. 17). Here, you see that Pharaoh was for this purpose hardened, that he might resist God and put off the redemption; in order that, there might be an occasion given for the working of signs, and for the display of the power of God, that He might be declared and believed on throughout all the earth. And what is this but shewing, that all these things were said and done to confirm faith, and to comfort the weak, that they might afterwards freely believe in God as true, faithful, powerful, and merciful? Just as though He had spoken to them in the kindest manner, as to little children, and had said, Be not terrified at the hardness of Pharaoh, for I work that very hardness Myself; and I, who deliver you, have it in My own hand. I will only use it, that I may thereby work many signs, and declare My Majesty, for the furtherance of your faith.

And this is the reason why Moses generally after each plague repeats, “And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, so that he would not let the people go; as the Lord had spoken.” (Ex. vii. 13, 22; viii. 15, 32; ix. 12, etc.). What is the intent of this, “as the Lord had spoken,” but, that the Lord might appear true, who had foretold that he should be hardened? — Now, if there had been any vertibility or liberty of will in Pharaoh, which could turn either way, God could not with such certainty have foretold his hardening. But as He promised, who could neither be deceived nor lie, it of certainty and of necessity came to pass, that he was hardened: which could not have taken place, had not the hardening been totally apart from the power of man, and in the power of God alone, in the same manner as I said before; viz. from God being certain, that He should not omit the general operation of His Omnipotence in Pharaoh, or on Pharaoh’s account; nay, that He could not omit it.

Moreover, God was equally certain, that the will of Pharaoh; being naturally evil and averse, could not consent to the word and work of God, which was contrary to it, and that, therefore, while the impetus of willing was preserved in Pharaoh by the Omnipotence of God, and while the hated word and work was continually set before his eyes without, nothing else could take place in Pharaoh, but offence and the hardening of his heart. For if God had then omitted the action of His Omnipotence in Pharaoh, when He set before him the word of Moses which he hated, and the will of Pharaoh might be supposed to have acted alone by its own power, then, perhaps, there might have been room for a discussion, which way it had power to turn. But now, since it was led on and carried away by its own willing, no violence was done to its will, because it was not forced against its will, but was carried along, by the natural operation of God, to will naturally just as it was by nature, that is, evil; and therefore, it could not but run against the word, and thus become hardened. Hence we see, that this passage makes most forcibly against

“Freewill”; and in this way — God who promised could not lie, and if He could not lie, then Pharaoh could not but be hardened.

Sect. XCI. — BUT let us also look into Paul, who takes up this passage of Moses, Rom. ix. How miserably is the Diatribe tortured with that part of the Scripture! Lest it should lose its hold of “Freewill,” it puts on every shape. At one time it says, ‘that there is a necessity of the consequence, but not a necessity of the thing consequent.’ At another, ‘that there is an ordinary will, or will of the sign, which may be resisted; and a will of decree, which cannot be resisted.’ At another, ‘that those passages adduced from Paul do not contend for, do not speak about, the salvation of man.’ In one place it says ‘that the prescience of God does impose necessity:’ in another, ‘that it does not impose necessity.’ Again, in another place it asserts, ‘that grace prevents the will that it might will, and then attends it as it proceeds and brings it to a happy issue.’ Here it states, ‘that the first cause does all things itself:’ and directly afterwards, ‘that it acts by second causes, remaining itself inactive.’

By these and the like sportings with words, it does nothing but fill up its time, and at the same time obscure the subject point from our sight, drawing us aside to something else. So stupid and doltish does it imagine us to be, that it thinks we feel no more interested in the cause than it feels itself. Or, as little children, when fearing the rod or at play, cover their eyes with their hands, and think, that as they see nobody themselves, nobody sees them; so the Diatribe, not being able to endure the brightness, nay the lightning of the most clear Scriptures, pretending by every kind of maneuver that it does not see, (which is in truth the case) wishes to persuade us that our eyes are also so covered that we cannot see. But all these maneuvers, are but evidences of a convicted mind rashly struggling against invincible truth.

That figment about ‘the necessity of the consequence, but not the necessity of the thing consequent,’ has been before refuted. Let then Erasmus invent and invent again, cavil and cavil again, as much as he will — if God foreknew that Judas would be a traitor, Judas became a traitor of necessity; nor was it in the power of Judas nor of any other creature to alter it, or to change that will; though he did what he did willingly, not by compulsion; for that willing of his was his own work; which God, by the motion of His Omnipotence, moved on into action, as He does everything else. — God does not lie, nor is He deceived. This is a truth evident and invincible. There are no obscure or ambiguous words here, even though all the most learned men of all ages should be so blinded as to think and say to the contrary. How much soever, therefore, you may turn your back upon it, yet, the convicted conscience of yourself and all men is compelled to confess, that, IF GOD BE NOT DECEIVED IN THAT WHICH HE FOREKNOWS, THAT WHICH HE FOREKNOWS MUST, OF NECESSITY, TAKE PLACE. If it were not so, who could believe His promises, who would fear His threatenings, if what He promised or threatened did not of necessity take place! Or, how could He promise or threaten, if His prescience could be deceived or hindered by our mutability! This all-clear light of certain truth manifestly stops the mouths of all, puts an end to all questions, and forever settles the victory over all evasive subtleties.

We know, indeed, that the prescience of man is fallible. We know that an eclipse does not therefore take place, because it is foreknown; but, that it is therefore foreknown, because it is to take place. But what have we to do with this prescience? We are disputing about the prescience of God! And if you do not ascribe to this, the necessity of the consequent foreknown, you take away faith and the fear of God, you destroy the force of all the divine promises and threatenings, and thus deny divinity itself. But, however, the Diatribe itself, after having held out for a long time and tried all things, and being pressed hard by the force of truth, at last confesses my sentiment: saying —

Sect. XCII. — “THE question concerning the will and predestination of God, is somewhat difficult. For God wills those same things which He foreknows. And this is the substance of what Paul subjoins, “Who hath resisted His will,” if He have mercy on whom He will, and harden whom He will? For if there were a king who could effect whatever he chose, and no one could resist him, he would be said to do whatsoever he willed. So the will of God, as it is the principal cause of all things which take place, seems to impose a necessity on our will.” — Thus the Diatribe.

At last then I give thanks to God for a sound sentence in the Diatribe! Where now then is “Free-will”? — But again this slippery eel is twisted aside in a moment, saying,

— “But Paul does not explain this point, he only rebukes the disputer; “Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God!” (Rom. ix. 20.) —

O notable evasion! Is this the way to handle the Holy Scriptures, thus to make a declaration upon ones own

authority, and out of ones own brain, without a Scripture, without a miracle, nay, to corrupt the most clear words of God? What! does not Paul explain that point? What does he then? 'He only rebukes the disputer,' says the Diatribe. And is not that rebuke the most complete explanation? For what was inquired into by that question concerning the will of God? Was it not this — whether or not it imposed a necessity on our will? Paul, then, answers that it is thus: — "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (Rom. ix. 15-16, 18.). Moreover, not content with this explanation, he introduces those who murmur against this explanation in their defence of "Free-will," and prate that there is no merit allowed, that we are damned when the fault is not our own, and the like, and stops their murmuring and indignation: saying, "Thou wilt say then, Why doth He yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will?" (Rom. ix. 19.).

Do you not see that this is addressed to those, who, hearing that the will of God imposes necessity on us, say, "Why doth He yet find fault?" That is, Why does God thus insist, thus urge, thus exact, thus find fault? Why does He accuse, why does He reprove, as though we men could do what He requires if we would? He has no just cause for thus finding fault; let Him rather accuse His own will; let Him find fault with that; let Him press His requirement upon that; "For who hath resisted His will?" Who can obtain mercy if He wills not? Who can become softened if He wills to harden? It is not in our power to change His will, much less to resist it, where He wills us to be hardened; by that will, therefore, we are compelled to be hardened, whether we will or no.

If Paul had not explained this question, and had not stated to a certainty, that necessity is imposed on us by the prescience of God, what need was there for his introducing the murmurers and complainers saying, That His will cannot be resisted? For who would have murmured or been indignant, if he had not found necessity to be stated? Paul's words are not ambiguous where he speaks of resisting the will of God. Is there any thing ambiguous in what resisting is, or what His will is? Is it at all ambiguous concerning what he is speaking, when he speaks concerning the will of God? Let the myriads of the most approved doctors be blind; let them pretend, if they will, that the Scriptures are not quite clear, and that they tremble at a difficult question; we have words the most clear which plainly speak thus: "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth:" and also, "Thou wilt say to me then, Why doth He yet complain, for who hath resisted His will?"

The question, therefore, is not difficult; nay, nothing can be more plain to common sense, than that this conclusion is certain, stable, and true: — if it be pre-established from the Scriptures, that God neither errs nor is deceived; then, whatever God foreknows, must, of necessity, take place. It would be a difficult question indeed, nay, an impossibility, I confess, if you should attempt to establish, both the prescience of God, and the "Free-Will" of man. For what could be more difficult, nay a greater impossibility, than to attempt to prove, that contradictions do not clash; or that a number may, at the same time, be both nine and ten? There is no difficulty on our side of the question, but it is sought for and introduced, just as ambiguity and obscurity are sought for and violently introduced into the Scriptures.

The apostle, therefore, restrains the impious who are offended at these most clear words, by letting them know, that the divine will is accomplished, by necessity in us; and by letting them know also, that it is defined to a certainty, that they have nothing of liberty or "Free-will" left, but that all things depend upon the will of God alone. But he restrains them in this way: — by commanding them to be silent, and to revere the majesty of the divine power and will, over which we have no control, but which has over us a full control to do whatever it will. And yet it does us no injury, seeing that it is not indebted to us, it never received any thing from us, it never promised us any thing but what itself pleased and willed.

Sect. XCIII. — THIS, therefore, is not the place, this is not the time for adoring those Corycian caverns, but for adoring the true Majesty in its to-be-feared, wonderful, and incomprehensible judgments; and saying, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." (Matt. vi. 10). Whereas, we are no where more irreverent and rash, than in trespassing and arguing upon these very inscrutable mysteries and judgments. And while we are pretending to a great reverence in searching the Holy Scriptures, those which God has commanded to be searched, we search not; but those which He has forbidden us to search into, those we search into and none other; and that with an unceasing temerity, not to say, blasphemy.

For is it not searching with temerity, when we attempt to make the all-free prescience of God to harmonize with our freedom, prepared to derogate prescience from God, rather than lose our own liberty? Is it not temerity,

when He imposes necessity upon us, to say, with murmurings and blasphemies, “Why doth He yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will?” (Rom. ix. 19). Where is the God by nature most merciful? Where is He who “willeth not the death of a sinner?” Has He then created us for this purpose only, that He might delight Himself in the torments of men? And many things of the same kind, which will be howled forth by the damned in hell to all eternity.

But however, natural Reason herself is compelled to confess, that the living and true God must be such an one as, by His own liberty, to impose necessity on us. For He must be a ridiculous God, or idol rather, who did not, to a certainty, foreknow the future, or was liable to be deceived in events, when even the Gentiles ascribed to their gods ‘fate inevitable.’ And He would be equally ridiculous, if He could not do and did not all things, or if any thing could be done without Him. If then the prescience and omnipotence of God be granted, it naturally follows, as an irrefragable consequence that we neither were made by ourselves, nor live by ourselves, nor do any thing by ourselves, but by His Omnipotence. And since He at the first foreknew that we should be such, and since He has made us such, and moves and rules over us as such, how, I ask, can it be pretended, that there is any liberty in us to do, in any respect, otherwise than He at first foreknew and now proceeds in action!

Wherefore, the prescience and Omnipotence of God, are diametrically opposite to our “Free-will.” And it must be, that either God is deceived in His prescience and errs in His action, (which is impossible) or we act, and are acted upon, according to His prescience and action. — But by the Omnipotence of God, I mean, not that power by which He does not many things that He could do, but that actual power by which He powerfully works all in all, in which sense the Scripture calls Him Omnipotent. This Omnipotence and prescience of God, I say, utterly abolishes the doctrine of “Free-will.” No pretext can here be framed about the obscurity of the Scripture, or the difficulty of the subject-point: the words are most clear, and known to every school-boy; and the point is plain and easy and stands proved by judgment of common sense; so that the series of ages, of times, or of persons, either writing or teaching to the contrary, be it as great as it may, amounts to nothing at all.

De Servo Arbitrio “On the Enslaved Will” or The Bondage of Will

Sect. XCIV. — BUT it is this, that seems to give the greatest offence to common sense or natural reason, — that the God, who is set forth as being so full of mercy and goodness, should, of His mere will, leave men, harden them, and damn them, as though He delighted in the sins, and in the great and eternal torments of the miserable. To think thus of God, seems iniquitous, cruel, intolerable; and it is this that has given offence to so many and great men of so many ages.

And who would not be offended? I myself have been offended more than once, even unto the deepest abyss of desperation; nay, so far, as even to wish that I had never been born a man; that is, before I was brought to know how healthful that desperation was, and how near it was unto grace. Here it is, that there has been so much toiling and labouring, to excuse the goodness of God, and to accuse the will of man. Here it is, that distinctions have been invented between the ordinary will of God and the absolute will of God: between the necessity of the consequence, and the necessity of the thing consequent: and many other inventions of the same kind. By which, nothing has ever been effected but an imposition upon the un-learned, by vanities of words, and by “oppositions of science falsely so called.” For after all, a conscious conviction has been left deeply rooted in the heart both of the learned and the unlearned, if ever they have come to an experience of these things; and a knowledge, that our necessity, is a consequence that must follow upon the belief of the prescience and Omnipotence of God.

And even natural Reason herself, who is so offended at this necessity, and who invents so many contrivances to take it out of the way, is compelled to grant it upon her own conviction from her own judgment, even though there were no Scripture at all. For all men find these sentiments written in their hearts, and they acknowledge and approve them (though against their will) whenever they hear them treated on. — First, that God is Omnipotent, not only in power but in action (as I said before): and that, if it were not so, He would be a ridiculous God. — And next, that He knows and foreknows all things, and neither can err nor be deceived. These two points then being granted by the hearts and minds of all, they are at once compelled, from an inevitable consequence, to admit, — that we are not made from our own will, but from necessity: and moreover, that we do not what we will according to the law of “Free-will,” but as God foreknew and proceeds in action, according to His infallible and immutable counsel and power. Wherefore, it is found written alike in the hearts of all men, that there is no such thing as “Free-will”; though that writing be obscured by so many contending disputations, and by the great authority of so many men who have, through so many ages, taught otherwise. Even as every other law also, which, according to the testimony

of Paul, is written in our hearts, is then acknowledged when it is rightly set forth, and then obscured, when it is confused by wicked teachers, and drawn aside by other opinions.

Sect. XCV. — I NOW return to Paul. If he does not, Rom. ix., explain this point, nor clearly state our necessity from the prescience and will of God; what need was there for him to introduce the similitude of the “potter,” who, of the “same lump” of clay, makes “one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?” (Rom. ix. 21). What need was there for him to observe, that the thing formed does not say to him that formed it, “Why hast thou made me thus?” (20). He is there speaking of men; and he compares them to clay, and God to a potter. This similitude, therefore, stands coldly useless, nay, is introduced ridiculously and in vain, if it be not his sentiment, that we have no liberty whatever. Nay, the whole of the argument of Paul, wherein he defends grace, is in vain. For the design of the whole epistle is to shew, that we can do nothing, even when we seem to do well; as he in the same epistle testifies, where he says, that Israel which followed after righteousness, did not attain unto righteousness; but that the Gentiles which followed not after it did attain unto it. (Rom. ix. 30-31). Concerning which I shall speak more at large hereafter, when I produce my forces.

The fact is, the Diatribe designedly keeps back the body of Paul’s argument and its scope, and comfortably satisfies itself with prating upon a few detached and corrupted terms. Nor does the exhortation which Paul afterwards gives, Rom. xi., at all help the Diatribe; where he saith, “Thou standest by faith, be not high-minded;” (20), again, “and they also, if they shall believe, shall be grafted in, &c. (23);” for he says nothing there about the ability of man, but brings forth imperative and conditional expressions; and what effect they are intended to produce, has been fully shewn already. Moreover, Paul, there anticipating the boasters of “Free-will,” does not say, they can believe, but he saith, “God is able to graft them in again..” (23).

To be brief: The Diatribe moves along with so much hesitation, and so lingeringly, in handling these passages of Paul, that its conscience seems to give the lie to all that it writes. For just at the point where it ought to have gone on to the proof, it for the most part, stops short with a ‘But of this enough;’ ‘But I shall not now proceed with this;’ ‘But this is not my present purpose;’ ‘But here they should have said so and so;’ and many evasions of the same kind; and it leaves off the subject just in the middle; so that, you are left in uncertainty whether it wished to be understood as speaking on “Free-will,” or whether it was only evading the sense of Paul by means of vanities of words. And all this is being just in its character, as not having a serious thought upon the cause in which it is engaged. But as for me I dare not be thus cold, thus always on the tip-toe of policy, or thus move to and fro as a reed shaken with the wind. I must assert with certainty, with constancy, and with ardour; and prove what I assert solidly, appropriately, and fully.

Sect. XCVI. — AND now, how excellently does the Diatribe preserve liberty in harmony with necessity, where it says — “Nor does all necessity exclude “Free-will.” For instance: God the Father begets a son, of necessity; but yet, He begets him willingly and freely, seeing that, He is not forced.” —

Am I here, I pray you, disputing about compulsion and force? Have I not said in all my books again and again, that my dispute, on this subject, is about the necessity of immutability? I know that the Father begets willingly, and that Judas willingly betrayed Christ. But I say, this willing, in the person of Judas, was decreed to take place from immutability and certainty, if God foreknew it. Or, if men do not yet understand what I mean, — I make two necessities: the one a necessity of force, in reference to the act; the other a necessity of immutability in reference to the time. Let him, therefore, who wishes to hear what I have to say, understand, that I here speak of the latter, not of the former: that is, I do not dispute whether Judas became a traitor willingly or unwillingly, but whether or not it was decreed to come to pass, that Judas should will to betray Christ at a certain time infallibly predetermined of God!

But only listen to what the Diatribe says upon this point — “With reference to the immutable prescience of God, Judas was of necessity to become a traitor; nevertheless, Judas had it in his power to change his own will.” —

Dost thou understand, friend Diatribe, what thou sayest? (To say nothing of that which has been already proved, that the will cannot will any thing but evil.) How could Judas change his own will, if the immutable prescience of God stand granted! Could he change the prescience of God and render it fallible!

Here the Diatribe gives it up, and, leaving its standard, and throwing down its arms, runs from its post, and hands over the discussion to the subtleties of the schools concerning the necessity of the consequence and of the thing consequent: pretending — ‘that it does not wish to engage in the discussion of points so nice.’ —

A step of policy truly, friend Diatribe! — When you have brought the subject-point into the midst of the field,

and just when the champion-disputant was required, then you shew your back, and leave to others the business of answering and defining. But you should have taken this step at the first, and abstained from writing altogether. 'He who ne'er proved the training-field of arms, let him ne'er in the battle's brunt appear.' For it never was expected of Erasmus that he should remove that difficulty which lies in God's foreknowing all things, and our, nevertheless, doing all things by contingency: this difficulty existed in the world long before ever the Diatribe saw the light: but yet, it was expected that he should make some kind of answer, and give some kind of definition. Whereas he, by using a rhetorical transition, drags away us, knowing nothing of rhetoric, along with himself, as though we were here contending for a thing of nought, and were engaged in quibbling about insignificant niceties; and thus, nobly betakes himself out of the midst of the field, bearing the crowns both of the scholar and the conqueror.

But not so, brother! There is no rhetoric of sufficient force to cheat an honest conscience. The voice of conscience is proof against all powers and figures of eloquence. I cannot here suffer a rhetorician to pass on under the cloak of dissimulation. This is not a time for such maneuvering. This is that part of the discussion, where matters come to the turning point. Here is the hinge upon which the whole turns. Here, therefore, "Free-will" must be completely vanquished, or completely triumph. But here you, seeing your danger, nay, the certainty of the victory over "Free-will," pretend that you see nothing but argumentative niceties. Is this to act the part of a faithful theologian? Can you feel a serious interest in your cause, who thus leave your auditors in suspense, and your arguments in a state that confuses and exasperates them, while you, nevertheless, wish to appear to have given honest satisfaction and open explanation? This craft and cunning might, perhaps, be borne with in profane subjects, but in a theological subject, where simple and open truth is the object required, for the salvation of souls, it is utterly hateful and intolerable!

Sect. XCVII. — THE Sophists also felt the invincible and insupportable force of this argument, and therefore they invented the necessity of the consequence and of the thing consequent. But to what little purpose this figment is, I have shewn already. For they do not all the while observe, what they are saying, and what conclusions they are admitting against themselves. For if you grant the necessity of the consequence, "Free-will" lies vanquished and prostrate, nor does either the necessity, or the contingency of the thing consequent, profit it anything. What is it to me if "Free-will" be not compelled, but do what it does willingly? It is enough for me, that you grant, that it is of necessity, that it does willingly what it does; and that, it cannot do otherwise if God foreknew it would be so.

If God foreknew, either that Judas would be a traitor, or that he would change his willing to be a traitor, whichever of the two God foreknew, must, of necessity, take place, or God will be deceived in His prescience and prediction, which is impossible. This is the effect of the necessity of the consequence, that is, if God foreknows a thing, that thing must of necessity take place; that is, there is no such thing as "Free-will." This necessity of the consequence, therefore, is not 'obscure or ambiguous;' so that, even if the doctors of all ages were blinded, yet they must admit it, because it is so manifest and plain, as to be actually palpable. And as to the necessity of the thing consequent, with which they comfort themselves, that is a mere phantom, and is in diametrical opposition to the necessity of the consequence.

For example: The necessity of the consequence is, (so to set it forth,) God foreknows that Judas will be a traitor — therefore it will certainly and infallibly come to pass, that Judas shall be a traitor. Against this necessity of the consequence, you comfort yourself thus: — But since Judas can change his willing to betray, therefore, there is no necessity of the thing consequent. How, I ask you, will these two positions harmonize, Judas is able to will not to betray, and, Judas must of necessity will to betray? Do not these two directly contradict and militate against each other? But he will not be compelled, you say, to betray against his will. What is that to the purpose? You were speaking of the necessity of the thing consequent; and saying, that that need not, of necessity, follow, from the necessity of the consequence; you were not speaking of the compulsive necessity of the thing consequent. The question was, concerning the necessity of the thing consequent, and you produce an example concerning the compulsive necessity of the thing consequent. I ask one thing, and you answer another. But this arises from that yawning sleepiness, under which you do not observe, what nothingness that figment amounts to, concerning the necessity of the thing consequent.

Suffice it to have spoken thus to the former part of this SECOND PART, which has been concerning the hardening of Pharaoh, and which involves, indeed, all the Scriptures, and all our forces, and those invincible. Now let us proceed to the remaining part concerning Jacob and Esau, who are spoken of as being "not yet born." (Rom. ix. 11)

Sect. XCVIII. — THIS place the Diatribe evades by saying — ‘that it does not properly pertain to the salvation of man. For God (it says) may will that a man shall be a servant, or a poor man; and yet, not reject him from eternal salvation.’ —

Only observe, I pray you, how many evasions and ways of escape a slippery mind will invent, which would flee from the truth, and yet cannot get away from it after all. Be it so, that this passage does not pertain to the salvation of man, (to which point I shall speak hereafter), are we to suppose, then, that Paul who adduces it, does so, for no purpose whatever? Shall we make Paul to be ridiculous, or a vain trifler, in a discussion so serious?

But all this breathes nothing but Jerome, who dares to say, in more places than one, with a supercilious brow and a sacrilegious mouth, ‘that those things are made to be of force in Paul, which, in their own places, are of no force.’ This is no less than saying, that Paul, where he lays the foundation of the Christian doctrine, does nothing but corrupt the Holy Scriptures, and delude believing souls with sentiments hatched out of his own brain, and violently thrust into the Scriptures. — Is this honouring the Holy Spirit in Paul, that sanctified and elect instrument of God! Thus, when Jerome ought to be read with judgment, and this saying of his to be numbered among those many things which that man impiously wrote, (such was his yawning inconsiderateness, and his stupidity in understanding the Scriptures), the Diatribe drags him in without any judgment; and not thinking it right, that his authority should be lessened by any mitigating gloss whatever, takes him as a most certain oracle, whereby to judge of, and attemper the Scriptures. And thus it is; we take the impious sayings of men as rules and guides in the Holy Scripture, and then wonder that it should become ‘obscure and ambiguous;’ and that so many fathers should be blind in it; whereas, the whole proceeds from this impious and sacrilegious Reason.

Sect. XCIX. — LET him, then, be anathema who shall say, ‘that those things which are of no force in their own places are made to be of force in Paul.’ This, however, is only said, it is not proved. And it is said by those, who understand neither Paul, nor the passages adduced by him, but are deceived by terms; that is, by their own impious interpretations of them. And if it be allowed that this passage, Gen. xxv. 21-23 is to be understood in a temporal sense (which is not the true sense) yet it is rightly and effectually adduced by Paul, when he proves from it, that it was not of the “merits” of Jacob and Esau, “but of Him that calleth,” that it was said unto Rebecca, “the elder shall serve the younger.” (Rom. ix. 11-16).

Paul is argumentatively considering, whether or not they attained unto that which was said of them, by the power or merits of “Free-will”; and he proves, that they did not; but that Jacob attained unto that, unto which Esau attained not, solely by the grace “of Him that calleth.” And he proves that, by the incontrovertible words of the Scripture: that is, that they were “not yet born:” and also, that they had “done neither good nor evil.” This proof contains the weighty sum of his whole subject point: and by the same proof, our subject point is settled also.

The Diatribe, however, having dissemblingly passed over all these particulars, with an excellent rhetorical fetch, does not here argue at all upon merit, (which, nevertheless, it undertook to do, and which this subject point of Paul requires), but cavils about temporal bondage, as though that were at all to the purpose; — but it is merely that it might not seem to be overthrown by the all-forcible words of Paul. For what had it, which it could yelp against Paul in support of “Free-will”? What did “Free-will” do for Jacob, or what did it do against Esau, when it was already determined, by the prescience and predestination of God, before either of them was born, what should be the portion of each; that is, that the one should serve, and the other rule? Thus the rewards were decreed, before the workmen wrought, or were born. It is to this that the Diatribe ought to have answered. Paul contends for this: — that neither had done either good or evil: and yet, that by the divine sentence, the one was decreed to be servant, the other lord. The question here, is not, whether that servitude pertained unto salvation, but from what merit it was imposed on him who had not deserved it. But it is wearisome to contend with these depraved attempts to pervert and evade the Scripture.

Sect. C. — BUT however, that Moses does not intend their servitude only, and that Paul is perfectly right, in understanding it concerning eternal salvation, is manifest from the text itself. And although this is somewhat wide of our present purpose, yet I will not suffer Paul to be contaminated with the calumnies of the sacrilegious. The oracle in Moses is thus — “Two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels, and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” (Gen. xxv. 23).

Here, manifestly, are two people distinctly mentioned. The one, though the younger, is received into the grace of God; to the intent that, he might overcome the other; not by his own strength, indeed, but by a favouring God:

for how could the younger overcome the elder unless God were with him!

Since, therefore, the younger was to be the people of God, it is not only the external rule or servitude which is there spoken of, but all that pertains to the spirit of God; that is, the blessing, the word, the Spirit, the promise of Christ, and the everlasting kingdom. And this the Scripture more fully confirms afterwards, where it describes Jacob as being blessed, and receiving the promises and the kingdom.

All this Paul briefly intimates, where he saith, “The elder shall serve the younger:” and he sends us to Moses, who treats upon the particulars more fully. So that you may say, in reply to the sacrilegious sentiment of Jerome and the Diatribe, that these passages which Paul adduces have more force in their own place than they have in his Epistle. And this is true also, not of Paul only, but of all the Apostles; who adduce Scriptures as testimonies and assertions of their own sentiments. But it would be ridiculous to adduce that as a testimony, which testifies nothing, and does not make at all to the purpose. And even if there were some among the philosophers so ridiculous as to prove that which was unknown, by that which was less known still, or by that which was totally irrelevant to the subject, with what face can we attribute such kind of proceeding to the greatest champions and authors of the Christian doctrines, especially, since they teach those things which are the essential articles of faith, and on which the salvation of souls depends? But such a face becomes those who, in the Holy Scriptures, feel no serious interest whatever.

Sect. CI. — AND with respect to that of Malachi which Paul annexes, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated;” (Mal. i. 2-3). that, the Diatribe perverts by a threefold contrivance. The first is — “If (it says) you stick to the letter, God does not love as we love, nor does He hate any one: because, passions of this kind do not pertain unto God.” —

What do I hear! Are we now inquiring whether or not God loves and hates, and not rather why He loves and hates? Our inquiry is, from what merit it is in us that He loves or hates. We know well enough, that God does not love or hate as we do; because, we love and hate mutably, but He loves and hates from an eternal and immutable nature; and hence it is, that accidents and passions do not pertain unto Him.

And it is this very state of the truth, that of necessity proves “Free-will” to be nothing at all; seeing that, the love and hatred of God towards men is immutable and eternal; existing, not only before there was any merit or work of “Free-will,” but before the worlds were made; and that, all things take place in us from necessity, accordingly as He loved or loved not from all eternity. So that, not the love of God only, but even the manner of His love imposes on us necessity. Here then it may be seen, how much its invented ways of escape profit the Diatribe; for the more it attempts to get away from the truth, the more it runs upon it; with so little success does it fight against it!

But be it so, that your trope stands good — that the love of God is the effect of love, and the hatred of God the effect of hatred. Does, then, that effect take place without, and independent of, the will of God? Will you here say also, that God does not will as we do, and that the passion of willing does not pertain to Him? If then those effects take place, they do not take place but according to the will of God. Hence, therefore, what God wills, that He loves and hates. Now then, tell me, for what merit did God love Jacob or hate Esau, before they wrought, or were born? Wherefore it stands manifest, that Paul most rightly adduces Malachi in support of the passage from Moses: that is, that God therefore called Jacob before he was born, because He loved him; but that He was not first loved by Jacob, nor moved to love him from any merit in him. So that, in the cases of Jacob and Esau, it is shewn — what ability there is in our “Free-will”!

Sect. CII. — THE second contrivance is this: — ‘that Malachi does not seem to speak of that hatred by which we are damned to all eternity, but of temporal affliction: seeing that, those are reproved who wished to destroy Edom.’ —

This, again, is advanced in contempt of Paul, as though he had done violence to the Scriptures. Thus, we hold in no reverence whatever, the majesty of the Holy Spirit, and only aim at establishing our own sentiments. But let us bear with this contempt for a moment, and see what it effects. Malachi, then, speaks of temporal affliction. And what if he do? What is that to your purpose? Paul proves out of Malachi, that that affliction was laid on Esau without any desert, by the hatred of God only: and this he does, that he might thence conclude, that there is no such thing as “Free-will.” This is the point that makes against you, and it is to this you ought to have answered. I am arguing about merit, and you are all the while talking about reward; and yet, you so talk about it, as not to evade that which you wish to evade; nay, in your very talking about reward, you acknowledge merit; and yet, pretend you

do not see it. Tell me, then, what moved God to love Jacob, and to hate Esau, even before they were born?

But however, the assertion, that Malachi is speaking of temporal affliction only, is false: nor is he speaking of the destroying of Edom: you entirely pervert the sense of the prophet by this contrivance. The prophet shews what he means, in words the most clear. — He upbraids the Israelites with ingratitude: because, after God had loved them, they did not, in return, either love Him as their Father, or fear Him as their Lord. (Mal. i. 6.).

That God had loved them, he proves, both by the Scriptures, and by facts: viz. in this: — that although Jacob and Esau were brothers, as Moses records Gen. xxv. 21-28, yet He loved Jacob and chose him before he was born, as we have heard from Paul already; but that, He so hated Esau, that He removed away his dwelling into the desert; that moreover, he so continued and pursued that hatred, that when He brought back Jacob from captivity and restored him, He would not suffer the Edomites to be restored; and that, even if they at any time said they wished to build, He threatened them with destruction. If this be not the plain meaning of the prophet's text, let the whole world prove me a liar. — Therefore the temerity of the Edomites is not here reprov'd, but, as I said before, the ingratitude of the sons of Jacob; who do not see what God has done, for them, and against their brethren the Edomites; and for no other reason, than because, He hated the one, and loved the other.

How then will your assertion stand good, that the prophet is here speaking of temporal affliction, when he testifies, in the plainest words, that he is speaking of the two people as proceeding from the two patriarchs, the one received to be a people and saved, and the other left and at last destroyed? To be received as a people, and not to be received as a people, does not pertain to temporal good and evil only, but unto all things. For our God is not the God of temporal things only, but of all things. Nor does God will to be thy God so as to be worshipped with one shoulder, or with a lame foot, but with all thy might, and with all thy heart, that He may be thy God as well here, as hereafter, in all things, times, and works.

Sect. CIII. — THE third contrivance is — ‘that, according to the trope interpretation of the passage, God neither loves all the Gentiles, nor hates all the Jews; but, out of each people, some. And that, by this use of the trope, the Scripture testimony in question, does not at all go to prove necessity, but to beat down the arrogance of the Jews.’ — The Diatribe having opened this way of escape, then comes to this — ‘that God is said to hate men before they are born, because, He foreknows that they will do that which will merit hatred: and that thus, the hatred and love of God do not at all militate against “Free-will” — And at last, it draws this conclusion — ‘that the Jews were cut off from the olive tree on account of the merit of unbelief, and the Gentiles grafted in on account of the merit of faith, according to the authority of Paul; and that, a trope is held out to those who are cut off, of being grafted in again, and a warning given to those who are grafted in, that they fall not off.’ —

May I perish if the Diatribe itself knows what it is talking about. But, perhaps, this is also a rhetorical fetch; which teaches you, when any danger seems to be at hand, always to render your sense obscure, lest you should be taken in your own words. I, for my part, can see no place whatever in this passage for those trope-interpretations, of which the Diatribe dreams, but which it cannot establish by proof. Therefore, it is no wonder that this testimony does not make against it, in the trope-interpreted sense, because, it has no such sense.

Moreover, we are not disputing about cutting off and grafting in, of which Paul here speaks in his exhortations. I know that men are grafted in by faith, and cut off by unbelief; and that they are to be exhorted to believe that they be not cut off. But it does not follow, nor is it proved from this, that they can believe or fall away by the power of “Free-will,” which is now the point in question. We are not disputing about, who are the believing and who are not; who are Jews and who are Gentiles; and what is the consequence of believing and falling away; that pertains unto exhortation. Our point in dispute is, by what merit or work they attain unto that faith by which they are grafted in, or unto that unbelief by which they are cut off. This is the point that belongs to you as the teacher of “Free-will.” And pray, describe to me this merit.

Paul teaches us, that this comes to them by no work of theirs, but only according to the love or the hatred of God: and when it is come to them, he exhorts them to persevere, that they be not cut off. But this exhortation does not prove what we can do, but what we ought to do.

I am compelled thus to hedge in my adversary with many words, lest he should slip away from, and leave the subject point, and take up any thing but that: and in fact, to hold him thus to the point, is to vanquish him. For all that he aims at, is to slide away from the point, withdraw himself out of sight, and take up any thing but that, which he first laid down as his subject design.

De Servo Arbitrio “On the Enslaved Will” or The Bondage of Will

Sect. CIV. — THE next passage which the Diatribe takes up is that of Isaiah xlv. 9, “Shall the clay say to Him that fashioneth it, what makest Thou?” And that of Jeremiah xviii. 6, “Behold as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in Mine hand.” Here the Diatribe says again — “these passages are made to have more force in Paul, than they have in the places of the prophets from which they are taken; because, in the prophets they speak of temporal affliction, but Paul uses them, with reference to eternal election and reprobation.” — So that, here again, temerity or ignorance in Paul, is insinuated.

But before we see how the Diatribe proves, that neither of these passages excludes “Free-will,” I will make this remark: — that Paul does not appear to have taken this passage out of the Scriptures, nor does the Diatribe prove that he has. For Paul usually mentions the name of his author, or declares that he has taken a certain part from the Scriptures; whereas, here, he does neither. It is most probable, therefore, that Paul uses this general similitude according to his spirit in support of his own cause, as others have used it in support of theirs. It is in the same way that he uses this similitude. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” which, 1 Cor. v. 6, he uses to represent corrupt morals: and applies it in another place (Gal. v. 9) to those who corrupt the Word of God: so Christ also speaks of the “leaven of Herod” and “of the Pharisees.” (Mark viii. 15; Matt. xvi. 6).

Supposing, therefore, that the prophets use this similitude, when speaking more particularly of temporal punishment; (upon which I shall not now dwell, lest I should be too much occupied about irrelevant questions, and kept away from the subject point,) yet Paul uses it, in his spirit, against “Free-will.” And as to saying that the liberty of the will is not destroyed by our being as clay in the hand of an afflicting God, I know not what it means, nor why the Diatribe contends for such a point: for, without doubt, afflictions come upon us from God against our will, and impose upon us the necessity of bearing them, whether we will or no: nor is it in our power to avert them: though we are exhorted to bear them with a willing mind.

Sect. CV. — BUT it is worth while to hear the Diatribe make out, how it is that the argument of Paul does not exclude “Free-will” by that similitude: for it brings forward two absurd objections: the one taken from the Scriptures, the other from Reason. From the Scriptures it collects this objection.

— When Paul, 2 Tim. ii. 20, had said, that “in a great house there are vessels of gold and silver, wood and earth, some to honour and some to dishonour,” he immediately adds, “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, &c.” (21.) — Then the Diatribe goes on to argue thus: — “What could be more ridiculous than for any one to say to an earthen chamber-convenience, If thou shalt purify thyself, thou shalt be a vessel unto honour? But this would be rightly said to a rational earthen vessel, which can, when admonished, form itself according to the will of the Lord.” — By these observations it means to say, that the similitude is not in all respects applicable, and is so mistaken, that it effects nothing at all.

I answer: (not to cavil upon this point:) — that Paul does not say, if any one shall purify himself from his own filth, but “from these;” that is, from the vessels unto dishonour: so that the sense is, if any one shall remain separate, and shall not mingle himself with wicked teachers, he shall be a vessel unto honour. Let us grant also that this passage of Paul makes for the Diatribe just as it wishes: that is, that the similitude is not effective. But how will it prove, that Paul is here speaking on the same subject as he is in Rom. ix. 11-23, which is the passage in dispute? Is it enough to cite a different passage without at all regarding whether it have the same or a different tendency? There is not (as I have often shewn) a more easy or more frequent fall in the Scriptures, than the bringing together different Scripture passages as being of the same meaning. Hence, the similitude in those passages, of which the Diatribe boasts, makes less to its purpose than our similitude which it would refute.

But (not to be contentious), let us grant, that each passage of Paul is of the same tendency; and that a similitude does not always apply in all respects; (which is without controversy true; for otherwise, it would not be a similitude, nor a translation, but the thing itself; according to the proverb, ‘A similitude halts, and does not always go upon four feet;’) yet the Diatribe errs and transgresses in this: — neglecting the scope of the similitude, which is to be most particularly observed, it contentiously catches at certain words of it: whereas, ‘the knowledge of what is said, (as Hilary observes,) is to be gained from the scope of what is said, not from certain detached words only.’ Thus, the efficacy of a similitude depends upon the cause of the similitude. Why then does the Diatribe disregard that, for the purpose of which Paul uses this similitude, and catch at that, which he says is unconnected with the purport of the similitude? That is to say, it is an exhortation where he saith, “If a man purge himself from these;”

but a point of doctrine where he saith, "In a great house, there are vessels of gold, &c." So that, from all the circumstances of the words and mind of Paul, you may understand that he is establishing the doctrine concerning the diversity and use of vessels.

The sense, therefore, is this: — seeing that so many depart from the faith, there is no comfort for us but the being certain that "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And let every one that calleth upon the name of the Lord depart from evil." (2 Tim. ii. 19). This then is the cause and efficacy of the similitude — that God knows His own! Then follows the similitude — that there are different vessels, some to honour and some to dishonour. By this it is proved at once, that the vessels do not prepare themselves, but that the Master prepares them. And this is what Paul means, where he saith, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, &c." (Rom. ix. 21). Thus, the similitude of Paul stands most effective: and that to prove, that there is no such thing as "Free-will" in the sight of God.

After this, follows the exhortation: "If a man purify himself from these," &c. and for what purpose this is, may be clearly collected from what we have said already. It does not follow from this, that the man can purify himself. Nay, if any thing be proved hereby it is this: — that "Free-will" can purify itself without grace. For he does not say, if grace purify a man; but, "if a man purify himself." But concerning imperative and conditional passages, we have said enough. Moreover, the similitude is not set forth in conditional, but in indicative verbs — that the elect and the reprobate, are as vessels of honour and of dishonour. In a word, if this fetch stand good, the whole argument of Paul comes to nothing. For in vain does he introduce vessels murmuring against God as the potter, if the fault plainly appear to be in the vessel, and not in the potter. For who would murmur at hearing him damned, who merited damnation!

Sect. CVI. — THE other absurd objection, the Diatribe gathers from Madam Reason; who is called, Human Reason — that the fault is not to be laid on the vessel, but on the potter: especially, since He is such a potter, who creates the clay as well as attempers it. — "Whereas, (says the Diatribe) here the vessel is cast into eternal fire, which merited nothing: except that it had no power of its own." —

In no one place does the Diatribe more openly betray itself, than in this. For it is here heard to say, in other words indeed, but in the same meaning, that which Paul makes the impious to say, "Why doth He yet complain? for who hath resisted His will?" (Rom. ix. 19). This is that which Reason cannot receive, and cannot bear. This is that, which has offended so many men renowned for talent, who have been received through so many ages. Here they require, that God should act according to human laws, and do what seems right unto men, or cease to be God! 'His secrets of Majesty, say they, do not better His character in our estimation. Let Him render a reason why He is God, or why He wills and does that, which has no appearance of justice in it. It is as if one should ask a cobbler or a collar-maker to take the seat of judgment.'

Thus, flesh does not think God worthy of so great glory, that it should believe Him to be just and good, while He says and does those things which are above that, which the volume of Justin and the fifth book of Aristotle's Ethics, have defined to be justice. That Majesty which is the Creating Cause of all things, must bow to one of the dregs of His creation: and that Corycian cavern must, vice versa, fear its spectators. It is absurd that He should condemn him; who cannot avoid the merit of damnation. And, on account of this absurdity, it must be false, that "God has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and hardens whom He will." (Rom. ix. 18). He must be brought to order. He must have certain laws prescribed to Him, that he damn not any one but him, who, according to our judgment, deserves to be damned.

And thus, an effectual answer is given to Paul and his similitude. He must recall it, and allow it to be utterly ineffective: and must so attemper it, that this potter (according to the Diatribe's interpretation) make the vessel to dishonour from merit preceding: in the same manner in which He rejected some Jews on account of unbelief, and received Gentiles on account of faith. But if God work thus, and have respect unto merit, why do those impious ones murmur and expostulate? Why do they say, "Why doth He find fault? for who hath resisted His will?" (Rom. ix. 19). And what need was there for Paul to restrain them? For who wonders even, much less is indignant and expostulates, when any one is damned who merited damnation? Moreover where remains the power of the potter to make what vessel He will, if, being subject to merit and laws, He is not permitted to make what He will, but is required to make what He ought? The respect of merit militates against the power and liberty of making what He will: as is proved by that "good man of the house," who, when the workmen murmured and expostulated

concerning their right, objected in answer, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?” — These are the arguments, which will not permit the gloss of the Diatribe to be of any avail.

Sect. CVII. — BUT let us, I pray you, suppose that God ought to be such an one, who should have respect unto merit in those who are to be damned. Must we not, in like manner; also require and grant, that He ought to have respect unto merit in those who are to be saved? For if we are to follow Reason, it is equally unjust, that the undeserving should be crowned, as that the undeserving should be damned. We will conclude, therefore, that God ought to justify from merit preceding, or we will declare Him to be unjust, as being one who delights in evil and wicked men, and who invites and crowns their impiety by rewards. — And then, woe unto you, sensibly miserable sinners, under that God! For who among you can be saved!

Behold, therefore, the iniquity of the human heart! When God saves the undeserving without merit, nay, justifies the impious with all their demerit, it does not accuse Him of iniquity, it does not expostulate with Him why He does it, although it is, in its own judgment, most iniquitous; but because it is to its own profit, and plausible, it considers it just and good. But when He damns the undeserving, this, because it is not to its own profit, is iniquitous; this is intolerable; here it expostulates, here it murmurs, here it blasphemes!

You see, therefore, that the Diatribe, together with its friends, do not, in this cause, judge according to equity, but according to the feeling sense of their own profit. For, if they regarded equity, they would expostulate with God when He crowned the undeserving, as they expostulate with Him when He damns the undeserving. And also, they would equally praise and proclaim God when He damns the undeserving, as they do when He saves the undeserving; for the iniquity in either instance is the same, if our own opinion be regarded: — unless they mean to say, that the iniquity is not equal, whether you laud Cain for his fratricide and make him a king, or cast the innocent Abel into prison and murder him!

Since, therefore, Reason praises God when He saves the undeserving, but accuses Him when He damns the undeserving; it stands convicted of not praising God as God, but as a certain one who serves its own profit; that is, it seeks, in God, itself and the things of itself, but seeks not God and the things of God. But if it be pleased with a God who crowns the undeserving, it ought not to be displeased with a God who damns the undeserving. For if He be just in the one instance, how shall He not be just in the other? seeing that, in the one instance, He pours forth grace and mercy upon the undeserving, and in the other, pours forth wrath and severity upon the undeserving? — He is, however, in both instances, monstrous and iniquitous in the sight of men; yet just and true in Himself. But, how it is just, that He should crown the undeserving, is incomprehensible now, but we shall see when we come there, where it will be no longer believed, but seen in revelation face to face. So also, how it is just, that He should damn the undeserving, is incomprehensible now, yet, we believe it, until the Son of Man shall be revealed!

Sect. CVIII. — THE Diatribe, however, being itself bitterly offended at this similitude of the “potter” and the “clay,” is not a little indignant, that it should be so pestered with it. And at last it comes to this. Having collected together different passages of Scripture, some of which seem to attribute all to man, and others all to grace, it angrily contends — ‘that the Scriptures on both sides should be understood according to a sound interpretation, and not received simply as they stand: and that, otherwise, if we still so press upon it that similitude, it is prepared to press upon us, in retaliation, those subjunctive and conditional passages; and especially, that of Paul, “If a man purify himself from these.” This passage (it says) makes Paul to contradict himself, and to attribute all to man, unless a sound interpretation be brought in to make it clear. And if an interpretation be admitted here, in order to clear up the cause of grace, why should not an interpretation be admitted in the similitude of the potter also, to clear up the cause of “Free-will?” —

I answer: It matters not with me, whether you receive the passages in a simple sense, a twofold sense, or a hundred-fold sense. What I say is this: that by this sound interpretation of yours, nothing that you desire is either effected or proved. For that which is required to be proved, according to your design is, that “Free-will” cannot will good. Whereas, by this passage, “If a man purify himself from these,” as it is a conditional sentence, neither any thing nor nothing is proved, for it is only an exhortation of Paul. Or, if you add the conclusion of the Diatribe, and say, ‘the exhortation is in vain, if a man cannot purify himself;’ then it proves, that “Free-will” can do all things without grace. And thus the Diatribe explodes itself.

We are waiting, therefore, for some passage of the Scripture, to shew us that this interpretation is right; we give no credit to those who hatch it out of their own brain. For, we deny, that any passage can be found which attributes

all to man. We deny that Paul contradicts himself, where he says, "If a man shall purify himself from these." And we aver, that both the contradiction and the interpretation which exhorts it, are fictions; that they are both thought of, but neither of them proved. This, indeed, we confess, that, if we were permitted to augment the Scriptures by the conclusions and additions of the Diatribe, and to say, 'if we are not able to perform the things which are commanded, the precepts are given in vain;' then, in truth, Paul would militate against himself, as would the whole Scripture also: for then, the Scripture would be different from what it was before, and would prove that "Free-will" can do all things. What wonder, however, if he should then contradict himself again, where he saith, in another place, that "God worketh all in all!" (1 Cor. xii. 6).

But, however, the Scripture in question, thus augmented, makes not only against us, but against the Diatribe itself, which defined "Free-will" to be that, 'which cannot will any thing good.' Let, therefore, the Diatribe clear itself first, and say, how these two assertions agree with Paul: — 'Free-will cannot will any thing good,' and also, 'If a man purify himself from these: therefore, man can purify himself, or it is said in vain.' — You see, therefore, that the Diatribe, being entangled and overcome by that similitude of the potter, only aims at evading it; not at all considering in the meantime, how its interpretation militates against its subject point, and how it is refuting and laughing at itself.

Sect. CIX. — BUT as to myself, as I said before, I never aimed at any kind of invented interpretation. Nor did I ever speak thus: 'Stretch forth thine hand; that is, grace shall stretch it forth.' All these things, are the Diatribe's own inventions Concerning me, to the furtherance of its own cause. What I said was this: — that there is no contradiction in the words of the Scripture, nor any need of an invented interpretation to clear up a difficulty. But that the assertors of "Free-will" willfully stumbled upon plain ground, and dream of contradictions where there are none.

For example: There is no contradiction in these Scriptures, "If a man purify himself;" and, "God worketh all in all." Nor is it necessary to say, in order to explain this difficulty, God does something and man does something. Because, the former Scripture is conditional, which neither affirms or denies any work or power in man, but simply shews what work or power there ought to be in man. There is nothing figurative here; nothing that requires an invented interpretation; the words are plain, the sense is plain; that is, if you do not add conclusions and corruptions, after the manner of the Diatribe: for then, the sense would not be plain: not, however, by its own fault, but by the fault of the corruptor.

But the latter Scripture, "God worketh all in all," (1 Cor. xii. 6), is an indicative passage; declaring, that all works and all power are of God. How then do these two passages, the one of which says nothing of the power of man, and the other of which attributes all to God, contradict each other, and not rather sweetly harmonize. But the Diatribe is so drowned, suffocated in, and corrupted with, that sense of the carnal interpretation, 'that impossibilities are commanded in vain,' that it has no power over itself; but as soon as it hears an imperative or conditional word, it immediately tacks to it its indicative conclusions: — a certain thing is commanded: therefore, we are able to do it, and do do it, or the command is ridiculous.

On this side it bursts forth and boasts of its complete victory: as though it held it as a settled point, that these conclusions, as soon as hatched in thought, were established as firmly as the Divine Authority. And hence, it pronounces with all confidence, that in some places of the Scripture all is attributed to man: and that, therefore, there is a contradiction that requires interpretation. But it does not see, that all this is the figment of its own brain, no where confirmed by one iota of Scripture. And not only so, but that it is of such a nature, that if it were admitted, it would confute no one more directly than itself: because, if it proved any thing, it would prove that "Free-will" can do all things: whereas, it undertook to prove the directly contrary.

Sect. CX. — IN the same way also it so continually repeats this: — "If man do nothing, there is no place for merit, and where there is no place for merit, there can be no place either for punishment or for reward." —

Here again, it does not see, that by these carnal arguments, it refutes itself more directly than it refutes us. For what do these conclusions prove, but that all merit is in the power of "Free-will?" And then, where is any room for grace? Moreover, supposing "Free-will" to merit a certain little, and grace the rest, why does "Free-will" receive the whole reward? Or, shall we suppose it to receive but a certain small portion of reward? Then, if there be a place for merit, in order that there might be a place for reward, the merit must be as great as the reward.

But why do I thus lose both words and time upon a thing of nought? For, even supposing the whole were established at which the Diatribe is aiming, and that merit is partly the work of man, and partly the work of God; yet

it cannot define that work itself, what it is, of what kind it is, or how far it is to extend; therefore, its disputation is about nothing at all. Since, therefore, it cannot prove any one thing which it asserts, nor establish its interpretation nor contradiction, nor bring forward a passage that attributes all to man; and since all are the phantoms of its own cogitation, Paul's similitude of the "potter" and the "clay," stands unshaken and invincible — that it is not according to our "Free-will," what kind of vessels we are made. And as to the exhortations of Paul, "If a man purify himself from these," and the like, they are certain models, according to which, we ought to be formed; but they are not proofs of our working power, or of our desire. Suffice it to have spoken thus upon these points, the HARDENING OF PHARAOH, the CASE OF ESAU, and the SIMILITUDE OF THE POTTER.

De Servo Arbitrio "On the Enslaved Will" or The Bondage of Will

Sect. CXI. — THE Diatribe at length comes to THE PASSAGES CITED BY LUTHER AGAINST "FREE-WILL," WITH THE INTENT TO REFUTE THEM.

The first passage, is that of Gen. vi. 3, "My Spirit shall not always remain in man; seeing that he is flesh." This passage it confutes, variously. First, it says, 'that flesh, here, does not signify vile affection, but infirmity.' Then it augments the text of Moses, 'that this saying of his, refers to the men of that age, and not to the whole race of men: as if he had said, in these men.' And moreover, 'that it does not refer to all the men, even of that age; because, Noah was excepted,' And at last it says, 'that this word has, in the Hebrew, another signification; that it signifies the mercy, and not the severity, of God; according to the authority of Jerome.' By this it would, perhaps, persuade us, that since that saying did not apply to Noah but to the wicked, it was not the mercy, but the severity of God that was shewn to Noah, and the mercy, not the severity of God that was shewn to the wicked.

But let us away with these ridiculing vanities of the Diatribe: for there is nothing which it advances, which does not evince that it looks upon the Scriptures as mere fables. What Jerome here triflingly talks about, is nothing at all to me; for it is certain that he cannot prove any thing that he says. Nor is our dispute concerning the sense of Jerome, but concerning the sense of the Scripture. Let that perverter of the Scriptures attempt to make it appear, that the Spirit of God signifies indignation. — I say, that he is deficient in both parts of the necessary two-fold proof. First, he cannot produce one passage of the Scripture, in which the Spirit of God is understood as signifying indignation: for, on the contrary, kindness and sweetness are every where ascribed to the Spirit. And next, if he should prove that it is understood in any place as signifying indignation, yet, he cannot easily prove, that it follows of necessity, that it is so to be received in this place.

So also, let him attempt to make it appear, that "flesh," is here to be understood as signifying infirmity; yet, he is as deficient as ever in proof. For where Paul calls the Corinthians "carnal," he does not signify infirmity, but corrupt affection, because, he charges them with "strife and divisions;" which is not infirmity, or incapacity to receive "stronger" doctrine, but malice and that "old leaven," which he commands them to "purge out." (1 Cor. iii. 3; v. 7.) But let us examine the Hebrew.

Sect. CXII. — "MY Spirit shall not always judge in man; for he is flesh." These are, verbatim, the words of Moses: and if we would away with our own dreams, the words as they there stand, are, I think, sufficiently plain and clear. And that they are the words of an angry God, is fully manifest, both from what precedes, and from what follows, together with the effect — the flood! The cause of their being spoken, was, the sons of men taking unto them wives from the mere lust of the flesh, and then, so filling the earth with violence, as to cause God to hasten the flood, and scarcely to delay that for "an hundred and twenty years," (Gen. vi. 1-3,) which, but for them, He would never have brought upon the earth at all. Read and study Moses, and you will plainly see that this is his meaning.

But it is no wonder that the Scriptures should be obscure, or that you should be enabled to establish from them, not only a free, but a divine will, where you are allowed so to trifle with them, as to seek to make out of them a Virgilian patch-work. And this is what you call, clearing up difficulties, and putting an end to all dispute by means of an interpretation! But it is with these trifling vanities that Jerome and Origen have filled the world: and have been the original cause of that pestilent practice — the not attending to the simplicity of the Scriptures.

It is enough for me to prove, that in this passage, the divine authority calls men "flesh;" and flesh, in that sense, that the Spirit of God could not continue among them, but was, at a decreed time, to be taken from them. And what God meant when He declared that His Spirit should not "always judge among men," is explained immediately afterwards, where He determines "an hundred and twenty years" as the time that He would still continue to judge.

Here He contrasts "spirit" with "flesh:" shewing that men being flesh, receive not the Spirit: and He, as being a

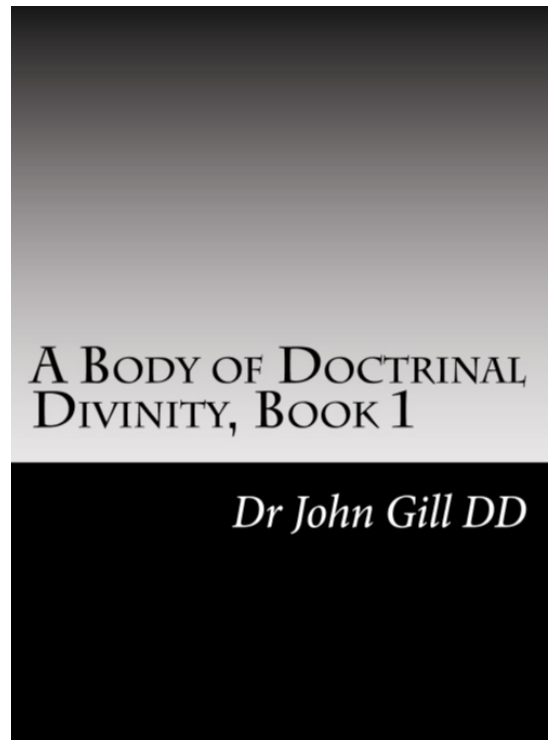
Spirit, cannot approve of flesh: ‘wherefore it is, that the Spirit, after “an hundred and twenty years,” is to be withdrawn. Hence you may understand the passage of Moses thus — My Spirit, which is in Noah and in the other holy men, rebukes those impious ones, by the word of their preaching, and by their holy lives, (for to “judge among men,” is to act among them in the office of the word; to reprove, to rebuke, to beseech them, opportunely and importunately,) but in vain: for they, being blinded and hardened by the flesh, only become the worse the more they are judged. — And so it ever is, that wherever the Word of God comes forth in the world, these men become the worse, the more they hear of it. And this is the reason why wrath is hastened, even as the flood was hastened at that time: because, they now, not only sin, but even despise grace: as Christ saith, “Light is come into the world, and men hate the light.” (John iii. 19.)

Since, therefore, men, according to the testimony of God Himself, are “flesh,” they can savour of nothing but flesh; so far is it from possibility that “Free-will” should do any thing but sin. And if, even while the Spirit of God is among them calling and teaching, they only become worse, what will they do when left to themselves without the Spirit of God!

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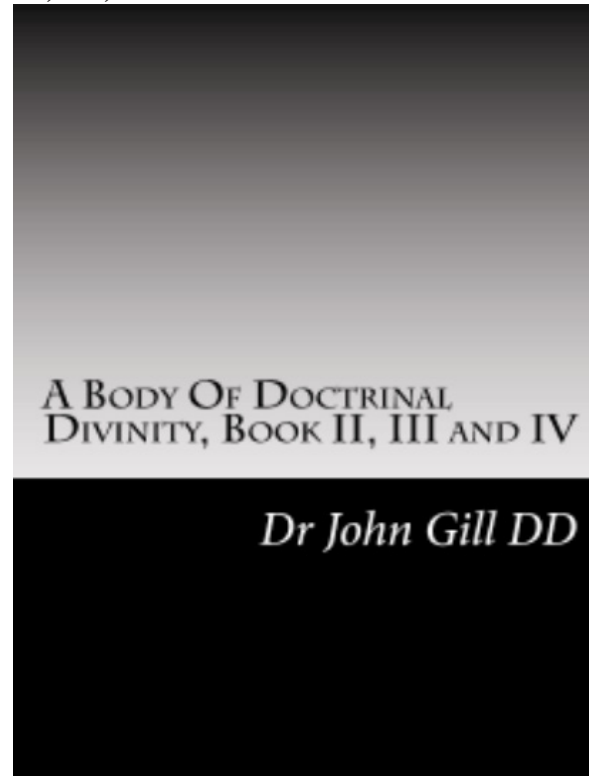
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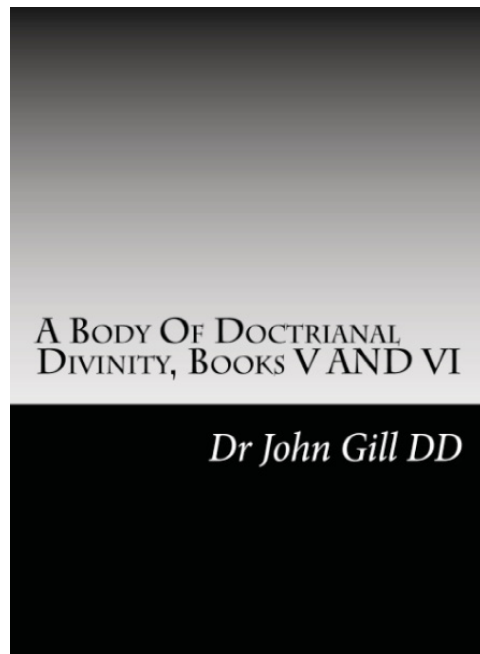
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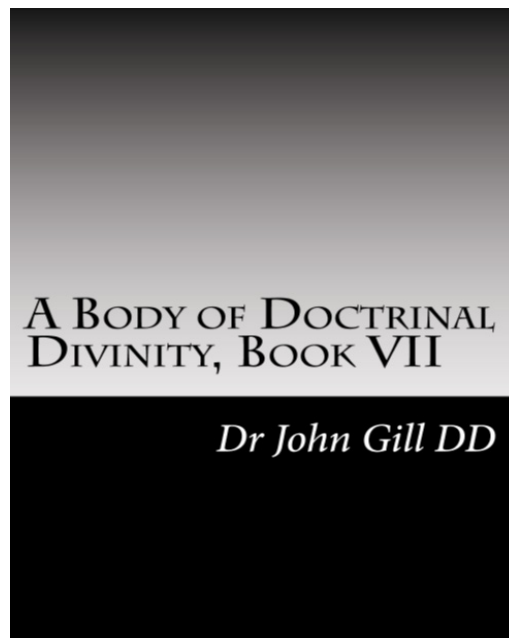
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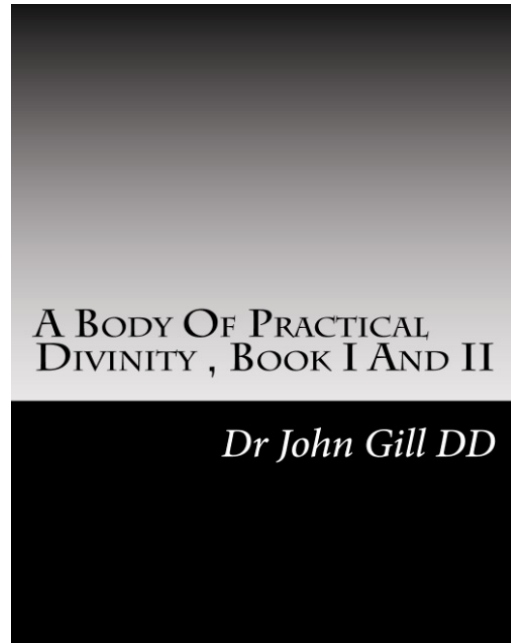
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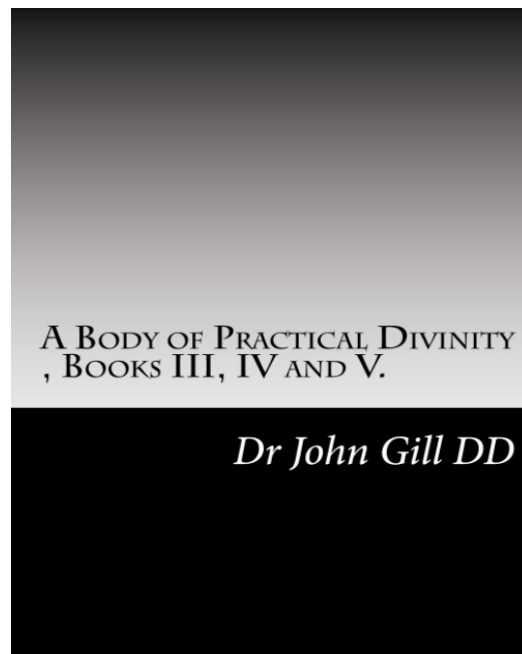
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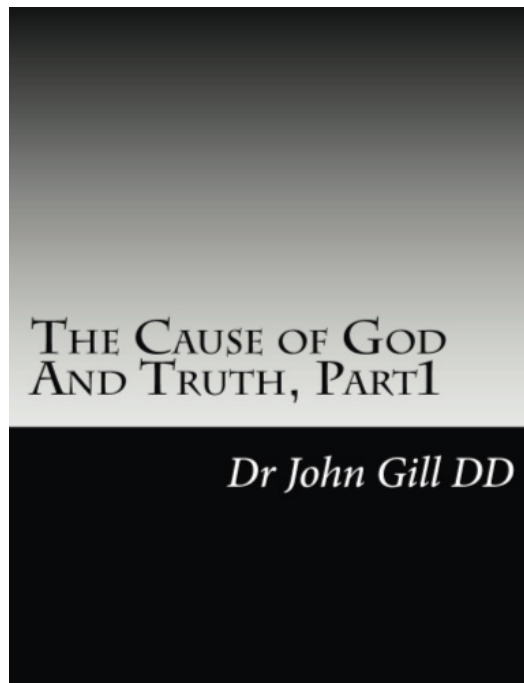
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BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

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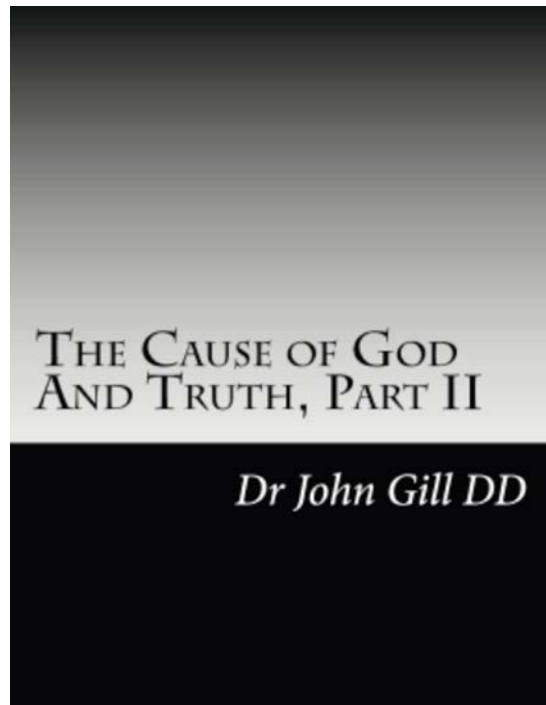
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The Cause of God And Truth, Part II



Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke CertEd

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ISBN-10: 1544648723

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This is volume 2 of this 4 part series and it should be known that the following work was undertaken and begun about the year 1733 or 1734, at which time Dr. Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points was reprinting, judged to be a masterpiece on the subject, in the English tongue, and accounted an unanswerable one ; and it was almost in the mouth of every one, as an objection to the Calvinists, Why do not ye answer Dr. Whitby ? Induced hereby, I determined to give it another reading, and found myself inclined to answer it, and thought this was a very proper and seasonable time to engage in such a work. In the year 1735, the First Part of this work was published, in which are considered the several passages of Scripture made use of by Dr. Whitby and others in favour of the Universal Scheme, and against the Calvinistical Scheme, in which their arguments and objections are answered, and the several passages set in a just and proper light. These, and what are contained in the following Part in favour of the Particular Scheme, are extracted from Sermons delivered in a Wednesday evening's lecture. The Second Part was published in the year 1736, in which the several passages of Scripture in favour of special and distinguishing grace, and the arguments from them, are vindicated from the exceptions of the Arminian, and particularly from Dr. Whitby, and a reply made to answers and objections to them.

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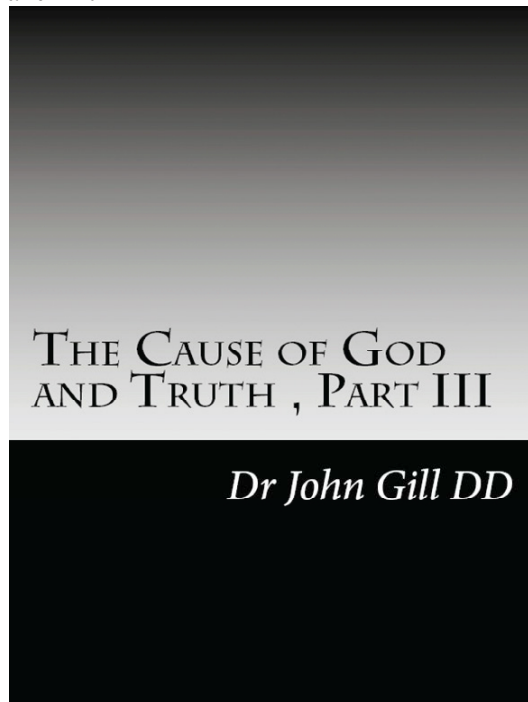
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The Cause of God and Truth Part III:



The Doctrines of Grace
 Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Authored by David Clarke Cert. Ed

ISBN-13: 978-1544810591 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1544810598

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

This book contains John Gill's answers to Dr Whitby objections to The Doctrines of Grace under the following heads.

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John 3:6.

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Chapter 6

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The Third Part was published in 1737.

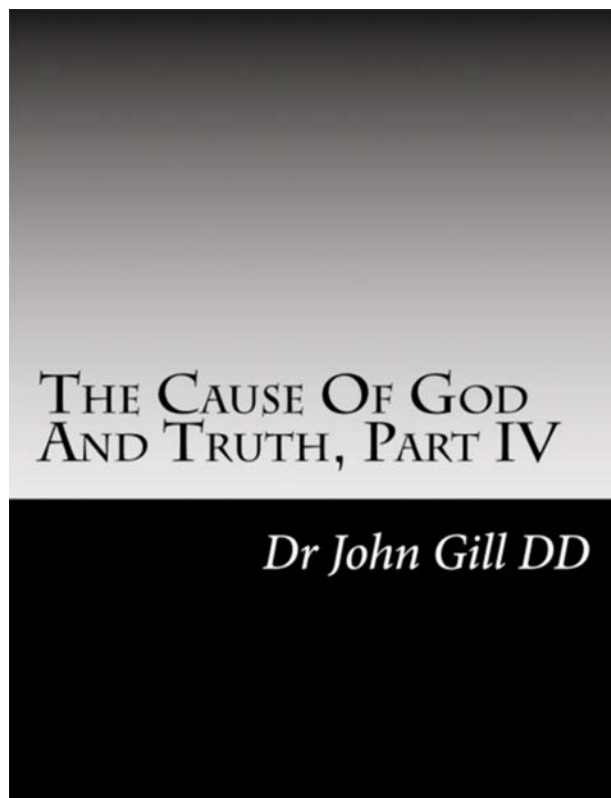
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The Third Part was published in 1737, and is a confutation of the arguments from reason used by the Arminians, and particularly by Dr. Whitby, against the above doctrines ; and a vindication of such as proceed on rational accounts in favour of them, in which it appears that they are no more disagreeable to right reason than to divine revelation ; to the latter of which the greatest deference should be paid, though the Rationalists of our age too much neglect it, and have almost quitted it ; but to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them.

In this part of the work is considered the agreement of the sentiments of Mr. Hobbes and the Stoic philosophers with those of the Calvinists, in which the difference between them is observed, and the calumny removed ; to which is added, a Defence of the Objections to the Universal Scheme, taken from the prescience and the providence of God, and the case of the Heathens.

The Fourth Part was published in 1738, in which the sense of the ancient writers of the Christian Church, before the times of Austin, is given ; the importance and consequence of which is shown, and that the Arminians have very little reason to triumph on that account.

This work was published at a time when the nation was greatly alarmed with the growth of Popery, and several learned gentlemen were employed in preaching against some particular points of it ; but the author of this work was of opinion, that the increase of Popery was greatly owing to the Pelagianism, Arminianism, and other supposed rational schemes men run into, contrary to divine revelation, This was the sense of our fathers in the last century, and therefore joined these and Popery together in their religious grievances they were desirous of having redressed ; and indeed, instead of lopping off the branches of Popery, the axe should be laid to the root of the tree, Arminianism and Pelagianism, the very life and soul of Popery.

This is Part 4 of 4 parts, and a new edition, with some alterations and improvements, is now published by request.

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Chapter 4 Of Efficacious Grace

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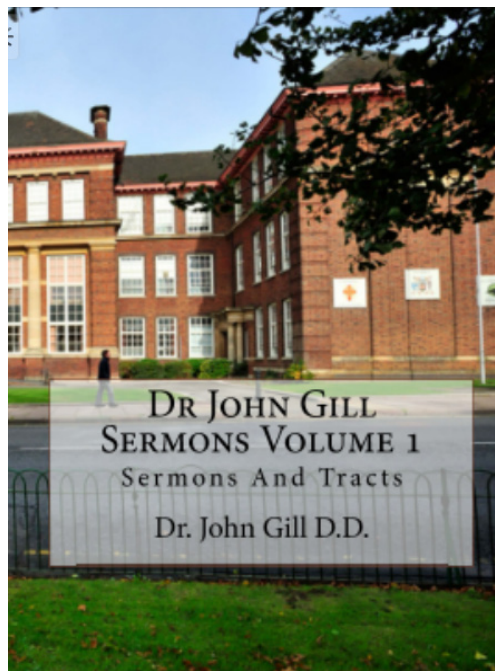
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BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Eschatology

This is volume 1 of 4 volumes of Dr John Gills sermons and are reproduced for the benefit of Bierton Particular Baptists Pakistan with a view to promote the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the view of the publisher that Dr. J Gill is the clearest and most faithful in preaching and teaching the doctrines of grace. We dismiss the charges, that those who do not his writings, and call him a Hyper-Calvinist and ask you to read or your self and learn from a master in Israel. Bierton Particular Baptists have republished the whole of Dr. Gills Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity, e Cause of God And Truth. Sermons and Tracts in several volumes.

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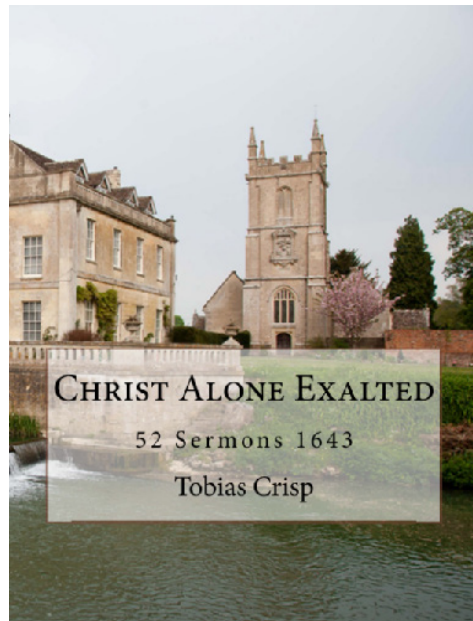
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52 Sermons 1643

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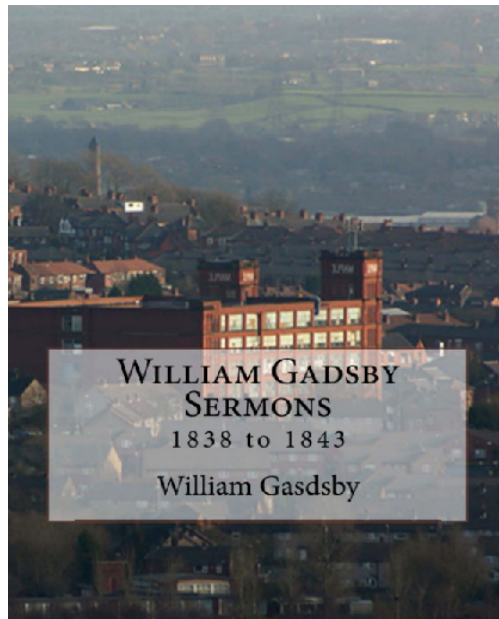
BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Soteriology

Tobias Crisp was a preacher of the gospel in England in the 17 century. He was born in 1600 and died in 1643 at which time these sermons were published.

He lived at the time when the First London Particular Baptist Confession of 1644 was published and it is clear from these sermons he taught Calvinists truths.

He preached the doctrines of grace and was charged with being an Antinomian and provoked opposition from various quarters.

Dr. John Gill republished these sermons along with comments, in his defense, showing that Tobias Crisp clearly taught the truths of the Lord Jesus Christ.

William Gadsby

Sermons: 1838 to 1843

Authored by William Gadsby

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BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Soteriology

This volume contains a tribute of high esteem, given by J.C Philpot on the death of William Gadsby, in 1844 and contains series of sermons preached between September 1838 and 14th June 1843.

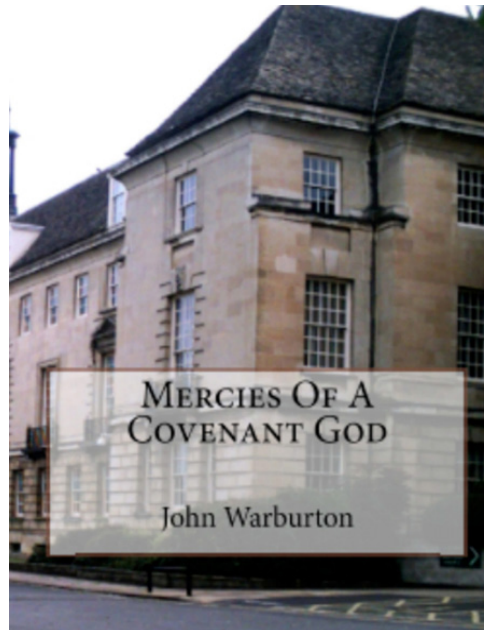
William Gadsby became a Particular Baptist minister in 1798 and went on to preach to many thousands of people. He later published Hymns, in a hymn books still used today by Particular Baptists.

He was born in Attleborough, Warwickshire in 1773. He had little or no education. In 1790, he went to see men hanged, and the horrid spectacle had such an effect on his mind that he was never afterward like the same youth. His memoirs tell of the lengths of folly into which he ran prior to this time and were often related by him in his ministry These memoirs were published shortly after his death.

William Gadsby preached the distinguishing doctrines of grace that gave all the glory to the Lord Jesus Christ for his salvation.

Authored by John Warburton

John Warburton



Mercies Of A Covenant God

Authored by John Warburton, Created by Bierton Particular Baptists

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BISAC: Religion / Christianity / Baptist

God be merciful to me a sinner was the cry of John Warburton on discovering and realizing he ruined lost condition before God. He knew and felt the condemnation of God against him. He knew of no way but to mend his ways, repent to find mercy. He could think of no other way to save his soul but by mending his life, doing his duty and pleasing God.

This book, "Mercies of a Covent God" tells the life story of John Warburton, of his call by grace, and becoming a Particular Baptists ministry in England. This book is not dry or intellectual Calvinism but experiential Christian experience. Teaching the way of salvation as Gods way, Father, Son and Holy Spirit engaged in covenant to save not to propose salvation but call by grace. Faith alone in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, his atoning blood, and imputed righteousness are clearly taught be blessings of grace.

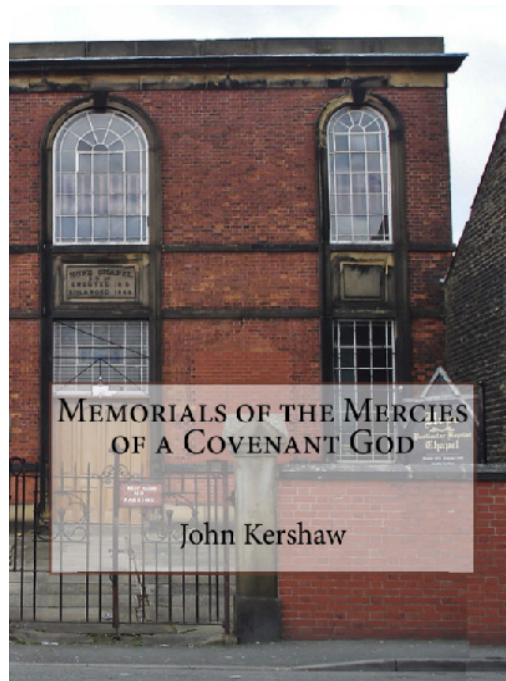
This is recommended read for Preterits as it is important, in order to have a correct understanding of Last things, we must have a correct view of first things, i.e. the beginnings to understand last things.

The Soteriology of John Warburton, like all Particular Baptists in the, is Calvinistic, but not textbook Calvinism. It is felt that a correct view of the way of salvation is important to understand eschatology, correctly and not in a dry textbook way. True religion is more than notion, Something must be known and felt.

This book also contains short bibliographies of the hymn writers that are quoted in this book

Authored by John Kershaw

Memorials Of The Mercies Of A Covenant God



Authored by John Kershaw

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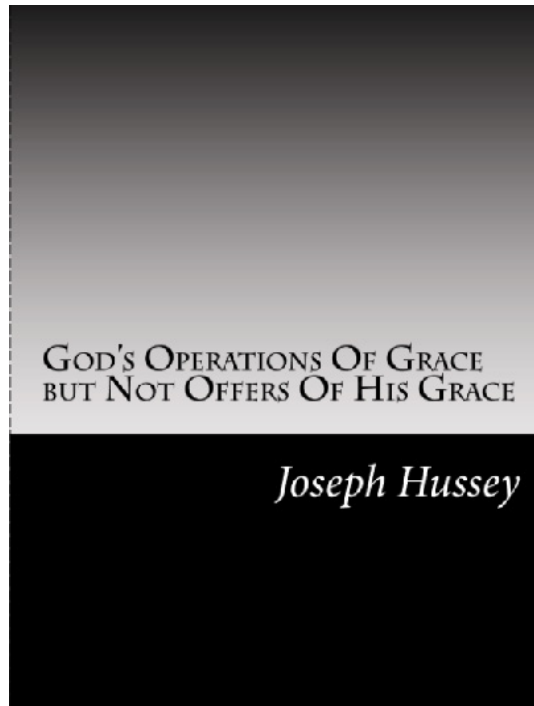
John Kershaw (1792-1870) was a Particular Baptists pastor for fifty-two years of Hope Chapel, Rochdale. He exercised a powerful ministry among the church, and became an influential preacher across the country. Few ministers remain faithful to a single congregation for an extended period—Kershaw committed himself to the same church he attended as a boy. This autobiography “Memorials of the Mercies of a Covenant God while Traveling through the Wilderness”, is one of the best written of its genre.

He preached and taught the doctrines of grace along with his contemporaries William Gadsby, John Warburton, J.C. Philpot.

These men were all Calvinists maintaining the bible to be the word of God and giving all the praise and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation

Authored by Joseph Hussey

God's Operations Of Grace but Not Offers Of His Grace



Published 1707

Authored by Joseph Hussey

ISBN-13: 978-1979551847

ISBN-10: 1979551847

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Soteriology

This work of Joseph Hussey treats the subject of preaching the gospel in light of the distinguishing doctors of grace. This is as relevant today as it was in the 18 century as there are those who call themselves Calvinists but are not and advocate “Duty Faith” and “Duty Repentance”, terms that are used to express a belief that it is the duty of all men, every where, to receive and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal saviour.

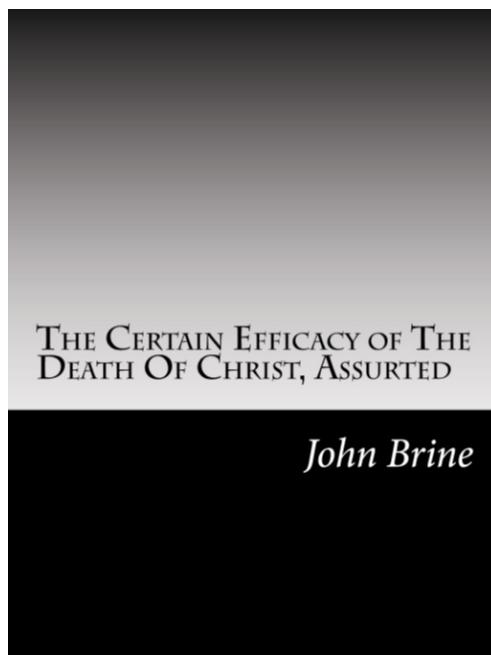
There are those historically, such as Richard Baxter and Andrew Fuller, who advocated, “Duty Faith” and ‘Duty Repentance’, in the UK and as a result brought about a great division the among Particular Baptists and Presbyterians and evangelicals. I am not sure about America.

This work of Joseph Hussey denies “Duty Faith” and “Duty Repentance” and demonstrates that saving faith is a free grace gift of God, bestowed upon those being effectually called by the Spirit of God, and who are stilled the elect. That is those for who the Lord Jesus died.

This book is published to assist Preterits’ studying eschatology and all Calvinists, as it is important to have a correct understanding of the nature of the fall of Man and the corruption of human nature in order to see the glory of free grace.

Authored by John Brine

The Certain Efficacy of The Death Of Christ, Asserted



**Authored by John Brine
Created by David Clarke**

ISBN-13: 978-1973922254 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

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BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Soteriology

This work declares the Glory of God in all his Perfections, the Honour of Christ, and the eternal Happiness of his People, all of which are intimately concerned in them. This is treated in four parts: In the First John Brine endeavours to prove the limited Extent of the Death of CHRIST, and the certain Salvation of all those for whom he died.

In the Second, the Objections which are usually urged by the Arminians, and others, will be answered.

In the Third shall attempt to prove the Impossibility of the Salvation of the Non-Elect, upon the Supposition of no other than a conditional Provision of Salvation being made for them.

In the Fourth Part shall attend to what he delivers on the Subjects of the Imputation of original Sin to Men, the Charge of Sin on CHRIST, and the Imputation of his Righteousness to his People.

This has been republished by Bierton Particular Baptists to further the cause of God and truth, it opposes Arminianism, Islam, and duty faith.

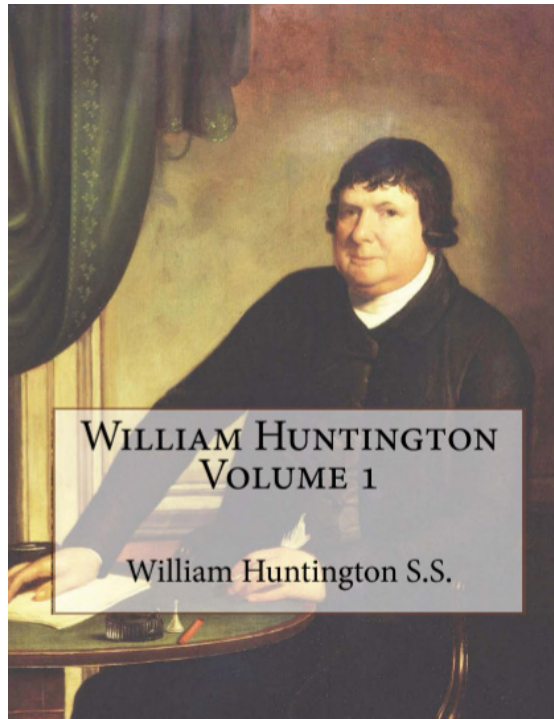
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Authored by William Huntington

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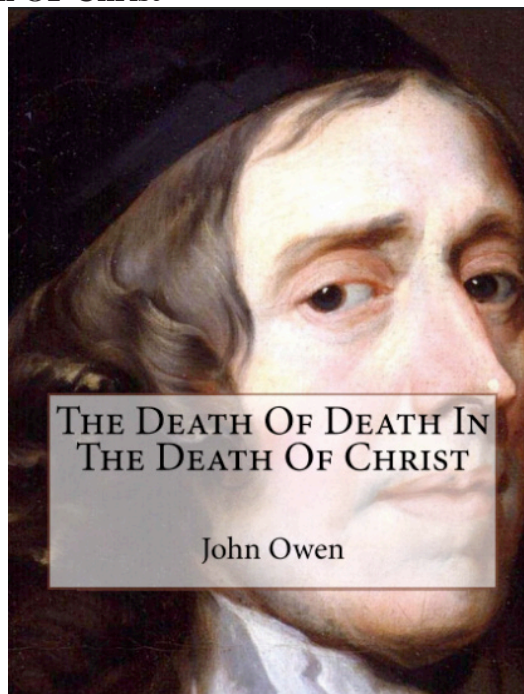
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BISAC: Religion / Christianity / Calvinist

William Huntington S.S. (2nd February 1745- 1 July 1813) was an English preacher and the man who preached to the Queen of England as well as the Prime Minister, and signed his letters William Huntington, S.S. (Saved Sinner). He taught that the moral law, or the 10 commandments, as published by Moses, was not the rule of life for the believer but rather the gospel, which is the Law Christ. He delighted in talking of the everlasting love of God, blessed redemption, all conquering grace, mysterious providence, the Spirit's work in mens souls and many other good news themes. He was charge with being an Antinomian although his writings and sermons do not bear this out. Huntington was a strict Calvinist who believed some were predestined to eternal life and some were not. He founded or opened chapels throughout England, many of which survive to this day.

There are 20 volumes of his works that were published in 1811, this is volume 1 of that series.

This volume contains the Kingdom Of Heaven Taken By Prayer and The Spiritual Sea Voyage.

The Death Of Death In The Death OF Christ**John Owen**

ISBN-13: 978-1544793733 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

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BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Soteriology

The Death of Death in the Death of Christ is a polemical work, designed to show, among other things, that the doctrine of universal redemption is unscriptural and destructive of the gospel. There are many, therefore, to whom it is not likely to be of interest. Those who see no need for doctrinal exactness and have no time for theological debates which show up divisions between so-called Evangelicals may well regret its reappearance. Some may find the very sound of Owen's thesis so shocking that they will refuse to read his book at all; so passionate a thing is prejudice, and so proud are we of our theological shibboleths. But it is hoped that this reprint will find itself readers of a different spirit. There are signs today of a new upsurge of interest in the theology of the Bible: a new readiness to test traditions, to search the Scriptures and to think through the faith. It is to those who share this readiness that Owen's treatise is offered, in the belief that it will help us in one of the most urgent tasks facing Evangelical Christendom today—the recovery of the gospel.

This last remark may cause some raising of eyebrows, but it seems to be warranted by the facts. There is no doubt that Evangelicalism today is in a state of perplexity and unsettlement. In such matters as the practice of evangelism, the teaching of holiness, the building up of local church life, the pastor's dealing with souls and the exercise of discipline, there is evidence of widespread dissatisfaction with things as they are and of equally widespread uncertainty as to the road ahead. This is a complex phenomenon, to which many factors have contributed; but, if we go to the root of the matter, we shall find that these perplexities are all ultimately due to our having lost our grip on the biblical gospel. Without realizing it, we have during the past century bartered that gospel for a substitute product which, though it looks similar enough in points of detail, is as a whole a decidedly different thing. Hence our troubles; for the substitute product does not answer the ends for which the authentic gospel has in past days proved itself so mighty. The new gospel conspicuously fails to produce deep reverence, deep repentance, deep humility, a spirit of worship, a concern for the church. Why? We would suggest that the reason lies in its own

character and content. It fails to make men God-centred in their thoughts and God-fearing in their hearts because this is not primarily what it is trying to do. One way of stating the difference between it and the old gospel is to say that it is too exclusively concerned to be “helpful” to man—to bring peace, comfort, happiness, satisfaction—and too little concerned to glorify God. The old gospel was “helpful,” too—more so, indeed, than is the new—but (so to speak) incidentally, for its first concern was always to give glory to God. It was always and essentially a proclamation of Divine sovereignty in mercy and judgment, a summons to bow down and worship the mighty Lord on whom man depends for all good, both in nature and in grace. Its centre of reference was unambiguously God. But in the new gospel the centre of reference is man. This is just to say that the old gospel was religious in a way that the new gospel is not. Whereas the chief aim of the old was to teach men to worship God, the concern of the new seems limited to making them feel better. The subject of the old gospel was God and His ways with men; the subject of the new is man and the help God gives him. There is a world of difference. The whole perspective and emphasis of gospel preaching has changed.

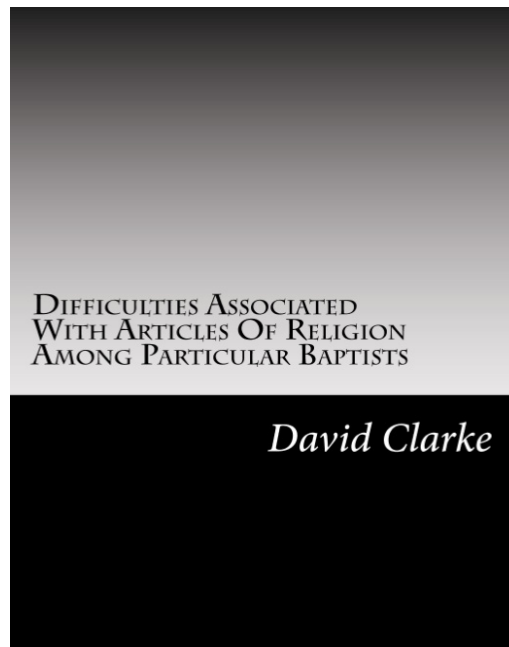
Available as a Paperback

[Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk)

[Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Authored by David Clarke

Among Particular Baptists



Articles of Religion are important when dealing with matters of the Christian Religion, however problems occur when churches fail to recognize there is a growth in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ in any believer. When a person first believes in the Lord Jesus Christ they cannot possibly have a comprehensive knowledge of a churches constitution or its articles of religion, before solemnly subscribing to them. The author David Clarke has introduced the Doctrines of Grace to Bierton Particular Baptists Pakistan, situated in Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan and bearing in mind his own experience with articles of religion he has compiled Bierton Particular Baptists Pakistan articles of religion from the first Bierton Particular Baptists of 1831, of which he is the sole surviving

member, the First London Baptist Confession, 2nd edition 1646, and those of Dr John Gill, in order to avoid some of the difficulties encounter by Particular Baptist during the later part of the 19 century and since. This booklet highlights the problem and suggests the Bierton Particular Baptists Pakistan is as step in the right direction.

Isaiah 52:8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

ISBN-13: 978-1532953446

BISAC: Religion / Christianity / Baptist

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2016

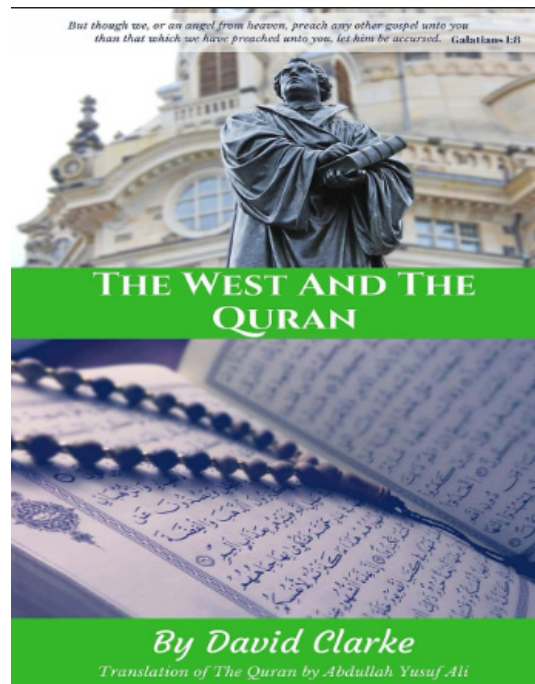
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Gospel Standard 31 Articles

CreateSpace eStore

<https://tswcreatespace.com/title/6235109>

The West And The Quran



Translation of The Quran

Authored by David Clarke, Authored with Abdullah Yusuf Ali

List Price: \$9.99

8.5" x 11" (21.59 x 27.94 cm)

Black & White on White paper

248 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1548914042 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1548914045

BISAC: Religion / Biblical Criticism & Interpretation / General

This Publication treats the subject of the Quran and the reason for presenting this is due to a rise in Islamic terrorism which has caused great concern to many in the West. So with the current massive influx of Muslim's migrating from the various parts of the world into Europe, Great Britain and the USA, it seems reasonable to discover the roots of Islam in order to deal with the problems that have occurred. Our Politicians seem clueless on how to deal with this enemy and when they are questioned they appear to know relatively little about Muhammad and his teaching. One of our greatest Prime-ministers in Britain William Gladstone declared the Quran an "Accursed book" and once held a copy of Muhammad's Quran up in Parliament, declaring: "So long as there is this book there will be no peace in the world".

Winston Churchill was one of the greatest leaders of the 20th Century, who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during World War II and again from 1951 to 1955.

As an officer of the British Army in 1897 and 1898, he fought against a Pashtun tribe in the north west frontier of British India and also at the Battle of Omdurman in Sudan. In both of those conflicts, he had eye-opening encounters with Muslims. These incidents allowed his keen powers of observation and always-fluid pen to weigh in on the subject of Islamic society.

While these words were written when he was only 25-years-old (in 1899), they serve as a prophetic warning to Western civilisation today.

"How dreadful are the curses which Mohammedanism (Islam) lays on its votaries! Besides the fanatical frenzy, which is as dangerous in a man as hydrophobia in a dog, there is this fearful fatalistic apathy."

Churchill apparently witnessed the same phenomenon in several places he visited. "The effects are apparent in many countries: improvident habits, slovenly systems of agriculture, sluggish methods of commerce and insecurity of property exist wherever the followers of the Prophet rule or live."

He saw the temporal and the eternal tainted by their belief system. “A degraded sensualism deprives this life of its grace and refinement, the next of its dignity and sanctity,” he wrote.

The second-class status of women also grated at the young officer. “The fact that in Mohammedan law every woman must belong to some man as his absolute property, either as a child, a wife, or a concubine, must delay the final extinction of slavery until the faith of Islam has ceased to be a great power among men,” he noted.

“Individual Muslims may show splendid qualities, but the influence of the religion paralyses the social development of those who follow it. No stronger retrograde force exists in the world.”

Well before the birth of modern Israel, its terror tactics and drive for world domination were felt. “Far from being moribund, Mohammedanism is a militant and proselytising faith. It has already spread throughout Central Africa, raising fearless warriors at every step, and were it not that Christianity is sheltered in the strong arms of science, the science against which it (Islam) has vainly struggled, the civilisation of modern Europe might fall, as fell the civilisation of ancient Rome.”

With the influx of Muslim people from the various parts of the continent along with their culture all of which is shaped by the teachings of Muhammad in the Quran.

Some objections and Observations are as follows:

Islam means submission

Islam does not mean peace

Multiculturalism is a failure.

Islam denies the natural rights of women

An Objection Halal Meat

An Objection To Shari-ah Law

Objects to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

An objection to Jihad which seeks over throw Western culture through education, Social activity, political activation and Law.

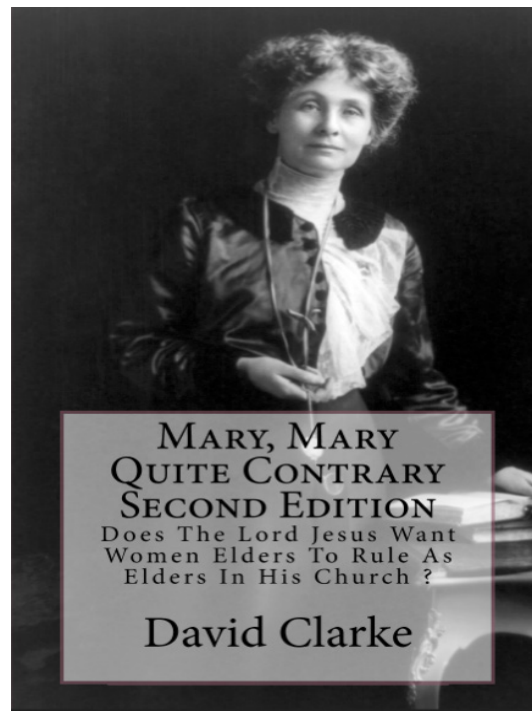
For this reason, this publication is made available for education purposes. With this prayer that God may grant us all wisdom as to how we may respond to the rise and threat of Islam.

Available as a Paperback

[Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) (click to view)

[Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) (click to view)

Mary, Mary Quite Contrary



Second Edition: Does The Lord Jesus Want Women To Rule As Elders In His Church ??

Authored by Mr David Clarke Cert E

ISBN-13: 978-1514206812

ISBN-10: 1514206811

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / General

When treating the subject of women elders in the church we are not dealing with the affairs of a secular society and so it has nothing to do with women's rights, equality of sex or race in the world. This matter only relates to men and women in a Christian church. It is about the rules of the house of God, which is the church of the living God and rules for those who are members of the body of Christ and members of an heavenly county.

The Suffragettes

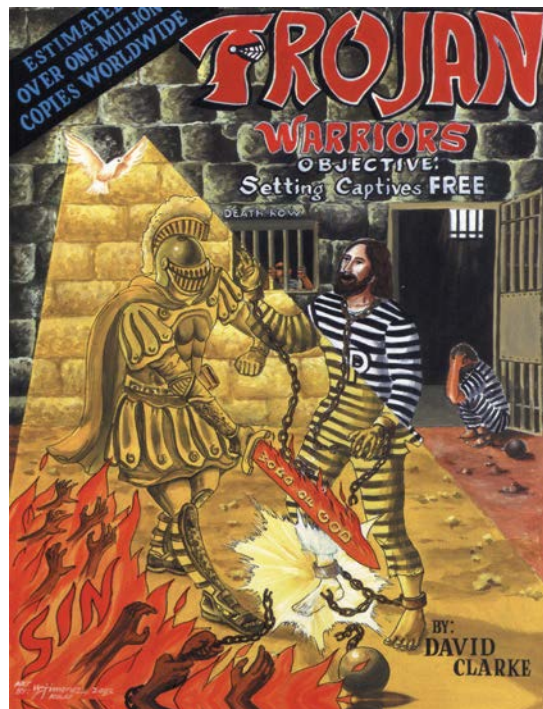
Emmeline Pankhurst (1858 -1928) was a Suffragette and worked very hard to bring equal rights for women to vote as men. In the year of her death all women over 21 gained the right to vote. The Suffragette movement brought about many changes for the better in a secular society but not so for women seeking to follow Christian principles. One of her famous quotes was, "Trust in God She shall provide". Terms which do not reflect Christian beliefs. We know God will provide and He is not a she.

In the USA and the UK, women's political rights were brought into general political consciousness by the suffragettes and since then there have been legal rights granted to the Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups, same sex marriages, along with the development of the feminist movement and the appointment of persons from the LGBT community to responsible positions in the Church of England. All of this has caused conflict in the Christian community due to differences beliefs of right and wrong.

This book seeks to show what the bible has to say about the role of women in the church and family. Since these rules are taught by the Apostles of Christ they are the word of God to us and we should obey. The secular world may differ and turn from the narrow path taught in scripture but we should follow the word of God, this is our wisdom.

[Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) (click to view)

[Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) (click to view)



Setting Captives Free

Authored by Mr David Clarke CertEd, Authored by Mr Michael J Clarke

List Price: \$15.99

5.25" x 8" (13.335 x 20.32 cm)

Black & White on White paper

446 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1508574989 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1508574987

BISAC: Religion / Christian Life / General

Trojan Warriors is a true story of two brothers, Michael and David Clarke, who are brought up in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, England. They became criminals in the 60's and were sent to prison for malicious wounding and carrying a fire arm without a license, in 1967.

They both turned from their lives of crimes in remarkable ways but some 25 years apart, and then they worked together helping other prison inmates, on their own roads of reformation.

David the younger brother became a Christian, after a bad experience on LSD, in 1970, and then went on to educate himself and then on to Higher Education. He became a baptist minister and taught electronics for over 20 years, in colleges of Higher and Further Education. Michael however remained untouched and continued his flamboyant life style ending up serving a 16 year prison sentence, in the Philippines, in 1996, where he died of tuberculosis in 2005.

When David heard the news of his brothers arrest on an ITN television news bulletin he felt compelled to wrote their story. And then when he heard of his own brothers conversion from crime to Christ, after serving 5 year of his sentence, he published their story in his book, "Converted on LS Trip", and directed a mission of help to the Philippines to assist his brother. This book tells the story of this mission.

They then worked together with many former notorious criminals, who were inmates in New Bilibid Prison, who too had become Christians and turned their lives around. This help was to train them to become preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ .

This book contains the 66 testimonies of some of these men who convicted former criminals, incarcerated in New Bilibid Prison. They are the, "Trojan Warriors", who had turned their lives around and from crime to Christ. Twenty two of these testimonies are men who are on Death Row scheduled to be executed by lethal injection.

Revelation 12 verse 11: And they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony and

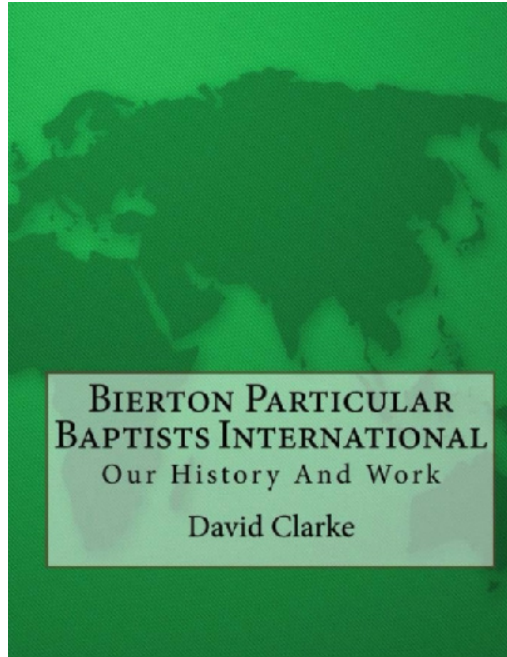
they loved not their lives unto the death.

Available as a Paperback

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Bierton Particular Baptists International



Our History And Work

Authored by David Clarke

ISBN-13: 978-1974670901 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

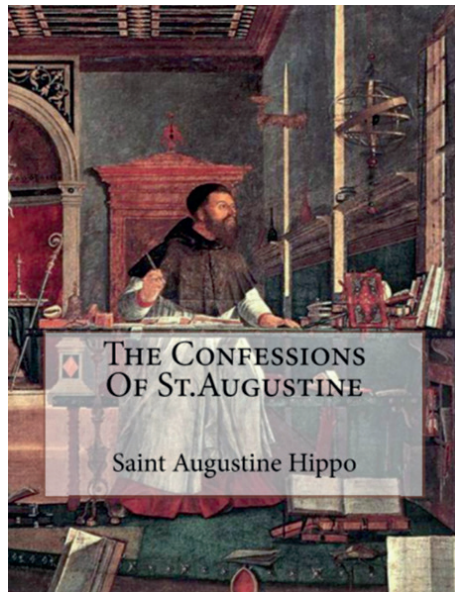
ISBN-10: 1974670902

BISAC: Religion / Christian Ministry / Evangelism

Bierton Particular Baptists were founded in England in 1831 and has now extended to Pakistan. The chapel belonging to Bierton Particular Baptists was closed for worship in December 2002 and David Clarke, the sole remaining member of the Bierton church, commissioned and appointed Anil Anwar and Anwar Shahid John as overseers, of Bierton Particular Baptist church, in Pakistan, in 2016. This book contains the articles of religion for Bierton Particular Baptists and the Bierton Particular Baptist College. Bierton Particular Baptists were a Gospel Standard listed cause 1981.

Bierton Particular Baptists Pakistan is the first in Pakistan and founded by David Clarke. Mr Clarke is the sole surviving member of Bierton Particular Baptist, founded in 1831. in England, and was a Gospel Standard Cause. This book tells of the formation of Bierton Particular Baptist Pakistan 2016 along with the formation of a Minister Bible college. David Clarke appointed minister Anil Anwar and Anwar Shahid John of Rahim Yar Khan, as overseers work and the articles of religion and doctrinal foundation are those to the Bierton Particular Baptists 1831.

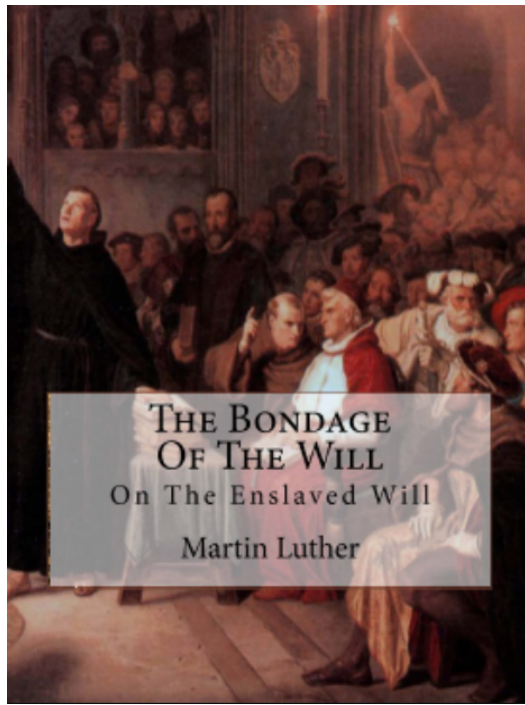
In these we express our belief in the sovereignty of God in creation and redemption and hold to Calvinistic soteriology. We also encourage those interested to investigate Covenant Eschatology, as a means of clearing up some of the many strange views held by some that teach end times theology. This magazine has been published to help Christians encourage and educate each other, in a way free from censorship. We encourage feedback and wish our readers to contribute further articles for publication. We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal son of the living God who alone is the saviour of mankind whether **Muslim Gentile or Jew**.

The Confessions Of St. Augustine**Augustine Of Hippo**

This is an autobiography, a work, consisting of 13 books, by Saint Augustine of Hippo, written in Latin between AD 397 and 400. The work outlines Saint Augustine's sinful youth and his conversion to Christianity. Its original title was *Confessions in Thirteen Books*, and it was composed to be read out loud with each book being a complete unit. *Confessions* is generally considered one of Augustine's most important texts. It is widely seen as the first Western autobiography ever written, and was an influential model for Christian writers throughout the Middle Ages. Professor Henry Chadwick wrote that *Confessions* will "always rank among the great masterpieces of western literature". Written after the legalization of Christianity, *Confessions* dated from an era where martyrdom was no longer a threat to most Christians as was the case two centuries earlier. Instead, a Christian's struggles were usually internal. *Confessions* was written between AD 397–398, suggesting self-justification as a possible motivation for the work. With the words "I wish to act in truth, making my confession both in my heart before you and in this book before the many who will read it" in Book X Chapter 1 Augustine both confesses his sins and glorifies God through humility in His grace, the two meanings that define "confessions," in order to reconcile his imperfections not only to his critics but also to God.

Pelagius, a British monk, took exception to Augustines prayer "Grant what Thou commandest, and command what Thou dost desire." Pelagius recoiled in horror at the idea that a divine gift (grace) is necessary to perform what God commands. For Pelagius and his followers responsibility always implies ability. If man has the moral responsibility to obey the law of God, he must also have the moral ability to do it. Augustine took up the cause of God clearly demonstrating the fall of man and the inability of man to do good and defended the truth of original sin.

The Bondage Of The Will



On The Enslaved Will

Authored by Martin Luther DD

ISBN-13: 978-1547044207

ISBN-10: 1547044209

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

This work of Martin Luther is very relevant today as so many who profess a knowledge of God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ are unable to discern the error of so-called Free Will. So for any who find a problem with Calvinism and Arminianism it is important they grasp the issues discussed in this book. This was first published in 1525 and was Luther’s reply to Desiderius Erasmus on Free Will, which had appeared in 1524 and was his first public attack on Luther. The issue raised by Erasmus was human beings, after the fall of Man are free to choose good or evil. The debate between Luther and Erasmus is one of the earliest of the Reformation over the issue of free will and predestination.

Available as a Paperback

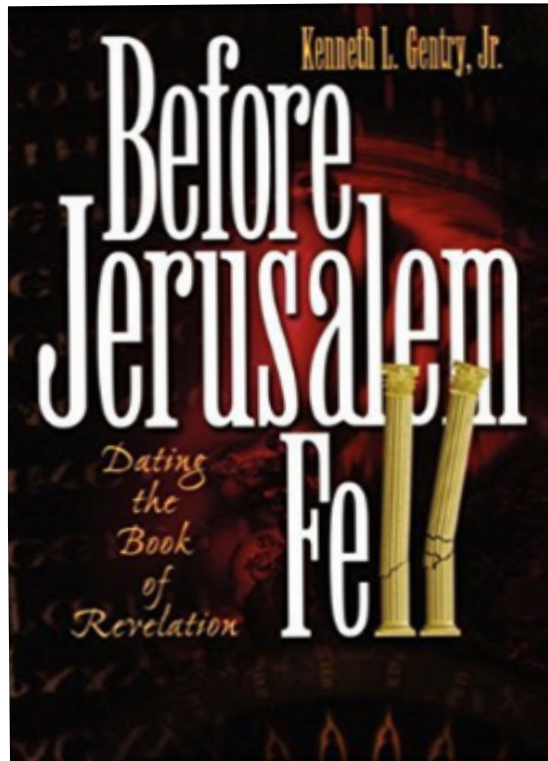
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Authored by Don K. Preston

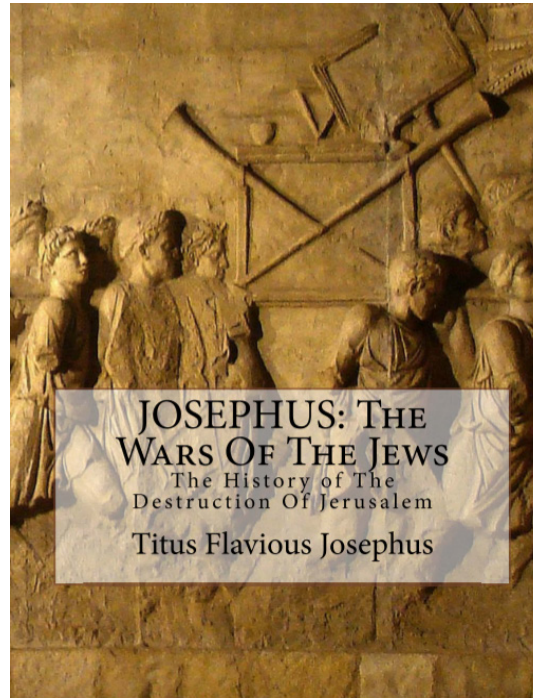
Before Jerusalem Fell

“Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation” is a doctoral dissertation seeking to demonstrate that Revelation was written prior to the destruction of the Jewish Temple in AD 70 and that it was prophesying that event. It proves this early date for Revelation by providing both internal evidence from within Revelation and external evidence from Church history and tradition. It provides much exposition of the text of Revelation. A large part of the argument deals with the identity of the beast (666) as Nero Caesar, the first imperial persecutor of the Church.

Available as a Paperback

Authored by Titus Flavius Josephus

Josephus: The Wars Of The Jews



The History of The Destruction Of Jerusalem

Authored by Titus Flavius Josephus, Designed by Translated by William Winston

ISBN-13: 978-1985029132 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1985029138

BISAC: Religion / Christianity / History / General

Josephus was an eye witness to those events that he records in this book, 'The Wars of The Jews', or 'The History of The Destruction Of Jerusalem'.

He records historic events that took place during and after the times of the New Testament scriptures.

The book of Revelation was a prophecy, given to Jesus Christ, and published by the Apostle John, about those things that were shortly to come to pass in his day.

From the internal evidence of the book Revelation was written before the Neuronic persecution, of 66 A.D. and before the fall off Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, in 70. A.D. This is because the book records that the temple in Jerusalem was still standing at the time the book was written and not around 95 A.D. as Eusebius mistakenly says.

The historic events that Josephus records are remarkable as they give evidence to the fulfillment of Prophecy given by the Lord Jesus in his Olivet prophecy. In fact the book of Revelation was a prophecy of those events that were shortly to come to pass when Jesus spoke to John who wrote the Revelation. Jesus had informed his Apostles about future events and they lived in expectation of there fulfillment in their day.

Josephus gives the historic evidence of the fulfillment of those prophecies and that confirms scripture fulfillment.

We recommend the James Stuart Russell's book, 'The Parousia as a very good introduction to this subject and advertised at the back of this book in our Further Publications.

