

MARTIN LUTHER
ON THE
BONDAGE OF THE WILL;

TO THE VENERABLE MISTER
ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM,

1525.

FAITHFULLY TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN;

BY

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WITH A PREFACE AND NOTES.

Rev. Vaughan's comments are drawn largely from Joseph Milner's
History of the Church of Christ (London, 1812).

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Editor's Preface

There are many translations and editions of Luther's *Bondage of the Will*. They vary widely in the partitioning and sectioning of the text, making it difficult to compare them. This edition has five parts, with numerous sections in each part.

Luther's wording was direct and forceful, even though peppered with dangling phrases. He wrote as he might speak, with lots of dashes and parentheticals. Vaughan's early 19th c. English rendering of the Latin was faithful to that style, but it was a bit cumbersome for a modern audience. Wordiness, unreferenced pronouns, implied words, archaic punctuation, broken and run-on sentences, awkward syntax, etc., have been "corrected" and largely simplified. Personal pronouns remain (e.g., "her", "she") as applied to things like *reason*. Original page numbers are retained intra-text, and are used for cross-references in the notes. Page-breaks were adjusted for easier reading.

Rev. Vaughan, both translator and editor, was not unbiased in his assessment of Luther's book. He brings a staunchly Calvinistic viewpoint to his notes. That has value in itself. He was from Cambridge, thus avoiding the Oxford Movement of his day, with its Romanizing influence. Unfortunately, we're left with a pedantic and condescending tone, so characteristic of Cambridge. Vaughan celebrates Luther's exceptional gifting by God, to fight the good fight, to uphold God's grace and the authority of Scripture, and to do it against all comers, at any cost. His biographical sketch of Luther is wonderfully pithy, informative, and inspiring.

But you may feel, understandably, that Vaughan's notes are unwelcome rather than helpful. Because of the length of some of them (even his footnotes had footnotes!) many were converted to *endnotes* (with Roman numerals), to avoid distracting the reader from Luther's text. These are marked [\[long note\]](#) beside the page number. Even so, his expertise in the subtleties of Latin is informative. Language and grammar were at the heart of many of Luther's responses to Erasmus, who was arguably one of the finest linguists of his day. Luther wrote,

"Your grammar-masters, and boys in the streets, know this: that by verbs of the *imperative* mood nothing else is expressed but what *ought* to be done. What *is* done, or *may be* done, must be declared by *indicative* verbs. (p. 165)

Some of Vaughan's notes constitute a *critique* of Luther's work, as well as an explanation of it. I think he is overly critical of Luther at times, slipping into commentary as he pursues doctrinal exactness and clarity. For Calvinists, such notes identify where relevant points of Lutheran doctrine may differ from Calvinist, as well as later reformed doctrine. Vaughan observes that Luther did not yet fully comprehend the "God-manifestation" in Christ. But to be fair, Luther was blazing a trail for others to follow, not paving it for them.

I hope you find this edition of Luther's classic both edifying and satisfying, and a worthwhile addition to the others currently available.

William H. Gross
January 2018

P.S. I would gladly have included Erasmus' Diatribe, if an uncopyrighted English translation were currently available online. Curiously, I could not find one.

TO
HIM
WHO SITS UPON THE THRONE
BY THE SIDE OF THE INVISIBLE FATHER,
EVEN JESUS,
MY LORD AND MY GOD!
WHO KNOWS THAT
NOT BY MY FREEWILL, BUT BY HIS,
THIS WORK,
WHATEVER IT IS,
WAS PROMPTED AND UNDERTAKEN,
AND HAS NOW AT LENGTH BEEN EXECUTED,
I DEDICATE IT:
DESIRING THAT HIS WILL, NOT MY OWN,
BE DONE BY IT;
AND FIRM IN THE HOPE, THAT HE WILL USE IT
TO THE EDIFYING OF HIS PEOPLE.

E. T. V.

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PREFACE

A Biographical Sketch of Martin Luther

I DEEM it expedient to put the reader in possession of the circumstances under which this work was written; for which purpose it is necessary that I premise a rapid sketch of Luther's history, in its connection with Protestantism.

Martin Luther was born in the year 1483, at Isleben, in Saxony. His father, who had worked in the mines of Mansfield, afterwards became a proprietor in them. This enabled him to educate his son, not only with a pious father's care, but with a rich father's liberality. After furnishing him with the elements in some inferior schools, he sent him at an early age to the University of Erfurth: where he made considerable proficiency in classical learning, eloquence, and philosophy, and commenced Master of Arts at the age of twenty. His parents had destined him for the bar; but after devoting himself diligently to the study of the civil law for some time, he forsook it abruptly, and shut himself up in a convent at Erfurth.

Here he became remarkable for his diligence, self-mortification and conscientiousness, occasionally suffering great agitation of mind from an ignorant fear of God. Habitually sad, and at intervals overwhelmed with paroxysms of mental agony, he consulted his vicar-general Staupitius. He comforted Luther by suggesting that he did not know how useful and necessary this trial might be to him:

'God does not thus exercise you for nothing,' he said. 'You will one day see that he will employ you as his servant for great purposes.'

ii

'The event,' adds the historian,¹ 'gave ample honour to the sagacity of Staupitius, and it is very evident that a deep and solid conviction of sin, leading the mind to the search of Scripture-truth, and the investigation of the way of peace, was the mainspring of Luther's whole conduct afterward. And indeed, this view of our reformer's state of mind furnishes the only key to the discovery of the real motives by which he was influenced in his public transactions.'

It was not till the second year of his residence in the monastery, that he accidentally met with a Latin Bible in the library, when for the first time he discovered that large portions of the Scriptures were withheld from the people. Being sick this same year, he was greatly comforted by an elder brother of the convent, who directed his attention to that precious article of our creed, 'I believe in the remission of sins.' Staupitius, he afterwards remarked, had spoken to him as with the voice of an angel, when he taught him that 'true repentance begins with the love of righteousness and of God;' but the old monk led him up to the source of this love. There may be, there is, a breathing after righteousness and a feeling after God, which prepare the way for this love; but there can be no real righteousness worked, nor real love felt of it and of God, till we have the consciousness of his forgiveness. His aged adviser represented to him, that this article implied not merely a GENERAL BELIEF

¹ *The historian that Vaughn refers to is Joseph Milner, who wrote *The History of the Church of Christ* (London, 1812), which Vaughn relied on heavily for this biographical sketch.*

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— for the devils, he remarked, had a faith of that sort — but that it was the command of God, that each particular person should apply this doctrine of the remission of sins to his own particular case; and he referred him for the proof of what he said, to Bernard, Augustine, and St. Paul. With incredible ardour, Luther now gave himself up to the study of the Scriptures, and of Augustine's works. Afterwards, he read other divines, but he stuck close to Augustine and held by him, as we find, to his last hour.

iii

In the year 1507, Luther received holy orders; and the next year, he was called to the Professorship of Divinity at Wittenberg, through the recommendation of his friend Staupitius. Thereby he gave Luther an opportunity to verify his own forebodings concerning him. Here arose his connection with the elector Frederic of Saxony, which was so serviceable to him in all his after-conflicts. Frederic was tenderly anxious for the credit and success of his infant seminary; and Luther more than fulfilled his expectations, both as a teacher of philosophy and as a public minister. 'Eloquent by nature, and powerful in moving the affections, acquainted also in a very uncommon manner with the elegancies and energy of his native tongue, he soon became the wonder of his age.'

In 1510, he was dispatched to Rome on some important business of his order. He performed this so well as to receive the distinction of a doctor's degree upon his return. While at Rome, he had opportunities to notice the spirit with which religious worship was conducted there — its pomp, hurriedness and politicality. He was thankful to return once more to his convent, where he might pray deliberately and fervently without being ridiculed. He now entered upon a public exposition of the Psalms and Paul's Epistle to the Romans; he studied Greek and Hebrew with great diligence. He improved his taste and enlarged his erudition, by availing himself of the philological labours of Erasmus (to which he always owned that he had been greatly indebted). He rejected the corruptive yoke of Aristotle and the Schoolmen, and did not rest, like the satirist who had given him a taste for pulling down in confusion, but sought and found his peace in erecting a scriptural theology upon the ruins of heathenized Christianity. The true light beamed very gradually upon his mind: from *suspecting* error, he became *convinced* that it was there. Constrained to reject error, he was forced step by step into truth.

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He was thus employed with great contention of mind, in studying, ruminating, teaching and preaching. Once he had been favoured with some particular advantages ² for ascertaining the real state of religion — both among clergy and laity in his own country — his attention was in a way compelled to the subject of INDULGENCES. He had not taken it up as a speculation; he did not know the real nature, grounds, ingredients, or ramifications of the evil. As a confessor, he had to deal with acknowledgments of sin; as a priest, he was to dictate penances. The penitents refused to comply, because they had dispensations in their pockets. What a chef-d'oeuvre ³ of Satan's was here! It is not "Sin

² In his office of subaltern vicar, he had about forty monasteries under his inspection, which he had taken occasion to visit.

³ [The most outstanding work of a creative artist or craftsman.](#)

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no more, lest a worse thing happen to you;" but sin as you wish, if you can pay for it.' Luther would not absolve. The brass-browed Tetzel stormed, and ordered his pile of wood to be lighted that he might strike terror into all who should dare to think of being heretics. At present, Luther only said with great mildness from the pulpit, that 'the people might be better employed, than in running from place to place to procure INDULGENCES.' ⁴

v

He was sure it was wrong; he would try to check it; he would try with canonical regularity, applying to arch bishop and bishop for redress. He was so ignorant of the principals, subordinates, and sub-subordinates in the traffic, that he called upon his own archbishop venter to stop the trade!

See how God works. Ambition, vanity, and extravagance are made the instrument of developing the abominations of the Popedom, so that God may develop himself by his dealings with it. The gorgeous temple, whose foundations had previously been laid to the wonderment of man, not to the praise and worship of God, must continue to be built — though not one jot may be subtracted from Leo's ⁵ pomp, sensuality, and magnificence, even though his treasury was already exhausted. Profligate necessity leads him to an expedient which, while it reveals his own spirit, and discloses the principles of the government he administers, could scarcely fail to draw at least some into an inquiry, by what authority they were called to submit to such enormities.

vi

This expedient was indeed not new, for Julius had adopted it before Leo. But it had never been so extensively and so barefacedly practised, as in this instance. It was none other than to make gain from godliness, by selling merits for money — not only by pardoning,

⁴ It is not to be inferred that Luther was at this time ignorant of the doctrine of grace, because he was ignorant of this particular subject. This is the memorable year 1517. In the preceding year, 1516, he thus wrote to a friend. 'I desire to know what your soul is doing; whether wearied at length of its own righteousness, it learns to refresh itself and to rest in the righteousness of Christ. The temptation of presumption in our age is strong in many, and specially in those who labour to be just and good with all their might, and at the same time are ignorant of the righteousness of God, which in Christ is conferred upon all with a rich exuberance of gratuitous liberality. They seek in themselves to work that which is good, in order that they may have a confidence of standing before God, adorned with virtues and merits, which is an impossible attempt. You, my friend, used to be of this same opinion — or rather, of this same mistake. So was I; but now I am fighting against the error, but have not yet prevailed.' — A little before the controversy concerning Indulgences, George, Duke of Saxony, entreated Staupitius to send him some worthy and learned preacher. The vicar-general, in compliance with his request, dispatched Luther with strong recommendations to Dresden. George gave him an order to preach: the sum of Luther's sermon was this: That no man ought to despair of the possibility of salvation; that those who heard the word of God with attentive minds were true disciples of Christ, and were elected and predestined to eternal life. He enlarged on the subject, and showed that the whole doctrine of predestination, if the foundation is laid in Christ, was of singular efficacy to dispel that fear by which men, trembling under the sense of their own unworthiness, are tempted to fly from God, who ought to be our sovereign refuge. Evidence to the same effect may be drawn in abundance from his letter to Spalatinus, written in this same preceding year, containing remarks on Erasmus' interpretations of Scripture, compared with those of Jerome, Augustine, and some of the other Fathers. 'When obedience to the commandment takes place to a certain degree, and yet does not have Christ for its foundation, though it may produce such men as your Fabriciuses, and your Reguluses, that is, very upright moralists according to man's judgment, it has nothing of the nature of genuine righteousness. For men are not made truly righteous, as Aristotle supposes, by performing certain actions which are externally good — for they may still be counterfeit characters — but men must have righteous principles in the first place, and then they will not fail to perform righteous actions. God first respects Abel, and *then* his offering.' — Milner, iv. Cent. xvi. chap. ii.

⁵ Pope Leo X (1475-1510), born Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici.

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but even legalizing, the contempt and defiance of God through the distribution of certain superfluous riches of Christ and of his saints, to which the Pope has the key. The price demanded varied with the circumstances of the buyer, so that all ranks of men might partake of the benefit. In fact, all orders of men were made to contribute to ecclesiastical profligacy, while the infamous Dominican Tetzl had some colour for his boast that he had saved more souls from hell by his Indulgences, than St. Peter had converted to Christianity by his preaching.⁶

Luther inquired, studied, prayed, and called on his rulers. At length, receiving no help but only silence or cautions from authorities, he published his ninety-five theses, or doctrinal propositions on the subject. These were spread, with wonderful impression and effect, in the course of fifteen days, throughout all Germany.

Tetzl answered them by one hundred and six. This gave occasion for sermons in reply and rejoinder. Luther was so dutiful, so simple-hearted, and so confident in truth, that he sent his publications to his superiors in the church — his diocesan and his vicar-general — requesting the vicar-general to transmit them to the Pope. The cause was now fairly before the public. New antagonists arose. Luther was elaborate and temperate in his answers. At length, the lion (Leo) was roused. He had commended brother Martin for his very fine genius, and resolved the dispute into monastic envy — a rivalry between the Dominicans and the Augustinians. But now, within sixty days, Luther must appear to answer for himself at Rome. Indeed, he was already condemned as an incorrigible heretic, without trial, in the apostolic chamber at Rome — even before the citation reached him.

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Through the intercession of his powerful friend, the elector, he gets a hearing at Augsburg (if that can be called a hearing), which gives the accused no alternative but admission of his crime and recantation. Such, however, was the justice and the judgment which Luther met with at the hands of Cajetan.⁷

After going *to* and *beyond* the uttermost of what was right in submission, saving nothing except to write down the six letters (REVOCO), which would have settled everything — though there were other weighty matters in dispute, besides the Indulgences — Luther left his imperious, contemptuous judge with an appeal which he took care to have solemnly registered in due form of law, "from the Pope ill-informed, to the same most holy Leo X, when better informed."

In his several conferences at Augsburg, written and unwritten, Luther had stood distinctly upon his distinguishing ground, 'scripture against all papal decrees.' It is his glory on this occasion, that he maintained it in the very jaws of the usurper's representative. An abject mendicant monk, as the cardinal haughtily termed him, with all due and unfeigned respect for human superiority, took and acted the language which two apprehended and arraigned Apostles had used before him, "We ought to obey God rather than men." [Act 5.29](#)

⁶ Luther quoted this boast by Johann Tetzl, in his tract against Hans Wurst.

⁷ Thomas Cajetan (1469–1534), Dominican theologian, cardinal, and opponent of Martin Luther.

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Cajetan got no honour at Rome by his negotiations at Augsburg. The papal counsellors complained that he had been severe and illiberal, when he should have promised riches, a bishopric, and a cardinal's hat. Such were their hot-burning coals to be heaped on the head of Luther's inflexibility! [Rom 12.20](#) On his return to Wittenberg, at the close of 1518, Luther considered leaving Germany to retire into France. But the elector forbade him, and made earnest application to the emperor Maximilian ⁸ to interpose, and get the controversy settled.

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Meanwhile, Luther renewed his appeal to the Pope. This was followed, strange to tell, by a new bull in favour of Indulgences, confirming all the ancient abuses, and not even mentioning Luther's name. In his then state of mind, clinging as he still did to the Pope's authority, this document was opportune. It served to make Luther's retreat impossible. Maximilian's death, which took place early in 1519, increased the elector's power to protect Luther during the interregnum, ⁹ and led to more lenient measures at Rome. This courteous Saxon knight was sent to replace the imperious Dominican.

'Martin,' he said, 'I took you for some solitary old theologian; whereas I find you a person in all the vigour of life. Then, you are so much favoured with popular opinion, that I could not expect, with the help of twenty-five thousand soldiers, to force you with me to Rome.'

Luther was firm, though softened: he had no objection to writing submissively to the Pope. As yet, he recognised the Pope's authority; and it was a principle with him to show respect to his superiors, and to obey "the powers that be," [Rom 13.1](#) in lawful things, if constituted lawfully.

The famous disputations at Leipzig were held in the month of July, 1519. This is where Luther, who had been refused a safe conduct if he attempted to appear in the character of a disputant, was at length permitted to take up Carolstadt's ¹⁰ half-defended cause, and to answer for himself in opposition to one of the most learned, eloquent, and embittered of his papal opponents. Eckius,¹¹ Luther's former friend, had come to earn laurels for himself, and strength for the Papacy. But He who gives the prey, assigned it to truth, and made this the occasion to supply Luther with many able coadjutors. ¹² Melancthon's approval of his doctrine, and his attachment to Luther personally, were the offspring of this encounter.

'At Wittenberg, Melancthon had probably been well acquainted with Luther's lectures on divinity. But it was in the citadel of Leipzig that he heard the Romish tenets defended by all the arguments that ingenuity could devise. There his suspicions were

⁸ Emperor Maximilian I (1459-1519) of the House of Habsburg. King of the Germans from 1486, and Holy Roman Emperor from 1493 until his death. He was never crowned by the Pope because he couldn't travel to Rome.

⁹ *Interregnum*: the time between two reigns, governments, etc.

¹⁰ Andreas von Karlstadt (1486-1541), a German Protestant theologian born in Karlstadt, Franconia. During his stay in Rome, he saw large-scale corruption in the Church. In September 1516, he wrote 151 theses challenging the practices. In 1519, Johann Eck challenged him to the Leipzig Debate, which Luther joined.

¹¹ i.e., Johann Eck.

¹² *Co-adjutor* – an assistant to a bishop.

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strengthened respecting the evils of the existing hierarchy; and there his righteous spirit was roused to imitate, in the grand object of his future inquiries and exertions, the indefatigable endeavours of his zealous and adventurous friend.' ¹³

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Here it was, that the question of papal supremacy first came into debate. The act of granting Indulgences *assumed* the right; but the principle was now brought forward by Eckius, in malicious wilfulness, for the purpose of throwing scandal upon Luther who as yet, "saw men, but as trees, walking." [Mk 8.24](#) He even maintained the Pope's supremacy, though on inferior grounds. He gave it to him by a right founded on human reasons: DIVINE PERMISSION, and THE CONSENT OF THE FAITHFUL. Though Eckius' thirteen propositions, and Luther's adversative ones, chiefly respected papal domination, they comprehended other topics. And many important matters of a more generally interesting nature, were elicited and agitated by the discussion.

On all the subjects of debate, Luther showed a mind opening itself to truth, as in the instance just cited — though it may be doubted whether he was yet *fully* enlightened to any truth. Even on Justification, and on Freewill, though he held the substance of what he taught afterwards, he did not use the same materials, or the same form of defence. Hear his own account, as given in the preface to his works.

'My own case,' he says, 'is a notable example of the difficulty with which a man emerges from erroneous notions of long standing. How true is the proverb, custom is a second nature! How true is that saying of Augustine that habit, if not resisted, becomes necessity! I had taught divinity both publicly and privately, with the greatest diligence for seven years, such that I retained in my memory almost every word of my lectures. But I was in fact at that time only just initiated into the knowledge and faith of Christ.

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I had only just learned that a man must be justified and saved *not* by works, but by the faith of Christ; and lastly, in regard to pontifical authority, though I publicly maintained that the Pope was not the head of the church by a DIVINE RIGHT, yet I stumbled at the very next step — namely, that the whole papal system was a Satanic invention. I did not see this, but contended obstinately for the Pope's RIGHT, FOUNDED ON HUMAN REASONS — so thoroughly deluded was I by the example of others, by the title of HOLY CHURCH, and by my own habits. Hence, I have learned to have more candour for bigoted Papists, especially if they are not well acquainted with sacred history, or perhaps even with secular history.'

When the debate was over, Luther calmly reviewed his own thirteen propositions, and published them, with concise explanations and proofs; establishing his conclusions chiefly by an appeal to Scripture and to ecclesiastical history.

¹³ Philipp Melanchthon, (1497-1560). German author of the Augsburg Confession of the Lutheran Church (1530), humanist, Reformer, theologian, and educator. He was a friend of Martin Luther and defended his views. In 1521 Melanchthon published the *Loci communes*, the first systematic treatment of the new Wittenberg theology developed by Luther. He played an important role in reforming public schools in Germany. *Ency. Britannica*.

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These wrestling-matches of ancient times were the seed-bed of the reviving church: the people heard, the people read. And thus, according to Luther's favourite maxim, THE STONE which is to destroy Antichrist, WAS CUT OUT WITHOUT HANDS.

In 1520, Miltitz ¹⁴ advised a second letter to the Pope. Advancing towards meridian light, as he now was, Luther found it difficult to do this with integrity; it may be questioned whether he succeeded in his attempt. He had already disclosed to his friend, that he had not much doubt that the Pope is the real Antichrist. 'The lives and conversation of the Popes, their actions, their decrees, *all*,' he said, 'agree most wonderfully to the descriptions of him in Holy Writ.' With what consistency could he still approach the Pope as his authorized head and desired protector, flatter his person, and propose terms of mutual silence? True, the tone of his address is much altered from that of his former letter: he declares many of the abominations of his government; he expressly refuses to recant; he insists upon his great principle, 'perfect freedom in interpreting the word of God.'

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He is also peculiarly wise, just, plain, and forcible in warning the Pope against the big swelling words with which his flatterers dignified him: "O my people, those who call you BLESSED cause you to err." But we could be glad to see more of frankness and less of compliments, e.g., the person not so subtly separated from the office, the man from his court; wishes and prayers for good suppressed, where he had begun to be persuaded that there could be only curse and destruction. The only plausible defence is that his mind was not yet FULLY made up as to what the Pope is. He had doubts; he thought himself bound to go to the uttermost in endeavours to conciliate; such an appeal would be a touchstone. In estimating the rectitude of this measure, it is plain that everything depends on the degree of light which had then beamed upon his mind. But, writing to Spalatinus as he had done early in this same year, and afterwards writing his treatise on the necessity of reformation in the month of June, , and his Babylonian Captivity, in the month of August, it is difficult to conceive that, in the intermediate space, he would have retained a state of mind which, consistent with simplicity, could dictate his, or indeed *any* letter of accommodation to Leo.

At length, however, having abundantly proved his David, and having convinced him of his foolishness, the Lord took it clean away from Luther, while He sealed up his enemies in theirs. Never was there a more manifest illustration of Jewish blindness and induration ¹⁵ than in the counsels of the Conclave at this period. — "He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart" [Joh 12.40](#) — Leo disdains to be conciliated. After three years' delay, when Lutheranism had now grown to a size and strength which no fire can burn, the

¹⁴ Karl von Miltitz (c. 1490-1529) — liaison between the papal court and Elector Frederick the Wise. He met with Luther in Altenburg in 1519, and negotiated a settlement: Luther would be silent on indulgences, write a conciliatory letter to the Pope, and publish a tract supporting papal authority. Luther's silence was contingent on the silence of his opponents, Johann Tetzel and Albert of Mainz. But Luther's statements at the Leipzig Debate, and his three treatises *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *On the Freedom of a Christian*, all published in 1520, made reconciliation impossible. Miltitz investigated Tetzel and accused him of fraud and embezzlement; but Miltitz was later discredited, and his accusations dismissed.

¹⁵ *Induration*: any pathological hardening or thickening of tissue.

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damnatory bull is issued on the 15th of June, 1520, at Rome. And after a further short interval of mysterious silence, it is published in Germany.

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It extracted forty-one propositions out of Luther's writings, declaring them all to be heretical, forbade the reading of his books and commanded them to be burned, excommunicated his person, and required all secular princes to aid in his arrest.

Luther was now quite prepared to receive it — prepared through the judgment which the Lord had now enabled him to form concerning the papal usurpation; and prepared through the willingness which God had given Luther to suffer martyrdom for the truth, if called to that outcome. The trenches were now fairly opened; the war had begun. Luther's first measure was to publish two Tracts. In one of them, he treated the bull ironically, pretending to have some doubts of its authenticity, but still entitling it the 'execrable bull of Antichrist,' and calling on the emperor and all Christian princes to come and defend the church against the Papists. In the other, he gave a serious answer to the forty-one condemned articles, defending the authority of Scripture, and calling everybody to study it, without deference to the expositions of men.

Having answered it, he acted out his reply. If the bull were valid, it was not to be answered, but obeyed. He would therefore show that he considered it an illegal instrument. The *Pope* was the separatist, not he; a bull of Antichrist is a bull to be burnt. He therefore takes the bull, together with the papal decretals, and those parts of the canon law respecting pontifical jurisdiction, and with all due solemnity, he publicly commits them to the flames. This was a measure which afterwards he proved had been deliberately adopted. It was not the effect of heat and rage, but of calm conviction. He selected thirty articles from the books he had burnt, publishing them with a short comment, and appealing to the public whether he had shown them less respect than they deserved. The two last of these were, Article 29. 'The Pope has the power to interpret Scripture, and to teach as he pleases; and no person is allowed to interpret in a different way.'

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Article 30. etc., 'The Pope does not derive from the Scripture, but the Scripture derives authority, power and dignity from the Pope.' He had more, he said, of a similar kind. If we assume his cause was just, then his bold proceedings were unquestionably right.

His was not a case for half-measures. He was either a subject for burning, or a vindicator of the oppressed. What sort of vindicator? Not by the knight-errant's sword, but by such acts as would declare him to be in earnest, and such arguments as would show that he was not in earnest for nothing. His publications at this period, and during the two preceding years, were almost without number. He knew that his life was in his hand; he therefore prized the short interval, as he anticipated, which was allowed him. The cause of Christ, so evidently committed into his hands, was to be maintained, extended, and at length made triumphant, only by the bloodless sword of the Spirit. He would therefore wield that sword with all his might, without cessation, faintness, or weariness. His main expectation was from the word of God, simply and intelligibly set forth. He added short practical and experimental treatises (appeals to plain sense and Scripture), but the expounded word

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was his stay. Hence his great labour in the Epistle to the Galatians, which he first published in the year 1519. After fifteen years of additional research, having made it one material subject of his public lectures during that entire period, it was revised, corrected, enlarged, and re-edited in 1635. His pious, laborious and philosophical historian says,

'I have repeatedly read and meditated on this treatise, and after the most mature reflection, I am fully convinced that, as it was one of the most powerful means of reviving the light of Scripture in the sixteenth century, so it will, in all ages, be capable of doing the same, under the blessing of God, whenever a disposition appears among men to regard the oracles of divine truth, and whenever souls are distressed with a sense of indwelling sin.

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For I perfectly despair of its being relished at all by any but serious, humble and contrite spirits, such being indeed the only persons in the world, to whom the all-important article of justification will appear worthy of all acceptance. The AUTHOR himself had ploughed deep into the human heart, and knew its native depravity. He had long laboured, to no purpose, to gain peace of conscience by legal observances and moral works, and had been relieved from the most pungent anxiety, by a spiritual discovery of the doctrine just mentioned. He was appointed in the counsels of Providence by no means exclusively of the other reformers, but in a manner more extraordinary and much superior to teach mankind, after upwards of a thousand years' obscurity, this great evangelical tenet. Compared with this, how little appear all other objects of controversy! Namely, that man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ.'

I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of inserting one extract from this truly spiritual work. —

'This doctrine of faith must therefore be taught in its purity. Namely, that as a believer, you are so entirely united to Christ by faith, that he and you are made one person as it were. You cannot be separated from Christ; but always adhere so closely to him, as to be able to say with confidence, I am one with Christ. That is, his righteousness, his victory, his life, death, and resurrection, are all mine.

On the other hand, Christ may say, *I am that sinner*. The meaning of this, in other words, is that my sins, death, and punishment, are Christ's, because he is united and joined to me, and I to him. For by faith we are so joined together as to become one flesh and one bone. We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; so that, in strictness, there is more of a union between Christ and me, than exists even in the relation of husband and wife, where the two are considered as one flesh.

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This faith, therefore, is by no means an ineffective quality; but it possesses so great an excellence, that it utterly confounds and destroys the foolish dreams and imaginations of the Sophists, ¹⁶ who have contrived a number of metaphysical fictions concerning

¹⁶ *Sophist*: someone whose reasoning is subtle and often specious, drawing from Greek philosophical methods.

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faith and charity, merits and qualifications. These things are of such moment, that I would gladly explain them more at large, if I could.' ¹⁷

Luther had many antagonists in his warfare. Just as his assertive manifestos were clear, argumentative, and decisive, so his answers to those who attacked them were prompt, energetic, and full. He neither spurned, delayed, nor spared. His admiring historian thinks it necessary to apologize for his vehemence, and for his acrimony. I do not concur with him in the sense of that necessity. God, who made the man, gave him his language. His language was the language for his case, for his hour, for his hearers and readers. Such were the publications *wanted*; such would be *read*: they agitated the high; they were understood by the vulgar. His own account of himself, as given at a later period, is worth a thousand apologies. He says,

'I am born to be a rough controversialist. I clear the ground, pull up weeds, fill up ditches, and smooth the roads. But to build, to plant, to sow, to water, to adorn the country, belongs, by the grace of God, to Melancthon.'

If he had a spirit of rancorous enmity and cold-blooded malice towards his opponents, let him be condemned. But we all know, severe words may be spoken without a particle of malignity, and a smooth tongue often disguises an envenomed spirit. *I* am much more disposed to quarrel with his vanity, than with his petulance.

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The obligations which Charles V owed to Frederic were such as to secure his protection for Luther, to a certain extent.¹⁸ He did not care for his opinions, though his own prejudices were no doubt on the side of the old system. He cared only for the political bearings of the question. And it was obvious that the elector's friend must not be condemned without a hearing. Hence, after much negotiation and correspondence, his appearance at Worms is agreed upon. His wise protector gets an express renunciation of the principle from Charles: 'Faith is not to be kept with heretics.' Several of the princes countersign his safe conduct; and Luther, as if to face as many devils as there were tiles on the houses of the selected city, preaches his way to Worms. His defence there has sometimes disappointed me, and he seems afterwards to have felt that he had been too tame and inexplicit himself. When he later speaks of his boldness (shortly before his death), questioning whether he should have been so bold in that day, he gives God the

¹⁷ There is a defect in Luther's statement of the believer's union with Christ: he does not mark, he did not discern, its origin and foundation, and its consequent exclusiveness and appropriateness to a peculiar people. He refers it all to his believing; which is the manifestation, realization and effectuation of that relation which has subsisted, not in divine purpose only, but in express stipulation and arrangement, from everlasting. And this has been the source of that very faith, or rather of that energizing of the Holy Ghost, which *he* considers as its parent. But *the thing itself*, the nature of this union, is so beautifully described that, whatever its defects, I could be glad to give it all currency.

¹⁸ Frederick III, or **FREDERICK THE WISE** (1463-1525), elector of Saxony who worked for constitutional reform of the Holy Roman Empire and protected Martin Luther after Luther was placed under the imperial ban in 1521. In 1486, Frederick allied himself with Berthold, archbishop of Henneberg, to promote imperial reforms that would increase the power of the nobles against the Holy Roman emperor. In 1500 he became president of the Reichsregiment (the Imperial Governing Council), which was soon disbanded for lack of funds. He was instrumental in securing the election of the emperor **CHARLES V** in 1519 after refusing the crown himself. Frederick appointed Luther and Philipp Melancthon to the University of Wittenberg, and refused to carry out a papal bull against Luther in 1520. After the ban was imposed on Luther the next year, Frederick welcomed him to the Wartburg castle, where Luther translated the Bible into German.

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glory. This is a fact recited triumphantly by many historians with reference to his courage in determining, or rather in proceeding to go up, notwithstanding the strong dissuasives with which he met on his way.

He who made man's mouth and gives him wisdom, and who has promised for such very occasions, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to challenge or resist," [Luk 21.15](#) no doubt ordered Luther's speech in perfect wisdom at that trying hour. The speech he delivered was the speech for the time and for the case. But the question is, was it the speech we should have looked for from a Luther? We admit there never was such a moment, possibly, since the Apostles' days. All the pomp of Caesar was before him. But I confess there is more of the elector Frederic, Spalatinus and Melancthon, than of Paul before Felix, or of Peter and John before the council.

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Hear his own account.

'I have great misgivings (he says in a letter to Spalatinus some months after), and am greatly troubled in conscience, because in compliance with your advice, and that of some other friends, I restrained my spirit at Worms, and did not conduct myself like an Elijah, in attacking those idols. Were I ever to stand before that audience again, they would hear very different language from me.'

And again:

'To please certain friends, and that I might not appear unreasonably obstinate, I did not speak out at the diet of Worms. I did not withstand the tyrants with that decided firmness and animation which becomes a confessor of the Gospel! Moreover, I am quite weary of hearing myself commended for the moderation which I showed on that occasion.'

The dean sets it all down to humility; but I do not doubt that there was much of well-founded and conscientious self-upbraiding in these acknowledgments. He maintained his principle, however: a free use of the word — the Scripture is *for* all, and it is to be freely interpreted *by* all. He would retract that, if convinced by Scripture, but not otherwise. Upon being informed that he was required to say simply and clearly whether he would or would not retract his opinions, Luther instantly said,

'My answer shall be direct and plain. I cannot think myself bound to believe either the Pope or his councils; for it is very clear, not only that they have often erred, but often contradicted themselves. Therefore, unless I am convinced by Scripture or clear reasons, my belief is so confirmed by the scriptural passages that I have produced, and my conscience is so determined to abide by the word of God, that I neither can nor will retract anything — for it is neither safe nor innocent to act against a man's conscience.'

There is something particularly affecting in the words which follow:

'Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. May God help me. Amen.'

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Many attempts were made to persuade him in secret; but the upshot was that he would stand by the word, 'rather than give up the word of God, when the case is quite clear: I WOULD LOSE MY LIFE.' ¹⁹

In the course of three hours after his last interview with the elector Archbishop of Treves (who, though a bigoted Roman Catholic, had shown strong dispositions to serve him), Luther received an order to quit Worms. Only twenty-one days had been allowed for his safe conduct, and he was not permitted to preach on his way home. A sanguinary edict was then smuggled through the diet: many of the members had left Worms before it was voted on. The ceremony of enacting it took place in the emperor's private apartments; the decree was antedated, as though it had passed on the 8th instead of the 21st, and Aleander, the Pope's legate, Luther's accuser, who had been greatly gruelled ²⁰ by the vast consideration and respect shown to Luther, received it as a sort of sop and soporific from the emperor, that he should draw up the sentence.

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'The edict, as might be expected, was penned by Aleander with all possible rancour and malice. The first part of it states that it is the duty of the emperor to protect religion and extinguish heresies. The second part relates the pains that had been taken to bring the heretic back to repentance. And the third proceeds to the condemnation of MARTIN LUTHER in the strongest terms. The emperor says that, by the advice of the electors, princes, orders, and states of the empire, he had resolved to execute the sentence of the Pope, who was the proper guardian of the Catholic faith. He declares that Luther must be looked on as excommunicated, and as a notorious heretic; and he forbids all persons, under the penalty of high treason, to receive, maintain, or protect him. He orders that after the twenty-one days allowed him, Luther should be proceeded against in whatever place he might be — or at least that he should be seized and kept prisoner till the pleasure of his imperial majesty was known. He directs the same punishment to be inflicted on all his adherents or favourers; and that all their goods should be confiscated, unless they can prove that they have left his party and received absolution. He forbids all persons to print, sell, buy, or read any of Luther's books, and he enjoins the princes and magistrates to cause them to be burnt.'

This high-sounding decree was never executed. Charles was too busy, too much entangled with crooked and conflicting politics, too dependent and too needy, to take vengeance for

¹⁹ Much was said in the course of these discussions, about a future council. Luther acknowledged the authority of such a council; maintaining only that it must be legally convened — the civil governor being the sole rightful summoner; — and that its decisions must be regulated by the word of God. There is more of sound than substance in the recognition of this appeal, upon Luther's principles. Waving the difficulty of summoning such a general council, where deputies are to be brought together out of all Christendom, divided as it is into independent states under various supreme heads; what is the decision at last? "The testimony of Scripture is testimony of Scripture to my conscience, only so far as I am led to *understand* Scripture in a sense which is coincident with the general decision. If that decision is contrary to my own deliberate, conscientious and supposedly Spirit-taught views, as a lover of order I bow to the tribunal by submitting to its penalties, whether positive or negative; but I cannot confess myself convinced, or adopt the judgment of the council as my own, without violating Luther's fundamental principle, 'the word is my judge.'" (See Part ii. Sect. 12. note ^k of the following work.) Luther's last answer confirms the distinction which I have been marking here: that his resolution applies to the supposed decision of a council.

²⁰ *Gravelled*: annoyed, disturbed, peeved.

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the Pope, at present, in Germany. In 1522, a diet of the empire held at Nuremberg agreed to a conclusion which Luther considered as an abrogation of it. In 1523, a second diet held at the same place, after some considerable difference of sentiment, concurred in a similar recess. The Lutherans were divided between hope and fear, alternately elated and depressed, during some succeeding years. In 1526, when evil had been anticipated, the diet of Spire, after much jangling, terminated favourably. The Pope's wrath, however, was only deferred.

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In 1529, a second diet at Spire went near to establish the neglected edict of Worms. The violence with which it was conducted, led to a Protest of the Lutheran states and princes (from which we have derived our name of *Protestants*), and was followed by the famous defensive league of Smalcalde. The decree of Augsburg in 1530, served to confirm the necessity of this league.

The most moderate expressions of doctrine, and the most guarded behaviour, had no conciliatory efficacy; force was prepared, and must be repelled by military combination. It is not by strength, however, nor by might — human strength and human might — that the Lord wins his battles. That formidable confederacy, which could bring 70,000 men into the field under the banner of John the Constant,²¹ to meet not more than 8,000 of the emperor's men, soon melted away like the winter's snow. In 1547, the emperor carries all before him, takes the two great Protestant leaders captive, and makes a spectacle of them to their subjects. He establishes his Interim, slays the Protestant witnesses, and assumes to be the MAN OF SIN'S master ^{2Thes 2.3} in his domination over the Lord's heritage. But behold! In three and a half years, the witnesses "whose dead bodies have been lying in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" ^{Rev 11.8} — even in that Germany which has been called the highway of Europe — are seen standing on their feet again. The treacherous and intriguing Maurice ²² is made the instrument of bringing deliverance to the Protestants. The emperor becomes in turn a fugitive, panic-struck, and within a hair's breadth of being the captive of his captives. At length, the un hoped-for treaty of Passau legalizes Protestantism, and secures to the revived witnesses, a seat in the symbolical heavens.

In the year 1546, Luther was removed from both the disasters and the triumphs of these latter scenes, by a rapid sickness and premature death. Fatigue and anxiety had impaired

²¹ Johann the Steadfast or Constant (1468-1532), was Elector of Saxony from 1525 to 1532. He organised the Lutheran Church in the Electorate of Saxony, aided by Martin Luther. This "Saxon model" was soon implemented beyond Saxony, in other territories of the Holy Roman Empire. Luther turned to the Elector for secular leadership and funds on behalf of a church that was largely stripped of its assets and income after the break with Rome.

²² Maurice (1521-1553) —Duke of Saxony. He betrayed the Protestant Faith and assured his father-in-law, Philip of Hesse, that if he surrendered to the emperor, Charles V, he would not be imprisoned. However, Philip was taken prisoner and exiled; and Maurice was promoted to Elector of Saxony. Charles V then tried to reintroduce Catholicism into the Protestant territories. When Charles commissioned Maurice to capture the Lutheran city of Magdeburg (1550), Maurice seized the opportunity to raise an army; he signed compacts with France and Germany's Protestant princes against the Habsburgs. In 1552 he signed a treaty with Henry II of France, to wage a campaign against the emperor Charles V. His father-in-law was eventually freed.

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the native soundness and vigour of his bodily frame, and he died an old man, at the age of sixty-three.

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The storm which had gathered around his head at Worms was repelled in its onset by a prudent stratagem of the elector's, which he had probably communicated in secret to the emperor himself. Having seized his person, by a mock arrest, while returning to Wittenberg, Frederick took and hid Luther in the castle of Wartburg, where he fed and nourished him at his own expense, for ten months. He would have continued to do so to the end of his days if Luther had allowed him. In this hiding-place which he called his Patmos, comparing himself with St. John as banished to that island by Domitian, he saw many visions of the Almighty, which enlightened his future ministry. He betrayed a good deal of impatience under this seclusion. He complained that his kind detainer fed him too well; that he ate and drank too much, that he grew stupid and sensual. But the truth seems to have been this: that stir and bustle and a great to-do were his element. He did not like fowling (though he allegorized it) so well as reading lectures to five or six hundred young men, and preaching to half as many thousands.

Here, however, the Lord nurtured his Moses, and made him wiser in the art of feeding his sheep. And if He allowed him to be dull and heavy, he gave him no inclination to be idle. The Yonker, ²³ in his horseman's suit, wrote many tracts; improved himself in the knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, which he studied very diligently with an eye to his projected translation of the Scriptures, and actually accomplished his German version of the New Testament, so as to publish it this same year. These were not the achievements of sloth and sensuality!

xxii

Of his original works at this period, his answer to Latomus' defence of the Louvain divines was the most elaborate. A confutation, says Seckendorff,²⁴ replete with so much solid learning and sound divinity, that it was impossible to reply to it without being guilty of obvious cavilling ²⁵ or downright impiety. If its author had never published anything else in his whole life, he would, on account of this single tract, deserve to be compared with the greatest divines who ever existed in the church. At the time of writing it, he was furnished with no other book but the Bible. And yet he interprets the leading passages of the Prophets and the Apostles, and does away with the deceitful glosses of sophistical commentators, with so much exquisite erudition and ability that the genuine meaning of the inspired writers cannot help but be clear to every pious and attentive reader.

²³ 'During his residence in the castle of Wartburg he allowed his beard and hair to grow, assumed an equestrian sort of dress, and passed for a country gentleman, under the name of Yonker George.'

²⁴ Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff (1626-1692). Chancellor of Saxe-Weitz, founding chancellor of the Univ. of Halle, scholar of the Reformation, and supporter of Pietists. When Jesuit Louis Maimbourg published the *Histoire du Lutheranisme* in 1680, Seckendorff spent ten years collecting sources on Luther and the Reformation to refute it. This was the first scholarly history of the Reformation, and it contained nearly all sources of Luther's work then available. *Dict. of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions*, eds. Granquist, Haemig, Kolb, Mattes, Strom (Baker Academic, 2017).

²⁵ *Cavilling* (cavil): raising trivial objections.

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He dedicates it to Justus Jonas,²⁶ who had recently been appointed to the presidency of the college of Wittemberg. He desired him to accept it as a sort of congratulatory present, expressing a strong sense of the divine indignation as now poured out upon the visible church, and hinting what he expected from the new president, in the discharge of his office.

'It is my earnest prayer that you, my brother, who by your appointment ought to teach the pestilential decretals of Antichrist, may be enlightened by the Spirit of God to do your duty — that is, to UNTEACH everything that belongs to Popery. For though we are compelled to live in Babylon, we ought to show that our affections are fixed on our own country, Jerusalem. Be strong and of good comfort; and do not fear Baal-peor; but believe in the Lord Jesus, who is blessed forevermore. Amen.'

In this treatise, Luther vindicates himself from the charge of insincerity in having for so long a time submitted to the Pope, and to the received opinions. While he declares his grief for having done so, his thankfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ for that insight into the Scriptures — which he deemed a hundred times preferable to the scholastic divinity of the times — and now his full conviction that the Pope is that monster Antichrist, who was foretold throughout the sacred writings.

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He expresses himself indifferent to the charge of lacking moderation. And as to sedition, it was no more than the Jews had charged Christ with; the main point in debate, he maintains, is 'THE NATURE OF SIN.'

'If in the passages which I have quoted from St. Paul, he says, it can be proved that the Apostle does not use the word SIN in its true and proper sense, my whole argument falls to the ground. But if this cannot be proved, then Latomus' objections are without foundation. He blames me for maintaining that no human action can endure the severity of God's judgment. I reply, he ought to shudder in undertaking to defend the opposite sentiment. Suppose for a moment, that any man could say he has indeed fulfilled the precept of God in some one good work. Then such a man might fairly address the Almighty to this effect:

"Behold, O Lord, by the help of your grace, I have done this good work. There is no sin in it; no defect; it does not need your pardoning mercy. Therefore, in this instance I do not ask for it. I desire that you would judge this action strictly and impartially. I feel assured that, as you are just and faithful, you cannot condemn it; and therefore, I glory in it before You. Our Saviour's prayer teaches me to implore the forgiveness of my trespasses. But in regard to this work, mercy is not necessary for the remission of sin, but rather justice for the reward of merit."

²⁶ Justus Jonas (1493-1555) — a German theologian and reformer. He was a Jurist, Professor, and Hymn writer. Jonas had befriended John Lange, a Greek scholar at Luther's old Augustinian house in Erfurt, and Luther's friend. Jonas and Luther corresponded through Lange. Jonas took sides with Luther after the Leipzig Debate, publishing a tract that defended him against John Eck's charges. He accompanied Luther to the Diet of Worms in 1521. As a result of his association with Luther, he was deposed as canon at St. Severi in Erfurt and excommunicated. His own hero, Erasmus, attacked him for supporting Luther's more contentious approach to reform.

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We are naturally led to such indecent, unchristian conclusions by the pride of the scholastic system! This doctrine of the sinless perfection of human works ²⁷ finds no support in Scripture. It rests entirely on a few expressions of the Fathers, who are yet by no means agreed among themselves. And if they *were* agreed, their authority is still only human.

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We are directed to prove ALL THINGS, and to hold fast that which is good. [1Thes 5.21](#) ALL doctrines, then, are to be proved by the sacred Scriptures. There is no exception here in favour of Augustine, Jerome, Origen, nor even of an antichristian Pope. Augustine, however, is entirely on my side of the question.... Such are my reasons for choosing to call that SIN to which you apply the softer terms *defect* and *imperfection*. But further, I may well interrogate all those who use the language of Latomus, as to whether they do not resemble the Stoics in their abstract definition of a wise man, or Quintilian in his definition of a perfect orator — that is, whether they do not speak of an imaginary character who never was, nor will ever be. I challenge them to produce a man who would dare to speak of his own work, and say it is without sin. Your way of speaking leads to the most pernicious views of the nature of sin. You attribute to mere human powers, that which is to be ascribed to divine grace alone. You make men presumptuous and secure in their vices. You depreciate the knowledge of the mystery of Christ, and by consequence, you depreciate the spirit of thankfulness and love to God. There is a prodigious effusion of grace expended in the conversion of sinners. You lose sight of this; you make nature innocent, and you so darken or pervert the Scripture, that the sense of it is almost lost in the Christian world.'

I make no apology for these instructive extracts.

'The matter of this controversy must always be looked at as of last importance (if anything is to be called important), in which the glory of God, the necessity of the grace of Jesus Christ, the exercises of real humility, and the comfort of afflicted consciences, are more eminently concerned.'

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'Luther concludes his book with observing, that he is accused of treating Thomas Aquinas, Alexander, and others, in an injurious and ungrateful manner. He defends himself by saying that those authors had done much harm to his own mind; and he advises young students of divinity to avoid the scholastic theology and philosophy as the ruin of their souls. He expresses great doubts whether Thomas Aquinas was even a good man: he has a better opinion of Bonaventura. Thomas Aquinas, he says, held many heretical opinions, and is the grand cause of the prevalence of the doctrines of Aristotle, that destroyer of sound doctrine. What is it to me, if the Bishop of Rome has canonized him in his bulls?'

²⁷ It is the works of the godly that are the subject of inquiry; the charge against which Luther here defends himself is, his having maintained that the very best acts of the best men, have the nature of sin.

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Valuable as this work is, however, it will allow no comparison with the truly Herculean and apostolic labour, in which he was interrupted by performing it. He says,

'You can scarcely believe with how much reluctance it is that I have allowed my attention to be diverted from the quiet study of the Scriptures in this Patmos, by reading the sophistical quibbles of Latomus.'

And again:

'I really grudge the time spent in reading and answering this worthless publication, particularly as I was EMPLOYED IN TRANSLATING the Epistles and Gospels into our own language.'

We who sit at ease, and when we have leisure or inclination to read a chapter in the Bible, have nothing to do but take down our Bible and open it to where we please, are apt to forget the labour which it cost to furnish us with that Bible in our native language; and to forget the perils by which we were redeemed into the liberty of reading it with our own eyes, and handling it with our own hands. We especially, who have fallen upon times in which, through the manifest counsel and act of God, out of the supposed three hundred languages and dialects of the earth, versions of the Scriptures are now circulating throughout the whole of the known world in more than one hundred and forty of them — and to whom it is a rare thing to meet an individual who even has it in his heart, much less on his tongue, to put any limits to the circulation of the sacred volume — are ill-prepared by our own feelings and experience, to estimate the boon of a Bible that now, for the first time, is edited in the vernacular tongue.

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But Luther had to fight not only for the right to read, but to labour, that they might have something on which to exercise that right.

'Luther easily foresaw the important consequences which must flow from a fair translation of the Bible in the German language. Nothing would so effectually shake the pillars of ecclesiastical despotism; nothing was so likely to spread the knowledge of pure Christian doctrine. Accordingly, he rejoiced in the design of expediting the work, while his adversaries deprecated the execution of it, more than any heresy of which the greatest enemy of the church could be guilty.'

Accordingly, he had begun, and was preparing himself by the more accurate study of the original languages for the completion of his work, when drawn off by Latomus. This was an enterprise which required the silence and seclusion of his Patmos for its origination and commencement, but which could not be satisfactorily completed without larger resources than he possessed there.

'I find,' he says, 'that I have undertaken a work which is above my strength. I shall not touch the Old Testament till I can have the assistance of yourself and my other friends at Wittemberg. If it were possible that I could be with you and remain undiscovered in a snug chamber, I would come. And there, with your help, I would translate the whole from the beginning, so that at length there might be a version of the Bible fit for

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Christians to read. This would be a great work of immense consequence to the public, and worthy of all our labours.'

This arduous task was at length accomplished: the New Testament, as I have already mentioned, was published in 1522; the Old Testament was done afterwards in parts, till completed in 1530.

'In this work he was much assisted by the labour and advice of several of his friends, particularly Jonas and Melancthon. The whole performance itself was a monument of that astonishing industry which marked the character of this reformer.

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The effects of this labour were soon felt in Germany. Immense numbers now read in their own language the precious word of God, and saw with their own eyes the just foundations of the Lutheran doctrine.'

What an Ithuriel's spear ²⁸ the Lord thus enabled him to put into the hands of the mass of the people! No wonder that the Papists should cry out and burn. What, in fact, has upheld the Popedom, but ignorance of THE BOOK? And what is ultimately to destroy it, according to Luther's intelligent and enlightened anticipation of that event, but the knowledge of *the Book*?

'The kingdom of Antichrist, according to the Prophet Daniel's prediction, must be broken WITHOUT HAND; [Dan 2.24](#) that is, the Scriptures will be understood by and by, and everyone will speak and preach against the papal tyranny from the word of God; until THIS MAN OF SIN is deserted by all his adherents, and dies of himself. This is the true Christian way of destroying him. And to promote this end, we ought to exert every nerve, encounter every danger, and undergo every loss and inconvenience.'

The wonder is that in our days, individuals — or should I rather say *numbers* — who are comprehended in that communion, are zealous for the dissemination of the Scriptures in the spoken language of their country. One of these, towering high above the rest, has been the favoured instrument of distributing more than 300,000 copies of a German version of his own, besides many thousands of this very version of Luther's. ²⁹

'To decide on the merits of Luther's translation would require not only an exact knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek, but also of the German language. Certainly it was elegant and perspicuous, and beyond comparison it was preferable to any scriptural publication which had before been known to the populace.

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It is probable that this work had many defects; but that it was in the main faithful and sound, may be fairly presumed from the solid understanding, biblical learning, and

²⁸ In *Paradise Lost* iv, 778, 788, John Milton refers to **Ithuriel** as a cherub. Along with the Zephon, it is dispatched by Gabriel to locate Satan. The "grieslie King" is discovered in the Garden of Eden "squat like a Toad, close at the ear of Eve." By touching Satan with his spear, Ithuriel causes the Tempter to resume his proper likeness.

²⁹ I need scarcely mention the name of Leander Van Ess. But is there no opposition to this work, among the Roman Catholics? Are there not divisions and fiercest persecutions among them on this very ground? And where, and what, are the Bible Societies of Spain, Portugal, Bavaria and the Italian States?

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multifarious knowledge of the author and his coadjutors. A more acceptable present could scarcely have been conferred on men who were emerging out of darkness. And the example being followed soon after by reformers in other nations, the real knowledge of Scripture, if we take into account the effects of the art of printing, was facilitated to a surprising degree.'

The papistical plagiarist Emser ³⁰ endeavoured first to traduce, and afterwards to rival and supersede Luther. But his "correct" translation was in fact little more than a transcript of Luther's (he was notoriously ignorant of the German language), with the exception of some alterations in favour of the Romish tenets. Thus, Luther was read under Emser's name, and the Lord gave Luther grace to say with his heart, "Notwithstanding, whether in pretence or truth, Christ is preached, and I rejoice in this, yes, and I *will* rejoice." [Phi 1.18](#)

It was not without manifesting, from time to time, a considerable degree of impatience, that Luther was detained for ten months in his solitude. Action was his element, and it was painful for him to sit still.

'For the glory of the word of God, and for the mutual confirmation of myself and others, I would much rather burn on live coals, than live here alone, half-alive and useless. If I perish, it is God's will; nor will the Gospel suffer in any degree. I hope you will succeed me, as Elisha did Elijah!'

I could wish he had not written this last sentence to his friend Melancthon. However, after ten months, the state of his beloved Wittenberg concurred with his own self-centered likes and dislikes, to render it manifestly desirable — for the church's welfare, and by just inference, the clear will of God — that Luther should hazard his life and safety by leaving his retreat and returning to his public station in the then-capital of infant Protestantism.

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Melancthon lacked spirits and vigour; the elector lacked boldness and decision; Carolstadt had become tumultuous; the flock was in the state of sheep without a shepherd; and the enemy was crying, "There, There." Having already made one short visit by stealth, and finding that an occasional interposition would no longer meet the difficulty, he determined to risk all, and knowing the elector as he did, to act first and *then* apologize. Accordingly, he left Wartburg, and wrote his noble letter to the elector, on his way from Borna. In that letter he freely opened his motives and expectations — delivering Frederic from all responsibility for his safety, and testifying of his entire and sole confidence in divine protection. Having done so, he pursued his journey with no real or even pretended safeguard, except Him who is invisible.

'I write these things that your highness may know that I consider myself, in returning to Wittenberg, to be under a far more powerful protection than any which the elector of Saxony can afford me. To be plain, I do not wish to be protected by your highness. It never entered my mind to request your defence of my person. Indeed, it is my decided judgment that, on the contrary, your highness should rather receive support and

³⁰ Jerome Emser (1477-1527) – A German antagonist of Luther. At first Emser sided with the reformers; but he wanted a practical and moral reformation of the clergy, not a doctrinal reformation. After the Leipzig Debate, the breach between them was final. When Emser warned against Luther, Luther launched a scathing attack on Emser.

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protection from the prayers of Luther and the good cause in which he is embarked.³¹ It is a cause which does not call for the help of the sword. God himself will take care of it without human aid. I positively declare that if I knew your highness intended to defend me by force, I would not now return to Wittenberg. This is a case where God alone should direct; and men should stand still, and wait the event without anxiety. And that man will be found to defend both himself and others most bravely, who has the firmest confidence in God. Your highness has but a very feeble reliance on God; and for that reason, I cannot think of resting my defence and hopes of deliverance on you.'

If I were to put my finger on the most splendid moment of Luther's life, I would fix it at Borna.

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All the magnanimity, courage, and perseverance which he displayed afterwards, were but the acting of that Spirit which he had then evidently received: the fruit and effect of the Lord's fullest and clearest manifestation of Himself, as that which he is, to his soul. This enabled Luther to cast his die in God. He cast it at Wartburg; he declared it at Borna. His return to Wittenberg was healing, confidence, and peace to his scattered, agitated, and mistrustful flock.

Luther's valuable life was preserved for the church for twenty-four years after his return to Wittenberg. In these years, he first had to *build*, which he found more difficult than to *destroy*; and then protect, extend, uphold, and perpetuate his infant establishment.³² He had to provide against the rapacity of the secular arm, without making ecclesiastics rich; he had to obtain learned instructors of the people, without feeding hives of drones; he had to make the untaught into teachers; and abolish pomp without violating decency. Often, he was at a loss what to advise; and often he was obliged to adopt what was only second-best in his own eyes. The press was the great weapon of his warfare, and of his culture. His publications extended to a vast variety of subjects, and it may be truly said that he had thought and knowledge, matter and weight, for all. We are to remember that he was all this while like a vessel living in a storm. He was not only an excommunicated man (he had excommunicated in return), but an outlaw under the ban of the empire, whom anybody that dared might have seized and delivered up to justice. Is *this* not the man whom the Lord holds with His right hand, keeps as the apple of His eye, and spreads a table for in the midst of his enemies? [Psa 17.8; 23.5](#)

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Nor were his professed enemies his worst. The slow caution of the elector, the timidity of his coadjutors, the madness of the people, fleshly heat assuming the name and garb of religious fervour, the lust of change — every body must be somebody — envy, debate, clamour, and his own native obstinacy, were more enemies to him than the Ecksiuses and the Aleanders, the Conclave and the Emperor!

³¹ It is unclear why this is in third person, unless perhaps it was transcribed by someone on Luther's behalf. – WHG

³² It was an acknowledged principle with him, as with our reformers, to alter as little as possible. He was more of a Cranmer than a Knox.

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The character of Luther is sufficiently obvious from this mere hint at his history. Magnanimous, capacious, abstinent, studious, disinterested, intrepid, wise, 'He feared God; he feared none else.' Early in life he had been made to drink deep into the knowledge of his own wickedness, accountableness, lostness, and impotency. Melancthon tells of him, that while he was deeply reflecting on the astonishing instances of divine vengeance, so great an alarm would suddenly affect his whole frame, as almost to frighten him to death.

'I was once present when, through intense exertion of mind in the course of an argument respecting some point of doctrine, he was so terrified as to retire to a neighbour's chamber, place himself on the bed, and pray aloud, frequently repeating these words: "He has enclosed all under sin, that he might have mercy on all."' [Gal 3.22](#)

This sensibility of conscience prepared him for a trembling reception of the divine word. We have seen how the Lord threw it in his way. For a considerable time, it spoke only terrors to him. "THEREIN is the righteousness of God revealed," [Rom 1.17](#) stirred him up to blasphemy. At length, the Lord had pity on him and opened his eyes, and showed him that the righteousness of God spoken of there, is not His own essential righteousness, which renders Him the hater and punisher of iniquity, but a substance which He has provided to invest sinners with. And thus, this very expression which had proved a stumbling-block to him, became his entrance into Paradise. In the process of time, the Lord revealed the mystery of this righteousness somewhat more distinctly to him. He showed him that the Lord Jesus Christ was in his own person this righteousness; and that to enter into Him, and to put Him on by faith, was to be righteous before God; that the merit of Christ was complete for justification; that nothing was to be added, or *could* be added to it, by a sinner; and that it was received by faith alone.

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Thus far, the Lord gave him clearness of sight, though not fulness; and He gave it speedily. After and beyond this, He left Luther to blunder, yes, to the end of his days. Now, therefore, "it having pleased God, who had separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace, to reveal his Son in him, he straightway did not confer with flesh and blood;" [Gal 1.15-16](#) "he could not help but speak the things which he had heard and seen;" [1Joh 1.3](#) "he was ready not only to be *bound*, but also to *die* at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." [Act 21.13](#) ³³

God gave three special endowments to this chosen witness, which are the characteristics of his testimony: great knowledge of Scripture, great talent for abstruse and elaborate argumentation, and a singular felicity in addressing the common people. ³⁴

³³ If his faults are required, he had in him every fault under heaven. *In him*, that is, in his flesh, dwelt no good thing; that is, every bad thing dwelt. His within was like ours. "For from within, out of the heart, etc.," etc. But if, as it should rather be, it is inquired what came out of him that is evil *chiefly*, then his vices, as is the nature of evil, were his virtues run mad: he was obstinate, fierce, contemptuous, vain. He was not unkind, as some would represent him; he had "bowels of mercies:" he was not rash; no man more deliberately weighed his words and deeds: he was not implacable; witness his attempts to conciliate that greatest of all bears, the Duke George, our tiger Henry, Carolstadt, Erasmus, and even the Pope.

³⁴ This does not imply that he always interpreted Scripture lightly, or saw all the truth; any more than his skill in arguing implies that he always arrived at right conclusions, or proceeded to them by just steps. His excellency in addressing the

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To illustrate the first of these, his whole works may be appealed to, if his translation of the Bible is not proof enough. For the second, his disputations with Eckius, Latomus, and Erasmus, especially the treatise which follows. For the last, all his numerous tracts and sermons, particularly his address to the common people upon the outbreak of the rustic war.³⁵ His commentary on the Galatians furnishes specimens of the three.

Such was the man, whom the Lord raised up, called forth and employed, as the most prominent, active, and efficacious of his *blessed* workfellows, in accomplishing the Reformation! But how strange it is that man will look only at half of God, and only at the surface of that half, when His whole self stands revealed; and when it is the very aim and contrivance of His operation to effect that complete display! The Reformation was *God's* act — an act inferior only to those of Calvary and of the Red Sea, for manifesting his mighty hand and his outstretched arm. He accomplished it by doing all in all that Luther did, and all in all that Luther's enemies did — by working in Charles as well as in the Elector; in Leo as well as Luther; in Cajetan, Campeggio, Prierias, Hogostratus, and the whole train of yelping curs and growling mastiffs, who were for baiting and burning the decriers of Babylon, as in Jonas, Pomeranus, and Melancthon.

Indeed, if we were to estimate this transaction aright, as a display of God, we must inspect not only the evil workers both visible and invisible, as well as the good, but we must mark the steps by which He prepared for his march, and the combinations with which He conducted it. We must see Constantinople captured by the infidel,³⁶ and the learned of the East shed abroad throughout Christendom; we must see the barbarian imbibing a taste for letters, and the art of printing facilitating the means of acquiring them; we must see activity infused into many and various agents, and that activity excited by various and conflicting interests.

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We must see rival princes, and vassals previously bowed down to the earth, now beginning to ask a reason of their governors; we must see a domineering Charles, a chivalrous Francis, a lustful and rapacious Henry, a cannonading Solyman, a dissipated Leo, a calculating Adrian, a hesitant Clement — German freedom, Italian obsequiousness, Castilian independence, Flemish frivolity, Gallic loyalty, Genoa's fleet and Switzerland's mercenaries, Luther's firmness, Frederic's coldness, Melancthon's dejectedness, and Carolstadt's precipitancy — made, stirred and blended by God as a sort of moral chaos, out of which, in the fulness of his own time, He commands knowledge, liberty, and peace to spring forth upon His captives in Babylon.

common people, let it be observed, did not consist in his having one doctrine or one reason for *them*, and another for the *learned*; he had one Gospel for all, and told it all to all. But he had powers of language, facility of illustration, and simplicity of expression, which made him intelligible and affecting for the most illiterate.

³⁵ Probably referring to the German **PEASANTS' WAR** from 1524-1525. It failed primarily because the aristocracy slaughtered up to 100,000 of the 300,000 poorly-armed peasants and farmers.

³⁶ The capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, Constantinople, was conquered by the Ottoman Army in 1453.

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Luther describes himself, we have seen, as a rough controversialist: controversy was his element; from his first start into public notice, his life was spent in it. I hope my reader has learned not to despise, or even to dread controversy. It has been from the beginning, the Lord's choice weapon for the manifestation of his truth; just as evil has been his own great developer. What are Paul's and John's Epistles, but controversial writings? What was the Lord's whole life and ministry, but a controversy with the Jews? Luther well knew its uses, and he had tasted its *peaceable* fruits: it stirs up inquiry; it stops the mouth of the gainsayers; it roots and grounds the believers. Still, there were three out of his many, from which he would gladly have been spared, for they were maintained against *former* friends. In the first of these, he was all in the right, but not without question; in the second, he was all in the wrong, without question; in the third, he was all in the right, without question — without question, I mean, not as respects any public trial which has been held, and judgment given, but before the tribunal of right reason.

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'Andreas Bodensteinus Carolstadt, *unheard, unconvicted, banished* by Martin Luther.' — What! Had Luther become a persecutor? Did he who should have been a martyr himself, make martyrs of others? Not so; but he was *charged* with doing so, and had appearances against him! Honest Carolstadt — there is some question whether he truly deserves this name — was a turbulent man. He had no hearty relish for Luther's 'broken WITHOUT HANDS;' though a learned man, and still a professor at Wittenberg, he let it be known that he despised learning; and having placed himself at the head of a few raw and hot-brained recruits, he raved at the papal abuses which still remained among them. He proceeded to remove them WITH HANDS, by breaking images and throwing down altars. This disorderly spirit gave the first impulse to Luther's return.

'The account of what had passed at Wittenberg,' he said, 'had almost reduced him to a state of despair. Everything he had as yet suffered was comparatively mere jest and boys' play. He could not lament enough, nor express his disapprobation of those tumultuous proceedings. The Gospel was in imminent danger of being disgraced from this cause.'

Carolstadt fled before him. He became a factious preacher at Orlamund; he was banished by the elector, and restored at length through the intercession of Luther; and he was reconciled to Luther, but without much cordiality. At length, Carolstadt retired into Switzerland, where he exercised his pastoral office in a communion that was more congenial with his own sentiments. He died in 1531. Such is the *short* of Carolstadt, one of Luther's earliest defenders, who turned to be his rival and his enemy, and with whom he waged a sort of fratricidal war for some years after his return from Wartburg — in conferences, sermons and treatises. Of these treatises, his 'Address to the Celestial Prophets and Carolstadt' is the principal. Of his banishment, it is unquestionable that Luther was *not* the author, even though he thoroughly approved of it. Indeed, upon submitting himself, he took great pains to get Carolstadt restored. He could not succeed with Frederic; he did succeed with John.

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Still, I have thought him repulsive, arbitrary, and ungenerously sarcastic in his resistance to this Carolstadt; even as I *had* thought him unwarrantably contemptuous and exclusive in his comments and conflicts with the Munzerites, and somewhat too confident in shifting off all influence of his doctrine from the rustic war. Hence my expression, 'not without question.' But on closer review, I find clear evidence that Carolstadt really was what Luther charged him with being — whimsical, extravagant, false and unsettled in doctrine; a preacher and a practiser of sedition — that he had moreover united himself to Munzer and his associates, and had thereby obtained a niche among the Celestial Prophets. I find clear evidence that Stubner, Stork, Cellery, Munzer and the rest were a nest of designing hypocrites; raging and railing, and making pretensions to divine favour, which they neither defined, nor defended.

His test of false prophecy and false profession, too, let it be remarked, is sound, efficacious, and practicable; though perhaps founded (I refer to his test of conversion) rather too positively and exclusively upon his own personal experience. Again, I find Luther's doctrine so clear in marking the line of civil subordination, that it was impossible for the peasants, or those who made them their stalking-horse,³⁷ to urge that Luther had taught them rebellion. Nor was it less than essential to sound doctrine, that he should disclaim and express his abhorrence of their error. With the exception of that part of the controversy, therefore, which respected his Sacramentarian error, Luther had right on his side. And on *that* subject, Carolstadt (though right in his conclusion) was so defective in his reasoning, so fickle, so versatile, and so disingenuous, that he defeated his own victory.

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In the second of these controversies which, although broached by Carolstadt, soon fell into abler hands, and was at length settled by abler heads than his. ³⁸ Luther was lamentably wrong — wrong in his doctrine, and wrong in the spirit with which he defended it — an affecting monument of what God-enlightened man is, who can literally and strictly see no farther than God gives him eyes to see with — and for whose good it is not, and therefore for God's glory in whom it is not — that he should see everything as it really is. Rather, he should in some particulars be left to show, to remember, and to feel "the rock from which he was hewn, and the hole of the pit from which he was dug." [Isa 51.1](#) Is there any exception to this remark among human teachers and writers? Can we

³⁷ *Stalkinghorse*: a horse behind which a hunter hides while stalking game — a false facade to enable an attack.

³⁸ Zuingle and Oecolampadius, the former at Zurich, and the latter at Basil, were the great defenders of the faith in this cause. Notwithstanding the authority, ponderosity, calumniousness, and inflexibility of Luther, they manifested to the uttermost in opposing them, were enabled to "bring forth judgment unto truth." (Isa 42.3) Zuingle's great work is a commentary on true and false religion, published in 1525, to which he added an appendix on the Eucharist. Oecolampadius' principal performance is a treatise on the genuine meaning of our Lord's words, This is my "body," published about the same time. Erasmus, in his light and profane way, said that it might deceive the very elect; and being called to review it, as one of the public censors, he declared to their high mightinesses, the senate of Basil, that in his opinion, it was a learned, eloquent and elaborate performance he should be disposed to add *pious*, if anything *could* be pious which opposes the judgment and consent of the church. Zuingle testified his sense of the importance of the question by remarking in his letter to Pomeranus, 'I do not think Antichrist can be completely subdued, unless this error of consubstantiation is rooted up.' Oecolampadius traces the origin of the doctrine of the real presence to Peter Lombard; and he contends that every one of the Fathers had held that the words, This is my body, were not to be taken literally.

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mention even *one* on whose writings this mark has not been impressed, so as to make it legible that we are reading a man's book, and not God's?

Luther held that 'the real substance of the Lord's body and blood was in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, *together with* that previous substance which was bread and wine only.' This is a tenet involving all the absurdity of popish transubstantiation, together with an additional one, that the *same* substance is, at the same instant, of two *dissimilar* kinds.

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Now, although the word of God requires us to receive many things as true which are *beyond* the testimony of sense, and *above* the deductions of right reason, it nowhere calls us to receive any thing *contrary* to these. In what page, or chapter, or verse of the Bible are we called to believe a palpable contradiction? This negative applies, by the way, not only to the abstruser articles of the faith — the coexistence of three coequal persons in the one divine essence, the God-manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the reality of divine and diabolical agency within the human soul — but also to those simpler verities which affirm what are called the moral attributes of God, and have been strangely marred and confounded by neglecting it. Luther, for instance, perplexed to reconcile what is commonly understood by these with his representations of truth, has gone the length of maintaining that we do not know what these are in God. Whereas, if justice, faithfulness, purity, grace, mercy, truth etc., etc. are not *essentially* the same sort of principles in God as in his moral creatures, then we can know nothing, we can believe nothing, we can feel nothing rightly, concerning him. How these may consist with each other, and with his actings, is a distinct consideration: but it is a bungling, a false, and a pernicious expedient for solving difficulties, to deny first principles. And if our very ideas of moral qualities, even as respects their essential nature, are impugned and taken from us, then we cease to be moral beings.

The tenet of consubstantiation, then, is contradictory both to sense and reason. Four of our senses testify against it, while only one can claim to bear witness in its favour. If the disciples heard the Lord affirm it, and if we hear it from their writings, then our sight, our touch, our taste, our smell, assure us that it *is* bread, and nothing but bread, which we are pressing with our teeth. ³⁹

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The same body can only be extended in one place at the same instant: the Lord's body, therefore, which is at the right hand of God, cannot be in any place where the sacrament is administered; much less in the various places in which it is administered at the same moment; any more than the bread which he held in his hand when he instituted the ordinance could occupy the same place as the hand itself. Luther talked much of *ubiquity*; but what is the ubiquity of the Lord's body? Are we not expressly taught that it is extended, and remains for a season, in one place?

³⁹ It was this *sort* of argument which brought the infidel Gibbon back to the Protestant faith, from which he had been seduced.... That the text of Scripture which seems to inculcate the real presence is attested only by a single sense, our sight — while the real presence itself is disproved by three of our senses. See his 'Memoir of My Life and Writings,' vol. i. p. 58.

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"So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God;" [Mk 16.19](#)

"Who has gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God." [1Pe 3.22](#)

"Who is even at the right hand of God." [Rom 8.34](#)

"Sit on my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." [Mat 22.44](#)

"Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things." [Act 3.21](#)

Besides, what precludes all dispute is that, in reality, He now has no such body and blood to give.

"There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." [1Cor 15.44](#)

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." [1Cor 15.50](#)

He did indeed turn his spiritual body into a natural one by miracle, for some moments, at sundry times, after his resurrection, in order that he might give competency to his witnesses, "even to those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead." [Act 10.41](#) But his abiding, ordinary subsistence, ever since, has been in a body which no teeth could chew, and no lips enclose.

All Luther's stress was upon the words, 'This is my body.' He carried that sound and just principle of his, 'Interpret Scripture literally, not tropically, where you can,' to a false and even ridiculous extreme here — in opposition to his own admitted exception, 'unless an evident context, and some absurdity which offends against one of the articles of our faith, in the plain meaning, constrain us to such interpretation.' (See Part iv. Sect. iii. p. 239 of the following work.)

xl-lxii [\[long note\]](#)

Is this the only instance of such a form of speech? Circumcision, which elsewhere is called the token of the Abrahamic covenant, is called *the* covenant in some places; the two tablets of stone are called *the* covenant; the lamb is called *the* passover; the rock stricken in Horeb is called *Christ*. [1Cor 10.4](#) Besides, if the bread is consubstantiated into his body, then the cup should also be consubstantiated into a testament; "this cup is the new testament." [Luk 22.20](#) And when we have eaten this flesh, and drunk this blood (if such an act were possible) by carnal chewing and swallowing, what has it done for us? — as if flesh could nourish spirit; or as if Christ's flesh were spirit (though Luther dreamed that it was so).

Luther diminished the impression of his general character as a reasoner, and invalidated the authority of his argumentations, by an elaborate and ingenious obstinacy in this controversy. He gave himself the air of an orator who could descant upon a broomstick, and could defend a bad cause as vehemently as a good one, by exhausting the great powers of his mind in forcible appeals and sophistical illustrations to establish this unfounded tenet. It is not that he knew, or thought, that he was advocating falsehood. His only palliation ⁴⁰ is that he was honest — indeed, honest to his dying hour. For however he might regret the heat of spirit and of language into which he had gone out against his opponents, he never made any concession with respect to his doctrine, but declared it

⁴⁰ *Palliation*: to act in such a way as to cause an offense to seem less serious.

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amidst the concussion and relentings of a severe sickness in 1526. And he continued to preach and write upon it to the last.

The spirit he had manifested, he regretted; and well he might. He had maintained it like a wild bull in a net, calling names, and making devils of his adversaries. To say the least, they were as pure, as learned, and as laborious, if not so commanding in their aspect, so exalted in their sufferings, and so brilliant in their successes, as he was. And rending the mantle which should have covered Switzerland as well as Germany, and made both one against the foe of both, was more his doing than theirs.ⁱ

This acrimonious controversy, deplorable on many accounts, but not without its direct and collateral benefits, began in 1524, and continued up to and beyond Luther's death: the churches which pass under his name still retain his dogma.

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In the last of these controversies, I pronounce him all in the right. By *right*, I mean as respecting his conclusion and his opponent — though he adduces some arguments which might have been spared, and he does not always exhibit a full understanding and correct use of his weapons.

Erasmus, who was Luther's predecessor in age by about sixteen years, had done the reformers some service. This was chiefly by facilitating the knowledge of the ancient languages through his successful researches in literature, but not a little by employing his peculiar talent of ridicule upon some of the grosser abominations of Popery. Not that he had any hearty concern about these; but he was a man born *pour le rire*⁴¹ — he was all for his jest — and monks and friars furnished him with a subject which he did not know how to reject. Like Lucian and Porphyry,⁴² therefore, without seriously meaning it, he prepared the way for a better faith, by deriding much of the old faith. He was indignant to be thought a sceptic; and many now-a-days think him harshly used by such an insinuation. But is not everyone who trifles with his soul, a sceptic? And what is the great multitude of professing Christians, if not such a company of triflers who, if put to the test, would act out what Luther said in his irony: 'God has not given everybody the spirit of martyrdom.'

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Erasmus, however, had committed himself in some degree to the cause of the reformers, by speaking well of them, specially of Luther, and acquiescing in many of their dogmas. In 1520, when the bull was preparing, and when the bull was out, he had both written and spoken in a language very decidedly in Luther's favour:

'God had sent him to reform mankind;'

'Luther's sentiments are true, but I wish to see more mildness in his manner;'

⁴¹ *Pour le rire*: for the jest, or for making fun of something.

⁴² **Lucian** of Samosata (c.115-200 AD) was a Greek satirist. He wrote *On the Death of Peregrinus*, a huckster. Lucian parodies what he sees as inherent naïveté and gullibility in Christians, calling them lackeys and dolts. **Porphyry** of Tyre (c. 234-305 AD) was a Neoplatonic philosopher. He edited and published the *Enneads*, containing the works of his teacher Plotinus. His book, *Against the Christians*, was banned by emperor Constantine the Great.

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'The cause of Luther is invidious, because he at once attacks the bellies of the monks, and the diadem of the Pope.'

'Luther possesses great natural talents; he has a genius particularly adapted to the explanation of difficult points of literature, and for rekindling the sparks of genuine evangelical doctrine, which have been almost extinguished by the trifling subtleties of the schools. Men of the very best character, of the soundest learning, and of the most religious principles, are much pleased with Luther's books. In proportion as any person is remarkable for upright morals and gospel-purity, they have fewer objections to Luther's sentiments. Besides, the life of the man is extolled even by those who cannot bear his doctrines. It grieved him that a man of such FINE PARTS should be rendered desperate by the mad cries and bellowings of the monks.'

When pressed by the Pope's legates to write against Luther, he answered,

'Luther is too great a man for me to encounter. I do not even understand him always. However, to speak plainly, he is so extraordinary a man, that I learn more from a single page of his books than from all the writings of Thomas Aquinas.'

Still, as the cause advanced, Erasmus did not advance with it, but receded. Vanity, a love of the praise of men, was his ruling passion; and the particular mode of it, which was a desire to stand high with great men — with princes, dignified ecclesiastics, and all who were highly thought of — to stand high, specially on the ground of extreme moderation, as became a man of letters. He would be an Atticus ⁴³ in his day. To join heartily with the reformers was not the way to achieve this object. They were despised by the rulers, and, what was still more provoking, they would not make him a king even among themselves.

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'Micat inter omnes
Julium sidus, velut inter ignes
Luna minores.' — HORACE ⁴⁴

But *he* was not that Luna, *Luther* was that Luna. What was to be done therefore, but to pout, and to distinctly separate himself from them — giving the princes to understand clearly that they were mistaken if they thought him one of them. Thus, by a sort of dexterous manoeuvre, he would kill two birds at once: avenge the injury of his 'spreta forma,' and open a way for the sun and stars to shine in upon him. He confessed this in his answer to Luther:

'As yet I have not written a syllable against you; otherwise I might have secured much applause from the great; but I saw that I would injure the Gospel. I have only endeavoured to do away with the idea that there is a perfect understanding between you and me, and that all your doctrines are in my books. Pains have been taken to instill this sentiment into the mind of the princes, and it is hard even now to convince them that it is not so.'

⁴³ Atticus (c. 175) insisted that Aristotle was an atheist, denied the existence of the soul, and rejected divine providence.

⁴⁴ Horace, *Carminum*, lib. i. 12, par. 45. Marcellus is compared to a bright star, illumining with its effulgence the Julian line, and forming the hope and glory of that illustrious house.

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Luther would have been glad if the matter had rested here. Erasmus had done all the service he was made for, but let him not become their enemy. He was a successful sharpshooter — some of his shots would hit, annoy, and dismay. However, there were underlings in Luther's camp as well as in the Pope's, and these did not quite *mind* enough to preserve Luther's line. They would step beyond it. They lampooned the satirist, hinted pretty broadly what he was, and made him little to his great ones. Luther tried to abate the shock of their attack, but it was too late: the enemy had been with him beforehand. Henry VII of England had implored, Pope Adrian VI in two epistles had supplicated, duke George had demanded, Tunstall ⁴⁵ had conjured, Pope Clement VII had persuaded — and all the while, the sting of the wasps was still sore.

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Luther makes his last attempt to pacify Erasmus with great forbearance (yet not trenching upon sincerity) with some galling hints as to the real state of the cause; but, as Erasmus himself allowed, it was done with sufficient civility.

'I will not complain of you, for having behaved yourself as a man estranged from us, to keep fair with the Papists, my enemies; nor that you have censured us with too much acrimony.' ...

'The whole world must own with gratitude your great talents and services in the cause of literature, through the revival of which we are enabled to read the sacred Scriptures in their originals. — I never wished that, forsaking or neglecting your own proper talents, you should enter into our camp.' ...

'I could have wished that the COMPLAINT of Hutten had never been published.' ...

'I am concerned, as well as you, that the resentment and hatred of so many eminent persons have been excited against you. I must suppose that this gives you no small uneasiness; for virtue like yours, mere human virtue, cannot raise a man above being affected by such trials'...

'What can I do now? Things are exasperated on both sides; and I could wish, if I might be allowed to act the part of a mediator, that they would cease to attack you with such animosity, and allow your old age to rest in peace in the Lord. And thus, they would conduct themselves, in my opinion, if they either considered your weakness, or the magnitude of the controverted cause, which has been long since beyond your capacity. They would show their moderation towards you that much more, since our affairs are advanced to such a point, that our cause is in no peril, even if Erasmus were to attack it with all his might — so far are we from fearing any of his strokes and strictures.'

'Our prayer is that the Lord may bestow on you a spirit worthy of your great reputation; but if this is not granted, I entreat you, if you cannot help us, to remain at least a spectator of our severe conflict, and not join our adversaries; and in particular, do not write tracts against us, on which condition I will not publish against you.'

⁴⁵ Cuthbert Tunstall (1474-1559) English church leader, diplomat, and royal adviser. He was Prince-Bishop of Durham during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I.

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All is in vain: to preserve his gold, to show his gratitude for what he has already received, and (unless he is barbarously treated) to earn more, his pledges must now be redeemed, and out comes the *Diatrobe*.⁴⁶

He vapours much about the great danger of publishing it:

'No printer at Basil would dare to undertake his or any work which contained a word against Luther.'

He tells Henry VI (to whom he had sent a part of the manuscript for his approbation)

'The die is cast; my little book on Freewill is published: a bold deed, believe me, if the situation of Germany at this time is considered. I expect to be pelted; but I will console myself with the example of your majesty, who has not escaped their outrages.'

Conscience speaks out, when he says to Wolsey,

'I have not chosen to dedicate this work to anyone, least my calumniators should instantly say that in this business I had been hired to please the great. Otherwise, I would have inscribed it to you, or to the Pope.'

His ruling passion speaks out, when he declares the mighty consequences which he expected from his publication. He writes to Tunstall:

'The little book is out; and though written with the greatest moderation, it will, if I am not mistaken, excite most prodigious commotions. Already pamphlets fly at my head.'

Such was the birth of the *Diatrobe*; the offspring of a peevish, dissatisfied, vain man who had tampered with both parties, and pleased neither, but was now sufficiently determined which side he would be of; yet he still aimed to preserve his favourite character of moderation. It is the work of a great scholar, but not of a deep thinker; of 'one who had scoured the surface of his question, but by no means penetrated into its substance;' of one who knew what is in the Bible, but did not understand the Bible.

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It is imposing, but not solid; objurgatory⁴⁷ and commendative; but neither disproving what he blamed, nor establishing or even defining what he approved. Yet this is a performance such as, not only careless persons, but half the tribe of professedly serious gossellers will defend and maintain in substance, in opposition to Luther's. Indeed, many who call and account themselves Calvinists, or Calvinistic (I am by no means an advocate for names — it is character and principle, not sect or party, that I would uphold), are in heart and understanding — if not avowedly — Freewillers. They oppose (as they seek to do) the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, with the deductions of blinded human reason, and make a God for themselves by blending shreds and patches of Scripture with shreds and patches of their own imagination. They do this instead of simply studying,

⁴⁶ He feared losing the pension which he received from England. Clement had made him a present of two hundred florins. He had received most magnificent promises from popes, prelates, and princes.

⁴⁷ *Objurgatory*: Designed to chide; containing or expressing reproof.

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lying at the feet of, and inhabiting, that living and true One, whom the Bible has been written and published to make known. I subscribe *my* testimony to that of Luther's: that the Diatribe is tedious, distinctive, illusory, false and pernicious.

Luther hesitated to answer it; but at length he consented to do so, for reasons which he declares in the introduction of his letter: if he was to answer such a production of such a man upon such a subject, why, it must be done with all his might, just as he has done it. He that would see Luther, therefore, may behold him here.

Erasmus replied in two distinct treatises under the name of Hyperaspistes, 'defender as with a shield.' The first, as he tells us, was written in ten days, so that it might be ready for the ensuing Frankfort fair (the great mart for literature as well as commerce, in that day). It was a passionate and hasty effusion, in which he did not give himself time to think. The second was a very long and highly-laboured performance, in which he was 'completely unfettered, and completely in earnest; and if he had been able, he would without the least mercy, have trampled on Luther and ground him to powder.' '*Diis aliter visun.*'⁴⁸

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'This second book is very long and very tedious; but the tediousness of which every reader must complain, is not owing so much to the length of the performance, as to the confusion which pervades it throughout. The *writer* is kept sufficiently alive, amidst great prolixity,⁴⁹ by the unceasing irritation of his hostility and resentment; but the *reader* is fatigued and bewildered by being led through obscure paths, one after another, and never arriving at any distinct and satisfactory conclusion. A close attention of the mind to a long series of confused and jumbled propositions, wearies the intellect as infallibly as a continued exertion in looking at difficult to distinguish objects, exhausts the powers of the most perfect organs of vision.'

Luther did not rejoin this twofold reply. He well knew that Erasmus was fighting for victory, not for truth, and he had better things to do than write books merely to repeat unanswered arguments. There was nothing of argument in the Hyperaspistes, which had not been answered in his *Bondage of the Will*; even as there was nothing in the *Diatribe*, which had not been in substance advanced and confuted many times before. *The Letter*, or *Treatise*, which is now presented to the public, must therefore be considered as containing Luther's full, final, and as he deemed it, unrefuted and irrefragable⁵⁰ judgment on the state of the human will.

According to Erasmus, that state is a state of liberty; according to Luther, it is a state of bondage. Such is the subject and position brought into debate by Erasmus, and accepted as matter of challenge by Luther.

The accurate Locke, whose name I would ever recite with veneration and gratitude, has shown that the question is improperly stated. He says that the will, in substance, is but a power of the human mind or of the man; freedom is also a power of the man.

⁴⁸ Latin: the gods have deemed otherwise.

⁴⁹ *Prolixity*: boring wordiness.

⁵⁰ *Irrefragable*: not to be refuted or overthrown; undeniable.

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Therefore, to ask whether the will is free, is to ask whether one power of the man possesses another power of the man. This is like asking whether his sleep is swift, or his virtue is square — liberty is as little applicable to the will, as swift motion is applicable to sleep, or squareness to virtue. The proper question is, not whether *man's will* is free, but whether *man* is free. And Locke determines that man is free, in so far (and only so far) as he can by the direction or choice of his mind, prefer the existence of any action, to the non-existence of that action; and *vice-versa*, to make it exist or not exist. Liberty is a power to act, or not to act, as we choose or *will*.

If, however, this improper question is still urged, whether the will is free, it must be changed into this form: *is man free to will?* That is, does man have liberty in the exercise of his will? Now, this must respect either the *act* of exercising his will; or the *result* of that exercise, which is the thing chosen. As to the former (the act), he determines that, in most cases, man does not have liberty. For once any action that is in his power, is proposed to his thoughts, as to be presently done, *he must will*. In the latter (the result), Locke determines that man cannot help but have liberty: he wills what he wills, and is pleased with what he is pleased with. To question this, is to suppose that one will determines the acts of another will, and that another will determines that; and so on, *in infinitum*.⁵¹ In this latter assertion, Luther, it must be remarked, is as explicit as Locke, expressly maintaining that a compelled will is a contradiction in terms, and should be called *Noluntas*, rather than *Voluntas*: *non-will*, rather than *will*. (See Part i. Sect. xxiv., p. 69)

The schoolmen, from whom Luther and Erasmus took this question (Erasmus was first on this occasion, but Luther had taken it up before), made a distinction between the absolute faculty of the will, and that faculty as exercised, or in action.

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Their question was not, *an sit libera voluntas?* but, *an sit liberum arbitrium?* This, in fact, is a distinction without a difference: because, what is the subject matter about which they were disputing? It is not a dormant faculty, surely, but a faculty such as it is when exercised; for how else can its nature and properties be ascertained? Luther is as perceptive as Locke himself here. Erasmus, in his definition of Freewill, calls it that power of the human will by which a man is able to turn himself to those things which pertain to his salvation, or to turn himself away from them: in reality, meaning to interpose *a something* between the will and its actings. Luther, when canvassing this definition, denies that there can be any such *tertium quid*,⁵² and uses a language so very like Locke's, that it might well draw from his historian the remark,

'Luther, with as much acuteness as if he had studied Mr. Locke's famous chapter on power, replies etc..'

'But, what is meant by this same power "applying itself and turning away itself," unless it is this very willing and refusing, this very choosing and despising, this very approving

⁵¹ See Locke's Essay, vol. i. pp. 195-200. b. ii. c. 21.

⁵² *Tertium quid*: some third thing similar to two opposites but distinct from both.

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and rejecting; in short, unless it is the will performing its very office; I do not see it. So that we must suppose this power to be "a something interposed between the will itself and its actings:" a power by which the will itself draws out the operation of willing and refusing, and by which that very act of willing and refusing is elicited. It is not possible to imagine or conceive anything else here.' See Part iii. Sect. ii. p. 132.

But this false distinction opens a door to the solution of the whole difficulty. Their improper question has been, 'Is the *will* free?' The proper question would be, 'Is the *understanding* free?' that is, has a man's will all the case before it, when he decides upon any given question? A blind understanding will lead to a false determination, though that determination is made without anything approaching compulsion.

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Now, this I apprehend to be just the true state of the case: the NATURAL man, having his understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him because of the blindness of his heart — and moreover, being possessed by the devil, whose energizing consists in maintaining and increasing his blindness — forms his decisions and determinations upon partial and false evidence. The same observation extends to the SPIRITUAL man, in so far as he is *not* spiritual; in so far as his flesh (through which the devil acts upon him) is allowed, in subservience to the great general principle, 'God's glory in his real good' to influence the determination of his will. So that it is the judgment, perception, or understanding, not the will, correctly speaking, which is really in bondage — that faculty which presents objects to the determining faculty, presenting them erroneously, either by suppressing what ought to be made present, or giving a false colour or distorted appearance to that which is and ought to be there. This suggestion will explain the paradox that the will is at the same time, free and not free. In popular language, the will is free, inasmuch as, from its very nature, it cannot be compelled; the will is *not* free, inasmuch as it acts in the dark: so that it may more fitly be called *blind-will*, than *bond-will*, which is Luther's term.

This suggestion will go further; it will explain all mysteries and all paradoxes: Paul's conflict in Romans 7 — Pharaoh's hardening — our own daily experience — indeed, the whole system of God's government, in ruling as He does, a world of moral beings — these all flee before it. Only those considerations which He makes present, can really constitute the materials of any judgment which we form, and consequently of any determination which we can come to, with respect to our own actings. That is, our volitions, while free, are subject to His agency, and through the means of our perceptions, *His* will becomes *ours*. — I have adopted throughout, however, the language of the combatants; which is also the language of common life.

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I speak of the will as *free*, or in bondage; and I use the term Freewill, as expressive of some supposed power in man, separating it into a sort of distinct substance, and almost continually personifying it.

Let it be conceded then, that the question is not correctly worded: that the proper inquiry is not whether man's *will* is free, but whether *man* is free; or rather, as we have just seen,

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whether his perceptive faculty is clear and entire. Still, the substance of the debate remains unaltered, and its importance unimpaired. Essentially, we are ascertaining what is the moral state of man; and the considerations, indeed, even the expressions, introduced into many parts of the discussion, will show that it is not an abstract and isolated question about the *will* which we are entertaining, but an investigation of our Adam-soul. What would be called momentous, if this subject is not so? What can be understood, if this is unknown? Of what sort is the Christ of an ignorant Freewiller? (See Part i. Sect. v., vi., vii., viii.) The truth is, ignorance of the real state of man lies at the root of all religious ignorance. And it is manifestly the ordained, arranged, and continually operated course of the Lord's dealings with his people, to bring them to the knowledge, use, and enjoyment of Himself through the means of deep, minute, self-emptying and self-abasing self-knowledge. How can this be, if not by opening to us the abyss of impotency as well as crime, of blindness as well as enmity, into which we have freely plunged ourselves?

It is the peculiarity of this treatise to explore the present state of the human soul by the aid of scripture testimonies and scriptural reasonings exclusively — without one syllable of abstract philosophical investigation beyond what is absolutely necessary to writing and reading about it intelligibly.⁵³ Luther was not ignorant of metaphysics.

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He had been thoroughly trained in Aristotle and the schoolmen.⁵⁴ If he forbore to use such weapons, it was because he disdained them; I should rather say, it was because, according to his own testimony as recited already, he found them pernicious. Erasmus sometimes compels him to break a lance of this kind, when he gives full proof that he could have handled such weapons dexterously, if he had deemed them to be the weapons of the sanctuary. One who was no common speculator, and no unskilful arbitrator, said of him, 'Even in the metaphysical niceties, which could not be entirely avoided in this abstruse inquiry, he greatly proved an overmatch for Erasmus.' But those who have *really* submitted themselves to the authority of Scripture, and drunk deeply enough to know the Father's testimony concerning Jesus, will feel that, as this subject is the most momentous which can engage the human soul, so this method of investigating it can alone be expected to yield a satisfactory conclusion. They will rejoice therefore, that such a man as Erasmus — a man well acquainted with the letter of Scripture (so Luther testifies of him *qui sic nostra omnia perlustravit* — Part iii. Sect. vi. note ^e) — should have delivered his challenge in the form of an appeal to the canonical Scriptures only; and that such a man

⁵³ I was once asked, why, with such an excellent treatise as Jonathan Edwards' and others, in our own language, I thought it necessary to revive Luther. Here is my answer: Your great metaphysicians decompound man; and if they could, they would decompound God. Your great theologians do the same. But if we would really know either man or God, we must first learn to take the Bible for granted, that it is the word of God; and then study both, as drawn and described in it: not imagining a God for ourselves, by decking out some we know not what *substratum* with a number of what we call attributes; but remembering, that what we hear called His *attributes* are in reality parts of His *essence*, and considering, that it is that Good One who has devised, foreordained, and in his appointed time, manifested the Lord Jesus Christ as the image of Himself, in his person and in his actings, which is our God; and that we ourselves are parts of that Adam, by his dealings with, and declarations concerning which, in Christ, He has been and is effecting the manifestation of what He himself is.

⁵⁴ That is, scholastics, such as Anselm, Peter Abelard, William of Ockham, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas.

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as Luther, who had penetrated to no inconsiderable depth in the mines of that volume, should have accepted and brought it to issue.

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The ORDER of the argumentation is minutely shown in the Table of Contents which follows, and is afterwards noticed at the head of each Part and Section. I shall only premise therefore, that after a short Introduction, Luther pursues the order of Erasmus' march (who, desultory as he is, furnishes us with a clue for his labyrinth), first examining his Preface, then his Proem, then his testimonies, then his pretended refutation, and afterwards establishing his own position by direct proof. He concludes the whole with a pathetic address, even as each Part exhibits a specimen of the melting mood, in its close. It is a common idea that Luther wanted softness; yet the once-cloistered, but afterwards conjugal and paternal monk, could weep, be gentle, be compassionate, be a little child.

The FORM of the treatise is epistolary: it is truly nothing but a LETTER to Erasmus; and therefore I have preferred the division of PARTS to that of CHAPTERS — considering chapters of a letter as anomalous, though I grant that we are accustomed to it in our distribution of the Scriptures. This division, however, it is to be remembered, has no authority, and has led to much misconstruction; Locke advises those who would understand Paul to disregard it. I have only one caution to give with respect to these Parts; which is that the reader not allow himself to take fright at some of the less inviting *gladiations* of the first Part — *not* that I account them uninteresting, but that the work increases in interest, as it proceeds. I trust the reader will find it so, and will remember meanwhile, that we must make a way to the walls, as well as storm them.

I cannot compliment Luther upon his STYLE: the sentences are long, the ideas multifarious; the words often barbarous, their collocation inharmonious. But there is always meaning in what he says, although that meaning is not always obvious, or clear.

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He is sometimes elaborately eloquent, and often simply so. The language is like the man. He is Hercules with his club, rather than Achilles with his sword; more of a Menelaus than an Ulysses; always forcible, sometimes playful; drawing wires now and then; never leaving a loophole for his adversary to escape through, but dragging him through many of his own.

The EXCELLENCES of this treatise are a noble stand for truth on its proper ground — God's testimony unmixed with man's testimony (see Part ii. Sect. i-xii.); that ground is cleared from objection (Part ii. Sect. xiii. xiv.); an integral part of the truth of God is firmly set on its base (see Part iii. Part iv. Part v.); much of it, besides, is collaterally and incidentally asserted or implied — proved, or left to clear and palpable inference — so that a man need not fear to say, 'Give me Luther, and I will give you THE TRUTH.'

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But Luther has not given it to us, either in this treatise or elsewhere. The defects of his theological system are manifest in this best of his best, ⁵⁵ as well as his other performances. I say 'theological system,' because TRUTH is one vast whole, not a number of disjointed and dis severed propositions — a whole made up of many parts which, while distinct, are yet so closely interwoven and compacted with each other, that it is scarcely possible to discern any one of these as it really is, without discerning each, and all, and that whole. Let those who deny a system in the Bible say what they understand by ἀληθεια (*aletheia*, the truth); let those who deny a system in the Bible say why this should be a name for that counsel or plan which God is executing in Christ; why it should be a name for Christ; why it should be a name for God. ⁵⁶

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If God is himself the only truth, THE TRUE ONE; if Christ is his Image; if the counsel, or system of divine operations which is *in Him*, is the image of that Image; if the Gospel or doctrine of the kingdom of God, is the word or declarer of that counsel; then we can have no difficulty in understanding why one and the same term should be applied to all these various subjects. They are all, in various regards, THE TRUTH. Nor is it a sound objection to say, 'this revered man did not see it there,' or, 'that revered man did not see it there.' It may be there still, and if it is not there, then God has come short of His object in revelation, which is not to reveal a proposition, but to reveal HIMSELF. Let everyone so study the Bible as to get to know God by it — which he cannot do, unless he realizes what is written there, IN HIM, and realize it as a whole. Let him at the same time take this caution: he is to get his whole, not by murdering or stifling any part, but by giving its fair, well-considered, and authenticated meaning to each and every portion of the testimony.

The DEFECTS of this treatise, then, are the defects of Luther's theological system. It was not given to him to discern that all God's dealings with creatures are referable to one vast counsel, devised, ordained and operated for the accomplishment of one vast end; that this vast end is the manifestation of God; that this counsel is in all its parts (not only in that which respects man's redemption, but every jot of every part) laid, conducted, and consummated *in* and *by* Christ — the eternally predestined, and in time, very *risen* GOD-MAN ⁵⁷ (see Part ii. Sect. viii. note ^r . Part iii. Sect, xxxii. note ^s). Much less was it given to him to discern the structure and materials of that counsel by which God is effecting this end: that Adam — meaning not only the personal Adam, but all that was created in him, even the whole human race — is the great and capital subject of His self-manifesting operations. (See Part iii. Sect, xxviii. notes ^{t v x} . Sect, xxxvii. note ^l etc.)

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Though he had some insight into the mystery of Christ's person (see Part i. Sect. iii.; also Sect. xvi. note ⁿ) that He was truly God and man, a coequal in the Trinity, made man

⁵⁵ It may not be improper to observe that Luther himself, many years afterwards, had so good an opinion of it, as to declare that he could not review any one of his writings with complete satisfaction, unless perhaps his Catechism and his Bondage of the Will.

⁵⁶ See Joh 1.17; 14.6. Eph 1.13; 4.21; Col 1.5; 1Joh 5.20.

⁵⁷ See, among other places, Joh 1.1-14. 1Joh 1.1, 2. Col 1.15-20. Heb 1. Pro 8.22-31. Mic 5.2.

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through the Virgin's impregnation by the Holy Ghost, he was not fully led into the mystery that his person is constituted by taking a human person, the spiritualized man Jesus, into union with his divine person, and that he has been acting in this person, as inspired, not by his own godhead, but by the Holy Ghost, ⁵⁸ from the beginning — having subsisted as the glorified God-man first predestinely and secretly, up to the period of his ascension; and now, ever since that period, really and declaredly doing the will of the Father continually, not his own will; by the Holy Ghost's inspiration, not his own; thus exhibiting the Trinity in every act he performs, which is, in deed and in truth, every act of God. His human person, moreover, was marvellously formed, so as to be at the same time both son of Adam and son of God; the Holy Ghost's impregnation gave him a spotless soul; the daughter of Adam gave him a sinful body; thus he became the sinless sinner; thus he that knew no sin was made sin for us, ^{2Cor 5.21} and was in all points tempted as we are, without sin; ^{Heb 4.15} that same Holy Ghost which had begotten him sinless, keeping him without sin amidst all the temptations of the world the flesh and the devil, until he had died to sin once, ^{Rom 6.10} and his mortality had been swallowed up by life. ^{2Cor 5.4}

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Into this depth of the mystery of Christ's person, ⁵⁹ of which the essential element is 'union yet distinctness' — both as it respects his divine and human person, and as it respects his oneness with us — it was not given to Luther to penetrate. (See as before, Part ii. Sect. viii. note ^r. Part iii. Sect. xxii. note ³; also Part v. Sect. xxii. note ¹. Sect. xxviii. note ^o.) Again; although it was given him to see the fact of man's coming into the world guilty (which he ascribes to his being born of Adam (see Part v. Sect. xx.), and that entire vitiation of his nature, as brought into the world with him, which renders him both vile and impotent (a fact which he assumes, and reasons upon, throughout the whole of his treatise, but see especially Part iv. Sect. x.); he was not led to see the mystery of the creation and fall of every individual of the human race, male and female, in and with Adam. ⁶⁰ (See Part iv. Sect. x. note ^z. Part v. Sect. xx. note ^p.) Again, though it was given him to see the fact that there are elect and reprobate men, God having predestined some to everlasting life and others to everlasting death, he had no insight into that covenant-standing in Christ, and the appropriateness of His work, and consequently, to the elect, which renders God just

⁵⁸ See especially Matt. 12.28. Acts 1.1, 2. 2.22, etc. 10.38.

⁵⁹ The essence of Christ's person is God-manhood: He is God, the equal of the Father and of the Holy Ghost: He is man by the conception of the Holy Ghost in the Virgin; He is God-man in one substance, through that union of his God person with his man person, which is effected by the agency of the Holy Ghost; Who, being one in essence with his God person, inhabits that manhood of His which he has generated. What is that manhood so generated? Its essence is a pure, spotless, sinless spirit inhabiting (in the days of his flesh, and while yet it was flesh and blood) a sinful body. Romans i. 3, 4. *rightly interpreted*, confirms this satisfying account of the matter: "Who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, that is, the body; Who was declared to be Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness that is, according to his spirit which was holy (the opposition, I maintain, is between his flesh and his spirit) — from the period of his resurrection (ἐξ ἀναστάσεως). The whole tenour of Scripture declaration falls in with this view. His body is his connecting link with manhood, that is, with *Adam-hood*: *Son of man* is not *man* merely; man *anyhow* begotten, *anyhow* made, *anyhow* existent (as the Lord God might have made five hundred species of men); but Son of Adam, one who has his being somehow *through* and *of* the stock of Adam.

⁶⁰ The notes referred to are explicit and full; but take an illustration, which may be of use to some, 1. from the case of Rebekah, Genesis 25.21-23. (... "Two *nations* are in your womb, and two manner of *people* shall be separated from your bowels); and 2. from Heb. 7.9, 10. (For he was yet *in the loins of his Father*, when etc.)

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in making a difference between them, while the original and eternal separation is of a law beyond justice even of that sovereignty which knows no limit but omnipotence.

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Thus, he was not only left, through his ignorance of God's plan and counsel, without any insight into that blessed and glorious principle which reconciles the spiritual mind to the severity of his appointments — for how else will that paramount end of God's manifestation be accomplished? But he was even obliged to give up the justice of God (which, both truly and discernibly, is without a flaw in this procedure) and to take refuge in a most pernicious falsehood, that we know nothing about God's justice, and must be content to be ignorant of what it is, till THE DAY discloses it. Why, if justice, truth, and all other moral excellencies are not in Him essentially what they are in us, and according to our *spiritual* conceptions of HIM, then chaos has come again: we know nothing — nothing of God — He has revealed himself in vain. (See Part iii. Sect, xxviii. notes ^{t v x}. Sect. xxxvii. note ^l. Part iv. Sect. xv. note ⁿ. Part v. Sect, xxxiii. note ^e.) Again; while it was given to him to see something of the freeness and completeness of a sinner's justification in and by Christ, it was impossible, from the very nature of that ignorance which has already been ascribed to him, that he should see it correctly and perfectly. He neither saw the eternal justification which they received in Christ Jesus, distinctly, personally, and individually, before the world began — God engaging to raise them up to Him as his accepted ones, for the sake of the merits of His death; nor did he see with precision what constituted their atonement made in time; nor did he see the state into which they were hereby brought, and have from the beginning been dealt with as though they had been meritoriously brought a state of gracious acceptance, in which they can bring forth, as He is pleased to enable them, and actually do bring forth, as He is pleased to enable them, fruit unto God.

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Nor did he see that, while their crown is a free crown, the Lord has so arranged, and so brings it to pass, that it will be a righteous thing in God to differentiate between the righteous and the wicked. There is a mind in the one, which is correlative to the manifestation He has made and is making of himself in his new-creation kingdom; whereas in the other, there is nothing but enmity toward Him, as so displayed. Again; though Luther had some insight into the nature of Holy-Ghost-influences, the other parts of his ignorance were incompatible with true and correct knowledge here. He did not see that the gift of the Holy Ghost is, in fact, the gift of His personal presence and agency; this is altogether a super-creation gift, a gift in Christ. It is had *when* and *as* God has been pleased to arrange to give it. It is therefore had when it is good for his people to have it, and withheld, as to His manifestation, when it is good that they do not have it. In no way does it contribute to the justification, properly so called, of a sinner, though it enables the manifestedly justified to *show* their justification. When I say, 'in no way contributing,' I mean that none of their acts performed *by* and *in* the Spirit, are what contribute the least particle to their acceptance. They are foreknown freely, predestined freely, called freely, justified freely (that is, they have their absolution from all sin testified to them freely); glorified freely — while it is the Holy Ghost who alone enables, indeed constrains them to

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believe, thereby exhibiting in their persons an obedience to the divine commandment,⁶¹ and putting a badge upon them which declares that they are in the number of those for whom Christ in due time died according to the will of the Father — thus evinced to be the will of the sacred and coequal Three.

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Luther's ignorance on this subject led him to speak of Adam's having the Spirit, of the Spirit's being our law-fulfiller, and of the Jewish church, as not having been justified by the law, because they did not have the Spirit. (See Part iv. Sect. x. note ^z. Part v. Sect. x. note ^z.) — as if the Spirit of grace were a creational, natural, or legal possession! Again; while he saw the Law to be a condemning precept, he did not understand its real nature, form, and design — that it was an interpolation, typical in all its parts, preparatory, temporary; whose glory was to be done away with. (See Part iii. Sect. xxiv. note ⁱ. Part v. Sect. x. xi. xii. xiii.) This ignorance led him to bring it back upon the people of God, instead of banishing it forever; to heap burdens with his left hand, which he had hardly removed with his right. He was not led to apprehend the distinct nature, as well as the end, of Law-obedience and Gospel-obedience; nor that obedience to the Law which he substantially demanded, even if not in word, is not only an obeying *for* life instead of an *acting* of the life given, but even denying God to be what He is and is manifesting himself to be, while we profess to believe in Him, and serve Him.⁶²

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These are some of the principal DEFECTS of Luther's theology: ⁶³ which he manifests, as might be expected, in this elaborate treatise. I have dealt fairly, as I believe, both with his

⁶¹ God has given a commandment, "Repent, and believe the Gospel;" "And this is his commandment, that we believe on the name " etc. This command is congruous to that manifestation which he makes of himself in his super-creation kingdom; I say rather, is congruous to what He himself is — He being, even as He has hereby shown himself to be, the God who in perfect harmony and consistency with all other perfections, is love, grace and mercy. The giving of this commandment, and the receiving of his people according to it, falls in with his great design of God-manifestation, by drawing out, as it does, what is in man, and showing HIM as dealing with what is so drawn out, according to justice and equity. — In no way does it disparage the freeness of the grace, while it manifests to the uttermost the justness of the indignation. Which of the reprobate disobeys the Gospel edict, because he counts himself to be a reprobate? And which of them has any right to deal with himself as such?

⁶² The law is a perfect transcript of creation man's duty, in enigma; typical emblem of Christ as the unblemished Lamb, and of the law of the Spirit of life which is laid up in Him ("Your lamb shall be without blemish," Exo 12.5..." And put the tables in the ark which I had made," Deu 10.5..." A new covenant ... I will put my laws into their mind," etc. Heb. 8.8-11.), and *real teacher* that *Adam* cannot obey his Maker; or rather, that creature, *as* creature, cannot fulfil the law of his sort. But grace has a new mind to study, and it is cast into a mould correspondent to that mind — brought to a mind which is of a much higher tone, and of another string, than that which God taught and demanded at Sinai.

⁶³ I would be understood as not pretending to make full and accurate references in proof of Luther's *seeings* and *not seeings* (which would, in fact, be to analyze and anatomize the whole of his work), but merely to give a hint at each. And now, I well know how I will be arraigned of arrogance for having dared to controvert his positions, even more, to judge and to condemn him. I can only say, as Luther did at Worms; Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. May God help me. Amen. It is the fashion to speak of Luther and the rest of the reformers as little less than inspired men, and of the era of the Reformation as the season of an effusion of the Spirit: the same sort of expression has been applied also to later times; to a *supposed* and, as I will hope, *real* revival of religion which took place in Whitfield's time. Such expressions are unwarranted. I know of but one effusion, when "being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, Jesus shed forth that which was seen and heard," on the day of Pentecost. Granting, therefore, what I would by no means dispute, that it has been the Lord's blessed will from the beginning to make peculiar display of his Spirit at certain seasons — as in private and personal experience, so in the community of his people — and not sticking at a word, but calling this *effusion*, if you please; what is the extent of the benefit? It is not meant that the atmosphere is impregnated with spiritual influences, so that *all* who live at such a period, and within

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excellencies and with his defects. It has been my endeavour to give the most faithful rendering I could to his whole text, and to every word and syllable of it. His excellencies, which, if I have succeeded in my endeavour, cannot be hidden, I have made yet more conspicuous by extricating each point of his argument, and specifying it distinctly, with the numbers 1, 2, 3, etc. prefixed. I have endeavoured to obviate his errors and defects and to supply, severally, by expressing THE TRUTH. My statements are ample, but I am not aware that they are prolix. I have desired to consult brevity; and in some instances, I have obtained, as I fear, the reward of laboured brevity, by becoming obscure. But I hope not often so.

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The reader must have seen already that, if I was to publish Luther, it must be with NOTES. I honestly believe that he would be unintelligible without them, as well as defective and fallacious. I have therefore adhered rigidly to two simple principles throughout: 'in the text, Luther, all Luther, and nothing but Luther; but in the notes, my own sentiments, whether agreeing with or contradicting his.'

Now, if it is asked why, in all wonder, have you thought it worth your while to publish Luther at all, when you pronounce his sentiments to be both defective and erroneous; I am not without an answer. With all its defects and errors, *confessed* and *professed*, I count this a truly estimable, magnificent and illustrious treatise. I publish it therefore,

1. Because I deem the subject all-important.
2. Because I know no other work of value upon this all-important subject, which discusses it by the same sort of argumentation.
3. Because Luther's name is gold with some, and will, I hope, beget readers.
4. Because his *right* is so very right, and so very forcible.

the circle of it, are made partakers of the boon. Otherwise, where did the Caiaphases and Alexanders, the Felixes and Caesars come from? It goes no further than that certain persons are specially taught, strengthened, and comforted at these seasons; and that the number so instructed and enlivened is greater than in ordinary times. It does not follow, that the blessed Spirit has, at these seasons, taught and shown all that is ever to be taught and shown of God and of his truth. The Bible and other records show that there has, on the contrary, been a progression in His teaching; in the *manner* of revealing, if not in the *matter* revealed. Though all truth is contained in, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman " etc. this truth has been made plainer, in various degrees, since the beginning; to Abraham, to Moses, to David, to the Prophets, the Evangelists and the Apostles. It would not be adventurous to affirm that, as the Prophets spoke *to* as well as *of* the Apostles' days, so the Apostles have spoken *to* as well *of* later times — times yet to come. Is it sacrilege or blasphemy to say that what Paul and John wrote and spoke will be better understood, and is even now better understood generally in the church, than it was by their own immediate hearers and readers, if not by themselves? Surely it would be preposterous to affirm that nothing has been added to the store of evangelical learning, since Luther's time, by the discovery of additional manuscripts, and by their collation; by the improved knowledge of the original languages; by the illustrations of travellers, and other sources of intelligence, inquiry and communication. While all other knowledge is progressive, why should biblical knowledge be stationary? Has it, in fact, been so? is it even yet so? And it is plain, this remark does not apply to the elucidation of prophecy exclusively; it extends to the counsel and truth-of God. Take our fourth Article as a specimen. In Luther's and our reformers' time, I suppose everybody expected to rise with a flesh and blood body, as that Article says in spite of Paul's clear words. But now, we have been taught with what sort of a body the Lord rose, and what sort of body we may look to be clothed with ourselves. (See 1Cor 15.44-54. See also Bishop Horsley's Nine Discourses on Our Lord's Resurrection.) These hints must be my defence against the supposed arrogance of impugning and correcting Luther. The Reformation did not absorb the spiritual Sun, any more than former or later periods had, or have done so. He still continues to shoot forth his rays, when and as it pleases Him; and those on whom they fall have already received their direction how to deal with them, from his own mouth, where He says, "No man, when he has lit a candle, covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed; but sets it on a candle-stick, that those who enter in may see the light." Luk 8.16.

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5. Because his very errors and defects throw some rays of light upon their corrector and supplier, claim and obtain a hearing for him, and open a way to the more successful march and entry of truth.

The wise Paley remarks that, if he could but make his pupils sensible of the precise nature of the difficulty, he was half-way towards conquering it. Let the reader see what sort of a God, and of a Christ, and of a salvation, Luther, when brought into day, sets before him; and my expectation is that he will cry out for something better.

I have said Luther's name is gold, and Luther, I trust, will beget readers. Do not let it be supposed that I am therefore leaning upon Luther's arm for the support of truth. May that be far from me. I disclaim, as he did, man's authority; what he protested against the *Fathers*, I protest against *him*, and against every uninspired teacher.

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The fair and legitimate use of human authority is to awaken attention. What so eminent a man of God has said, is worth listening to, is worth weighing; but if he could now be called before us, he would say, 'Weigh it in the balances of Scripture; I desire to be received no further than as I speak according to the oracles of God.' High respect is due to the opinions of a godly, God-raised, God-owned man — but he is man, fallible man at last; and this man carried the mark of his fallibility with him to his grave, indeed, he has left it not only in his writings, but as a frontlet between the eyes of his blindly-devoted followers who *consubstantiate* with him. "To the law and to the testimony." Good! But that appeal will not *ensure* the knowledge of THE TRUTH: all do not know THE TRUTH who search the Scriptures. It is the Scripture as we believe it to be opened to us by the Holy Ghost, which is the guide of our spirit; and while we are bound to yield a certain deference and obedience to the decisions of a lawfully constituted human tribunal — submitting to its inflictions even to the destruction not only of our worldly substance, but of our flesh — our spirit owns no fetters but those which the Spirit imposes.

I commend this work, therefore, both as it respects Luther, and as it respects my own part in it, to the candid, patient and anxious consideration of the reader — earnestly requesting him to compare what is written here with the Scriptures, and carrying with him into that comparison a prayer which I here breathe out for him, 'Lord, grant me to understand your word; preserve me from concluding rashly against anything that is written in this book, however it may contradict my preconceived opinion; and what is true in it, enable me to welcome, digest, hold fast, and enjoy!'

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I have already hinted that my desire has been to accomplish a *faithful* translation. I believe the Lord has given me my desire. I need scarcely say I have found it a difficult undertaking. Every scholar knows that the work of translation is one of great nicety. In every language, there is some *one* word which more precisely than any other, corresponds with the given one; but it may often be the rumination of many hours to find that word. This has been much of my toil. Luther's work, above most others, demanded it: he abounds in emphatic and distinctive words. His meaning also, as I have said, is not always unambiguous. He, too, wrote in a dead language: in which, though he doubtless tried his

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best on this occasion, and was complimented by having it supposed that the elegant pen of Melancthon had assisted him, he was but a clumsy and *middle-aged* composer. He has proverbs, moreover, without end; some German, some classical.

'The Germans, you know (as a very learned friend, whom I consulted in one of my difficulties, obligingly writes to me), are great proverbialists, and many of their allusions are now lost. I have searched a great variety of authors, on a similar inquiry (he was kind enough to do so now), but in vain.'

I too, in a much humbler way, have made some search and a great deal of inquiry, but have learned nothing: witness, the Wolf and the Nightingale (p. 79), the beast which eats itself (p. 196), and the palm and the gourd (p. 373). My greatest perplexity has arisen from his mixing the old with the new, in some instances, and luring me, like a will o' the wisp, to go after him, because I fancied I had a lantern to guide me; but soon I found myself left in darkness.

I fear my notes will incur the censure of two different sorts of reader — each of whom will account many of them superfluous. I can only say none of them have been inserted without thought and design. To the learned, I have been anxious to vindicate my accuracy; to the unlearned, I have been anxious to give such helps as might enable them to understand me. The learned must bear the burden of my laborious dullness, and the unlearned, of my Latin and Greek.

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With respect to my theology, I will not wonder if I appear more positive and dogmatic to some, than even Luther himself. Let me be understood here. While I make no claim to infallibility, but desire only that my assertions may be brought to the standard of Scripture, I desire to give my reader the full benefit of the firmness and deliberateness with which I have formed, entertained, and advanced my opinion, by omitting all such qualifying and hesitative restrictions such as, 'if I am not mistaken,' 'I believe it will be found,' 'I would venture to affirm,' etc. Such subjects require a mind made up in the instructor; and if he would not invite others to doubt, his language must breathe the indubitative confidence which he feels. Besides, there is an energy, as well as an importance in truth, which inspires boldness, even as it demands it.

I cannot take leave of my reader without desiring him to acknowledge his obligations to the late venerable Dean of Carlisle, Dr. Isaac Milner, to whose completion of his brother's valuable history I am indebted, almost exclusively, for my account of Luther. It is a work of great research in which, by ransacking a vast body of original documents, and drawing light from sources which former historians had been content to leave unexplored, he has vindicated, illustrated, and adorned this dauntless standard-bearer of the Reformation.

Postscript on Plato and Augustine

It has been my endeavour to assist the unlearned and those who may not have access to books, by giving some account of the various persons named in this work. There are two capital writers I would aim at: PLATO is one of these; AUGUSTINE is the other. Not only

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their celebrity, but the frequent reference made to them by Luther (especially to the latter), would render my omission inexcusable.

1. The great PLATO, then (for such he truly was), seems to have been no favourite with Luther, who was deeply conscious of the mischievous tendency of his writings as fostering a spirit of proud self-sufficiency, and as having cooperated with other sources of error to contaminate the truth, by exhibiting some semblances of its glory and beauty. In Part iv. Sect. lii. he speaks contemptuously of his 'Chaos;' and in Part ii. Sect. v. of his 'Ideas.' This Plato, however, appears to have been led into some vast conceptions of God (whence he derived them, is another question) — His nature, will, power, and operations into some exalted aspirations after communion with him — and into some elaborate attempts to purify and elevate the morals of his countrymen. Like others who speculated upon God without God's guidance, he made matter eternal as well as God, though he gave God a supremacy over it, and ascribed to him both the modelling of the world, and commanding it into being.

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Doubtless, it is a strange jumble which he makes — the world having a soul, indeed a compound soul; man with his two souls, and second causes placing a material body round a germ of immortality! — but in his 'chaos,' wild as it is, and that universal soul which was plunged into it, and by its agitation brought out order, we see the vestige of corrupted truth; in his 'ideas,' or 'first forms of things,' we see something yet more nearly approaching reality — even the eternal God devising, ordaining, and protruding everything which exists. And in his ideal world, with God reigning in its highest height, as compared with the visible system and its sun, we catch a faint glimpse of the invisible glory, and of that repose which will be found in the uninterrupted contemplation of the reposing God. I am not for bringing men back to Platonism, but for letting them see, that even pagan Plato had a conception and a relish beyond many on whom the true light has shone; and for leading them to understand, that revelation and tradition have extended much more widely than they are aware of; so that it should not appear strange, if even heathens are dealt with on a ground of knowledge which we may falsely have supposed they did not have the means of possessing. (See Part iii. Sect. xxviii. note ^v. Part v. Sect. xxvi. note ^c.)

"The notion of a Trinity, more or less removed from the purity of the Christian faith, is found to have been a leading principle in all the ancient schools of philosophy, and in the religions of almost all nations; and traces of an early popular belief of it appear even in the abominable rites of idolatrous worship. If reason was insufficient for this great discovery, what could be the means of information but what the Platonists themselves assign, *θεοπαράδοτος θεολογία*; (*theoparadotos theologia*) "a theology delivered from the Gods," *i.e.*, a revelation. This is the account which Platonists, who were no Christians, have given of the origin of their master's doctrine.

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But from what revelation could they derive their information, who lived before the Christian, and had no light from the Mosaic? For whatever some of the early Fathers

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may have imagined, there is no evidence that Plato or Pythagoras were at all acquainted with the Mosaic writings: not to insist that the worship of a Trinity is traced to an earlier age than that of Plato or of Pythagoras, or even of Moses. Their information could only be drawn from traditions founded upon earlier revelations; from the scattered fragments of the ancient patriarchal creed — that creed which was universal before the defection of the first idolaters, which the corruptions of idolatry, gross and enormous as they were, could never totally obliterate.' —

'What Socrates said of him, what Plato wrote, and the rest of the heathen philosophers of several nations, is all no more than the twilight of revelation, after the sun of it was set in the race of Noah.' (See Horsley's Letters to Priestley, pp. 49, 50.)

I am rather surprised that Luther should flee⁶⁴ so roughly at Plato, because his beloved Augustine acknowledged obligations to him.

'And first, as you should show me how you resist the proud, and give grace to the humble; and how great your mercy is shown to be in the way of humility; you procured for me, by means of a person highly inflated with philosophical pride, some of the books of Plato translated into Latin, in which I read passages concerning the divine word similar to those in the first chapter of St John's Gospel; in which his eternal divinity was exhibited, but not his incarnation, his atonement, his humiliation, and glorification of his human nature. For you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes; that men might come to you weary and heavy laden, and that you might refresh them.... Thus, I began to form better views of the divine nature, even from Plato's writings, as your people of old spoiled the Egyptians of their gold, because, whatever good there is in anything, is all your own.

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And at the same time, I was enabled to escape the evil which was in those books, and not attend to the idols of Egypt.' —

His historian remarks upon this,

'There is something divinely spiritual in the manner of his deliverance. That the Platonic books should also give the first occasion, is very remarkable; though I apprehend the Latin translation which he saw, had improved on Plato by the mixture of something scriptural, according to the manner of the Ammonian philosophers.'⁶⁵

⁶⁴ *Flee*: to express contempt by mockery.

⁶⁵ Milner does not appear to have understood what the investigating Horsley has made plain: that Plato was not an inventor, nor were the Ammonians scriptural improvers of human inventions. Rather, both Plato and those from whom he copied, were retailers, in fact, of mutilated revelations. 'These notions were by no means peculiar to the Platonic school. The Platonists pretended to be no more than the expositors of a more ancient doctrine which is traced from Plato to Parmenides; from Parmenides to his masters of the Pythagorean sect; from the Pythagoreans to Orpheus, the earliest of the Grecian mystagogues; from Orpheus to the secret lore of the Egyptian priests, in which the foundations of the Orphic theology were laid. Similar notions of a triple principle prevailed in the Persian and Chaldean theology; and vestiges even of the *worship* of a Trinity were discernible in the Roman superstition in a very late age. Ehe Romans had received this worship from their Trojan ancestors. For the Trojans brought it with them into Italy from Phrygia. In Phrygia it was introduced by Dardanus as early as in the ninth century after Noah's flood. Dardanus carried it with him from Samothrace, where the personages that were its objects, were worshipped under the heathen name of Cabirim.... 'The Great or Mighty ones;' for that is the import of the Hebrew name. And their Latin appellation is of like import,

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Thus Plato, it seems, could hold the candle to an Augustine, while he was himself far from the light. But there was truth, we see, and discriminating truth, mixed and blended with his falsehood.

2. AUGUSTINE's errors were those of Luther, increased by an ignorance of the doctrine of justification. He had the elements of this doctrine, it is said, but he never put them together.

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His case was a very remarkable one. After a profligate youth, in which he had run to great excess of riot; after having infected himself with the poison of the Manichees (see Part iv. Sect. ix. note ^v. Sect. xi. note ^h); after having sold himself into the service of vain-glory, lasciviousness, pride and atheism, he was made to bow down before the true God, and to kiss his Son. God had hereby signally and specially prepared him to be the champion of grace in opposition to Pelagianism, which started up in his days a many-varied monster. By degrees, he was led to use his own experience as an interpreter of Scripture. And though, as his historian tells us, St. Paul's doctrine of predestination was a doctrine that, with him, followed experiential religion, as a shadow follows the substance — it was not embraced for its own sake — yet follow him it did. And he was persuaded of it, and embraced it, and maintained it in much, though not all of its vigour, against its antagonists. In fact, how could he defend the doctrine of grace, as his historian terms it (not meaning grace in its fulness, but only the gift of the Spirit), without it?

If his historian is correct, we have in Augustine a confirmation of the salutary effect of controversy. It was Pelagianism which made Augustine understand what he did about predestination. We have it also exemplified that, not to know the root and outline of truth is not to know any branch or feature of it thoroughly. His historian would commend him for his *moderation*, which here is another name for his *ignorance*. But the reality is, not thoroughly understanding predestination, which is the root "of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ," he did not understand justification, he did not understand redemption, he did not understand man's state, he did not understand that grace of which he was the strenuous and honoured defender.

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Grace of the Spirit (*properly* so called) is but a part of the grace of God the Father, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began. And even of that part of which he spoke so sweetly and so feelingly, he did not discern the spring, channel, and mouth. What is to be said of this — how it should have been so arranged to this beloved child, that he should have been left, and kept, and used in his ignorance, is one question; the fact that he *was* so left, is another. The truth is, he and his venerable yoke-fellow Luther, are clear confirmers of the position I have maintained in a preceding note, that the light of divine truth is progressive. Augustine knew what Cyprian did not, and Luther knew what Augustine did not; and why is the climax to end with Luther, Calvin, and Cranmer? Grace,

Penates... Thus the joint worship of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, the triad of the Roman capital, is traced to that of the THREE MIGHTY ONES in Samothrace, which was established in that island. It is impossible to determine at what precise time, but earlier than the days of Abraham, if Eusebius may be credited. — Horsley's Letters to Priestley, pp. 47-49.

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however, though not in all its *fulness*, yet in all its *freeness*, was Augustine's theme and Augustine's glory. With such a history going before, how could he teach anything else?

'The distinguishing glory of the Gospel is to teach humility, and to give God his due honour; and Augustine was singularly prepared for this by a course of internal experience. He had felt human insufficiency completely, and knew that in himself dwelt no good thing. Hence, he was admirably qualified to describe the total depravity and apostasy of human nature, and he described what he knew to be true.... Humility is his theme. Augustine taught men what it means to be humble before God. This he does everywhere with godly simplicity, with inexpressible seriousness. And in doing this, no uninspired writer ever exceeded, and I am apt to think none ever equalled him in any age.... Few writers have been equal to him in describing the internal conflict of flesh and spirit.... He describes this in a manner unknown to any but those who have deeply felt it: and the Pelagian pretensions to perfection oblige him to say more than otherwise would be needful to prove: that the most humble and the most holy have, through life, to combat indwelling sin....

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Two more practical subjects he delights to handle: charity and heavenly-mindedness. In both he excels wonderfully... A reference of all things to a future life, and the depth of humble love, appear in all his writings — as in truth, they influenced all his practice, from the moment of his conversion.'

With all his darkness, therefore, abiding thick upon him (we are not to call darkness light because God commanded the light to shine out of it), He who forms the light and creates darkness made him a light to His church.

'For a thousand years and upwards, the light of divine grace which shone here and there in individuals during the dreary night of superstition, was nourished by his writings. Next to the sacred Scriptures, these were the guides of men who feared God. Nor do we have, in all history, an instance of such extensive utility derived to the church from the writings of men.'

Beatus Augustinus is the title by which he is commonly quoted. And a word from him, for confirmation, was usually made an end of all strife by Luther, Calvin, and all the Oracles of the Reformation, when eleven hundred years had rolled over his ashes.

MARTIN LUTHER, etc.

*To the venerable Mr. Erasmus of Rotterdam
Martin Luther sends grace and peace in Christ.*

INTRODUCTION.

Reasons for the Work.

IN replying so tardily to your Diatribe ⁶⁶ on Freewill, my venerable Erasmus, I have done violence both to the general expectation and to my own custom. Till this instance, I have seemed willing not only to lay hold on such opportunities of writing when they occurred to me, but even to go in search of them without provocation. Some perhaps will be ready to wonder at this new and unusual *patience* (as it may be) or *fear* of Luther's, who has not been roused from his silence even by so many speeches and letters which have been bandied to and fro among his adversaries, congratulating Erasmus upon his victory, and chanting an *Io Pæan*. ⁶⁷

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So then, this Maccabæus and most inflexible Assertor has at length found an antagonist worthy of him, whom he does not dare to open his mouth against!

I am so far from blaming these men, however, that I am quite ready to yield a palm to you myself, such as I never yet did to any man. I admit that you not only very far excel me in eloquence and genius (a palm which we all deservedly yield to you — how much more such a man as I; a barbarian who has always dwelt amidst barbarism), but that you have checked both my spirit and my inclination to answer you, and have made me languid before the battle. You have done this twice over: first, by your art in pleading this cause with such a wonderful command of temper, from first to last, that you have made it impossible for me to be angry with you; and secondly, by contriving, through fortune, accident, or fate, to say nothing on this great subject which has not been said before. In fact, you say so much less for Freewill, and yet ascribe so much more to it, than the Sophists ⁶⁸ have done before you (of which I shall speak more at large hereafter), that it seemed quite superfluous to answer those arguments of yours which I have so often confuted myself, and which have been trodden underfoot, and crushed to atoms, by Philip Melancthon's invincible 'Common Places.' ⁶⁹

⁶⁶ *Diatribæ*. One of the names by which Erasmus chose to distinguish his performance on Freewill. He borrows it from the debates of the ancient philosophers; and would be understood to announce a canvassing of the question rather than a judicial determination upon it. The original Greek term denotes, 1. The place trodden by the feet while they were engaged in the debate. 2. The time spent in such debate. 3. The debate itself. Erasmus' *Diatribæ*, therefore, is a disquisition, or disputation, on Freewill. Luther often personifies it.

⁶⁷ *Io Pæan* — in ancient Greece, a hymn of praise; especially one sung to invoke or thank a deity.

⁶⁸ The schoolmen, with Peter Lombard at their head, who arose about the middle of the twelfth century; idolizers of Aristotle; their theology abounding with metaphysical subtleties, and their disputations greatly resembling those of the Greek sophists.

⁶⁹ Luther refers to the former editions of Melancthon's 'Common Places,' which contained some passages not found in the later ones; this among others. The divine predestination takes away liberty from man [Not choice, but unbiassed choice; freeness and contingency of choice. ED.]. For all things happen according to divine predestination; as well the external actions as the internal thoughts of all creatures. . . . The judgment of the flesh abhors this sentiment, but the judgment of the spirit embraces it. For you will not learn the fear of God, or confidence in Him, from any source more surely than when you have imbued your mind with this sentiment concerning predestination. It is to passages such as these that Luther doubtless refers in the testimony here given to Melancthon's work; and it has been inferred from the

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In my judgment, that work of his deserves not only to be immortalized, but even canonized. So mean and worthless did yours appear when compared with it, that I exceedingly pitied *you*, who were polluting your most elegant and ingenious diction with such filth of argument, and was quite angry with your most unworthy *matter*, for being conveyed in so richly ornamented a style of eloquence. It is just as if the sweepings of the house or of the stable were borne about on men's shoulders in vases of gold and silver! You seem to have been sensible of this yourself, from the difficulty with which you were persuaded to undertake the office of writing, on this occasion. Your conscience, no doubt, admonishing you, that with whatever powers of eloquence you might attempt the subject, it would be impossible to so gloss it over that I would not discover the excrementitious nature of your matter through all the tricky ornaments of phrase with which you might cover it — that I should not discover it, I say, who though rude in speech, by the grace of God, I am not rude in knowledge.

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For I do not hesitate, with Paul, to thus claim the gift of knowledge for myself, and to withhold it from you with equal confidence — while I claim eloquence and genius for you, and willingly withhold them from myself, as I ought to do.

So that I have been led to reason thus with myself: If there are those who have not drunk deeper into our writings, nor yet more firmly maintain them (fortified as they are by such an accumulation of Scripture proofs) than to be shaken by those trifling or good for nothing arguments of Erasmus, though dressed out, then I admit, in the most engaging apparel, such persons are not worth being cured by an answer from me. For nothing could be said or written which would be sufficient for such men, though many thousands of books were repeated a thousand times over. You might just as well plough the seashore and cast your seed into the sand, or fill a cask that is full of holes, with water. We have ministered abundantly to those who have drunk of the Spirit as their Teacher, through the instrumentality of our books; and they perfectly despise your performances; and as for those who read without the Spirit, it is no wonder if they are driven like the seed with every wind. To such persons, God would not say enough, if He were to convert all his creatures into tongues. Thus, I have almost determined to leave these persons, stumbled as they were by your publication, with the crowd which glories in you and decrees that you are a triumph.

You see then, that it is neither the multitude of my engagements, nor the difficulty of the undertaking, nor the vastness of your eloquence, nor any fear of you, but mere disgust, indignation, and contempt — or to say the truth, my deliberate judgment respecting your Diatribe, which has restrained the impulse of my mind to answer you. This is not to mention what also has its place here: that fever-like yourself, with the greatest pertinacity,

withdrawing of it in subsequent editions, that Melancthon afterwards changed his sentiments on these subjects. The late Dean of Carlisle has investigated this supposition with his usual accuracy and diligence; and concludes that he probably did alter his earlier sentiments to some extent in later life. Truth, however, does not stand in man or by man. Too much has no doubt been made of supposed changes in the opinions of many learned and pious divines. But after all, what do these prove? We have the same sources of knowledge as they, and we must draw our light from the clear spring, not from the polluted and uncertain stream. See Milner's Eccles. Hist, vol. iv. p. 920-926, first edition.

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you take care to always be evasive and ambiguous.⁷⁰ More cautious than Ulysses, you flatter yourself that you contrive to sail between Scylla and Charybdis,⁷¹ while you would be understood to have asserted nothing, yet again assume the air of an asserter. With men of this sort, how is it possible to *confer* and to *compare*,⁷² unless one possessed the art of catching Proteus?⁷³ Hereafter I will show you with Christ's help, what I can do in this way, and what you have gained by putting me to it.

Still it is not without reason that I answer you now. The faithful brethren in Christ impel me by suggesting the general expectation which is entertained of a reply from my pen — inasmuch as the authority of Erasmus is not to be despised, and the true Christian doctrine is brought into jeopardy in the hearts of many. At length, too, it has occurred to me that there has been a great lack of piety in my silence; and that I have been beguiled by the wisdom or wickedness of my flesh into a forgetfulness of my office, which makes me debtor to the wise and to the unwise, especially when I am called to discharge it by the entreaties of so many of the brethren.

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For, our business⁷⁴ is not content with an external teacher. Besides Him who plants and waters without, it desires the Spirit of God also (that He may give the increase, and being Himself life, He may teach the doctrine of life within the soul — a thought which imposed on me). Still, whereas this Spirit is free, and breathes not where we would, but where He himself wills, I should have observed that rule of Paul's, "Be instant in season, out of season," for we know not at what hour the Lord shall come. What if some have not yet experienced the teaching of the Spirit through my writings, and have been dashed to the ground by your Diatribe! It may be that their hour has not yet come.

And who knows but that God may deign to visit even you, my excellent Erasmus, by so wretched and frail a little vessel of His, as myself? Who knows but that I may come to you in a happy hour (I wish it from my heart of the Father of Mercies through Christ our Lord) by means of this treatise, and may gain a most dear brother? For, although you both think ill and write ill on the subject of Freewill, I owe you vast obligations for having greatly confirmed me in my sentiments, by letting me see the cause of Freewill pleaded by such and so great a genius, with all his might — and yet, after all, so little is effected that it

⁷⁰ *Lubricus et flexiloquus* — *Lub.* 'one that slips out of your hands, so that you cannot grapple with him.' *Flex.* 'one whose words will bend many ways, as being of doubtful or pliable meaning.

⁷¹ Greek mythology: Scylla was a sea nymph transformed into a sea monster who lived on one side of a narrow strait; drowned and devoured sailors who tried to escape Charybdis (a whirlpool) on the other side of the strait.

⁷² *Conferri aut componi* — What Erasmus professed to do, and thereupon gave the name of 'Collatio' to his Treatise: 'a sort of conference and comparison of sentiment; each disputant bringing his opinion and arguments, and placing them front to front with his opponent's. — Proteus was a sort of Demigod supposed to have the power of changing himself into many forms.

⁷³ *Proteus* (Greek mythology): the prophetic old man of the sea and shepherd of the sea's flocks. He was subject to the sea god Poseidon.... Proteus knew all things—past, present, and future—but disliked divulging what he knew. Those who wished to consult him first had to surprise and bind him during his noonday slumber. Even when caught he would try to escape by assuming all sorts of shapes. *Ency. Brit.*

⁷⁴ *Res nostra* — The ministering of Christ is the business spoken of here, by a phrase correspondent with 'res bellica,' 'res navalis,' 'res judiciaria,' etc. etc. as being the trade, occupation, and sole concern of Christ's ministers, in whose name he speaks here.

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stands worse than it did before. Here is an evident proof that Freewill is a downright lie, since, like the woman in the Gospel, the more it is healed by the doctors, the worse it fares. I will give unbounded thanks to you if the event is that you are made to know the truth through me, even as I have become more fixed in it through you. Yet, each of these results is the gift of the Spirit, not the achievement of our own good offices.⁷⁵

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We must therefore pray God to open my mouth and your heart, and the hearts of all men, and to be present himself as a Teacher in the midst of us, speaking and hearing severally within our souls. Once more, let me beg of you, my Erasmus, to bear with my rudeness of speech, even as I bear with your ignorance on these subjects. God does not give all his gifts to one man; nor have we all power to do all things; or, as Paul says, "There are distributions of gifts, but the same Spirit." [1Cor 12.11](#) It remains, therefore, that the gifts labour mutually for each other, and that one man bear the burden of another's penury by the gift which he has received himself; thus we fulfil the law of Christ. (Gal 6.2.)

⁷⁵ *Officium nostri* – *Off.* 'What a man has to do;' 'his business,' implying a relation; such as 'munus et officium oculorum,' the office or function of the eye. Hence, 'good office, obligation, or kindness conferred.'

PART I. ERASMUS' PREFACE REVIEWED.

SECTION 1. Assertions defended.

I WOULD begin with passing rapidly through some chapters of your Preface, by which you sink our cause and set up your own.⁷⁶ And first, having already found fault with me in other publications, for being so positive and inflexible in my assertions, in this you declare yourself to be so little pleased with my assertions, that you would be ready to go over and side⁷⁷ with the Sceptics on any subject in which the inviolable authority of the divine Scriptures, and the decrees of the Church, would allow you to do so. Indeed, on all occasions, you willingly submit your own judgment to that of the Church, whether you understand what she prescribes or not. This is the temper you like.

I give you credit, as I should, for speaking with a benevolent mind which loves peace; but if another man were to say so, I would perhaps inveigh against him, as is my way. I would not, however, allow even you, though writing with the best intention, to indulge so erroneous an opinion.

11-12 [\[long note\]](#)

For it is not the property of a Christian mind to be displeased with assertions — indeed, a man must be absolutely pleased with assertions, or he will never be a Christian. Now, that we may not mock each other with vague words,⁷⁸ I call 'adhering with constancy, affirming, confessing, maintaining, and invincibly persevering,' an ASSERTION. Nor do I believe that the word 'assertion' means anything else, either as it is used by the Latins, or in our own age. Again, I confine 'assertion' to those things which have been delivered by God to us in the sacred writings. We do not want Erasmus, or any other Master, to teach us in doubtful matters, or in matters that are unprofitable and unnecessary, those assertions which are not only foolish but even impious — those very strifes and contentions which Paul more than once condemns.⁷⁹ Nor do I assume that you speak of them in this place, unless by adopting the manner of a ridiculous Orator, you have chosen to presume one subject of debate and discuss another (like the one who harangued the Rhombus); or with the madness of an impious Writer, you are contending that the article of Freewill is dubious or unnecessary.ⁱⁱ

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We Christians disclaim all intercourse with the Sceptics and Academics, but we admit into our family asserters who are twofold more obstinate than even the Stoics themselves. How often the Apostle Paul demands that Plerophory,⁸⁰ or most assured and most tenacious 'assertion' of what our conscience believes! In Romans 10 he calls it 'confession,' saying,

⁷⁶ *Gravas, ornas*. The figure is mixed: gr. 'clog, load, weigh down.' *Orn*. 'beautify with apparel.' — [your ornate load](#).

⁷⁷ *Pedibus discessurus*. A Roman phrase taken from their method of voting in the senate, when they dissented from the decree as proposed: they walked over to the opposite side of the house.

⁷⁸ *Ne verbis ludamur*. 'That we may not be mocked by words;' 'made the sport of words.'

⁷⁹ [Rom 1.29; 1Cor 3.3; 2Cor 12.20](#).

⁸⁰ Luther has no authority for this interpretation of the term Plerophory, which expresses no more than full evidence of a fact or truth; or full assurance of that fact or truth. But in substance, he is correct; confession (which amounts to assertion) is demanded.

"and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." (Rom 10.10.) And Christ says, "He who confesses me before men, I will also confess him before my Father." (Mat 10.32.) Peter commands us to give a reason for the hope that is in us. (1Pet 3.15.) And what need is there for many words? Nothing is more notorious and more celebrated among Christians than Assertion. Take away assertions, and you take away Christianity. Indeed, the Holy Ghost is given to them from heaven, that He may glorify Christ and confess him even unto death. Unless *this* is not asserting: to die for confessing and asserting! In short, the Spirit is such an assertor that He even goes out as a champion to invade the world, and reprove it of sin, as though he would provoke it to fight. And Paul commands Timothy to "rebuke, and to be instant out of season." (Joh 16.8; 2Tim 4.2) But what a droll sort of rebuker he would be, who neither assuredly believes, nor with constancy asserts, the truth which he rebukes others for rejecting. I would send the fellow to Anticyra.⁸¹ But I am far more foolish myself, in wasting words and time on a matter that is clearer than the sun. What Christian would endure that assertions should be despised? This would be nothing else but a denial of all religion and piety at once; or an assertion that neither religion, nor piety, nor any dogma of the faith, is of the least moment. And why, I ask, do *you also* deal in assertions?

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You say, 'I am not pleased with assertions, and I like this temper better than its opposite.'

But you would be understood to mean nothing about confessing Christ and his dogmas in this place. I thank you for the hint, and out of kindness to you, I will recede from my right and from my practice, and will forbear to judge your intention, reserving such judgment for another time, or for other topics. Meanwhile, I advise you to correct your tongue and your pen, and hereafter to abstain from such expressions. For however sound and pure your mind may be, your speech (which is said to be the image of the mind) is not so. For if you judge the cause of Freewill to be one which it is not necessary to understand, and to be no part of Christianity, then you speak correctly; but your judgment is profane. On the contrary, if you judge it to be necessary, then you speak profanely and judge correctly. But then, there is no room for these mighty complaints and exaggerations about useless assertions and contentions: for what have these to do with the question at issue?

SECT. 2. Erasmus shown to be a Sceptic.

But what do you say to those words of yours in which you speak not of the cause of Freewill only, but of all religious dogmas in general — 'that if the inviolable authority of the divine writings and the decrees of the Church allowed it, you would go over and side with the Sceptics, so displeased are you with assertions.'

What a Proteus is in those words, 'inviolable authority and decrees of the Church!' — as if you had a great reverence, truly, for the Scriptures and for the Church, but hint that you wished you were at liberty to become a Sceptic. What Christian would speak this way? If you say this about useless dogmas concerning matters of *indifference*, what novelty is there in this? In such cases, who does *not* desire the licence of the Sceptical profession?

15

⁸¹ *Anticyra*. The famous island of Hellebore, which cured mad people. Hence 'Naviget Anticyram.' —Hor.

Indeed, what Christian does not, in point of fact, freely use this licence to condemn those who are the sworn captives of any particular sentiment? Unless (as your words almost express) you account Christians, in the main, to be the sort whose doctrines have no value, though they are foolish enough to jangle about them, and to fight the battle of counter-assertion! If on the contrary, you speak of *necessary* doctrines, what assertion can be more impious than for a man to say that he wishes to be at liberty to assert *nothing* in such cases? A Christian would rather say, 'I am so far from delighting in the sentiment of the Sceptics that, wherever the infirmity of my flesh allows me, I would not only adhere firmly to the word of God, asserting what it asserts, but I would even wish to be as confident as possible in matters that are *not* necessary, and which fall outside the limits of Scripture assertion. For what is more wretched than uncertainty?

Again, what shall we say to these words subjoined to it: 'to which in all things I willingly submit my judgment, whether I understand what they prescribe, or not?' What is this that you say, Erasmus? Is it not enough to have submitted your judgment to Scripture? Do you also submit it to the decrees of the Church? What, has she the power to decree what the Scripture has *not* decreed? If so, then what becomes of liberty, and of the power of judging those dogmatists, as Paul writes in 1Cor 14.29, "Let the others judge"? It seems that you do not like that there should be a judge set over the decrees of the Church; but Paul enjoins it. What is this new devotedness and humility of yours, that you take away from us (as far as your example goes) the power of judging the decrees of men, and submit yourself to men, blindfolded? Where does the divine Scripture impose this on us? Then again, what Christian would so commit the injunctions of Scripture and of the Church to the winds, as to say, 'whether I understand what they prescribe or not'? ⁸²

16

You submit yourself, and yet you do not care whether you apprehend what you profess, or not. But a Christian is accursed if he does not apprehend with assurance, the things that are enjoined to him. Indeed, how will he believe, if he does not apprehend? For you call it 'apprehending' here, if a man assuredly receives an affirmation, and does not doubt it like a Sceptic. Otherwise, what is there that any man can apprehend in any creature, if 'to apprehend a thing' is to 'perfectly know and discern it'? Besides, there would then be no place for a man to apprehend some things, and *not* to apprehend some things, at the same time, in the same substance. But if he has apprehended one thing, then he must have apprehended all. For instance, we must apprehend God before we can apprehend any part of his creation. ⁸³

In short, these expressions of yours come to this: that in your view, it is no matter what any man believes anywhere, if only the peace of the world is preserved; and when a man's life, fame, property, and good favour are in danger, he may be allowed to imitate the fellow who said, 'They affirm, I affirm; they deny, I deny;' and to account Christian doctrines nothing better than the opinions of philosophers and ordinary men; and for which it is most foolish to wrangle, contend, and assert, because nothing but contention and a disturbing of the peace of the world results from it. 'What is above us, is nothing to us.' You interpose yourself as a mediator who would put an end to our conflicts by hanging

⁸² Originally, "whether I apprehend, or do not apprehend." The reference is to the previous quote. – WHG

⁸³ That is, we must apprehend His existence, before we can attribute the creation to Him (Rom 1.20; Heb 11.6).

both parties, and persuading us that we are fighting for foolish and useless objects. This is what your words come to, I say. And I think you understand what I suppress here, my Erasmus. ⁸⁴

17

However, let the words pass as I have said; and in the meantime, I will excuse your spirit on the condition that you manifest it no further. O fear the Spirit of God, who searches the reins and hearts, and is not beguiled by fine words. I have said this much to deter you from hereafter loading our cause with charges of positiveness and inflexibility. For upon this plan, you only show that you are nourishing in your heart a Lucian, or some other hog of the Epicurean sty, who, having no belief at all of a God himself, laughs in his sleeve at all those who believe and confess one. Allow us to be asserters, to be studious of assertions, and to be delighted with them. But you, meanwhile, bestow your favour on your Sceptics and Academics, till Christ has called you one also. The Holy Ghost is no Sceptic; nor has He written dubious propositions or mere opinions upon our hearts, but assertions that are more assured and more firmly rooted than life itself, and all that we have learned from experience. ⁸⁵

I come to another head, which is a piece of this. When you distinguish between Christian dogmas, you pretend that some are necessary to be known, and some unnecessary; you say that some are shut up, and some are exposed to view. ⁸⁶ Thus, you either mock us with the words of others, which have been imposed on you, or you try your hand at a sort of rhetorical sally of your own. You adduce in support of your sentiment, that saying of Paul's, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God," (Rom 11.33); and that of Isaiah too: "Who has assisted the Spirit of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor"? (Isa. 40.13)

18

It was easy for you to say these things, as one who knew that he was not writing *to* Luther, but for the multitude; or else as one who did not consider that he was writing *against* Luther — to whom you still give credit, I hope, for some study and discernment in the Scriptures. If not, see whether I do not extort it even from you. If I may also be allowed to play the rhetorician or logician for a moment, I would make this distinction: God, and the writing of God, are two things; no less than the Creator, and the creature of God, are two things. Now, no one doubts that there are many things hidden in God, which we are ignorant of, as He says himself about the last day, "Of that day no man knows, but the Father." (Mat 24.36) And again, in Acts 1. "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons." And again; "I know whom I have chosen." ⁸⁷ (John 13.18) And Paul says, "The

⁸⁴ Luther does not choose to speak out on the subject of Erasmus' scepticism and infidelity, but hints pretty broadly at it. There is only too strong an evidence that the insinuation was just; and that it constituted the most galling part of his attack. Erasmus' object was to rise upon the ruins of Luther; but with what face could the Pope or the Princes prefer an Infidel? See Milner's Eccles. Hist. vol. iv. 935-945.

⁸⁵ A beautiful testimony to the confidence inspired into the soul by the Holy Ghost's teachings! We are more sure of the truth of His assertions than that *we live*; and we hold them more firmly than we do the results of experience.

⁸⁶ *Abstrusa, exposita*. *Abst.* 'thrust from us,' as into secret places; 'hidden from view,' like the apocryphal writings. *Expos.* 'set out in broad day,' like goods displayed for sale.

⁸⁷ Luther appears to understand this text as most do: he knew who those were among men, whom he had chosen, with a supposed reference to eternal election. But the Greek text plainly determines it to mean, 'I know the real character

Lord knows those who are His," (2Tim 2.19) and the like. But it has been rumoured by profane Sophists (with whose mouth you also speak here, Erasmus) that some dogmas of Scripture are shut up in the dark, and not all are exposed to view. This is true; but they have never produced a single instance, nor *can* they produce one, by way of making good this mad assertion of theirs. Yet, by such hobgoblins as these, Satan has deterred men from reading the sacred writings, and rendered holy Scripture contemptible, that he might cause his own pestilent heresies, derived from philosophy, to reign in the Church.

19

SECT. 3. Christian truth is revealed and ascertained, not hidden.

I confess, indeed, that many passages of Scripture are obscure and shut up. This is not so much through the vastness of the truths declared in them, as through our ignorance of words and grammar. But I maintain that these do not at all prevent our knowledge of all things contained in the Scriptures. For what is there of a more august nature, that can yet remain concealed in Scripture, now that — after breaking the seals and rolling away the stone from the door of the sepulchre — that greatest of all mysteries has been spread abroad: that 'Christ, the Son of God, is made man;' ⁸⁸ that 'God is at the same time Three and One;' that 'Christ has suffered for us, and shall reign forever and ever?' Are these things not known, and even sung in the streets? Take Christ from the Scriptures, and what will you find in them any longer?

The things contained in the Scriptures, then, are all brought forth into view, though some passages still remain obscure through our not understanding the words. But it is foolish and profane to know that all the truths of Scripture are set out to view in the clearest light, and to call the truths themselves obscure because a few words are obscure. If the words are obscure in one place, they are plain in another. And the same truth, declared most openly to the whole world, is both announced in the Scriptures by clear words, and left latent by means of obscure ones. But of what moment is it, if the truth itself is in the light, that some one testimony to the truth is yet in the dark, when meanwhile, many other testimonies to the same truth are in the light? Who would say that a public fountain is not in the light, because those who live in a narrow entry do *not* see it, while all who live in the marketplace *do* see it? ⁸⁹

20

SECT. 4. Scripture is falsely accused of obscurity.

Your allusion to the Corycian cave ⁹⁰ is therefore not to purpose. The case is not as you represent it, with respect to the Scriptures. The most abstruse mysteries, and those of greatest majesty, are no longer in retreat, but stand at the very door of the cave, in open

and state of those persons whom I have chosen;' referring to the Twelve exclusively, as those whom he afterwards (15.19.) declares himself to have chosen out of the world.

⁸⁸ Who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness," (as opposed to, "which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh," in the preceding verse) "by the resurrection from the dead." Rom.1.4. *Fractis signaculis*. The stone at the door of the sepulchre was sealed. Matt, 27.65-66.

⁸⁹ Luther's affirmation and argument is of the greatest importance here. All the truth of God, he maintains, is explicitly and intelligibly declared in Scripture; in some passages more obscurely through our ignorance of words; in others more manifestly and unequivocally. But there is no truth, no dogma, that is not distinctly taught and confirmed.

⁹⁰ A cave of singular virtue in Mount Corycus of Cilicia, supposed to be inhabited by the gods.

space, drawn out and exposed to view. For Christ has opened our understanding, that we should understand the Scriptures. (Luk 24.45) And the Gospel has been preached to every creature. (Mar 16.15; Col 1.23) Their sound has gone out into all the land. (Psa 19.4) And all things which have been written, have been written for our learning. (Rom 15.4) Also, all Scripture having been written by inspiration of God, is useful for teaching. (2Tim 3.16) You and all your Sophists, therefore, come and produce a single mystery in the Scriptures which still remains shut up. The fact that so many truths are still shut up to many, does not arise from any obscurity in the Scriptures, but from their own blindness or carelessness, which is such that they take no pains to discern the truth, though it is most evident. As Paul says of the Jews, "The veil remains upon their heart." (2Cor 3.15) And again, "If our Gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost; whose hearts the God of this world has blinded." (2Cor 4.3-4) To blame Scripture, in this matter, is a rashness like that of the man who would complain about the sun and the darkness, after having veiled his own eyes, or gone out of the day-light into a dark room to bide himself.

21

Then let these wretches cease from such a blasphemous perverseness, as to impute the darkness and dullness of their own minds to the Scriptures of God, which are light itself.

So, when you adduce Paul exclaiming "how incomprehensible are his judgments," you seem to have referred the pronoun *HIS* to the Scripture. But Paul does not say how incomprehensible are the judgments of *Scripture*, but of *God*. Thus Isa 40.13 does not say 'who has known the mind of *Scripture*,' but, "who has known the mind of the Lord?" Paul, though, asserts that the mind of the Lord is known to Christians: but then it is about "those things which have been freely given to us," as he says in the same place. (1Cor 2.10-16) You see, therefore, how carelessly you have inspected these passages of Scripture which you have cited — about as aptly as you have done nearly all your others in support of Freewill. And thus your instances which you subjoin with a good deal of suspicion and venom, are not to the purpose at all. For instance, 'the distinction of Persons in the Godhead,' 'the combination of the divine and human nature,' and 'the unpardonable sin.' Their ambiguity, you say, has not even yet been clean removed.⁹¹ If you allude to questions which the Sophists have stirred up on these subjects, I am ready to ask what that most innocent volume of Scripture has done to you, that you should charge her with the abuse with which wicked men have contaminated her purity? Scripture simply confesses the Trinity of Persons in God, the humanity of Christ, and the unpardonable sin. What is there of obscurity or ambiguity here?

22

The Scripture has not told us how these things subsist, as you pretend it has; nor have we any need to know. The Sophists discuss their own dreams on these subjects. Accuse and condemn *them* if you please; but acquit Scripture. If, on the other hand, you speak of the essential truth, and not of factitious questions, I say again, do not accuse Scripture, but the Arians, and those to whom the Gospel is hidden to such a degree that they have no eye to see the clearest testimonies in support of the Trinity of Persons in God, and the humanity of Christ. This is through the working of Satan, who is their God.

⁹¹ *Resectum*. Erasmus' term, taken from 'the close cutting of the nails, or hair, or beard;' or, from 'the excision of the unsound flesh in wounds.' It implies, that all the ambiguity is not yet withdrawn, though some of it may be.

To be brief, there is a twofold clearness in Scripture, even as there is also a twofold obscurity: the one is *external*, contained in the ministry of the word; the other is *internal*, which consists in that knowledge which is of the heart. ⁹²

If you speak of this internal clearness, no one discerns an iota of Scripture, except one who has the Spirit of God. All men have a darkened heart; so that, even though they repeat and are able to quote every passage of Scripture, they neither understand nor truly know anything that is contained in these passages. Nor do they believe that there is a God, or that they are themselves God's creatures, or anything else. According to what is written in Psalm 14, "The fool has said in his heart, God is nothing." (Psa 14.1.) For the Spirit is necessary to the understanding of the whole of Scripture, and of any part of it.

23

But if you speak of that external clearness, nothing at all has been left obscure or ambiguous; rather, everything that is contained in the Scriptures has been drawn out into the most assured light, and declared to the whole world by the ministry of the word.

SECT. 5. Freewill is a necessary subject

But it is still more intolerable, that you should class this question of Freewill with those which are useless and unnecessary, and recount a number of articles to us in its stead — the reception of which you deem sufficient to constitute a pious Christian. Assuredly, any Jew or Heathen who had no knowledge at all of Christ, would find it easy enough to draw out such a pattern of faith as yours. You do not mention Christ in a single jot of it, as though you thought that Christian piety might subsist without Christ — if only God, whose nature is most merciful, is worshipped with all our might. What shall I say here, Erasmus? That your whole air is Lucian, and your breath a vast surfeit of Epicurus? ⁹³ If you account this question an unnecessary one for Christians, then take yourself off the stage, I pray; for we account it necessary.

If it is irreligious, if it is curious, if it is superfluous, as you say it is, to know whether God foreknows anything contingently; whether our will is active in those things which pertain to everlasting salvation, or merely passive, grace meanwhile being the agent; whether we do by mere necessity (which we must rather call 'suffer') whatever we do of good or evil, what will then be religious, I ask? What is important? What is useful to be known? This is perfect trifling, Erasmus! This is too much. Nor is it easy to attribute this conduct of yours to ignorance. An old man like you, who has lived among Christians and long revolved the Scriptures, leaves us no place for excusing or thinking favourably of him.

24

Yet the Papists pardon these strange things in you, and bear with you, because you are writing against Luther. Men who would tear you with their teeth if Luther were out of the way, and you were to write such things! Plato may be my friend, or Socrates my friend,

⁹² Luther refers back to this passage in the progress of his work. (See below, Chap. ii. Sect. 13.) It is not the public ministry of the word, but its instrumentality in general, of which he speaks here. Scripture reveals truth to the ear, and it reveals truth to the heart. The former of these he calls an *external* clearness. The word which falls upon the ear is a plain and clear word. The other he calls an *internal* clearness. The truth which is contained in Scripture, and conveyed by a clear and plain word, is understood by the heart.

⁹³ '*Totus Lucianum spiras et inhalas mihi grandem Epicuri erapulam.*' *Luc.* One of the most noted satirical blasphemers of Christianity: *Epic.* An atheistic heathen philosopher who inculcated pleasure and indifference.

but I must honour *truth* before both. For even if you knew only a little about the Scriptures and about Christianity, the enemy of Christians might surely have known what Christians account necessary and useful, and what they do not. But you are a theologian and a master of Christians. When you set about to prescribe a form of Christianity to them, what might at least have been expected of you is to hesitate, after your usual sceptical manner, as to what is necessary and useful to them. Instead, you glide into the directly opposite extreme, in a manner contrary to your usual temper, with a sort of assertion never heard of before, to now sit as judge, pronouncing those things to be unnecessary which, if they are *not* necessary and are *not* certainly known, leaves nothing behind: neither a God, nor a Christ, nor a Gospel, nor a faith, nor anything else even of Judaism, much less of Christianity. Immortal God! What a window, shall I say — what a field, rather — Erasmus hereby opens for acting and speaking against himself! What could you possibly write on the subject of Freewill, which would have anything of good or right in it, when you betray such ignorance of Scripture and of piety, in these words of yours? But I will furl my sails, and talk with you here, not in my own words (as perhaps I will do presently), but in yours.

SECT. 6. Erasmus' Christianity

The form of Christianity chalked out by you, has this article, among others: that we must strive with all our might; that we must apply ourselves to the remedy of repentance, and solicit the mercy of God by all means. Without this mercy, neither the will, nor the endeavour of man, is efficacious. Also, that no man should despair of pardon from God, whose nature it is to be most merciful.

25

In these words of yours, there is no mention of Christ, no mention of the Spirit. They are colder than ice itself, so that they do not have even *your* usual grace of eloquence in them. Perhaps the fear of Priests and Kings ⁹⁴ had hard work to wring them from the pitiful fellow, that he might not appear to be quite an Atheist. Nevertheless, they contain some ASSERTIONS, such as, that we have strength in ourselves; that there is such a thing as striving with all our strength; that there is such a thing as God's mercy; that there are means of soliciting mercy; that God is by nature just, and by nature most merciful, etc. If, then, anyone is ignorant what those powers are, what they do, what they allow, what their striving is, what efficacy and inefficacy they have, then what should he do? What will you teach him to do? It is irreligious, curious, and superfluous, you say, to wish to know whether our will is *active* in those things which pertain to everlasting salvation, or is only *passive* under the agency of grace. But here you say, on the contrary, that it is Christian piety to strive with all our might; and that the will is not efficacious without the mercy of God. In these words, it is plain, you assert that the *will* does something in matters which pertain to everlasting salvation, since you suppose it to *strive*. On the other hand, you assert that it is passive, when you say that it is inefficacious without the mercy of God. However, you do not explain how far that activity and passiveness should be understood to extend.

⁹⁴ *Pontificum et Tyrannorum*. These names comprehend the whole tribe of Popes, Cardinals, and Princes, by which the ecclesiastical and civil power of the Roman empire was now administered. *Pont.* 'Priests of high dignity,' generally; not confined to the Pope, but including also his Cardinals. *Tyrann.* 'The civil rulers throughout the empire.' In Latin, it is used more generally in a bad sense, to denote usurped authority exercised with fierceness and violence; but not always.

26

Thus, you do what you can to make us ignorant of what is the efficacy of our own will, and what is the efficacy of the mercy of God, in that very place in which you teach us what is the conjoint efficacy of both. That prudence of yours, by which you have determined to keep clear of both parties, and to emerge in safety between Scylla and Charybdis, so whirls you round and round in its vortex, that being overwhelmed with waves and confounded with fears ⁹⁵ in the midst of the passage, you assert all that you deny, and you deny all that you assert.

SECT. 7. Erasmus' theology exposed by similes.

I will expose your theology to you, by two or three similes. What if a man, setting about to make a good poem or speech, were not to consider or inquire what sort his genius is; what he is equal to, and what he is not; what the subject which he has taken in hand requires. Rather, he altogether neglects that precept of Horace, 'what your shoulders are able to bear, and what is too heavy for them,' and rushes headlong upon his attempt to execute the work. He thinks to himself that he must try and get it done; and that it would be superfluous and curious to inquire whether he has the erudition, the powers of language, and the genius which the task requires. What if a man, anxious to reap abundant fruits from his ground, were not curious to exercise abundant care in exploring the nature of his soil, as Virgil in his *Georgics* curiously and vainly teaches us. Rather, he hurries on rashly, having no thought except to finish his work. He ploughs the shore, and casts his seed wherever there is an open space, whether sand or mud. What if a man, going to war and desirous of a splendid victory, or having some other service to perform for the state, were not curious to consider what he is able to effect; whether his treasury is rich enough; whether his soldiers are expert; whether he has any power to execute his design?

27

Rather, he altogether despises that precept of the historian, 'before you act, there is need for deliberation; and when you have deliberated, you must be quick to execute.' He rushes on, with his eyes shut and his ears stopped, crying out nothing but "war," "war," and vehemently pursues his work.

What judgment would you pronounce, Erasmus, upon such poets, husbandmen, generals, and statesmen? I will add that simile in the Gospel, if any man, building a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has the means to finish it — what is Christ's judgment on that man?

Thus, you command us only to work, and you forbid us to first of all explore and measure, or ascertain our strength, what we can do, and what we cannot do — as though this were curious, unnecessary, and irreligious. The effect is that, by excessive prudence, you deprecate temerity, and make a show ⁹⁶ of sober-mindedness; but nonetheless, you come at last to the extreme of counselling the greatest temerity. For, although the Sophists act

⁹⁵ *Confusus*, expresses the state of the mariner's mind: *flactibus obrutus*, his drowning body.

⁹⁶ *Detestaris, praetendis*. *Detest.* deprecari, amoliri, avertere, deos invocando. *Praetend.*, 'to put forwards as a reason for acting, whether truly or falsely.'

rashly and insanely, by discussing curious ⁹⁷ subjects, yet their offence is milder than yours; for you even teach and command men to be mad and rash. To make this insanity still greater, you persuade us that this temerity is most beautiful — that it is Christian piety, sobriety, religious gravity, and soundness of mind. Indeed, if we do not act so, then you, who are such an enemy to assertions, *assert* that we are irreligious, curious, and vain. ⁹⁸ Thus you have beautifully escaped your Scylla, while avoiding your Charybdis.⁹⁹

28.

It is your confidence in your own talents which drives you to this point. You think that you can impose on men's minds by your eloquence, to such a degree that no man will be able to perceive what a monster you are cherishing in your bosom, and what an object you are labouring to achieve by these slippery writings of yours. But "God is not mocked;" nor is it good for a man to strike upon such a rock as HIM.

Besides, if you had taught us this rashness in making poems, in procuring the fruits of the earth, in conducting wars and civil employments, or in building houses — though it would be intolerable, especially in a man like yourself — you would, after all, have deserved at least some indulgence from Christians, who despise temporal things. But when you command even Christians to be these rash workmen, and in the very matter of their eternal salvation, insist upon their being incurious as to their natural powers — what they can and cannot do — this surely is an offence which cannot be pardoned. For they will not know what they are doing, so long as they are ignorant of what and how much they *can* do. And if they do not know what they are doing, they cannot possibly repent if they are in error; and impenitence is an unpardonable sin. To such an abyss does that moderate, sceptical theology of yours conduct us!

SECT. 8. Absolute necessity of the subject of Freewill for true piety.

It is not irreligious, then, nor curious, nor superfluous, but it is most of all useful and necessary to a Christian, to know whether the *will* does anything, or nothing, in the matter of salvation. Indeed, to tell the truth, this is the very hinge of our disputation — the very question at issue turns upon it. ¹⁰⁰ We are occupied in discussing what the free will does, what the free will allows, and what its proportion is to the grace of God.

29

If we are ignorant of these things, we will know nothing at all about Christianity, and will be worse than Heathens. Let the man who does not understand this subject, acknowledge that he is no Christian. Let the man who censures or despises it, know that he is the worst enemy of Christians. For, if I do not know what, how far, and how much I can, of my own natural powers, do and *effect towards God*, then it will be alike uncertain and unknown

⁹⁷ Curiosa. Applied in a bad sense to things we have no business with, '*curiosus dicitur nonnunquam de iis qui nimia cura utuntur in rebus alienis exquirendis.*'

⁹⁸ *Vanos* corresponds to *supervacaneos* used above, expressing their 'unprofitableness;' 'idle speculators.'

⁹⁹ Greek mythology: Scylla was a sea nymph transformed into a sea monster who lived on one side of a narrow strait; drowned and devoured sailors who tried to escape Charybdis (a whirlpool) on the other side of the strait.

¹⁰⁰ *Status causae hujus*. 'Status a rhetoribus dicitur quaestio, quae ex prima causarum conflictione nascitur; quia in eo tota causa stat et consistit.'

to me what, how far, and how much God can and does *effect in me*: whereas, God "works all in all!" ¹⁰¹

Again, if I do not know the works and power of God, then I do not know God himself; and if I do not know God, then I cannot worship, praise, give him thanks, or serve him — being ignorant of how much I ought to attribute to myself, and how much to God. Therefore, if we would live piously, then we should distinguish with the greatest clearness, between God's power and our own power, and between God's work and our own work.

You see then, that this question is the one part ¹⁰² of the whole sum of Christianity! Both the knowledge of ourselves, and the knowledge and glory of God, are dependent upon the hazard of its decision. It is then insufferable in you, my Erasmus, to call the knowledge of this truth irreligious, curious,¹⁰³ and vain. We owe much to you. But we owe all to piety. Indeed, you yourself think that all good is to be ascribed to God, and you assert this in the description you have given to us, of your own Christianity.

30

And if you assert this, you unquestionably assert in the same words, that the mercy of God does all, and that our will does not act at all, but rather is acted upon. Otherwise, all will not be attributed to God. But a little while after, you declare that the assertion and even the knowledge of this truth, is neither religious, pious, nor salutary. However, the mind which is inconsistent with itself, and which is uncertain and unskilled in matters of piety, is obliged to speak so.

SECT. 9. Erasmus has omitted the question of God's prescience.

The other part of the sum of Christianity, is to know whether God foreknows anything *contingently*; and whether we do everything *necessarily*. This part you also represent as irreligious, curious, and vain, as all other profane men do. Indeed, the devils and the damned represent it as utterly odious and detestable. And you are very wise in withdrawing yourself from these questions, if you may be allowed to do so. But in the meantime, you are not much of a rhetorician or a theologian when you presume to speak and to teach about Freewill, without these parts. I will be your whetstone; and though no rhetorician myself, I will remind an exquisite rhetorician of his duty. If Quintilian were to say, proposing to write on oratory, 'In my judgment those foolish and useless topics of invention, distribution, elocution, memory, and delivery should be omitted; it is sufficient to know that oratory is the art of speaking well' — would you not laugh at this artisan? This is precisely your method. Professing to write about Freewill, you begin with driving away, and casting off, the whole body and all the members of this art which you propose to write about. For it is impossible to understand what Free will is, until you know what the human will has power to do, and what *God* does — whether he foreknows, or not? ¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ *Omnia in omnibus*. Not only 'all things in all men;' but 'all things in all things;' every jot and tittle in every single thing that is done.

¹⁰² *Partem alteram*. As opposed to 'altera pars' in the next section: considering the sum of Christian doctrine, as divisible into these two integral parts.

¹⁰³ *Curious*: fussy or picky; overly concerned.

¹⁰⁴ *An praesciat*; The Newstadt editor inserts the word *necessario* here. It is not needed. What is foreknowledge, if it is not absolute; *i.e.* if the event is not inevitable, or necessary?

31

Do even your rhetoricians not teach you that when a man is going to speak on any matter, he must first speak to whether there *is* such a thing or not; then what it is; what its parts are; what its contraries are, its affinities, and the question of its similitudes. But you strip poor Freewill, wretched as she is in herself, of all these appendages, and define ¹⁰⁵ none of the questions which pertain to her, save the first: Whether there *is* such a thing as Freewill? We shall see shortly by what sort of arguments you do this. I never beheld a more foolish book on Freewill, if eloquence of style is excepted. The Sophists, truly, who know nothing of rhetoric, have at least proved better logicians here, than you. For in their essays on Freewill, they define all its questions, such as 'whether it exists;' 'what it is;' 'what it does;' 'how it is,' etc. However, they do not even complete ¹⁰⁶ what they attempt. Therefore, in this treatise of mine I will goad ¹⁰⁷ both you and all the Sophists, until you define for me the powers and the performances of Freewill ¹⁰⁸— yes, I will so goad you, with Christ's help, that I hope I will make you repent of having published your Diatribe.

32

SECT. 10. God's absolute foreknowledge, flows from Erasmus' confession.

It is most necessary and most salutary, then, for a Christian to know this also: that God foreknows nothing contingently. Rather, He foresees, and purposes, and accomplishes everything by an unchangeable, eternal, and infallible will. And by this thunderbolt, Freewill is struck to the earth and completely ground to powder. Those who would assert Freewill, therefore, must either deny, or disguise, or by some other means, repel this thunderbolt from them. However, before I establish it by my own argumentation and the authority of Scripture, I will first of all engage you personally with your own words. Are you not that Erasmus who just now asserted that it is God's nature to be just, and that it is God's nature to be most merciful? If this is true, does it not follow that he is UNCHANGEABLY just and merciful — that just as his nature does not change unto eternity, so neither does his justice or his mercy change? But what is said of his justice and mercy, must also be said of his knowledge, wisdom, goodness, will, and other divine properties. If these things, then, are asserted religiously, piously, and profitably concerning God — as you write — then what has happened to you that, in disagreement with yourself, you now assert it to be irreligious, curious, and vain to affirm that God foreknows necessarily? Is it that you think, 'he either *foreknows* what he does not *will*, or *wills* what he does not *foreknow*?' If he wills what he foreknows, his will is eternal and immutable, for it is part

¹⁰⁵ *Definis. Def.* does not express simply what we understand and mean by a definition; but laying out the subject matter of debate in propositions, and a supporting of those propositions by argument. Such were Luther's several Theses; with ninety-five of which, he first opened his attack upon the Popedom; or rather upon the doctrine of Indulgences: a form of discussion common in those times. Perhaps our English word 'determine' comes nearest to it.

¹⁰⁶ *Efficiunt quod tentant.* They do not go through with the matter in hand, but leave it short: the 'vires et opera' are still undefined, neither distinctly affirmed, nor satisfactorily proved.

¹⁰⁷ *Urgebo.* 'Driving, as you would drive cattle, or an enemy, before you.'

¹⁰⁸ *Liberi arbitrii vires et opera.* *Voluntas* is 'the faculty of the will at large.' *Arbitrium*, 'the essence, spirit, power of that faculty.' Erasmus maintains this power to be free; Luther, that it is in bondage. Hence, 'liberum arbitrium,' 'servum arbitrium.' *Vis*, or *vires arbitrii*, the power or powers of this power. *Vis*, or *vires liberi arbitrii*; the power or powers of this power, as declared by Erasmus to be free; and so, just corresponds with our idea and term of Freewill. 'You shall define to me, what are the powers of this faculty, which is thus supposed and maintained by you to be free.' This is the crux of modern Freewillers, just as it was of Erasmus. They get on pretty well, till they are compelled to define.

of his nature. If he foreknows what he wills, his knowledge is eternal and immutable, for it is part of his nature. ¹⁰⁹

33

Hence, it irresistibly follows that all which we do, and all which happens, though it seems to happen mutably and contingently, in reality it happens necessarily and unalterably, insofar as it respects the will of God. For the will of God is efficacious, and such as cannot be thwarted. And since the power of God is itself a part of his nature, it is also wise, so that it cannot be misled. And since his will is not thwarted, the work which he wills cannot be prevented, but must be produced in the very time, place, and measure which he himself both foresees and wills. If the will of God were such as to cease after he has made a work which remains the same — as is the case with man's will, when after having built a house as he willed, his will concerning it ceases (as it does in death), then it might be truly said that some events are brought to pass contingently and mutably. But here, on the contrary, so far is it from being the case, that the work itself either comes into existence, or continues in existence *contingently* — by being made and remaining in being when the will to have it so, has ceased — that the work itself ceases, but the will remains. Now, if we would use words so as not to abuse them, in Latin, a work is said to be done *contingently*, but it is never said to be itself *contingent*.

34

The meaning is that a work has been performed by a contingent and mutable will; but such is not the case in God. Besides, a work cannot be called a contingent work, unless it is done by us contingently, and as it were, by accident — without any forethought on our part. It is so called, because our will or hand seizes hold of it as a thing thrown in our way by accident, and we have neither thought nor willed anything about it before.

SECT. 11. Objection to the term 'necessity' admitted: absurdity of the distinction between necessity of a consequence and of a consequent.

I could have wished indeed, that another and a better word had been introduced into our disputation than this usual one, 'Necessity' — which is not rightly applied to the will of either God or man. It has too harsh and incongruous a meaning for this occasion. It suggests to the mind the notion of something like compulsion, and what is at least the opposite of willingness. Our question, meanwhile, implies no such thing. For both the will of God and of man, does what it does, whether good or bad, without compulsion, by means of mere good pleasure or desire, as with perfect freedom. The will of God, nevertheless, is immutable and infallible, and governs our mutable will — as Boethius sings, 'and standing fixed, mov'st all the rest' — and our will, wicked in the extreme, can do nothing good of itself. Let the understanding of my reader, then, supply what the word 'necessity' does not express. Apprehend by it, what you might choose to call the immutability of *God's* will,

¹⁰⁹ This abstruse but irresistible deduction from Erasmus' concession may perhaps be stated a little more familiarly, thus: If God does not foreknow all events absolutely, there must be a defect either in his will, or in his knowledge; what happens must either be against his will, or beside his knowledge. Either he meant otherwise than the event, or had no meaning at all about the event; or, he foresaw another event, or did not foresee any event at all. But the truth is, what he willed in past eternity, he wills now; the thing now executed is what he has intended to execute from everlasting; for his will is eternal: just as the thing which has now happened is what he saw in past eternity; because his knowledge is eternal.

and the impotency of *our* evil will: what some have called 'a necessity of immutability' — though not very grammatically or theologically. ¹¹⁰

The Sophists, who had laboured this point for years, have at length been mastered, and are compelled to admit that all events are necessary; but it is by the necessity of a *consequence*, as they put it, and not by the necessity of a *consequent*.

35

Thus they have *eluded* the violence of this question, but it is by much more *illuding* ¹¹¹ themselves. ¹¹² I will take the trouble of showing you what a mere nothing this distinction of theirs is. By necessity of a consequence (to speak as these thick-headed people do) they mean that, if God wills a thing, the thing itself must be. But it is not necessary that the very thing which *is*, should *be*. For only God exists *necessarily*; all other things may cease to be, if God pleases. Thus, they say that the act of God is necessary if he wills a thing, but the very thing produced is *not* necessary. Now what do they get by this play on words? Why, I suppose this: the thing produced is not necessary; that is, it does not have a necessary existence. This is no more than saying that the thing produced is not God himself. Still, the truth remains, that every event is necessary if it is a necessary act of God, or a necessary consequence. However, it may not exist necessarily, now that it is effected; that is, it may not be God, or may not have a necessary existence. For, if I am made of necessity, then it is of little moment to me that my *being* or *making* is mutable. Still, I — this contingent and mutable thing, who am not the necessary God — am made. So that their foolery (that all events are necessary through a necessity of the *consequence*, but not through a necessity of the *consequent*) has no more in it than this: all events are necessary, it is true; but though necessary, they are not God himself. Now what need was there to tell us this, as if there was any danger of our asserting that the things made are God, or have a divine and necessary nature?

36

So sure and steadfast is the invincible aphorism, 'All things are brought to pass by the unchangeable will of God;' — what they call 'necessity of a consequence.' Nor is there any obscurity or ambiguity here. He says in Isaiah "My counsel shall stand" and my will shall be brought to pass. (Isa. 46.10) Is there any schoolboy who does not understand what is meant by these words '*counsel*,' '*will*,' '*brought to pass*,' '*stand*'?

SECT. 12. Universal prevalence of this persuasion.

But why should these things be kept from us Christians so that it is irreligious, curious, and vain for us to search and to know them, when heathen poets and the very vulgar are wearing them threadbare, by the most common use of them in conversation? How often the single poet Virgil mentions fate! 'All things subsist by a fixed law.' 'Every man has his day fixed.' Again, 'If the fates call you.' Again, 'If you can by any means burst the bonds of

¹¹⁰ N. B. [note well] This whole paragraph is omitted in the Nieustadt edition of 1591.

¹¹¹ *Illude*: To play upon by artifice; to deceive; to mock; to excite and disappoint the hopes of.

¹¹² *Eluserant*, *illuserunt*. A play on the words *eludo*, *illudo*. *Elud*. 'to parry off,' 'evade.' A metaphor taken from the gladiator, who by a dexterous turn of his body, escapes the weapon of his adversary. I do not find any classical authority for understanding 'illudo' with the same reference to the gladiator. It refers to customs of a more general nature; comprehending all sorts of injury inflicted in a way of deception, or derision: 'to sport with,' or 'make sport of,' sometimes 'to ruin in sport.' Thus, these Sophists have evaded their adversaries, but they have made fools of themselves.

the cruel fates.' It is this poet's sole object to show that in the destruction of Troy, and the raising up of the Roman empire from its ruins, fate did more than all human efforts put together. In short, he subjects his immortal Gods to fate, making even Jupiter himself and Juno yield to it necessarily. Hence, they imagined these three fatal sisters, the Parcae, whom they represent as immutable, implacable, inexorable.

Those wise men discovered (what fact and experience prove) that no man has ever yet received the accomplishment of his own counsels; but all have had to meet events which differed from their expectations. 'If Troy could have been defended by a human right hand, it would have been defended even by this,' says Virgil's Hector. Hence, that most hackneyed expression in everybody's mouth, 'God's will be done.' Again, 'If it pleases God, we will do so.' Again, 'So God would have it.'

37

'So it seemed good to those above.' 'So you would have it,' says Virgil. So that, in the minds of the common people, knowledge of the predestination and foreknowledge of God is not less inherent, we perceive, than the very notion that there is a God. Although blessed Augustine condemns fate, with good reason, speaking of the fate maintained by the Stoics. But those who professed to be wise went to such lengths in their disputations that, in the end, their heart being darkened, they became foolish (Rom 1.22). They denied or dissembled those things which the poets, and the vulgar, and their own consciences, account most common, most certain, and most true.

SECT. 13. The exceeding temerity and mischievousness of Erasmus' pretended and boasted moderation.

I go further and declare not only how true these things are (I will later speak more at large about them from the Scriptures), but also how religious, pious, and necessary it is to know them. For if these things are not known, it is impossible that either faith or any worship of God should be maintained. For this would be a real and notorious ignorance of God, with which salvation cannot consist. For if you either doubt this truth, or despise the knowledge of it — that God foreknows and wills all things, not contingently but necessarily and immutably — then how will you be able to believe his promises, and trust and lean upon them with full assurance? For when He promises, you ought to be sure that he knows what he promises, and is able and willing to accomplish it. Otherwise, you will account Him neither true nor faithful — which is unbelief, the highest impiety and a denial of the most high God.

How will you be confident and secure, if you do not know that He certainly, infallibly, unchangeably, and *necessarily* knows and wills, and will perform what he promises? Nor should we merely be *certain* that God necessarily and immutably wills, and will perform what he has promised.

38

But we should even *glory* in this very thing, as Paul does in Romans 3: "But let God be true and every man a liar." (Rom 3.4) And again, "Not that the word of God has been of no effect." (Rom 9.6) And in another place, "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal: the Lord knows those who are his." (2Tim 2.19) And in Titus 1, "which God, who cannot lie, has promised before the world began." (Tit 1.2) And in Hebrews 11, "He that

comes to God must believe that God exists, and that he is a rewarder of those who hope in him." (Heb 11.6)

So then, the Christian faith is altogether extinguished, the promises of God and the whole Gospel fall absolutely to the ground, if we are taught and believe that we have no need to know that the foreknowledge of God is *necessary*, and that all acts and events are *necessary*. For this is the sole and highest possible consolation of Christians, in all adversities: to know that God does not lie, but brings all things to pass without any possibility of change; and that his will can neither be resisted, nor altered, nor hindered. See now, my Erasmus, where this most abstinent and peace-loving theology of yours leads us! You call us off from endeavouring — no, you *forbid* that we endeavour — to learn the foreknowledge of God and necessity, in their influence upon men and things. You counsel us to abandon such topics, to avoid and to hold them in abhorrence. By this ill-advised labour of yours, you at the same time teach us to cultivate an ignorance of God (what in fact comes of itself, and even grows on us ¹¹³), to despise faith, to forsake God's promises, and to make nothing of all the consolations of the Spirit and the assurances of our own conscience. These are injunctions which scarcely Epicurus himself would lay upon us!

39

Not content with this, you go on to call that man irreligious, curious, and vain who takes pains to get knowledge of these things. And you call that man, religious, pious, and sober who despises them. What else do you achieve by these words, then, but that Christians are curious, vain, and irreligious; and that Christianity is a thing of no moment at all — vain, foolish, and absolutely impious. It thus happens that, while you would above all things deter us from rashness — from being hurried into the opposite extreme, as fools usually are — you teach us nothing but the most excessive temerities and impieties, which must lead us to destruction. Are you aware that, in this part, your book is so impious, so blasphemous, and so sacrilegious, as to nowhere have its like?

I do not speak of your intention, as I already said. For I do not think you so abandoned as to wish from your heart, either to teach these things, or to see them practised by others. But I would show you what strange things a man obliges himself to babble, without knowing what he says, when he undertakes a bad cause. I would also show you what it is to strike our foot against divine truth and the divine word, while we personate a character in compliance with the wishes of others, and with many qualms of conscience, to bustle through a scene in which we have no just call to appear. ¹¹⁴

40

It is not a play or a pastime to teach theology and piety. In such an employment it is most easy to make that sort of fall which James speaks of, ¹¹⁵ when he says, "He that offends in

¹¹³ *Agnata*. 'What grows to us as a sort of monstrous appendage;' like the *membra agnata et agnascentia* in animals; parts that are more than should be by nature, such as a sixth finger, etc.

¹¹⁴ *Aliorum obsequio*. Erasmus was a *forced* champion, writing to please the Pope and his party at their special request. *Personam sumimus*. He did not really stand in his own person, but was an actor sustaining a part which had been put upon him. *Alienae scenae servire* expresses the drudgery of labouring through a character in which he had made himself a volunteer. *Scenae servire* sometimes signifies 'to temporize;' but here I prefer retaining the original figure. — This is one of the poisoned arrows of Luther's treatise; 'a hireling expectant, with only half his heart in the cause.'

¹¹⁵ A forced application of James' words, who speaks of a breach of one commandment as subjecting us to the curse of all, because such a breach is derogatory to the authority of the Lawgiver. We set ourselves up against the Lawgiver, and

one point becomes guilty of all." (Jam 2.10) For thus it comes to pass that, while we think we mean to trifle but a little, having lost our due reverence for the Scriptures, we soon get entangled in impieties, and are plunged over head and ears in blasphemies — just what has happened to you in this case, Erasmus! May the Lord pardon and have mercy on you!

As to the fact that the Sophists have raised such swarms of questions on these subjects, and have mixed a multitude of other unprofitable matters with them, such as you mention — I am aware of this, and I acknowledge it as well as you, and have inveighed against it with yet more sharpness and at greater length than you. But you are foolish and rash in mixing, confounding, and assimilating the purity of sacred truth with the profane and foolish questions of ungodly men. They have defiled the gold and changed its beautiful colour, as Jeremiah says (Lam 5.1). But gold is not to be straightway compared to dung and thrown away together with it, as you have done.

41

The gold must be recovered out of their hands, and the purity of Scripture separated from their dregs and filth. I have always been aiming to do this, in order that one sort of regard might be paid to the divine word, and another to their trifling conceits. Nor should it move us, that no other advantage has been gained by these questions, than that with great expense of concord, we have come to love less, while we are far too eager to get wisdom. Our question is not what advantage the disputatious Sophists have gained; but how we may ourselves become good Christians. Nor should you impute to Christian doctrine, what ungodly men do amiss. For this is not at all to the purpose; you might have spoken of it in another place, and spared your paper.

SECT. 14. All *Scripture* truth may be published safely.

In your third chapter, you go on to make us into these modest and quiet Epicureans by another sort of counsel, not a whit sounder than the two already mentioned: viz. that some propositions are of such a nature that, even if they were true and could be ascertained, it would still not be expedient to publish them promiscuously.¹¹⁶ Here again, you confound and mix things, as is your custom, so that you may degrade what is sacred, to the level of the profane, without allowing the least difference between them. And again, you fall into an injurious contempt of God and his word. I have said before, what is either plainly declared in Scripture, or may be proved from it, is not only open to view, but salutary. And it may therefore be safely published, learned, and known; indeed, it ought to be. With what truth, then, can you say that there are things which should not be published promiscuously, if you speak of things contained in Scripture? If you speak of other things, then nothing you have said concerns us: all is out of place, and you have wasted your paper and your time in words.

impugn his authority by a single wilful breach of a single commandment, with guilt of the same quality, though not of the same extent and aggravation, as if we broke all. Luther applies it to Erasmus' only meaning to have a little sport; but then it is at the expense of Scripture: and such sport, and even the intention of such sport, implies a lack of due reverence for Scripture. This first fault leads to all the impiety which follows; and therefore he who is guilty of it, is guilty of all the impieties which follow, though he did not set out with the intention of committing them. 'Guilty of all,' because one *leads* to all; is the *seed* of all. — This is not James' meaning.

¹¹⁶ *Prostituere promiscuis auribits. Prostit.* 'publicare,' 'diffamare,' (*pro*, sive *prae*, statuo.) *Promisc.* 'confusus;' hence, 'general,' 'common.'

42

Again, you know that I have no agreement with the Sophists on any subject. So, I deserved to have been spared by you, and not to have had their abuses thrown in my face. It was against *me* that you were to write in this book. I know how guilty the Sophists are, and I don't want you to teach me, having already reprehended them abundantly. And I say this once for all: that as often as you confound me with the Sophists, and load my cause with their mad sayings, you act unfairly by me in doing so, and you very well know it.

SECT. 15. The argument, 'some truths should not be published,' is either inconsistent with Erasmus' act, or out of place.

Let us now look into the reasons on which you build your counsel. Even if it were true that God is essentially present in the beetle's cave and even in the common sewer, no less than in heaven (which reverence forbids you to assert, and you blame the Sophists for babbling so) — you still think it would be irrational to maintain such a proposition before the multitude.

In the first place, babble who may, we are not talking here about the actions of men, but about law and right — not how we live, but how we ought to live! Which of us lives and acts rightly in all cases? Law and precept are not condemned on this account, but rather *we* are condemned by *them*. The truth is, you fetch these materials of yours (which are foreign to the subject) from a great distance, and scrape many things together from all sides of you, because this one topic of the foreknowledge of God gravels you. And having no arguments to overcome it with, you try to weary your reader by a profusion of empty words, before you conclude, 'But we will let this pass, and return to our subject.'

Then how do you mean to apply this judgment of yours, that there are some truths which should not be proclaimed to the common? Is Freewill one of these? If so, all that I said before, about the necessity of understanding Freewill, returns upon you. Besides, why do you not follow your own counsel, and withhold your Diatribe?

43

If you are right in discussing Freewill, then why do you find fault? if it is wrong to so do, then why do you discuss it? On the other hand, if Freewill is *not* one of these subjects, you are again guilty of running away from the point at issue, in the midst of the discussion, and of handling foreign topics with great verbosity, where there is no place for them.

SECT. 16. Erasmus' three examples of truths 'not to be published,' considered.

It is not that you deal correctly with the example which you adduce, when you condemn it as a useless discussion for the multitude: that 'God is in the cave, or in the sewer.' You think of God too *humanly*. I acknowledge, indeed, that there are some frivolous preachers who, having neither religion nor piety, and being moved solely by a desire for glory, or an ambition for novelty, or an impatience for silence, gabble and trifle with the most offensive levity. But these men please neither God nor man, though they are engaged in asserting that God is in the heaven of heavens. On the contrary, where the preacher is grave and pious, and teaches in modest, pure, and sound words, such a man will declare such a truth before the multitude, not only without danger, but even with great profit. Should we not all teach that the Son of God was in the womb of the Virgin, and born from

her bowels? And what difference is there between the bowels of a woman and any other filthy place? Who could not describe them nastily and offensively? Yet, we should deservedly condemn such describers, because there is an abundance of pure words to express this substance, of which it has become necessary to speak, ¹¹⁷ with beauty and grace. Christ's own body, again, was human like our own. And what is filthier than this? Shall we then forbear to say that God dwelt in him *BODILY*, as Paul says? (Col 2.9) ¹¹⁸

44

What is more disgusting than death? What is more horrible than hell? But the Prophet glories that God is with him in death and in hell. (Psa 23.4)

The pious mind, then, does not shudder to hear that God is in death or in hell, each of which is more horrible than the cave or the sewer. Indeed, since Scripture testifies that God is everywhere, and fills all things, not only does such a mind affirm that He is in those places, but as matter of necessity, it will learn and know that he is there. Perhaps, then, if I were somehow seized by a tyrant, and thrown into a prison or a common sewer (which has been the lot of many saints), I must not be allowed to invoke my God there; or to believe that he is present with me — not until I have entered some ornamented temple! If you teach us that we ought to trifle in this way about God, and are so offended with the abiding places of his essence, you will at length not allow us to consider him as abiding even in *heaven*. For not even the heaven of heavens contains him, ^{2Chr 2.6} nor is it worthy to do so. But the truth is, you sting with so much venom,¹¹⁹ as is your way, that you may sink our cause and make it hateful, because by powers such as yours, you see this [argument] as insuperable and invincible.

I confess that the second instance which you adduce, that 'there are three Gods' is a stumbling block, if it is indeed taught: but it is *not* true, nor does Scripture teach it. The Sophists indeed speak so, and have invented a new sort of logic. But what is that to us?

45

With respect to your third and remaining example of confession and satisfaction, it is wonderful with how happy a dexterity you contrive to find fault. Everywhere you are prone to just skim the surface of the subject and no more — lest you appear on the one hand, not simply to condemn our writings, or on the other, not to be disgusted with the tyranny of the pontiffs ¹²⁰ — for a failure in either of these points would by no means be safe for you. So, you bid adieu for a little while to conscience and to God, for what has Erasmus to do with the will of God and the obligations of conscience in these matters? You draw your sword against a mere outside phantom, and accuse the common people of abusing the preaching of *free* confession and satisfaction, ¹²¹ because their own evil nature

¹¹⁷ *Eam necessitatem.*

¹¹⁸ I would crave the reader's particular attention to this description of the human body of the Lord Jesus Christ; that part of his frame which alone connected him and really connected him with the damned substance of his people. It enters into the very entrails of 'the mystery of godliness.'

¹¹⁹ *Sic odiosè pungis. Pung.* 'cuspidem vel aculeo ictum infero.'

¹²⁰ *Pontificum tyrannidem offendere. Offend.* 'aversari,' 'offendi,' 'molestiam capere;' quasi impingere, incurrere in illiquid, quod displiceat. — Another poisoned arrow. While he keeps no terms with Luther, he must still be the friend of liberty. He had gone far in satirizing the reigning abuses. But how galling the exposure!

¹²¹ *Free.* That is, preaching that these are free; that men may observe or neglect them according to their own individual conscience.

may incline them to indulge the flesh — maintaining that, by *necessary* confession, they are somehow or other restrained. O famous and exquisite harangue! Is this teaching theology? Or is it to bind with laws and kill, as Ezekiel says, the souls which God has not bound (Eze 23; 13.19). At this rate, truly, you stir up the whole tyranny of the Popish laws against us, on the ground of their being useful and salutary, because the wickedness of the people is restrained by them!

But I am unwilling to inveigh against you, as this passage deserves. I will state the matter as it is, concisely.

46

A good theologian teaches thus: the common people are to be restrained by the external force of the sword when they do amiss, as Paul teaches (Rom 13.1-4); but their consciences are not to be ensnared by false laws, teasing and tormenting them for sins which God does not account sins. For the conscience is bound only by the commands of God. So that, this interposed tyranny of the pontiffs should be entirely taken out of the way. For it falsely terrifies and kills souls inwardly, while it harasses the body without, to no purpose. This tyranny, indeed, compels men to outward acts of confession and to other burdens, but the mind is not restrained by these things. Rather, it is exasperated to a hatred of God and of man. It hangs, draws and quarters the body outwardly, without effect, making mere hypocrites within. It is such that the tyrants who enact and execute laws of this sort are nothing but rapacious wolves, thieves, and robbers of souls. These wolves and robbers, O most excellent counsellor of souls, you commend to us again. In other words, you propose the cruelest of soul-slayers for our acceptance — those who will fill the world with hypocrites, blaspheming God, and despising him in their hearts, in order that men may be a little restrained in their outward carriage. It is as if there were not another method of restraining, which makes no hypocrites, and is obtained without destroying any man's conscience,¹²² as I have said.

SECT. 17. Erasmus neither understands nor feels the vast importance of the question.

Here you fetch ¹²³ a host of similes; in which you aim to abound, and to be thought very apt and expert.

47

You tell us, truly, that there are some diseases which are borne with less evil than they are removed with, such as leprosy and others. You also add the example of Paul, who distinguished between lawful and expedient things. A man may *lawfully* speak the truth, you say, to anybody, at any time, in any way he pleases; but it is not *expedient* for him to do so.

What an exuberant orator! But one who does not at all know what he is saying. In a word, you plead this cause as if your affair with me were a contest for a sum of money which is

¹²² *Consul, auctor*, refer to the customs of the Roman Republic, of which the consul was the *guardian* and *adviser*: he was the author, or originator of measures.

¹²³ *Allegas*, 'afferre aliquid probandi vel excusandi gratia.' A forensic expression; these were his witnesses: but what did they prove? only what a clever fellow this Erasmus is. Illustration is not argument; but here it is manifestly a substitute for it. He amuses, imposes, irritates, and bewilders by his similies, because he has nothing solid with which to answer.

recoverable, or for some other very inconsiderable object. Its loss (being a thing of far less value than that dear external peace of yours) should not move anyone to such a degree that he is unwilling to submit, do, and suffer, as the occasion may require; nor render it necessary for the world to be thrown into such a tumult. You plainly intimate, therefore, that this peace and tranquility of the flesh, is far more excellent in your eyes than faith, conscience, salvation, the word of God, the glory of Christ — indeed, God himself.

I declare to you, therefore, and I entreat you to lay this up in your inmost soul: that I, for *my* part, am in pursuit of a serious, necessary, and eternal object in this cause. It is such and so great an object, that I must assert and defend it, even at the risk of my life — indeed, even if the whole world must not only be thrown into a state of conflict and confusion through it, but even rush back again into its original chaos, and be reduced to nothing. If you do not comprehend or feel these things, mind your own business; and give others leave to comprehend and to feel them, on whom God has bestowed this power.

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For I am not such a fool, or such a madman, I thank God, as to have been willing to plead and maintain this cause for so long, with such resoluteness, and with such constancy (*you* call it obstinacy) amidst so many hair-breadth escapes with life, amidst so many enmities, amidst so many wiles and snares — in short, amidst the rage and frenzy of men and devils — for the sake of money (which I neither have nor desire); or for the sake of glory (which, even if I would, I could not obtain in a world that is so hostile to me); or for the sake of bodily life, of which I cannot ensure the possession for a single moment. Do you think that *you* are the only person who has a heart that is moved by these tumults? I am not made of stone, or born of the Marpesian rocks,¹²⁴ any more than yourself.

But since it must be so, ¹²⁵ I choose to endure the collisions of a temporal tumult for asserting the word of God with an invincible and incorruptible mind — rejoicing all the while in the sense and manifestations of his favour — rather than be crushed to pieces by the intolerable torments of an eternal tumult as one of the victims of God's wrath. The Lord grant that your mind not be like Epicurus (I hope and wish He may!); but your words sound as though you consider the word of God and a future state to be mere fables. By virtue of the doctoral authority with which you are invested, you wish to propose to us that, in order to please pontiffs and princes, or to preserve this dear peace of yours, we should submit ourselves; and if occasion requires it, we should relinquish for a while the use of the word of God, as sure as that word is ¹²⁶ — even though, by such a relinquishment, we relinquish God, faith, salvation, and every Christian possession. How much better Christ advises us, to despise the whole world rather than do this! [Joh 12.25](#)

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SECT. 18. Peace of the world disturbed, is no argument *against* a dogma, but *for* it.

¹²⁴ *Marpesian rocks*: Greek mythology — Marpesia was Queen of the Amazons. She established a city in the Caucasus Mountains referred to as the Rock of Marpesia. Sometime later, Alexander the Great built the Caspian Gates there to keep out the barbarian hordes of the north.

¹²⁵ 'Since I am reduced to this painful alternative of evils.'

¹²⁶ *Certissimum*. As opposed to what Erasmus gave reason to suspect that he accounted it: 'verbum Dei et futuram vitam fabulas esse putis.'

But you say such things, because you do not read, or do not observe, that this is the most constant fortune of the word of God: to have the world in a state of tumult because of it. Christ explicitly asserts this when he says, "I have not come to send peace, but a sword." (Mat 10.34) And in Luke, "I have come to send fire on the earth." (Luk 12.49) And Paul (2Cor 6.5) "In seditions," etc. And the Prophet testifies the same thing in the second Psalm, with great redundancy, when he asserts that the nations are in a tumult, that the people murmur, that kings rise up, that princes take counsel together against the Lord and against his Christ. It is as if he had said, numbers, grandeur, riches, power, wisdom, justice, and whatever is exalted in the world, opposes itself to the word of God. In the Acts of the Apostles, see what happens in the world just through Paul's preaching (not to mention the other Apostles), how he singly and solely stirs up both Gentiles and Jews; or as his enemies affirm in that same place, how he troubles ¹²⁷ the whole world. The kingdom of Israel is troubled under the ministry of Elijah, as king Ahab complains. What a stir there was under the *other* Prophets! — while the Jews were all being slain with the sword, or stoned; while Israel was led captive into Assyria, and Judah was likewise led into Babylon. Was this *peace*? The world and its god neither *can* nor *will* endure the word of the true God; the true God neither *will* nor *can* be silent. When these two Gods are at war, what can there be but tumult throughout the world?

The wish to hush these storms is nothing but a wish to take the word of God out of the way, and stay the course. For the word of God comes for the very purpose of changing and renewing the world, as often as it comes. Even Gentile writers bear witness that change cannot occur without commotion and tumult, indeed, without blood.

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It is the part of a Christian, now-a-days, to await and endure these things with presence of mind. As Christ says, "When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be afraid, for these things must first occur, but the end is not just yet." I, for my part, would say that if I do not see these tumults, then the word of God is not in the world. But seeing them, I rejoice in my heart and disdain them, being most sure that the kingdom of the Pope and his adherents is about to fall. For the word of God, which is now running in the world, has especially invaded this kingdom. To be sure, I see you, my Erasmus, complaining of these tumults in many of your publications, and mourning over the loss of peace and concord. Moreover, by many expedients you try to cure this disorder, with good intention, as I truly believe; but this is a sort of gout, which mocks your healing hands. For here, to use your own expression, you are in truth sailing against the stream; indeed, you are extinguishing fire with stubble. Cease to complain; cease to play the physician. This confusion is of God in its *origin*, and in its *progress*; nor will it cease till it has made all the adversaries of the word like the mire of the streets. But it is a lamentable thing that it should be necessary to admonish you about these things — you who are as great a theologian as a scholar — for you ought to be filling the place of a master.

This, then, is the proper application of your aphorism (a very excellent one, though you misapply it), that 'some diseases are borne with less evil, than removed.' Let all those tumults, commotions, troubles, seditions, divisions, discords, wars, and whatever other

¹²⁷ *Conturbat*. Luther makes it 'troubled waters;' we, more correctly, 'the world turned upside down,' *anastatwsauten* (*anastatoosauten*).

things of this kind— with which, for the sake of the word of God, the whole world is shaken and clashed in conflict — be called *diseases* that are better borne, than cured.

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These things being temporal, I say, are borne with less mischief than old habits of evil by which all souls must perish, unless they are changed through the word of God. So that, by taking this word of God away, you take away eternal blessings — God, Christ, the Spirit. But how much better it would be to lose the *world*, than to lose the *Creator* of the world, who can create innumerable worlds afresh, and who is better than an infinity of worlds! For what comparison is there between temporal and eternal things? Much rather, then, is this leprosy of temporal evils to be borne, than at the expense of the slaughter and eternal damnation of all the souls in the world, the world should be pacified and cured of all these tumults by their blood and destruction — since one soul cannot be redeemed by paying the whole world for its ransom.

You have many beautiful and excellent similes and aphorisms. But when you come to sacred subjects, you apply them childishly, and even perversely.¹²⁸ For you crawl on the ground, and have no thought of anything which is beyond mere human conception. Now, the things which God does are neither childish, nor civil, nor human things; but things of God,¹²⁹ which exceed all human conception. For example, you do not see that these tumults and divisions are marching through the world by divine counsel and operation, and you are afraid that the skies will fall. But I, on the other hand (thanks be to God!), see *good* in these storms. That is because I see other and greater things in the world to come, compared with which, these things seem like the whispers of a gentle breeze, or the murmur of a soft-flowing stream.

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SECT. 19. Doubts whether the dogma of free confession is scriptural. The Pope and God cannot be obeyed conjointly. The people must be left to abuse.

But you either deny, or profess not to know, that our dogma of free confession and satisfaction, *is the Word of God*.

This is another¹³⁰ question. *We*, however, know and are sure, *both* that it is the word of God, *and* it is that word by which Christian liberty is maintained in order that we may not allow ourselves to be entrapped into servitude by human traditions and laws. This is a point which I have abundantly proved elsewhere. And if you have a mind to test it, I am ready to plead in support of it, even at your judgment seat,¹³¹ or to debate it with you.

¹²⁸ *Perversè*. 'Distortedly,' in a manner contrary to their real leaning and use. Luther's charge is no less than this: what Erasmus counted evil was really good; and vice versa.

¹²⁹ *Puerilia, civilia, humana, divina. Civ.* 'What relate to man as a citizen; as opposed to 'puerilia,' because it was not till man attained a certain age that he became entitled to them.

¹³⁰ *Haec alia questio est*. 'Other' than that of the expediency of proclaiming it, as supposed to be acknowledged truth. Free confession is introduced by Erasmus as his third example of a dogma which, though true, should not to be circulated.

¹³¹ *Et tibi dicere*. Like his 'etiam te iudice,' in Part ii Sect. 1. means making Erasmus himself the judge. — *Vel conserere manus* might be supposed to allude to an ancient custom, 'ex jure manu consertum vocare;' when a party expresses his willingness to go with his adversary into the field if dissatisfied with the award of the tribunal: a species of judicium combat. But I prefer the simpler antithesis of the text.

Many books of ours are before the public upon these questions. *You* say, 'Still, however, the laws of the pontiffs ought to be suffered and to be observed equally with the divine laws, out of love — if both the eternal salvation of men, through the word of God, and the peace of the world, may thus be made to subsist together without tumult.'

I have said before that this cannot be. The prince of this world does not suffer the laws of his Pope and his cardinals to be maintained consistent with liberty. Rather, he has it in his mind to entrap and enchain men's consciences by them. The true God cannot endure this. Thus it is, that the word of God and the traditions of men, are opposed to each other with an implacable discord — no different than that with which God himself and Satan oppose each other.

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The one undoes the works and subverts the dogmas of the other, like two kings laying waste each other's kingdom. "He that is not with me is against me," says Christ. [Mat 12.30](#)

Now, with respect to your 'fear that the multitude, who are prone to crimes, will abuse such liberty' — this must be classed among those disturbances we have been speaking of as a part of that temporal leprosy which is to be tolerated; of that evil which is to be endured. Nor are these persons of so great account that the word of God should be given up in order to restrain their abuse of it. If *all* cannot be saved, still, *some* are saved for whose sake the word of God is given — these will love it more fervently, and consent to it more reverently. And what evils, I ask, have wicked men not done even before this, when there was no word of God? Rather, what *good* did they do? Has the world not forever overflowed with war, fraud, violence, discord, and all manner of wickedness, so that Micah compares the very best among them to a thorn? (Mic 7.4) What would he call the rest, do you think? Now, indeed, it begins to be imputed to the promulgation of the Gospel, that the world is wicked — because through the good Gospel it becomes more truly apparent how wicked the world was while it lived in its own darkness, *without* the Gospel. So too, since letters have flourished, illiterate men attribute to literature the fact that their ignorance has become notorious. Such are the thanks we render to the word of life and salvation! We may imagine, then, what fear must have been kindled among the Jews, when the Gospel absolved all men from the law of Moses! ¹³²

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SECT. 20. Erasmus' counsel about persons, time, and place, is pernicious.

What degree of licence did this prodigious liberty not seem to hereby concede to wicked men? But the Gospel was not therefore withheld. Wicked men were left to their own ways, and the godly were charged not to use their liberty as an occasion for the flesh. (Gal. 5.13)

Nor does that part of your counsel or remedy ¹³³ stand good, where you say, 'It is lawful to declare the truth among *any* persons, at *any* time, and in *any* manner, but it is not

¹³² Luther's expressions are not equivocal here, but irrestrictive and direct: 'absolved *all* men from *the law of Moses*, without excepting any part of that law; and it is essential to his argument that he be understood thus comprehensively. Otherwise, what is the ground of fear?

¹³³ Erasmus interposes in the form of an adviser, or physician; reprobating the course pursued by others, and suggesting a better one. This was no other than to modify the truth by squaring it to times, places, and persons.

expedient.' And to prove this, you very absurdly adduce Paul's words, "All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient." (1Cor 6.12)

Paul is not speaking here about doctrine, or about teaching the truth, as you would represent him to do. You are confounding his words, and drawing them wherever you please, No, he would have the truth proclaimed everywhere, at any time, by any means, even rejoicing that Christ is preached out of envy. And he expressly testifies in the very words that he rejoices if Christ is preached by *any means*.¹³⁴ Paul is speaking about the practice and use of doctrine — to wit, of those vaunters of Christian liberty who, "seeking their own" ¹³⁵ did not care what stumbling-blocks they made, and what offences they occasioned by them for the weak.

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The true doctrine is to be preached always, openly, steadily, never to be turned aslant, never to be concealed: ¹³⁶ for there is no occasion of stumbling in it: 'tis the rod of straightness. ¹³⁷ And who ever empowered you, or gave you the right, to bind Christian doctrine to places, persons, times, and cases, when Christ wills it to be published, and to reign in the world with the most perfect freedom? "For the word of God is not bound," says Paul, (2Tim 2.9) and will Erasmus bind it? Nor has God given us a word to select particular places, persons, and times, since Christ says, "Go into *all* the world." He does not say, 'Go to a certain place, and do not go to a certain place,' as Erasmus speaks. Again; "Preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark 16.15) He does not say, 'Preach it to some, and do not preach it others.' In short, you prescribe the acceptance of persons, acceptance of places, and acceptance of manner — that is to say, TIME-SERVINGS — in ministering the word of God. Whereas, this is one great part of the glory of the word: that "there is no acceptance of persons" (as Paul says), and "God does not respect persons." You see again how rashly you make war upon ¹³⁸ the word of God, as though you preferred your own thoughts and counsels far above it.

¹³⁴ The allusion is evidently to Phi 1.18, which fully justifies his 'quovis modo.' [any means] "What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I rejoice in this, yes, and will rejoice." The 'every way,' or 'by any means,' is whatever spirit he is preached with, sincere or insincere.

¹³⁵ "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." (Phi 2.21)

¹³⁶ *Obliquanda*. *Obliq.* is sometimes applied to the veering and tacking of ships; but the essential idea is bending, or making crooked, what is in itself straight. It is here opposed to *constanter*, just as 'celanda' is opposed to 'palam.' The truth must be preached in its straightness, or perpendicularity, not bent downwards or sideways, that it may be accommodated to the taste, or lusts, or supposed unaptnesses of the hearer.

¹³⁷ The allusion is evidently to Psal 14.6. Luther seems to have understood the Gospel or doctrine of Christ by this rod or sceptre; as he also does, though not exclusively, in his exposition of this psalm. (Vide in loco.) I would rather understand it of his own personal conduct as a prince. But according to Luther's allusion, the truth being a straight or upright rod, he who walks by it will walk straightly, or uprightly, and will not give occasion to others to walk crookedly, or prone.

¹³⁸ The word of God teaches that there is no respect of persons, and that God does not regard the persons of men. Col 3.25; Rom 2.6; Gal 2.6; Eph 6.9; Jam 2.1; Luk 20.21; Act 10.34, etc. etc. How contrary is it, then, to the clear testimony of the word, which declares that God mocks all human distinctions — that Jew and Greek, master and servant, or slave, rulers and subjects, pillars of the church, and men disinterested in the church, are alike regarded and disregarded by Him — to respect these distinctions, as Erasmus would counsel us in the ministry of the word! These testimonies are sometimes perverted to mean a denial of God's *electing grace*, which they do not in the slightest degree impugn, nor did Luther conceive so. He maintained that grace as firmly as any man. The truth is, respect of persons in Scripture, means respect of persons *according to human and earthly distinctions*. In this regard, God, contrariwise to man, puts no difference between them. His distinctions, which he palpably makes, are built upon another foundation. "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." (Col 3.14) But then, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all

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If we were now to request you to distinguish times, persons, and modes of speaking the truth for us, when would you determine them? The world would have laid its end to sleep, and time be no more, before you fixed on a single sure rule. Meanwhile, what becomes of the teacher's office? Where will we find the souls who are to be taught? Indeed, how is it possible for you to lay down any sure rule, when you do not know any criteria by which to estimate persons, times, and modes of speech? But even if you assuredly knew them, you would still be ignorant of the hearts of men. Unless, of course, you were to choose to adopt *this* standard for your manner of speaking, and for your time and person: 'teach the truth, so that the Pope will not be indignant, so that Caesar will not be angry, so that the cardinals and princes are not displeased; and provided further, that there are no tumults or commotions in the world, and the multitude are not stumbled by it, and made worse.'

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You have already seen, what sort of a counsel this is. But you choose to play the rhetorician in this manner, with idle words, because you must say *something*.

How much better it would be for us wretched men to give to God, who knows all hearts, the glory of prescribing the manner, persons, and times of speaking the truth! He knows 'what,' 'when,' 'how,' and 'to whom,' we ought to speak; and his injunction is that his Gospel, which is necessary to all, should know no limits of time or place, but should be preached to all men, at all times, and in all places. I have already shown that the things set forth in the Scripture are such as lie exposed to the view of all men; such as, whether we will or not, must be spread abroad among the common people; and such as are salutary. This is what you yourself also maintained in your *Paraclesis*, when you gave better counsel than you do now. Let us leave it to those who are unwilling for souls to be redeemed (such as the Pope and his myrmidons ¹³⁹), to bind the word of God, and shut men out from eternal life and the kingdom of heaven; neither entering in themselves, nor allowing others to enter in [Mat 23.13](#) — whose mad rage *you*, Erasmus, are perniciously serving by this suggestion of yours.

SECT. 21. The Fathers are not to be set on a level with Christ; their decisions have no authority but from the word.

With the same sort of wariness, in the next place, you suggest that we should not make public declarations in opposition to anything which may have been determined wrongly in general councils, lest we give a handle for despising the authority of the Fathers.

This you say to please the Pope, who hears it with more pleasure than he does the Gospel. He is ungrateful in the extreme if he does not, in return, honour you with a cardinal's hat and revenues! Meanwhile, what is to become of those souls who have been fettered and slain by the unrighteous decree? Is this *nothing* to you?

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spiritual blessings (or blessedness) in heavenly places in Christ; *according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world,*" etc. Eph 1.3-4, etc.

¹³⁹ *Myrmidon*: a follower who carries out orders without question.

Why, you always feel, or pretend to feel, that the statutes of men may be observed without any danger, in coincidence with the pure word of God. If they could, I would readily accord with this proposition of yours. So then, if you are still ignorant, I will again inform you that 'human statutes cannot be observed in conjunction with the word of God.' For the former statutes bind men's consciences; the latter word looses them; and they fight one another like fire and water, unless the former are kept freely — that is, as *unbinding* statutes. This is a thing very contrary to the Pope's will. And it must be so, unless he wishes to destroy and put an end to his own kingdom, which is only kept by ensnaring and fettering men's consciences, while the Gospel declares them to be free. The authority of the Fathers, then, must be set aside, and all bad decrees must be torn in pieces, and thrown to the dogs. I include with these, all such determinations that are not warranted by the word of God; for Christ's authority is of another sort than that of the Fathers. In short, if your statement comprehends the word of God, then it is a wicked one. If it is confined to other writings, then your verbose discussion of the sentiment which you recommend is nothing to me; my assertions respect the word of God only. ¹⁴⁰

SECT. 22. Injuriousness of certain paradoxes, 'all things are by necessity;' 'God is all in all.'

In the last part of your Preface, you seriously dissuade us from this sort of doctrine, and fancy that you have almost succeeded. What is more injurious, you ask, than that this paradox be published to the world: that whatever is done by us is not done by Freewill, but by mere necessity?

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And what of that saying of Augustine's, that 'God works both good and evil in us; that he rewards his own good works in us, and punishes his own bad works in us'? Here you are rich in giving, or rather, in demanding reasons. What window will this saying open to impiety, if it is commonly published among men? What wicked man will correct his life? Who will think he is loved by God? Who will strive against his flesh?

I am surprised that in this mighty vehemence and agony of yours, you did not remember your cause, and ask, What then will become of Freewill? Let me also become a speaker in my turn, Erasmus, and I will ask you this: If you account these paradoxes to be the invention of men, then why dispute? Why boil with rage? Whom are you opposing them? Is there a man in all the world, today, who has more vehemently inveighed against the dogmas of men, than Luther has done? So that, this admonition of yours is nothing to me. But, if you believe these paradoxes to be the word of God, then what face have you? ¹⁴¹ What modesty have you? Where is now — I will not say that usual sobriety of Erasmus, but — that fearful reverence which is due to the true God, when you assert, that nothing can be affirmed more unprofitably than this word of God? What! I suppose your Creator is to learn from his *creature* what is useful to be preached, and what is not? Yes, this foolish and ill-advised God, has not known up to now what is expedient to be taught. But

¹⁴⁰ Erasmus had said that bad decisions should be hushed up; and if spoken of, it should rather be said that they were good at the time, though unseasonable now. Luther replies, if your remark is intended to affect any decision which is founded upon the word of God, the sentiment is impious. With respect to any other sort of decisions, whether you choose to call them pious and holy, or acknowledge them to be faulty, I have nothing to do with them.

¹⁴¹ *Ubi frons tua*. The face is the index of sensibility; effrontery is the result of obduracy. Luther's question implies you can have no face; you must have a brow of brass, to speak so. [We might say 'cheek' – audacity.](#)

now at last his master Erasmus will prescribe to him the manner in which he would be wise, and in which he should deliver his commands! Truly, God would have been ignorant if you had not taught him that *your* inference follows upon *His* paradox!

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If God, then, has been willing to have such things spoken openly and spread abroad among the common people, without regard to consequences, then who are you that you should forbid him?

Paul the Apostle explicitly declares the same things in his Epistle to the Romans, open-mouthed — not in a corner, but publicly and before the whole world, in even harsher words. He says, "Whom he will, he hardens." (Rom 9.18.) And again, "God willing to make his wrath known." (Rom 9.22) What is harsher — to the flesh, I mean — than that saying of Christ, "Many are called, but few chosen." (Mat 22.14) And again, "I know whom I have chosen." (Joh 13.18) ¹⁴² All these sayings, truly, if we listen to your suggestions, are among the most injurious that can be conceived, because they are the instruments by which ungodly men fall gradually ¹⁴³ into desperation, hatred of God, and blasphemy.

Here, as I perceive it, you reckon that the truth and usefulness of Scripture are to be weighed and decided by the judgment of men, and these men are none other than the most ungodly. So that, whatever they are pleased with and consider tolerable, that is true, divine, and salutary. And what is otherwise in their eyes, is straightway useless, false, and pernicious. What do you propose by this counsel, but that God's words should be dependent on the will and authority of men, so as to stand or fall by them? Whereas the Scripture, on the other hand, says that everything stands or falls by the will and authority of God. Indeed, that "all the earth must keep silence before the face of the Lord." (Hab 2.20) To speak as you do, a man must imagine the living God is nothing but some light and ignorant sort of Ranter, declaiming in a rostrum — whose words you are at liberty, if you choose, to interpret anyhow you please, accepting or rejecting them according to the emotions or affections which you see produced by them in wicked men.

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You clearly show here, my Erasmus, how sincere you were before, in persuading us to respect the awful majesty of the divine judgments. When the question was about the dogmas of Scripture, there was no need to call for reverence towards them on the ground of their being shut up and hidden from view, because there are none of this sort. In words of great solemnity, you threatened us with Corycian caves,¹⁴⁴ lest we break in curiously. This nearly deterred us by fear, from reading Scripture at all — that very Scripture which Christ and his Apostles, and elsewhere even your own pen, so greatly urge and persuade us to study! But here, when we have actually arrived not only at the dogmas of Scripture, and at the Corycian cave, but truly at the awful secrets of the divine majesty — to wit, why God works in the manner which has been mentioned — here, I say, you break through bolts and bars, and rush forwards with all but blasphemies in your mouth, showing all

¹⁴² See Part i. Sect. 3. note ⁱ.

¹⁴³ *Prolabantur*. Translate 'sensim devenire,' 'palatim accedere.'

¹⁴⁴ *Corycian caves*: meaning that such things are reserved to God alone.

possible indignation against God, because you are not permitted to see the design and arrangement of such a judgment of His! ¹⁴⁵

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Why do you not also pretend obscurities and ambiguities here? Why do you not both restrain yourself, and deter others, from prying into those things which God has willed to be kept secret from us, and has not published in his word? You should have laid your hand upon your mouth here, revering the unrevealed mystery, adoring the secret counsels of the Divine Majesty, and exclaiming with Paul, "No, but, O man, who are you that replies against God?" (Rom 9.20)

SECT. 23. Answers to Erasmus' objectionary questions, who will take pains, etc.? Two reasons why these things should be preached.

You say, 'who will take pains to correct his life?' I answer, no man; nor will anyone even be able to do so. For God pays no regard to your amenders of life, who do not have the Spirit since they are but hypocrites. But the elect and godly will be amended by the Holy Spirit: the rest will perish unamended. For Augustine does not say that the good works of *none* will be crowned, nor that the good works of *all* will be crowned; but that the good works of *some* are crowned. There will be some, therefore, who amend their life. You say, 'Who will believe that he is beloved of God?' I answer, no man will believe so, or be able to believe so; but the *elect* will believe so. The rest, not believing, will perish, storming and blaspheming as you do in this place. There will be some, therefore, who believe.

As to what you say, that 'a window is opened to impiety by these doctrines' — What if the disorders resulting from them are referred to that leprosy of *tolerable evil*, which I have already hinted at? Still, by the same dogmas, a door is opened at the same time for the elect and godly, to righteousness, and an entrance into heaven, and a way to God.

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Now if, according to your advice, we were to abstain from these dogmas, and hide this word of God from men, so that each one, beguiled by a false persuasion of his safety, did not learn to fear God and be humbled, and through wholesome fear at length come to grace and love, then we would have nobly closed your window of impiety. But in its place, we would open folding doors — no, pits and gulfs — not only to impiety, but even to the belly of hell, for ourselves and for all men. Thus, we would neither enter heaven ourselves, nor allow others who were entering, to go in.

'What is the use or necessity, then, of publishing such things to the world, when so many evils seem to spring from them?'

I answer; it would be enough to say,

¹⁴⁵ *Non licet videre*. Referring to Augustine's saying, that God works all things in us, rewarding his own good, and punishing his own evil. In a future part of the work, where this subject is more fully gone into — and to which I defer my observations on it as briefly glanced at here — I trust it will appear that the word of God does not really leave us in that depth of darkness which Luther's language implies here, and which his fuller statement, made hereafter, affirms. God has *not* revealed himself that he might remain hidden, as unknown, or even yet more unknown than he was before; but amidst the unsearchableness of his infinity, he has, by his counsel of manifestation, which the Scripture records, unveiled much of himself to our view, which before and without it, was and must forever have remained concealed. Luther — prodigy as he was in his day — did not have the clue of God-manifestation to guide him through the labyrinth; and therefore, he counted much that is light, darkness.

'God would have these things published. And as to the principles of the divine will, we have no right to ask them; we should simply adore that will, giving glory to God because He, the only just and wise one, injures no man, and cannot possibly do anything foolishly or rashly — even if it appears far otherwise to us.'

Godly men are content with this answer. But, to be lavish with our abundance,¹⁴⁶ let it be replied that 'two things require the preaching of these truths.' The *first* is the humbling of our pride, and a thorough knowledge of the grace of God. The *second* is the very nature of Christian faith.

64

For the *first*, God has promised his grace, with certainty, to the humbled — that is, to those who bewail themselves in self-despair. But a man cannot be thoroughly humbled till he knows that his salvation lies altogether beyond and out of the reach of his own strength, counsels, desires, will, and works: till he depends absolutely upon the counsel, will, and work of another — that is, of God only. For as long as he is persuaded that he can do the least thing possible for his own salvation, he continues in self-confidence, and does not absolutely despair of himself. Therefore, he is not humbled before God, but goes about anticipating for himself, or hoping, or at least wishing to obtain a time, place, and some performance of his own, by which He may at length arrive at salvation.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, he who does not have the shadow of a doubt that he is wholly and solely dependent on the will of God, this man is complete in his self-despair; this man chooses nothing,¹⁴⁸ but waits for God to work. This man is next neighbour to that grace of God which makes him whole. Thus, these things are published for the *elect's* sake, that by these means they may be humbled and brought to know their own nothingness, and so they may be saved. The rest resist this sort of humiliation; indeed, they condemn the teaching of this self-despair; they would have some modicum of power left to themselves. These persons secretly remain proud, and are adversaries to the grace of God. This, I say, is one reason why these truths should be preached: that the godly, being humbled, may come to a real knowledge¹⁴⁹ of the promise of grace, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, and may receive its fulfilment.

65

The second *reason* for this preaching is that for faith to be conversant about things which are not apparent — to have a *place* for faith — all the things believed must be hidden things. Now, things are never hidden further from us, than when their contrary is set before us by sense and experience. Thus, when God makes us alive, He does it by killing us; when He justifies us, He does it by making us guilty; and when He lifts us up to heaven,

¹⁴⁶ *Super-erogemus*. 'To lay out and bestow over and above what is due. *Ergo* is properly applied to public money, exacted and issued upon petition and by order; from there it is transferred to 'private expenditure.' *Ut ex ubundantid super*, implies a superabundance of reasons might be alleged, where only one is necessary.

¹⁴⁷ *Quo tandem perveniat*. The contrast is between that direct going to God of the truly humbled sinner; and the circuitous, procrastinative, self-centered expectations of the man who does not yet know the whole of his lostness and impotency.

¹⁴⁸ *Nihil eligit*. In direct contrast with the 'sibi praesumit, sperat, optat' of the former sentence; he does not desire or expect any particular combination of time and place, in which he may perform some great work for himself; but lies passive in the hands of God, leaving it to God even to choose for him. The expression reminds us of St. Paul's language, under other circumstances, which was probably in Luther's mind; "yet what I shall *choose* I know not." (Phi 1.22)

¹⁴⁹ *Cognoscant*. 'Nosco, vel bene nosco;' 'to know a person or thing not known before; as opposed to 'agnosco.'

He does it by plunging us into hell. As the Scripture says, "The Lord kills and makes alive; he brings down to the grave, and brings up." (1Sam 2.6) This is not the place to discourse about this at large. Those who have seen our books, are hackneyed ¹⁵⁰ in these topics. Thus, God hides his eternal mercy and pity under eternal wrath, and his righteousness under iniquity.

This is the highest degree of faith: to believe that He is merciful, who saves so few, and condemns so many; to believe that He is just, who of his own will, makes us necessary objects of damnation. ¹⁵¹ Thus, according to Erasmus' account, God seems to be delighted with the torments of the wretched, and to deserve our hatred, rather than our love. If then, I could by any means comprehend how this God is pitiful and just, who shows such great wrath and injustice, there would be no need for faith. But now, since this cannot be comprehended, and while these things are preached and published, space is given for the exercise of faith — even as the faith of life is exercised in death,¹⁵² while God is in the very act of killing us. Enough for the present, in a preface.

66

Those who assert and defend these paradoxes, do, in fact, better provide against the impiety of the multitude, than *you* do by your counsel of silence and abstinence — which, after all, avail nothing. For if you either believe, or suspect, that these paradoxes are true (being, as they are, of no small moment), it is through that insatiable desire which men have for scrutinizing secret things. But *then*, most of all (when most of all we wish to *conceal* them), you will cause men to have a much greater desire to learn whether these paradoxes are true, by publishing this caution of yours. You will no doubt set them on fire by your eagerness. Thus, it will be found that none of us has yet given such occasion for the promulgation of these things, as you have done by this devout and vehement admonition against it. If you meant to obtain your wish, then you would have acted more prudently in holding your tongue about shunning these paradoxes.

67

All is over now. Since you do not absolutely deny that they are true, they cannot hereafter be concealed. Rather, by the suspicion that they *are* true, you will draw everybody to investigate them. ¹⁵³ Therefore, either deny that they are true, or first keep silent yourself, if you mean for others to be silent.

¹⁵⁰ *Hackneyed*: made too familiar by overuse and repetition.

¹⁵¹ *Necessariò damnabiles*. We were so created, have been so generated and brought out into manifest existence, are so constituted and so situated, that we cannot choose but be just objects of God's eternal damnation. This necessity is not blind Fate, but arises out of the appointments, arrangements, and operations of God's counselled will.

¹⁵² *Fides vitae*. Luther has some allusion possibly to Job 13.15, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Faith of eternal life; the belief that he shall possess that life; is exercised by the dying man, in the moment when God is killing him. What! He gives you life, who is now killing you? Yes; so faith speaks. Even so, these apparent contradictions to the justice and other perfections of God, kill faith; but it is exercised in the midst of this death. A fine thought! But it will be seen elsewhere, I trust, that Luther misconceives and overstates this difficulty, through not seeing far enough into the counsel and actings of God. There is manifestly no injustice in the divine procedure when that procedure is viewed in its real nature and circumstances, as revealed. Nor are we without a manifested end, which the spiritual mind entirely approves and rejoices in, for that severity which is so hateful to carnal man. But it requires great depth, as well as distinctness of vision, to see so as to be truly and indeed satisfied with this mystery of God, by which He is making himself known.

¹⁵³ *Suspicio veritatis*. Interdum suspicio est 'opinio,' 'cogitatio,' 'conjectura,' 'levis cognitio:' a sort of 'surmise' in that they may be true.

SECT. 24. The paradox that 'all human works are necessary,' explained and defended.

With respect to the other paradox, that 'whatever we do is done by mere necessity, and not by Freewill,' let us look a little into it here, so that we may forbid its being called *most pernicious*. What I say at present is this: when it has been shown that our salvation is placed beyond the reach of our own power and wisdom, and depends on the work of God alone (which I hope to fully prove hereafter, in the body of my discourse), will it not clearly follow that, while God is not present *as a worker* in us, everything is evil which we do? And will it not appear that we *necessarily* do those things which are of no profit to our own salvation? For, if it is not *we*, but *only* God, that works salvation in us, then before he works in us, we do nothing that is profitable to our salvation, whether we will it or not. When I say *necessarily*, I do not mean by compulsion — but as it is said, by a necessity of immutability, not of compulsion. That is, when a man is destitute of the Spirit of God, he does not work evil against his will, as if it was forced upon him; as if someone seized him by the throat and twisted him around; just as a thief or highwayman is carried to the gallows against his will. Rather, he works it of his own accord, and with a *willing* will. But then he cannot, by his own strength, lay aside, restrain, or change his good pleasure or his will to act; but he goes on, willing and liking. And even if he were to be compelled from without, to do something else by force, *still* his will remains averse within him, and he is angry with the person who compels or resists him.

68

Now, he would not be angry if his mind were changed, and he were following the force which acts upon him willingly. This is what at present I call 'a necessity of immutability' — that is, the will cannot change itself and turn another way. Rather, by being resisted, the will is provoked all the more to will, as proved by its indignation. This would not be, if the will were free, or if it possessed Freewill. Appeal to experience. How impracticable those persons are who cling to anything with affection. If these persons cease to cling, they cease through force, or the greater advantage they would derive from something else. They never cease to cling, except by constraint. Whereas, if they have no affection for the thing, they allow what may, to go forwards and be done.

So, on the other hand, if God works in us the will which has been changed and softly whispered to by the Spirit of God, again it wills and acts according to its own sheer lust, proneness, and self-accord, and is not compelled. So that, it cannot be changed into another sort of will by any opposite excitements, nor overcome or compelled even by the gates of hell. But it goes on willing and liking and loving *good*, just as before it willed and liked and loved *evil*. For experience again proves how invincible and constant holy men are, while they are goaded on to other objects, by force— to the extent that they are thereby more provoked to will: just as fire is inflamed by the wind, rather than extinguished by it! So that, in this case, there is no freedom in the will to turn itself another way, nor to will something else, as the *free will* might choose, so long as the Spirit and God's grace remain in the man.

In short, if we are under the power of the god of this world — being destitute of the work and Spirit of the true God, we are held captive by him at his will, as Paul says, 2Tim 2.26; so that, we cannot will anything but what he wills.

69

For he is himself that armed strong-man, who so keeps his palace that those whom he possesses are at peace, lest they stir up any commotion or thought against him. Otherwise, the kingdom of Satan, being divided against itself, could not stand; whereas Christ affirms that it *does* stand. And we willingly and cordially *do* this will of his, agreeably to the nature of our will. Our will, if it were compelled, would not *be* a Will — for compulsion is more properly *Non-will*, if I may say so.¹⁵⁴ But if a stronger will comes upon it, and having conquered it, carries it off as a spoil, then again, we become servants and captives through His spirit (which, however, is royal *liberty*), to will and do of our own desire, just what He himself wills. Thus, the human will is placed as a sort of packhorse, in the midst of two contending parties. If God has mounted, it wills and goes where God pleases. As the Psalmist says, "I have become as a beast of burden, and I am ever with you."¹⁵⁵ (Psa 73.22-23) If Satan has mounted, then it wills and goes where Satan wills. Nor is it in its own choice, which of the two riders it runs to or seeks as its rider; but the riders themselves contend for the acquisition and possession of it.¹⁵⁶

70

SECT. 25. Erasmus convicted by his own concession: the folly and madness of man's claiming Freewill.

What if I were to prove from your own words, in which you assert Freewill, that there is no such thing as Freewill, so as to convict you of unwarily denying the conclusion which you endeavour with so much wariness to establish? Truly, if I do not succeed in this, I swear to revoke all that I have written against you, from the beginning to the end of this book; and to confirm all that your Diatribe either asserts or questions against me.¹⁵⁷

You represent the power of the free will as something very diminutive, and altogether inefficacious without the grace of God. Do you not acknowledge this? I ask and demand,

¹⁵⁴ *Noluntas*. 'The negation of will;' a state supposed, which is inconsistent with the very existence of the faculty: yet this is what the opponents of 'necessity' would charge its asserters with maintaining; instead of that constrained but freely-acted obedience which is essential to the reality of God's being God, and man being his *moral* creature.

¹⁵⁵ Our authorized version gives another turn to this passage, by dividing the verses differently. But the original text is, 'I am foolish, and I did not know that I was behemoth before you: and I am always with you, you hold in your hand my right hand.'

¹⁵⁶ Luther does not really mean what his words might seem to imply, that God and Satan are co-equal rivals for the throne of man's will. Hereafter, it will be found that he firmly and explicitly maintains the universal and minute sovereignty of God, as the doer of all things. His object here is to show the governance under which man's will is; that it is under the power and control of the devil, unless and until the Holy Ghost assumes the empire of it: when it is still a subject, though the subject of another, and that is a freedom-giving master. The truth is, however, that God has never given Freewill (if by Freewill is meant an uncontrolled will) to any creature. Man, in his creation state, had the power of choosing and refusing, just as he has now; and the difference between his then state and his now state, consisted in his knowing nothing but good; and till the moment of trial, having no temptation to choose anything but good. When that temptation was, for the first time, presented to him, we know how he met it and the result was a corrupted faculty, which Satan rides as his packhorse. But both his seat and his riding are of the gift, and according to the will, of God; even as his dispossession is *when, as and in whom* God wills; not a moment sooner or later. Yet all this agency of God in no way contradicts the reality of a will in man; God's universal and minute government consisting in his setting, or rather procuring to be set, before this faculty, such considerations as will lead the free agent possessor of it to choose just what God would have him choose.

¹⁵⁷ *Contra me turn assent, turn quaerit*. Much of Erasmus' argument consisted of dubitative remark; hinting a fault or objection, rather than boldly stating it; and proposing questions, rather than affirming certainties.

then, if the grace of God is lacking, or is separated from this little something of power, what will it do by itself? ¹⁵⁸

71

It is inefficacious, you say, and it does nothing that is good. Then it will not do what God or his grace would have done (for we suppose here, that the grace of God is in a state of separation from it), and what the grace of God does *not* do, is not good. It follows, therefore, that the free will, ¹⁵⁹ without the grace of God, is not absolutely free, but is immutably the captive and slave of evil, since it cannot, of itself, turn to good. Let but this be allowed, and I will give you leave to make the power of the free will not only that small something, but the power of an angel; a power, if you can, that is truly divine. Still, if you add this unhappy appendage — that it is inefficacious without the grace of God — you will instantly take away all its power. What is an inefficacious power, but no power at all?

To say, then, that the will is free, and has power, but that its power is inefficacious, is what the Sophists call 'an opposite in the adjunct.' It is as if to say, the will is free, but it is *not* free. It is like saying, fire is cold, and earth is hot. Let fire possess even an infernal degree of heat; if it neither warms nor burns, but is cold and it makes cold, I will not call it fire, much less hot — unless you choose to consider it as a painting or an engraving of a fire.

72

If, however, we declare Freewill to be that power which renders man a fit substance to be seized by the Spirit and imbued with the grace of God, as a being created to eternal life, or to eternal death, then we would speak properly. For we also confess this power (that is, this *fitness*) in the will, or as the Sophists say, this disposable quality and passive adaptedness, which everybody knows is not implanted in the trees and in the beasts. For 'God has not created heaven for geese and ganders,' as it is said. ¹⁶⁰

It stands fixed, even by your own testimony, therefore, that we do all things by necessity, and nothing by Freewill, so long as the power of the free will is nothing, and neither does nor *can* do good, in the absence of grace. Unless you, by a new use of terms, choose to mean 'completion' by 'efficacy,' intimating that Freewill can begin and can will a good work, though not complete it — which I do not believe. But more of this later.

It follows from what has been said, that Freewill is a title which altogether belongs to God, and cannot join with any other being, save the Divine Majesty. For that Divine Majesty, as the Psalmist sings, can and does effect all that He wills in heaven and earth. (Psa 135.6)

¹⁵⁸ *Quid ipsa faciet.* This question is no less than the death blow to Freewill, however modest may be the pretensions made for her. A false candour and a ruinous forbearance ask why we should attempt to separate what run so closely and so harmoniously together: God's grace and man's exertion? Goodwill to man, and zeal for God, demand the separation: only thus can man be made to know himself; only thus can God's proper praise be knowingly and unfeignedly rendered to him.

¹⁵⁹ See above, Sect. 9. note. *Lib. arb.* 'The power of willing,' thus asserted to be free. *Vis lib. arb.* 'The power of this power,' etc. etc. 'Freewill.'

¹⁶⁰ It is necessary to mark with precision the amount of this concession. Man has a rational will (not that his reason is seated in his will; it is a distinct faculty; and we should say more correctly, man has an understanding as well as a will) which brutes do not have; and through the means of which he may become the subject of spiritual influences. There is a spirit in man; and this spirit may be renewed and invigorated by the Holy Ghost, so as to discern spiritual objects, and to perform spiritual acts. But how does this affect the reality of the natural blindness and impotency of the rational will? It presupposes that reality.

But if this title is ascribed to men, then you might just as well ascribe divinity itself to them — a sacrilege which none can exceed.

73

So that, it was the duty of theologians to abstain from this word when they would speak of human power, and to leave it for God only; and having done this, to remove it from the mouth and discourse of men, claiming it as a sacred and venerable title for their God. ¹⁶¹ No, but if they must by all means ascribe some power to man, then they should teach that it be called by some other name than 'Freewill;' especially when, as we all see and know, the common people are miserably seduced and beguiled by this term. They hear in it, and conceive from it, something far different from what theologians entertain in their minds, and affirm. For 'Freewill' is too magnificent, extensive, and copious a term. The common people suppose by it (as both the force and the nature of the word require) that a power is meant, which can turn itself freely to either side, and is of such an extent as not to yield or be subjected to anyone. If they knew that the fact is otherwise, and that scarcely a small particle of a little spark is signified by it, and that this very small particle is quite inefficacious by itself — no, that it is the captive and slave of the devil — it would be strange if they did not stone us as mockers and deceivers, for uttering a sound so very different from our meaning. And this too, is when it is not even a settled and agreed upon thing among us yet, what we really *do* mean by it! For "he who speaks deceitfully," says the wise man, "is detestable;" ¹⁶² especially, if he does so in matters of piety, where eternal salvation is at stake.

74

We have lost the substance which is expressed by so glorious a name; or rather, we have never possessed it. Indeed, the Pelagians would have it that we do possess it — they are beguiled by this word, as *you* are. Why do we so obstinately retain an empty name, to the mocking and endangering of the common people who believe?

It is the same sort of wisdom as that by which kings and princes either retain, or claim and vaunt themselves to possess, empty titles of kingdoms and countries, when all the while they are almost beggars, and are as far as possible from possessing those kingdoms and countries. This, however, is a folly that may be borne, since they neither deceive nor beguile anyone; they only feed themselves on vanity, to no profit at all. But in the case before us, the soul-danger and the deception are most injurious.

Who would not laugh at (or rather *hate*) that unseasonable innovator in the use of words, who, contrary to all common usage, endeavours to introduce such a mode of speaking as to call a beggar *rich* — not for having any money of his own, but because some king might perhaps give him *his*? Especially if he were to do this as though in earnest, without any figure of speech such as antiphrasis ¹⁶³ or irony. So too, if he were to call someone who is sick to death, a man in perfect health, because some other healthy person might possibly make him whole, like himself. So too, if he were to call a most illiterate idiot, a very learned

¹⁶¹ *Nomen*. He does not mean that God should be called by this name; but that it is a property which, as to him, should be a name; it is what separates the individual, in the recognition of others, from all that resemble him.

¹⁶² *Odibilis*. I do not find any words like these, either in the Canonical Scriptures, or in the Apocrypha. Some have supposed Luther refers to Wis 37:3, "O wicked imagination, where did you come from to cover earth with deceit?"

¹⁶³ *Antiphrasis*: the use of a word in a sense opposite to its normal sense (especially in irony).

man, because some other learned person might possibly give him letters. It is just the same sort of thing which is said here — 'man has Free will;' yes, truly, if God were to give him *His*. By such an abuse of speech, any man might boast anything about himself: for instance, that he is Lord of heaven and earth — that is, if God would only give it to him. Such, however, is *not* the language of theologians, but of stage-players and swaggerers.¹⁶⁴

75

Our words should be plain, pure, and sober, ¹⁶⁵ or what Paul calls "sound and irreprehensible." (Tit 2.7-8)

If, then, we are not willing to give up the term altogether (which would be the safest expedient, and most consistent with piety), still, let us teach men to keep good faith in using it only within certain limits. Thus, Freewill is conceded to man, only with respect to those substances which are inferior to himself, and not to those which are his superiors. In other words, let him know that, with regard to his faculties and possessions, he has a right to use them — of doing, and of forbearing to do — according to his own free will; even if this very right is also controlled by God's free will alone, wherever God sees fit to interpose. But in his actings towards God, in things pertaining to *salvation* or *damnation*, he has no free will, but he is the captive, subject, and servant, either of the will of God, or of the will of Satan. ¹⁶⁶

76

SECT. 26. Luther concludes his review of Erasmus' Preface by reducing him to a dilemma, and making short work of some of his sharp sayings.

I have said this much on the chapters of your Preface, which even in themselves contain almost the whole of our matter — more of it, I might say, than the body of the book which follows. But the sum of these is what might be dispatched by this short dilemma. Your preface complains either of the words of God, or of the words of man. If it complains of the words of man, then it is all written in vain, and I have no concern with it. If it complains of the words of God, then it is altogether profane. So that, it would have been more profitable to make *this* our question: Are the words about which we dispute, *God's*

¹⁶⁴ *Quadruplatorum*. This name was applied, under the Roman law, to public informers, who gained a fourth of the accused's goods, or of the fine imposed upon him: or, as others say, because they accused persons who, upon conviction, used to be condemned to pay fourfold; as those who were guilty of illegal usury, gaming, or the like. But chiefly mercenary and false accusers, or litigants, were called by this name; and also those judges who, making themselves parties in a cause, decided in their own favour. Seneca calls those who, for small services, sought great returns, 'quadruplatores beneficiorum suorum;' overrating and exaggerating them. — Luther, however, may possibly have no allusion to these customs, but uses the term according to its essential meaning, for a 'bouncer' or 'exaggerator,' insinuating, that Erasmus' statements were of this kind. But uniting it with *Histrionum* rather leads us to some notorious class or community of persons.

¹⁶⁵ *Propria, pura, sobria*. *Prop.* 'plain,' as opposed to| figurative; *pur.* simple, as opposed to ornamented; *sobr.* temperate, as opposed to extravagant.

¹⁶⁶ Luther's distinction here is neither profitable, nor just, nor safe: *unprofitable*, because the amount of the exception is small and hard to define; *unjust*, because God does, in fact, always interpose. "He works all things after the counsel of his own will." "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father;" "He is all (things) in all (things)." It is *unsafe* because, if Freewill is admitted anywhere, then why not everywhere? who will yield to our authority when we say, it is *here*, but it is not *there*? The truth is, man is a *free-agent*, though not a *free-wilier* in spiritual things; and he is no more free in temporal things, and in his dealings with the inferior creatures. (See Sect. 24. note.)

words, or *man's* words? But, perhaps the Proem which follows, and the disputation itself, will discuss this question.

What you repeat in the conclusion of your preface, does not at all disturb me, such as calling my dogmas 'fables, and useless;' that 'we should rather, after the example of Paul, preach Christ crucified;' that 'wisdom must be taught among those who are mature;' that 'Scripture has its language variously tempered to the state of the hearers,' which makes you think that it is left to the prudence and charity of the teacher, to preach what he may deem suitable to his neighbour.

All this is absurdity and ignorance. I also preach nothing but Jesus crucified. But "Christ crucified" brings all these things along with it; and moreover, it brings that very wisdom among those who are mature, since there is no other wisdom to be taught among Christians, than that which is hidden in a mystery and belongs to the mature; not to children ¹⁶⁷ of a Jewish and legal people, who glory in works without faith.

77

This is Paul's meaning in 1Cor 2, unless you would have 'the preaching of Christ crucified' mean no more than sounding out the phrase, 'Christ was crucified.'

As for those expressions, 'God is angry,' 'has fury,' 'hates,' 'grieves,' 'pities,' 'repents,' — we know that none of these things happen to God.

You are looking for a knot in a bulrush. ¹⁶⁸ These expressions do not make Scripture obscure, or something that must be modulated according to the varieties of the hearer; except that some people are fond of making obscurities where there are none. These are matters of grammar: the sentiment is expressed in figurative words, but those words which even schoolboys understand. However, in this cause of ours, we are talking about *doctrines*, not about *figures of speech*.

¹⁶⁷ *Pueros*. *Puer*, as opposed to *perfectos*; en tois teleioiv Men of full age, as opposed to babes. (1Cor 2.6)

¹⁶⁸ *Nodus in scirpo quaeritur*. A proverb for stumbling upon plain ground.

PART II. LUTHER COMMENTS ON ERASMUS' PROEM.

SECTION 1. Canonical Scriptures are to be the standard of appeal. Human authority, all against Luther, is admitted but depreciated.

Now, therefore, when you are about to enter upon your disputation, you promise to plead the Canonical Scriptures only, since Luther does not hold himself bound by the authority of any other writer.

I am satisfied, and I accept your promise, even though you do not make it on the basis of judging those other writers unprofitable to the cause, but to spare yourself useless labour. For you do not quite approve of this audacity of mine, or whatever else the principle must be called, by which I regulate myself in this instance.

You are not a little moved, truly, by so numerous a series of the most learned men, who have been approved by the common consent of so many ages. Among them are to be found men of the greatest skill in sacred literature, some of the most holy of our Martyrs, and many celebrated for their miracles. Add to these a number of more modern theologians, so many Universities, Councils, Bishops, and Pontiffs. In short, on the one side stands erudition, genius, numbers, grandeur, high rank, fortitude, sanctification, miracles, and what not? But on my side, there is only Wickliff and one other, Laurentius Valla,¹⁶⁹ whose weight is nothing in comparison with the former (though Augustine also, whom you pass over, is altogether with me).

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There remains none but Luther, you say — a private man, a man of yesterday — and his friends, who have neither so much learning, nor so much genius; no numbers, no grandeur, no sanctification, no miracles — who cannot even heal a lame horse. They make a parade of Scripture, which *they*, as well as the opposite party, nevertheless consider to be equivocal.¹⁷⁰ They boast of the Spirit also; but they give no signs of possessing it. — And if you pleased, you could specify a great many other particulars.¹⁷¹ — There is nothing on our side, therefore, but what the wolf acknowledged of the devoured nightingale; 'You are a voice,' he said, 'and nothing else.' 'They talk,' you say; 'and for this only, they expect to be believed.'

I confess, my Erasmus, that you are not without good reason moved by all these things. I was so much affected by them myself for more than ten years,¹⁷² that I think no other person was ever equally harassed by such conflicts. And it was utterly incredible to me,

¹⁶⁹ Laurent or Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457) – His textual analysis proved that the "Donation of Constantine" was a forgery. At the 1457 feast of St. Thomas, at the Dominican church in Rome, Valla opposed philosophy (the works of Aristotle and the Scholastics) to theology, and to the Word of God. He criticized the scholastics for adulterating the pure word of God with pagan Greek philosophy. He advocated a return to the Scriptures, whose truth would be revealed by a close textual study in the original languages. This was called "humanist theology." *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance*, ed. Guido Ruggiero (Blackwell Pub., Oxford UK, 2007), p. 341.

¹⁷⁰ *Quam tamen dubiam habent*. The pretended ambiguity of Scripture is a point on which Erasmus laid great stress, and which Luther, hereafter, most powerfully and satisfactorily repels.

¹⁷¹ A vaunting insinuation expressed in the words of Aeneas, iv. 333, 334); by which Erasmus would lead his reader to understand, that he had a great deal still behind.

¹⁷² That is, for ten years prior to posting his 95 theses (1517), he too had been of Erasmus' mind. – WHG

that this Troy of mine could ever be taken, which had proved itself to be invincible for so long a time, and during so many wars. No, I call God for a record upon my soul, that I would have continued in my opinion, and would still be impressed to this day with the same feelings [as yours], if it were not that the goadings of my own conscience, and the evidence of facts, constrained me to judge differently. You can have no difficulty in conceiving that, although my heart is not a heart of stone, yet if it *were* one, it might have melted in the struggle and collision with such waves and tides as I brought upon myself, by daring to do an act which would, as I perceived it, cause all the authority of these persons whom you have recounted, to come down upon my own head with all the violence of a deluge. ¹⁷³

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But this is not the place for me to construct a history of my life, or of my works; nor have I taken this book in hand with the design of commending myself, but that I might extol the grace of God. What sort of a man I am, and with what spirit and design I have been hurried into these transactions, I commit ¹⁷⁴ to that Being, who knows that all these things have been effected, not by my own Freewill, but by *His*. However, even the world itself should have become sensible of this long ago. It is evidently a very invidious situation into which you throw me by this exordium of yours, from which it is not easy for me to extricate myself without trumpeting my own praises, and censuring so many of the Fathers. But I will be short. In erudition, genius, numbers, authority, and everything else, I allow the cause to be tried at your judgment-seat, and acknowledge myself the inferior.¹⁷⁵

81

But if I were to turn upon my judge, and propose these three questions to you — What is the manifestation of the Spirit? What are Miracles? What is Sanctification? ¹⁷⁶ — you

¹⁷³ Luther claims respect, here, for three properties of his mind and conduct: conscientiousness, scrupulous investigation of truth, and full consciousness of the evil he was encountering. Not only was his light poured in very gradually, and admittedly very cautiously, but from first to last, he would have been often glad to hold his tongue. When he spoke or wrote, it was because God's word was in his heart as a burning fire shut up in his bones, and he was weary with forbearing, and could not stay. (Jer 20.9.)

¹⁷⁴ *Commendo*. Properly, to 'commit as a deposit into the hands of a trustee. I leave my character and my conduct, in these particulars, with my God.

¹⁷⁵ Luther considers himself as arrayed, in opposition to the Fathers, before the judgment-seat of Erasmus. His defence must consist of self-praise and abuse of the Fathers. He declines making such a defence, and cuts the matter short by acknowledging his inferiority; and that in *all* the points of competition which Erasmus had introduced. — Dr. Milner understands him to reserve three; viz. the Spirit, miracles, and sanctification. But this does not appear to be the fair construction and import of the original text. If I collect the sense aright, he makes two concessions: *etiam te iudice*; I will allow the cause to be tried even at your judgment-seat; *omnibus aliis*; I do not reserve a single point of superiority for myself. (Did Luther *indeed* mean to contest the palm on any of these three grounds of excellency?) But then he abates the force of his concessions by remarking with respect to those three distinctions which alone are of any value in the number and variety claimed for his adversaries, that in the first place, Erasmus could not define them; and in the next, he could not prove that he possessed them, concerning any individual of his vaunted host. (See Miln. Ecclesi. Hist. vol. iv. part ii. p. 863.)

It may be well, just to notice the order, in which Luther hence proceeds, in his animadversions upon Erasmus' Proem. 1. You cannot prove that they possessed these properties. 2. If they had them, they did not come at them by Freewill. 3. Show you the same. 4. At least define the power. 5. How absurd your conduct is with respect to the Fathers. 6. Some desultory objections such as, 'strange that God should have tolerated such errors in his church: 'Scripture is not clear' — met and repelled. 7. Erasmus is reduced to a dilemma.

¹⁷⁶ By 'manifestation of the Spirit,' Luther (with reference to Erasmus' taunt, 'quem nusquam ostendunt') means, 'how men are to prove that they have the Spirit dwelling and walking in them.' By 'miracles,' how the reality or falsehood of affirmed miracles is to be proved.' By 'sanctification,' the state of a saint; that is, of one effectually called by the Holy

would be found too inexpert and too ignorant (so far as I know you from your letters and from your books) to answer me one syllable.

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Or, if I were to go on and demand of you which of all these heroes of whom you boast, you could certainly show to have *been*, or to *be* sanctified, or to have had the Spirit, or to have displayed real miracles, my conviction is that you would have to work very hard, and all in vain. ¹⁷⁷ Much of what you say is borrowed from common use and public discourse, ¹⁷⁸ which loses more than you suppose of its credit and authority when summoned to the bar of conscience. The proverb is true, 'Many pass for saints on earth, whose souls are in hell.'

SECT. 2. The excellencies of the Fathers were not *of*, or *for* Free will.

But let us grant, if you please, that all of them were sanctified, had the Spirit, and worked miracles (a concession which you do not ask for). Tell me, was any one of them sanctified, did any one of them receive the Spirit and work miracles in the name of or by the power of Freewill; or to confirm the doctrine of Freewill? God forbid, you will say: all these things were done in the name of and by the power of Jesus Christ; and in support of the doctrine of Christ. Why, then, do you adduce their sanctification, their having the Spirit, and their miracles, in support of the doctrine of Freewill, for which they were not given and worked? Their miracles, therefore — their having the Spirit, and their sanctification — are all ours, who preach Jesus Christ in opposition to the powers and works of men. Now, what wonder is it, if those men (holy, spiritual, and workers of miracles as they were) being every now and then forestalled by the flesh, have spoken and acted according to the flesh?

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This happened more than once to the Apostles themselves, when living under the immediate eye of Christ. For you do not deny, but even assert, that Freewill is not a matter of the Spirit, or of Christ, but a mere *human* affair; so that the Spirit which was promised, that he might glorify Christ, cannot possibly preach Freewill. Therefore, if the Fathers have sometimes preached Freewill, then they have assuredly spoken by the flesh, as men, and not by the Spirit of God. Much less have they worked miracles so that they might support it. Thus, your allegation respecting the Fathers, as having been sanctified, having the Spirit, and working miracles, is inapplicable — since it is not Freewill, but the dogma of Jesus Christ which is proved thereby, ¹⁷⁹ as opposed to that of Freewill.

Ghost: this effectual calling, or *separation* of the Spirit. It is that act by which the *eternally separated* of the Father (Jude 1.1.) are drawn into a realized and recognised union with the *separated* one, even the Lord Jesus Christ — *in whom* (Heb 2.11.), according to eternal purpose and covenant, they are separated to God. So that 'separation *from* and *to*' constitutes the essence of sanctification, into which the Scripture-use of the term is everywhere resolvable. It is not a gradual work, the result of repeated actions of the Spirit upon the substance of the natural soul, as human authors fondly teach; but one complete and final operation, by which the natural soul (Yuch) is made a spiritual soul (pneuma) — as holy, with respect to its own substance, as it ever will be in eternity. (See 1Pet. 1.2, 22, 23; 2The 2.13; Joh 6.37, 44, 63, 64. See also the *klhtoiv agiois*, 'called to be saints,' of the epistolary inscriptions.) Luther very properly distinguishes this 'sanctimonia,' 'sanctum esse vel fuisse,' from the 'habere spiritum;' that is, from the presence of the Holy Ghost *with*, and his consequent actings *in* and *by*, the renewed Spirit.

¹⁷⁷ *Multùm sed frustrá sudatorum*. Horace's 'sudet multùm frustráque labore;' implying great and inefficacious toil.

¹⁷⁸ *Ex usu et publicis sermonibus*. *Us*. 'men's saying what is usually said, what others say.' *Publ. serm.* 'what men talk in public,' contrasted with private meditation and the secret testimony of their own hearts.

¹⁷⁹ *Jesu Christi dogma*. Not a 'dogma taught by Jesus Christ,' but a 'dogma of which He is the subject;' 'the truth as it is in Jesus' — which is directly opposite to this fancy of Freewill.

SECT. 3. Luther challenges him to show effects of Freewill in the three particular excellencies which he has selected out of Erasmus' catalogue.

But come now, you who are on the side of Freewill, and assert that a dogma of this sort is true; that is, it has come from the Spirit of God. Still, *still* I say, manifest the Spirit, publish your miracles, display your sanctification.¹⁸⁰ Assuredly you who assert it, owe these things to us who deny it. The Spirit, sanctification, miracles, should not be demanded of us who deny it; they should be demanded of you who assert it. For a *negative* advances nothing, is nothing, is not bound to prove anything, nor should it be proved itself. An *affirmative* ought to be proved. You affirm the power of Freewill; a human substance. But no miracle has ever yet been seen or heard of, as performed by God, for any dogma in support of a human thing, but only for one in support of a *divine* thing. We have it in charge to receive no dogma whatsoever, which has not first been proved by divine attestations. (Deu 18.15-22.) Moreover, the Scripture calls man a vanity and a lie;¹⁸¹ in effect, this is saying that all human things are vanities and lies.

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Come then, *come* I say, and prove that your dogma in support of a human vanity and lies, is true. Where now is your manifestation of the Spirit? Where is your sanctification? Where are your miracles? — I see talents, erudition, and authority — but God has given these to the Gentiles also.

And yet we will not compel you to great miracles, such as that of healing a lame horse,¹⁸² lest you complain of a carnal age.¹⁸³ However, God is in the habit of confirming his doctrines by miracles, without any regard to the carnality of the age. He is not moved by the merits or demerits of a carnal age, but by mere pity and grace, and by a love of establishing souls in solid truth, unto His glory.¹⁸⁴ You are at liberty to work a miracle as small as you please. No, by way of provoking your Baal to exertion, I jeer at you, and I challenge you to create even a single frog in the name and by the power of Freewill — the impious Gentile magicians in Egypt were enabled to create many of these. I will not put you to the trouble of creating lice, which they also were not able to bring forth. I will set you a still lighter task: take but a single gnat or louse (since you tempt and mock my God with your fleer¹⁸⁵ about healing a lame horse). And if with the whole united force, and the whole conspiring efforts, of both your God and yourselves, you are able to kill it — in the name and by the power of Free will — then you will be proclaimed conquerors; and it will be admitted that you have maintained your cause, and we will come quickly and adore this God of yours — the marvellous slayer of a louse!

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¹⁸⁰ Luther challenges him to show the effects of Freewill, in the three particular excellencies which he has selected out of Erasmus' catalogue.

¹⁸¹ Psa 39.5. 62.9.

¹⁸² *Equum claudum sanare*. Erasmus' burlesque illustration of their lack of miracles. Luther plays with it: 'we will not call you to practise upon so huge an animal as a horse; we will be content with something less.'

¹⁸³ Alluding to the Lord's, "a wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign." Mat 16.4; 12.39.

¹⁸⁴ Luther confines the design of God in his miracles to the *gracious* object of them. But does God not also design, by these seals set upon his truth, to convict and render inexcusable the reprobate and ungodly?

¹⁸⁵ *Fleer*: contempt expressed by mockery.

It is not that I deny your having the power to remove even mountains; but because it is one thing to assert that some act has been performed by the power of Freewill, and another to prove it.

What I have said of miracles, I say also of sanctification. If in so great a series of ages and of men, and of all the things which you have named, you are able to show a single work (let it be but lifting a straw from the ground); or a single word (let it be but the syllable 'my'); or a single thought (let it be but the feeblest sigh) — proceeding from Freewill — by which they have either applied themselves to grace, or earned the Spirit, or obtained the pardon of sin, or have negotiated anything with God (let it be as diminutive as you please — we will not talk about their sanctification); you will again be the victors, and we will be the vanquished! But then, it must be through the power and in the name of Freewill! For, as to what is done in men through the power of a divine creation, it has Scripture testimonies in abundance. You certainly ought to exhibit some work of this kind, if you would not make yourselves ridiculous teachers by spreading dogmas throughout the world, with all this superciliousness¹⁸⁶ and authority, about a thing of which you produce no record. For those things (the most disgraceful thing imaginable) are called dreams, when they produce no result whatsoever for persons of "such great consequence, living through such a series of ages, men of the greatest erudition and sanctity, who also have the power of working miracles." The result will be that we prefer the Stoics before you. Although they too described a wise man such as they never saw, they still endeavoured to exhibit the likeness of some part of him in their own character. But you have absolutely nothing to show; not even the shadow of your dogma.

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So again, with respect to the Spirit — if out of all the assertors of Freewill, you can show me one who possessed even so small a degree of strength of mind, or good feeling, that it might enable him to despise a single farthing, to forego a single roll of the die, or to forgive a single word or letter of injury (I will not talk of despising wealth, life, and fame), in the name and through the power of Freewill, then take the palm again, and I will be content to be sold as your captive.¹⁸⁷ You should at least show us this, after all your big, swelling words,¹⁸⁸ boasting of Freewill. Otherwise, you will again seem to be wrangling about goats' wool, or like the noble Argian, seeing plays in an empty theatre.¹⁸⁹

SECT. 4. The saints practically disclaim Freewill, however they may dispute about it.

¹⁸⁶ *Supercilious*: displaying arrogance by patronizing those considered inferior.

¹⁸⁷ *Sub hastam libenter ibimus*. The custom of selling under the spear was derived from the sales of booty taken in war; in which the spear was set up, and the spoil sold under it, to denote where the property had been obtained. So constant, however, was the use of the spear in auctions, that 'hasta' sometimes absolutely represents the auction itself; and 'sub hasta venire' corresponds to our coming under the hammer. Luther applies it here, in agreement with its original use: he will freely come to the spear, that he may be sold as a part of Erasmus' spoil.

¹⁸⁸ *Buceá verborum*. 'The puffed or distended cheek' is used to express 'anger,' 'pride,' or 'boastfulness.' Horace has 'iratus buceas inflet;' Persius has, 'scloppo tumidas intendis rumpere buccas.'

¹⁸⁹ *Land capriná, vacua theatro*. The first allusion (Hor. 1. Epist. xviii. 15.) charges him with contentious trifling; like the man who quarrels with his friend about goats' hair, whether it should be called wool or bristles; 'fighting for straws' the second — 'fuit haud ignobilis Argis' — (Hor. 2. Epist. ii. 128 130, etc.) with indulging 'a harmless but disordered fancy.' —If you cannot show us any moral effects produced by it, Freewill must be either a thing of no value, or an illusion.

But, in contradiction to your statement, I will easily show you that holy men, such as you vaunt yourself to possess, as often as they come to pray or plead with God, approach him with an utter forgetfulness of their own Freewill — despairing of themselves, and imploring nothing but pure grace alone, which they acknowledge to be far removed from their own deservings.

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Such a man Augustine frequently proves himself to have been; such did Bernard when, in his dying-hour, he said, 'I have lost my time, for I have lived abominably.'¹⁹⁰ I do not see any power alleged in these expressions, which applies itself for grace. Rather, they accuse these men of absolutely turning away from all the power which a man has.¹⁹¹ And yet, in their disputations, these self-same holy men sometimes spoke a different language about Freewill. This is just what happens, as I perceive it, to all mankind: they are one sort of people while intent upon words and reasonings; and another when feeling and acting. In the former instance, they speak a language which differs from their later feelings; in the latter, their feelings contradict their previous language. But whether they are actually pious or impious, men are to be measured by their feelings, rather than their discourse.¹⁹²

SECT. 5. However they may dispute about it, Luther demands a definition of Freewill; a specification of its parts, powers, properties, and accidents.

But we give you still more. We do not demand miracles, the Spirit, or sanctification. We return to the dogma itself, demanding only that you at least show us what work, what word, what thought, this power of the free will stirs up or attempts to perform, in order that it may apply itself to grace. It is not enough to say, 'there is a power,' 'there is a power,' 'there is a certain power, I say, in the free will;' for what is easier than to say this? Nor is this worthy of those most learned and most holy men who have been approved by so many ages. 'The babe must be named,' as the German proverb has it. You must define what that power is, what it *does*, what it *allows*, what are its *accidents*.¹⁹³

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For example; speaking as one who is most dull of apprehension, I would ask, is it the office of this power either to pray, or to fast, or to labour, or to subdue the body, or to give alms, or to do anything else of this kind, or does it make any *attempt* at these things? If it is a power, then it will be trying to *achieve* something. But here, you are more silent than the Seriphian frogs, and fishes.¹⁹⁴

And how is it possible that you should define it when, according to your own testimony, you are still uncertain what the power itself is; being at variance with each other, and each

¹⁹⁰ *Perditè*. More perditì hominis; flagitiòsè, 'nequiter, corruptè.'

¹⁹¹ *Non nisi aversa fuerit*. As opposed to 'ad gratiam sese applicet;' aversion and disgust, instead of desire and seeking.

¹⁹² *That is, by their heart and actions, rather than by their words alone.* – WHG

¹⁹³ *Accidents*: a logical term referring to *incidental*, not *essential* attributes (e.g. bread being white).

¹⁹⁴ Seriphus was an island in the Ægean sea; one of the Sporades where, according to Ælian, the frogs never croaked; but when removed to another place, they became more noisy and clamorous than others. The latter part of the story, however, is differently told, and in a manner more consistent with the proverb: they kept their silence when transferred and mingled with others. Hence the saying, Βατραχος εκ Σεριφε, for a silent man, who can neither speak nor sing.

of you inconsistent with himself? What will become of the definition when the thing defined means one thing in one place, and another in another place?

But let it be granted that, since the time of Plato, there has at length been some sort of agreement among you about the power itself. Let it further be defined, as its office, that it prays, or fasts, or does something of this sort, which still, perhaps, lies concealed in the maze of Plato's 'Ideas.' ¹⁹⁵ Who will assure us that the dogma is true, that it is well-pleasing to God, and that we are safe in maintaining it? ¹⁹⁶ Especially, when you yourselves confess that it is a human thing, which does not have the testimony of the Spirit.

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For it was bandied by the philosophers, and existed in the world before Christ came, and before the Spirit was sent from heaven. Thus it is made most certain that this dogma was *not* sent from heaven, but had been born long before, out of the earth — so that a great deal of testimony is necessary to confirm it as certain and true.

Let us, then, be *private* men and few; while you are *publicans* ¹⁹⁷ and even a multitude; let us be barbarians, and you most learned; let us be stupid, and you most ingenious; let us be men of yesterday, and you older than Deucalion; ¹⁹⁸ let us be men of no acceptance; and you, men who have received the approbation of ages; let us, in fine, be sinners, carnal, and sottish; ¹⁹⁹ and you be men fitted to excite fear in the very devils — by your sanctity, the Spirit which is in you, and your miracles. Give us, at least, the right of Turks and Jews: that of demanding a reason for your dogma, agreeable to what your great patron St. Peter ²⁰⁰ has commanded you.

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We ask this, however, with the greatest modesty. For we do not demand that it be proved to us by sanctification, by the Spirit, and by miracles, as we might do according to your own law, which is to demand these things of others. No, we even allow you not to give us any instance of thought, word, or deed in your dogma; but to teach us the simple, naked

¹⁹⁵ *Platonis Ideis*. A term used by Plato to denote the first forms of things; the sort of mental draught, according to which nature (in the language of a heathen philosopher and if only professed heathens would speak so!) has framed all her substances. 'Plato ideas vocat ex quibus omnia quaecunque videmus fiunt, et ad quas omnia formantur.'

¹⁹⁶ *Nosque tutò rectum agere*, i.e. *in rectum*. More literally, safe in going straight forwards. Quasi 'in rectum agere iter.'

"Iterque

Non agit in rectum." ... "in rectum exire catervas." — LUCAN.

¹⁹⁷ *Publicani*. Not without meaning is it used here instead of *publici*, as opposed to *privati*. The publicans were government-officers, employed in collecting the public revenues; which they contracted for at a price, and lived on the produce. They were chiefly of the equestrian order, and held in honour. 'Erant publicani equites Romani, qui tributa et publica vectigalia questus sui causa conducebant.' 'Publicani autem, sunt, qui publico fruuntur.' 'Flos equitum Romanorum, ornamentum civitatis, firmamentum reipub. Publicanorum ordine continetur.' — Luther uses the name, if I understand him aright, equivocally. While he gives them the glory of publicity, he hints at their support being derived from the *fiscus*, and the infamous celebrity which they had acquired by their exactions. In fact, what were the barefaced traffickers in Indulgences, such as Tetzl and others, but publicans of the worst stamp? I do not find any authority for the word *publicanus*, except as referred to this office.

¹⁹⁸ *Deucalion*: Gr. mythology — son of Prometheus, and survivor of the flood. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

¹⁹⁹ *Socordes*. Quasi *sine corde*. 'Not only sinful, instead of sanctified; and carnal, instead of having the Spirit; but absolutely without natural intellect and feeling.'

²⁰⁰ Referring to 1Pet 3.15. "And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you for a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." *Petrus vester*. 'Your tutelar saint and pretended founder.'

proposition. Declare the dogma itself, at least: what you wish to be understood by it; what its form is. ²⁰¹

If you *will not*, or *cannot* give us an example of it, then let us at least try to give *you* one. Imitate the Pope and his cardinals, at least, who say, 'Do what we say, not according to our works,' Even so, if you say what work that power requires to be performed by its subjects, we will apply ourselves to it, leaving you to yourselves. What! Shall we not even get this from you? The more you exceed us in numbers, the more ancient you are, the greater, the better in all respects than we — that much more disgraceful is it to you, that you are not able to prove your dogma — by the miracle of even slaying a louse, or by any small affection of the Spirit, or by any small work of holiness — to us, who are a mere nothing in your presence, and wish to learn and perform your dogma. No, you are not even able to exemplify it in a single deed or word. More than this, you are not even able to declare the very form or meaning of the dogma (such a thing as never was heard of), so that *we* at least, might imitate it. Delightful teachers of Freewill! What are you now, but a voice, and nothing else? Who are those now, Erasmus, that boast of the Spirit, and *show* nothing of it; that only speak, and suddenly expect to be believed?

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Are not these admired ones of yours, the men who do all this? Though extolled to the skies, they do not even answer, and yet they make such great boasts and demands. ²⁰²

We ask it as a favour, therefore, of yourself and of your party, my Erasmus, that you would at least grant to us that, being terrified with the danger incurred by our conscience, we may be allowed to indulge our fears, or at least to defer our assent to a dogma which *you* yourself perceive to be nothing but an empty word, and the sound of so many syllables (to wit, 'There is such a thing as Freewill;' 'there is such a thing as Freewill'), even if you had attained the summit of your object, and all your positions had been proved and allowed. Then, again, it is still uncertain, even amidst your own party, whether this word exists or not, since they are at variance one with another, and each is not agreed with himself. It is a most unfair thing — no, it is the most wretched thing imaginable — that the consciences of those whom Christ has redeemed with his own blood, should be harassed with the mere phantom of a single petty word, and that word be of doubtful existence. Yet, if we do not allow ourselves to be thus harassed, we are accused of an unheard-of pride for having despised so many Fathers, of so many ages, who have asserted the doctrine of Freewill. But the truth is, they have laid down no distinct propositions at all concerning it, as you perceive from what has been said. And the dogma of Freewill is set up under the cover of their name, while its maintainers are unable to exhibit either its species, or its name. ²⁰³ It is thus that they have contrived to delude the world with a lying word! ²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ *Quá formá.* In a dialectic sense. 'A dialecticis sumitur pro specie subjectâ generi. Formae sunt, in quas genus dividitur.' 'Specify, or define it; i.e. enumerate and combine all the several ideas contained in it. — We do not ask for miracles, etc.; we do not even ask for an example by way of illustrating it; but we do require a clear and explicit affirmation of what you mean; a full and precise description of the supposed substance.

²⁰² *Qui ne dicitis quidem.* You are not even the nightingale. (See above, Sect. 1.) They had voice enough, when speaking for themselves; but none with which to answer the questions and demands of their opponents.

²⁰³ *Neque speciem neque nomen.* They can neither define it, nor find an appropriate name by which to express it.

²⁰⁴ *Mendaci vocabulo.* Though they cannot find a *name* for it, they have a *word* for it: but that word is a liar; for it proclaims the will to be free, which is really in bondage. Logicians distinguish 'vocabulum' from 'nomen;' the former is arbitrary and general; the latter is descriptive and precise. What you cannot name (according to this distinction) you

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SECT. 6. Erasmus' advice turned against himself: presumption, cruelty, and lack of discernment, are charged upon him.

And here, Erasmus, I summon your own and not another's counsel ²⁰⁵ to my aid; you who persuade us above that we ought to desist from questions of this kind, and rather teach Christ crucified, and those things that may suffice for Christian piety. For a long time now, such has been the nature of our questions and discussions. For what else are we aiming at, but that the simplicity and purity of Christ's doctrine may prevail; and that those dogmas which have been invented and introduced by men, may be abandoned and disregarded. But, while you give us this advice, you do not act it, but do just the contrary. You write Diatribes, you celebrate the decrees of Popes, you boast in the authority of men, and you try all means to hurry us into those matters which are strangers and aliens to the holy Scriptures, and to agitate on unnecessary topics, in order that we may corrupt and confound the simplicity and genuineness of Christian piety, with the additions of men.

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Hence, we readily perceive that you have not given us this counsel from your heart; and that you do not write anything seriously, but trust to the vain and puerile ornaments of your language, ²⁰⁶ as that which may enable you to lead the world wherever you please. Meanwhile, in point of fact, you lead it nowhere; for you utter nothing but sheer contradictions throughout the whole, and in every part. So that, you would be most fitly characterised by someone who called you Proteus or Vertumnus ²⁰⁷ — or who accosted you with the words of Christ, and said, "Physician, heal yourself!" It is disgraceful to the teacher when the fault which he reproves, reproves himself. ²⁰⁸

Until you shall have proved your affirmative, therefore, we persist in our negative. And we venture to make it our boast at the tribunal of our judge (even if that judge were the whole band of holy men you vaunt as having on your side; or if it were the whole world); that we do not, and should not admit a dogma which is really nothing, and of which it cannot be shown with certainty, what it is. We will moreover charge you with an incredible degree of presumption, or insanity, in demanding that this dogma be admitted by us without any reason, except that it pleases your High Mightinesses — who are so many, so great, and so ancient — and that we assert the existence of a thing which you yourselves confess to be a mere nothing.

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may speak of. 'Differunt nomina et vocabula; quia nomina finita sunt et significant res proprias; vocabula autem infinita, et res communes designant.'

²⁰⁵ *Appellamus*. A forensic expression, applied to advocate, witnesses, and judge; but to each, consistent with its primary meaning of 'addressing a person by name;' prosagoreuw Luther would avail himself of Erasmus' own testimony and advice, now that he has shown the dogma of Freewill to be this unauthorized and unprofitable one. Erasmus had recommended that all such things should be suppressed.

²⁰⁶ *Inanibus bullis verborum*. 'Prettiinesses of style.' 'Bulla' is properly a bubble made by boiling water, and is thence applied to divers ornaments of dress; particularly to one in the shape of a heart, worn by the Roman youth. The quality of it depended on their rank, or degree of nobility. This they dedicated to the Lares, when they took the manly gown.

²⁰⁷ Vertumnus had, among the Latins, the same property of assuming all shapes, which Proteus had among the Greeks.

²⁰⁸ Luther does not tell us to whom he is indebted for this *metrical* aphorism. — Erasmus had played the physician, prescribing silence with respect to some dogmas; his own is shown to be one of them.

Is it really a conduct worthy of Christian teachers, to delude the poor wretched common people, in the matter of piety, with a mere nothing, as though it were something of great moment to their salvation? Where now is that sharpness of Grecian wit, which previously invented lies that at least had some show of beauty? But on *this* subject, it utters only naked and undisguised falsehoods. Where now is that Latin industry, not inferior to the Grecian, which in this instance so beguiles, and is beguiled, with the vainest of words? ²⁰⁹ But thus it happens to unwary or designing readers of books: they make all those dogmas of the Fathers and of the Saints, which are the offspring of their infirmity, to be of the highest authority — the fault not being of the authors, but the readers. Just as if, leaning on the sanctity and authority of St. Peter, someone contended that all which Peter ever said is true — including Mat 16.22, when through infirmity of the flesh, he exhorted Christ not to suffer; or when he commanded Christ to depart from him, out of the ship (Luk 5.8); and many others for which he was reproved by Christ himself.

SECT. 7. Injustice done to the Fathers, by choosing their bad sayings and leaving their good.

Men of this sort are like those who, by way of sneering at the Gospel, chatter that all is not true which is in the Gospel; and they lay hold of that word where the Jews say to Christ, "Do we not say rightly that you are a Samaritan, and have a devil?" (Joh 8.48) or that, "He is guilty of death;" or "We have found this fellow subverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar."

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The assertors of Freewill sayings, do exactly the same thing (with a different design, it is true; and not willingly, but through blindness and ignorance), when they lay hold on what the Fathers, having fallen through infirmity of the flesh, say in support of Freewill. And they oppose it to what the same Fathers have, in the strength of the Spirit, said elsewhere against it. After this, they presently go on to make the better give way to the worse. Thus it comes to pass that they give authority to the worse sayings, because they make *for* the judgment of their flesh; and they withdraw it from the better, because they make *against* that judgment [of the Spirit].

Why do we not rather choose the better? Many such sayings are in the works of the Fathers. To give you an instance: what saying can be more carnal — indeed, what saying can be more impious, more sacrilegious, and more blasphemous — than that usual one of Jerome's? 'Virginity fills heaven, and marriage fills earth,' — as if earth, and not heaven, were the due of those patriarchs, apostles, and private Christians who have married wives; or as if heaven were the due of vestal virgins among the heathens, without Christ! Yet the Sophists collect these and similar sayings from the Fathers, maintaining a contest of numbers, rather than of judgment, to get themselves the sanction of their authority. Just like that stupid fellow, Faber of Constance, ²¹⁰ who recently presented his *Margaritum*

²⁰⁹ Erasmus had bestowed these and some other commendations upon the Greek and Latin Fathers, to the disparagement of the Reformers, as making for *his* side in the argument. Luther asks whether what they had said on Freewill was a specimen of this richness of invention, and laboriousness of investigation and expression? Here they had not excelled any more than Erasmus himself; to whom Luther was not reluctant to ascribe the praise of resembling and even equalling them.

²¹⁰ John Faber, a native of Suabia, who from one of his works against the Reformers, probably this very work, was called 'The Hammer of the Heretics.' He was advanced to the see of Vienna in 1531, and died there in 1542. His elevation was supposed to have been the fruit of his zeal against Luther. He entitled it his *Pearl*: but Luther would rather call it his

(more properly called his *stable of Augeas*) to the public, so that the pious and learned might have their nauseating and vomiting draught.

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SECT. 8. Objection that God should have disguised the error of his Church, answered.

You say,

'It is incredible that God should have disguised ²¹¹ the error of his Church for so many ages, and not have revealed to any of his saints what we maintain to be the very head of evangelical doctrine.'

I reply, *first*, that we do not say that this error has been tolerated by God in his Church, or in any of His saints. For the Church is governed by the Spirit of God; the saints are led by the Spirit of God (Rom 8.14); Christ remains with his Church even to the end of the world (Mat 28.20); and the Church of God is the pillar and ground of the truth. ²¹² (1Tim 3.15) I say, we know these things. For thus says even our common creed; 'I believe in the holy Catholic Church;' so that it is impossible for her to err in the least article. ²¹³

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And even if we were to grant that some elect persons are held in error all their lifetime, they must still, before death, return into the way; because Christ says (Joh 10.28), "No one shall pluck them out of my hand." But this must be your labour and your achievement — even to make it appear with certainty, that those whom you *call* the Church, *are* the Church; or rather, that those who were wanderers all their lifetime, have not at length been brought back to the fold before they died. For it does not directly follow, if God has allowed all those whom you adduce, to abide in error (scattered through as long a series of ages as you please, and men of the greatest erudition, if you please), that therefore he has allowed his *Church* to abide in error.

Look at Israel, the people of God: of all their kings, so many in number, and reigning during so long a period, not even one is mentioned who did not err. And under Isaiah the

Dunghill, an allusion to Hercules' famous labour of removing the long accumulated filth of 3000 oxen. — [For the fifth labor, Eurystheus ordered Hercules to clean up King Augeas' stables, which is the parenthetical reference here.](#)

²¹¹ *Dissimulárit*. 'Diligenter et astutè celo, occulto, fingo non esse, quod reverà est.'

²¹² Στυλος και εδραιωμα της αληθειας. Luther connects and refers these words, as the older editions of the Scriptures and our translators have done; but Griesbach, and others after him, connect them with what follows. A very important sense is thus elicited; 'the pillar and ground of the truth (and without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness) is that God was manifested in the flesh,' etc. — But there seems an evident allusion to the ancient tabernacle, with its boards and sockets (the pillars, or uprights, and the silver foundations into which these were grooved; see Exod. 26.15-30), of which the Church of God is the blessed reality; even as that was the image, or figure.

²¹³ Luther seems to have inferred the *immaculateness* of the militant and visible Church, from the above and other like testimonies; 'an entire exemption from error in a certain ever-subsistent community of the Lord's people tabernacling in flesh of sin.' The Nineteenth Article of our Church declares, more correctly, 'The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly ministered, *in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same*. Just as the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred, so also the Church of Rome has erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith.' — The same remark extends to each individual of the faithful. Who has not erred in his *lifetime*? Of whom shall we say that he died without any mixture of error in his creed? — Luther's representation, therefore, requires restriction: of that error which he is disputing about, it holds good.

Prophet, all men, and all who were *public* ²¹⁴ of that people, had departed into idolatry to such a degree that he thought himself left alone. Yet, in the meantime, while God was going to destroy kings, princes, priests, prophets, and whatever could be called the people or church of God, He reserved to himself seven thousand men. ^{1Kng 19.18} But who saw or knew these to be the people of God? So then, who will dare to deny that God has even now preserved for himself a Church among the common people, concealed under those principal men (for you mention none but men of public office and name) and has left all those to perish, as he did in the kingdom of Israel? After all, it is God's peculiar right and act, to entangle the choice men of Israel, and to slay their fat ones (Psa 78.31), but to preserve the dregs and remnant of Israel alive; as Isaiah says. ²¹⁵

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What happened under Christ himself, when all the Apostles were offended, and he was denied, and condemned by the whole people? Scarcely one or two, Nicodemus and Joseph, and afterwards the thief upon the cross, were preserved to him. But were these, at that time, called 'the people of God'? There was, indeed, a people of God remaining, but it was not called so. What was called so, was not *that* people. Who knows whether such may not have been the state of the Church of God always, during the whole course of the world from its beginning: that some have been called the people and saints of God, who were not really so; while others, abiding as a remnant in the midst of them, have been his people or saints, but have not been called so? This is shown by the history of Cain and Abel, of Ishmael and Isaac, of Esau and Jacob.

99-100 [\[long note\]](#)

Look at the Arian period. ⁱⁱⁱ This is when scarcely five Catholic ²¹⁶ bishops were preserved in all the world, and those were driven from their sees — the Arians reigned everywhere under the public name, and filled the office ²¹⁷ of the Church. Nevertheless, under the dominion of those heretics, Christ preserved his Church; but it was in such a form that by no means was it supposed to be, or regarded as, the Church.

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Under the reign of the Pope, show me a single bishop discharging his duty; show me a single Council in which matters of piety were treated — and not robes, dignity, revenues, and other profane trifles, which none but a madman can attribute to the Holy Spirit. Yet *they* are called the Church, when all who live as they did — whatever may be said of others — are in a lost state, and anything rather than the Church. However, Christ preserved his Church under these; yet not so as to have it called *the Church*. How many saints, do you

²¹⁴ *Omne quod publicum erat.* 'Men of public station, as opposed to private men.' Luther does not forget Erasmus' *privatus* and *publicus*.

²¹⁵ Frequent promises are made in this Prophet that a remnant shall be left. "Unless the Lord of Hosts had left us a very small *remnant*, we would have been as Sodom," etc. (Isa 1.9) "The *remnant* of Israel and those who have escaped from the house of Jacob... The *remnant* shall return, even the *remnant* of Jacob, to the mighty God." "For though my people Israel are the sand of the sea, yet a *remnant* of them shall return. (10.20, 21, 22. Compare Rom 9.27) So Isa 11.11-16. But I do not find the expressions 'dregs' and 'remnant' united.

²¹⁶ *Catholici.* Catholic as opposed to *heretical*; a Greek term (αἰρεσις αἰρετικος) denoting 'selection,' or 'partiality,' as opposed to the profession of *the whole faith*.

²¹⁷ *Publico nomine et officio.* They were publicly called and recognised as Christ's Church, and performed its public functions.

think, have these sole and special inquisitors ²¹⁸ of heretical depravity, burnt and slain in the course of some ages for which they have now reigned? Such saints were John Huss and the like, ²¹⁹ in whose time, no doubt many holy men lived, who were of the same spirit.

Why do you not rather express your admiration at *this*, Erasmus: that from the beginning of the world, there have always existed among the heathens, men of more excellent genius, greater erudition, and more ardent study, than among Christians, or the people of God? Just as Christ himself confesses that the children of this world are wiser than the children of light. (Luk 16.8) What Christian is worthy to be compared with but Cicero, in genius, erudition, and diligence — not to mention the Greeks?

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What shall we then say to have been the hindrance, that none of *them* has been able to attain to grace? Certainly they have exercised the free will with all their might. And who will venture to say that none of them has been most eagerly bent upon arriving at the truth? Yet, it must be asserted that none of them has reached it. Will you say here also, that it is incredible that God should have left so many and such great men to themselves, throughout the whole course of the world, and suffered them to strive in vain? Assuredly, if Freewill *were* anything, or could *do* anything, it must have *been* something, and have *done* something in those men — in some *one* of them at least. But it has effected nothing; indeed, its effect has always been the opposite. So that, Freewill may be fully proved to be nothing, by this single argument: that from the beginning of the world to the end, no sign can be shown of it.

SECT. 9. The Church is not yet manifested; the saints are hidden.

But to return to the point. What wonder is it, if God suffers all the great ones of the Church to walk in their own ways, when he has thus left all *nations* to walk in their own ways; as Paul says in the Acts 14.16? The Church of God is not so vulgar ²²⁰ a thing, my Erasmus, as this *name* by which it is called, 'The Church of God.' Nor do the saints of God meet us up and down everywhere, so commonly as this *name* of theirs does: 'The Saints of God.' They are a pearl and noble gems, which the Spirit does not cast before swine, but as the Scripture says, keeps hidden so that the wicked may not see the glory of God. ²²¹

²¹⁸ *Soli isti inquisitores*. Referring not to the Inquisition only (which was established about the year 1226; the Vaudois and Albigenses being the first objects of it); but to the whole system of espionage, confiscation, excommunication, and violence with which the lamb-like beast professed to be achieving the extirpation of heresy; while he was himself the great heresiarch [*i.e., the leader of a heresy*].

²¹⁹ John Huss, and his fellow-martyr Jerom of Prague, were among the earlier and most intrepid vociferators [*i.e., a loud and vehement protester*] against Papal abuses. They were favoured with much insight into the truth of God, walking in the light, and treading in the steps of their immediate predecessor, Wickliff — though it has been said that they struck at the branches rather than the root of Antichrist, not sufficiently exposing the predominant corruptions in doctrine. (See Milner, vol. iv. p. 275.) They suffered death under very aggravated circumstances of perfidy, fierceness, and maliciousness, by a decree of the Council of Constance, 1415, 1416 — about a hundred years before Luther's time. Huss is supposed to have been Luther's swan, singing of him in his death, as one who would come after.

²²⁰ *Vulgaris*. Properly, 'what is possessed by the common people;' 'ordinary,' 'common,' 'promiscuous;' as opposed to 'rare,' 'choice,' 'what is the possession of a few.' The names 'Church of God,' and 'Saints,' are in everybody's mouth; but the things signified by these names are select and few.

²²¹ *Gloriam Dei*. These substances are not only select, but hidden; the Church is an invisible community, and the saints have no outward badge to distinguish them. If they could be discerned by the eye, that Scripture would be falsified which says, 'The wicked shall not see the glory of God.' I do not find this text to which he appears to refer. The Lord's people are expressly called his hidden ones, Psa 83.3, and his act of hiding them is mentioned in Psa 27.5; 31.20. Also,

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Otherwise, if these were openly recognised by all people, how could it happen that they should be so afflicted and persecuted in the world? As Paul says, "If they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." ²²²

SECT. 10. Distinction between judgment of faith, and judgment of charity.

I do not say these things as if denying that those whom you mention were saints, or were the Church of God. I say so because it cannot be *proved* (should anyone be disposed to deny it) that these specific persons were saints; but it must be left altogether uncertain. And consequently, an argument drawn from their saintship is not of sufficient credit ²²³ to confirm any dogma. I *call* them saints, and I account them such; I *call* them, and I think them to have been, the Church of God.

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But that is by the law of love, not by the law of faith — that is, by charity — which thinks all good of every man, and is in no way suspicious. And it believes and presumes all good of her neighbours, calls any baptized person you please, 'a saint.' ²²⁴ Nor is there any mischief if she is mistaken, because it is the lot of charity to be deceived, exposed as she is to all the uses and abuses of all men. She is a general helper to the good and to the evil, to the faithful and to the unfaithful, to the true and to the false. But faith calls no man a *saint* unless he is declared such by a divine judgment, because it is the property of *faith* not to be deceived. So that, whereas we should all be *accounted* saints mutually, by the law of charity; still, no one should be *decreed* a saint, by the law of faith — as though it were an article of faith that this or that man is a saint. It is in this way, that the Pope, that great adversary of God who sets himself in the place of God, *canonizes* his saints, whom he does not know that they *are* saints. ²²⁵

I affirm only this, with respect to those saints of yours (or rather of ours): that since they are at variance among themselves, those should have been followed who rather spoke the best things — that is, against Freewill and in support of grace; and those should have been left who, through infirmity of the flesh, witnessed to the flesh rather than the Spirit. Again, those writers who are inconsistent with themselves, should have been adopted and

the sentiment of the wicked not seeing God, is common in Scripture, though not with this allusion which is evidently a strained one, though beautiful and just. But I do not find any Scripture which puts the two sentiments together: 'hidden, that the wicked may not see.' 'The Church,' and 'each individual saint,' is a part of that substance, 'the mystical Christ,' which God has ordained and created to his glory.

²²² *Dominion gloriæ crucifixissent*. Here again, we have a strained application of Scripture (1Cor 2.8); although the sentiment is correct. What the Apostle says there, he says of Christ personally and exclusively; but it is also true that in persecuting his people, they act out his crucifixion over again. They are animated with the same spirit as the crucifiers; and the Lord himself has said, applying it to this very case, "Why do you persecute Me?"

²²³ *Locum satis fidelem*. *Loc.* more strictly, 'a fund of arguments;' 'locus' et 'loci,' sunt sedes argumentorum, ex (niibus ea tanquam è promptuario petuntur. *Fid.* 'fide dignus,' 'trustworthy;' like πιστος (*pistos*), it expresses either one who has faith, or one towards whom faith is exercised.

²²⁴ *Quamvis baptisatum*. Luther states this too broadly: the judgment of charity is moderate and indulgent; but surely there are deflections, both in faith and practice, which place many a baptized unbeliever beyond the bounds of the widest enclosures of charity.

²²⁵ See 2The 2.4.

embraced where they speak after the Spirit, and left where they savour the flesh. This was the role of a Christian reader, a clean animal that parts the hoof and chews the cud. ²²⁶

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But our course, instead, has been to postpone the exercise of judgment, and to devour all sorts of meat indiscriminately. Or what is still more unrighteous, by a perverse exercise of judgment, we rejected the better and approved the worse in these same authors. And after having done so, we affixed the title and authority of their saintship to those very parts which are worse: a title which they have deserved for their better parts, and for the Spirit only; but not for their Free will, or flesh.

SECT. 11. Erasmus' perplexity and advice stated, in some degree admitted, but amended.

'What shall we do then? The Church is a hidden community: the saints are not yet manifested. What and whom will we believe? Or as you most shrewdly argue, who will assure us? How will we test their spirit? ²²⁷ If you look to erudition, there are Rabbis on both sides. If you look to the life, sinners are on both sides. If you look to Scripture, both parties embrace it with affection. Nor is the dispute so much about Scripture (which even yet is not quite clear) as about the *meaning* of Scripture. ²²⁸ Moreover, on both sides there are men who, if they do not promote their cause by their numbers, erudition, or dignity, much less do they promote it by their fewness, ignorance, and meanness. The matter is therefore left in doubt, and the dispute still remains in the hands of the judge. So it seems as though we should act most prudently in withdrawing, as a body, into the sentiment of the Sceptics, unless we would rather choose to follow your best of all examples: those who profess to be in just such a state of doubt that it enables you to testify that you are still a seeker and a learner of the truth; inclining to that side which asserts the freedom of the will, only just until truth has made herself manifest.'

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To this I reply, 'What you say here is the truth, but not the whole truth,' ²²⁹ For we will not test the spirits by arguments drawn from the erudition, life, genius, multitude, dignity, ignorance, rudeness, paucity, or meanness of the *disputants*. Nor do I approve those who place their refuge in a boast that they have the Spirit. For I have had a very severe contest this year, ²³⁰ and I am still maintaining it, with those fanatics who subject the Scriptures to the interpretation of their own spirit. No, it is on this ground that up to here I have inveighed against the Pope himself. In *his* kingdom, nothing is more commonly urged, or more commonly received, than this saying: that 'the Scriptures are obscure and ambiguous;' that 'we must seek the interpreting spirit from the Apostolic See of Rome,'

²²⁶ See Lev 11.3; Deu 14.6.

²²⁷ *Unde explorabimus Spiritum*. Referring to 1Joh 4.1. Erasmus talks about Paul's recommending to test the spirits, but evidently his allusion is to these words of St. John.

²²⁸ *Neque adeo de Scripturá*. It is not so much the authority of Scripture, as its right interpretation, which is in dispute. *Quae necdum*. Lack of clearness is hinted at rather than affirmed; *necdum* implies, 'notwithstanding all that has been written and decreed about it.'

²²⁹ *Neque nihil, neque omnia dicis*. Erasmus says rightly, the spirits must be tried; wrongly, that there is no test of them. Also, the tests he proposes are bad.

²³⁰ It was in 1525 (the date of his performance), that Luther published his 'Address to the Celestial Prophets and Carolstadt.'

There cannot be a more pernicious assertion than this, from which ungodly men have taken occasion to exalt themselves above the Scriptures, and to fabricate just what they pleased — till at length, having quite trodden the Scriptures underfoot, we were believing and teaching nothing but the dreams of madmen. In a word, this saying is no human invention, but a mouthful of poison sent into the world by the incredible malice of the very prince of all the devils.

SECT. 12. There are two tribunals for the spirits of men; one private, the other public.

This is *our* assertion: that the spirits are to be tested and proved by two sorts of judgment. One of these is *internal*, by which the man who has been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, or special gift of God — for his own sake, and for his own individual salvation — judges and discerns the dogmas and thoughts of all men, with the greatest certainly.

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The Apostle speaks of this judgment in 1Cor 2.15: "He that is spiritual judges all things, and is judged by no man." This judgment pertains to faith; and it is necessary to every private Christian. I have called it above, 'the internal clearness of Holy Scripture,' ²³¹ Perhaps this is what was meant by those who replied to you, that 'everything must be determined by the judgment of the Spirit,' But this judgment is of no profit to any other person besides ourselves. And it is not the subject of inquiry in this cause. Nor does anyone, I dare say, doubt that this judgment is just what I state it to be.

Therefore, there is another judgment which is *external*, and by which we — not only for ourselves, but for others, and for the salvation of others — judge the spirits and dogmas of all men, with the greatest certainty. This is the judgment of the *public ministry*, an outward office, appealing to the word. This is what belongs chiefly to the leaders of the

²³¹ See Part i. Sect. 4.

people, and the preachers of the word. ²³² We use it to confirm the weak, and to confute the gainsayers. ²³³

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Above, I called this 'the external clearness of Holy Scripture,' Our assertion is this: 'Let all the spirits be tried in the face of the Church, at the bar of Scripture,' For it ought to be a first principle, most firmly maintained among Christians, that the Holy Scriptures are a spiritual light, far brighter than the sun; especially in those things which pertain to salvation, or are necessary.

SECT. 13. Clearness of Scripture proved by testimonies from the Old Testament.

But since, for a long time now, we have been persuaded to a contrary opinion by that pestilent saying of the Sophists, that 'The Scriptures are obscure and ambiguous,' I am compelled, in the first place, to prove that very first principle of ours, by which all the rest are to be proved, and which would appear absurd and impossible to philosophers.

First, then, Moses says (Deu 17.8) that if any difficult cause should arise, they must go up to the place which God has chosen for his name, and there consult the Priests, who must judge it according to the law of the Lord.

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"According to the law of the Lord," he says. But how will they judge, unless the law of the Lord, with which the people must be satisfied, were externally ²³⁴ most plain? Otherwise it would be enough to say, 'They shall judge according to their own spirit,' No, the truth is, that in every civil government, all the causes of all the subjects are settled by the laws. But how could they be settled, unless the laws were most certain, and like so many shining lights among the people? For if the laws were ambiguous and uncertain, not only would

²³² *Judicium publici ministerii in verbo. Minis.* 'The office, or body, of ministers.' *In verbo.* The word is to them, what the law of the land is to a civil judge. *Offic. exter.* as opposed to an internal function, or operation. Luther refers to the judgment of a synod, or council; a tribunal, to which he always declared himself willing to submit his own objectionable assertions. He states the matter too broadly, and was guided by an image which he had in his mind of what might be, rather than by any exhibition of this external judgment which he had ever seen, or could appeal to as an example. A synod of real saints might be confidently looked to, as decreeing under the illumination of a light from above. But when has such a synod met since the council of Jerusalem? (Acts 15.1-31.) If, as it is probable, there are real saints in the council, who is to ensure their being the majority? While great respect, therefore, is due to a judgment of this kind, it cannot be that infallible one which Luther's commendations might seem to imply.

It is not strictly parallel to the 'external clearness' of Scripture; which he refers to, as he asserted in Part i. Sect. 4. The testimony may be imperfectly brought out; or the judges may not have eyes to see it. Would Luther undertake to say that he should himself bring all the testimony that is in the Scriptures, to bear upon any given question; or would he, had he been able to cite it, have convinced the Council of Constance, or the Council of Trent? After all, the private and internal judgment which he speaks of — the Spirit shining upon and confirming his testimony by the word — is that which the spiritual man must, and will, at last resort to, and can alone depend upon. He is thankful for, and in some sense obedient to, the judgment of pure synods (pure as such compounds can be expected to be); but he stands or falls to a higher Master. "This I say then, walk in" (or *after*) the spirit." (Gal 5.16) — Enough for Luther's purpose may be admitted, however. Let all dogmas be brought to the standard of Scripture, *publicly*; let the leaders and counsellors of the people declare based upon them, stating the grounds of their decision. Such judgment will have its weight, though not paramount; and it will be manifested how slender, or how false, are the foundations of error. This object is obtained in a great degree, now, by the free canvass which religious opinions, as well as others, are made to submit to, from the press.

²³³ *Gainsayer*: here, it is one who contradicts or denies the truth of God.

²³⁴ *Externè.* As opposed to a light of the Spirit, *within* the soul.

it be impossible for any causes to be decided, but there could be no certain standard of manners. Laws are made for this very purpose: that the manners of the people may be regulated by a certain model; and the principles by which causes are to be determined, may be defined. ²³⁵ That which is to be the standard and measure of other things, should itself be measured by the surest and clearest of all things: and such a thing is the law. Now, this light and certainty in their laws is both necessary, and also conceded freely to the whole world *by a divine gift*. If it is so in secular governments (which are conversant about temporal things), then how is it possible that God should not have granted laws and rules of much greater light and certainty to his Christian people (*his chosen*, truly) — laws and rules by which to direct their own hearts and lives individually, and to settle all their causes, since He would have temporal things be despised by his children?

110

For, "if God so clothes the grass, which is here today, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more shall he clothe us?" But let us go on to overwhelm this pestilent saying of the Sophists with Scripture.

Psalm 19.8 says, "The commandment of the Lord is lightsome, or pure; enlightening the eyes." I presume that what enlightens the eyes, is not obscure or ambiguous.

So too, Psalm 119.130 says, "The door of your words enlightens; it gives understanding to your little ones." Here he attributes to the words of God, that they are 'a door,' 'something set open;' — what is exposed to the view of all, and enlightens even the little ones.

Isaiah 8.20 sends all questions "to the law and to the testimony;" threatening that the light of the morning will be denied to us, unless we do so. ²³⁶

In Malachi 2.7, ²³⁷ he commands them to seek the law from the mouth of the Priest, as being the messenger of the Lord of Hosts. He is truly a poor messenger or ambassador of the Lord, if he speaks those things which are both ambiguous in themselves, and obscure to the people, so that *he* is as ignorant of what he speaks, as *they* are of what they hear.

And what is more frequently said to the praise of Scripture, throughout the whole of the Old Testament, but especially throughout the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, than that it is in itself a most certain and a most evident light?

111

For thus he celebrates its clearness: "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths," (v. 105.) He does not say, 'only your Spirit is a lamp unto my feet,' though he

²³⁵ *Causarum quaestiones definiuntur*. The book of the laws lays own and recognises certain broad principles, to which the facts of each case are applied. These principles must be determinately fixed, admitted, and perspicuously affirmed. 'Status causae,' is the question of fact at issue; '*quaestio causae*,' the principle of law to which it is referable.

²³⁶ In our version, it is not a threat, but an explanation of a fact: "If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," A testimony equally conclusive as to the clearness of the word; for how are we to compare declarations, and ascertain their conformity with the written word, if that word is not plain?

²³⁷ Originally Zec 2, a false reference: the words are found in Mal 2.7. "For the Priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts."

assigns its office to this also, saying, "your good Spirit shall conduct me ²³⁸ in a right land." Thus it is called both a 'way' and 'a path;' ²³⁹ doubtless, from its exceeding great certainty.

SECT. 14. The clearness of Scripture is proved by testimonies from the New Testament.

Let us come to the New Testament. Paul says in Rom 1.2, that the Gospel was promised by the law and the Prophets in the Holy Scriptures. And in Rom. 3.21, that the righteousness of faith was witnessed by the law and the Prophets. But what sort of a witnessing was this, if it was obscure? No, he not only makes the Gospel 'the word of light,' 'the gospel of clearness,' in all his Epistles, but he does this professedly, and with great abundance of words, in 2Cor 3 and 4. There he reasons boastfully about the clearness of Moses as well as of Christ. ²⁴⁰

Peter also says, 2Pet 1.19, "We have a very sure word of prophecy; to which you do well to take heed, as to a light that shines in a dark place." Here Peter makes the word of God a clear lamp, and all other things darkness; and will we make obscurity and darkness of it?

Christ so often calls himself "the light of the world," and John the Baptist "a burning and a shining light" — not because of the sanctity of their lives, doubtless; but because of the word. Just as Paul calls the Philippians "bright lights of the world," "because you hold fast ²⁴¹ the word of life," he says. For without the word, life is uncertain and obscure.

112

And what are the Apostles about, when they prove their own preachings by the Scriptures? Is it that they may darken their own darkness to us, by greater darkness? Or is it to prove the more known thing by one that is more unknown? What is Christ about, in Joh 5.39, when he teaches the Jews to search the Scriptures; as being his witnesses, truly? Is it that he may render them doubtful about having faith in him? ²⁴² What are those persons about in Acts 18.2, who upon hearing Paul, read the Scriptures day and night, to see whether those things were so? Do not all these things prove that the Apostles, as well as Christ himself, appeal to the Scriptures, as the clearest witnesses to the truth of their discourses? With what face, ²⁴³ then, do we represent them as obscure?

I beg to know whether *these* words of Scripture are obscure or ambiguous: "God created the heavens and the earth;" and "the word was made flesh;" and all those affirmations which the whole world has received as articles of faith. And where were they received

²³⁸ *Deducet*. Like the προπεμπω (propempoo) of the Greeks, expresses 'the escorting' of a person to his home.

²³⁹ *Via et semita*. *Via*, the broad carriage-road; *semita*, the narrow foot-path.

²⁴⁰ *Gloriosè disputat*. The Apostle institutes a comparison (in chap 3) between the glory of the Gospel ministry and that of Moses, showing the superiority of the former. The scope and effect of the comparison is to magnify his own office: but the clearness of both is assumed, as the very basis of the argument; a clearness indicated in Moses by the glory of his countenance.

²⁴¹ Our translation says "holding forth;" Luther says "*tenetis*:" the original word is *epecontev* 'exhibeo,' 'prae me fero.' But it must be possessed before it can be held forth; and if on this account they are called "lights," then what must the word itself be?

²⁴² *Defide sui*. If these witnesses were doubtful, not clear; he would be justifying them in their unbelief, instead of establishing his claim to be received.

²⁴³ *Face: we might say 'cheek' — audacity, effrontery.*

from, if not from the Scriptures? And what are those about, who still preach to this day? Do they interpret and declare ²⁴⁴ the Scriptures?

113

If the Scripture which they declare is *obscure*, then who is to assure us that even this declaration of it is certain? Another new declaration? Who will declare that also? At this rate, we will have an endless progression. In fine, if Scripture is obscure or doubtful, what need was there for it to be declared to us by God from heaven? Are we not sufficiently obscure and ambiguous, without having our obscurity, ambiguity, and darkness increased from heaven? What then will become of that saying of the Apostle, "All Scripture, having been given by inspiration from God, is profitable for teaching, for reproof, and for convincing?" (2Tim 3.16) No, it is absolutely *useless*, Paul! And what you attribute to Scripture must be sought from the Fathers, who have been received for a long series of ages, and from the Roman see! Your sentence, therefore, must be revoked, which you write to Titus, that "a bishop must be mighty in sound doctrine, that he may be able both to exhort and to refute the gainsayers, and to stop the mouth of vain-talkers and soul-deceivers." How can he be mighty, if you leave him Scriptures that are obscure — that is, arms of flax, and for a sword, light stubble? Then Christ must also recant his own word, who falsely promises us, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries will not be able to resist." How will they *not* resist, if we fight against them with obscure and uncertain weapons? Why do *you also*, Erasmus, prescribe a form of Christianity to us, if the Scriptures are obscure to you?

But I think I have been burdensome, even to men of no sensibility, in making so long a delay, and thus wasting my forces ²⁴⁵ on a proposition which is most evident.

114

But it was necessary to overwhelm that impudent and blasphemous saying, 'The Scriptures are obscure,' so that you also might see, my Erasmus, what it is you say, when you deny that the Scripture is quite clear. For you must assent to me, at the same time, that all your saints whom you adduce, are much *less* clear. For who will assure us of their light, if you make out the Scriptures to be obscure? So that, those who deny that the Scriptures are most clear and most evident, ²⁴⁶ leave us nothing but darkness.

SECT. 15. The conclusion: if the dogma of Freewill is obscure, it is not in Scripture.

But here you will say, 'All this is nothing to *me*; I do not say that the Scriptures are obscure on all subjects (for who would be mad enough to say so?); but only on this, and the like,' My answer is, neither do I assert these things in opposition to you only, but in opposition to all who think as you do. And again, in opposition to *you* distinctly, I affirm with respect to the whole Scripture, that I will not allow any part of it to be called obscure. What I have

²⁴⁴ *Declarant*. 'Make clear,' or 'cause to be seen;' it refers to the *matter* of Scripture, as *interpretantur* refers to the *meaning of the terms*: an 'avowing,' 'propounding,' or distinctly setting forth to the world, 'of the testimony or truth of God which is contained and enclosed in the Scriptures.

²⁴⁵ *Tantas moras traho et copias perdo*. His 'copiae' are his Scripture testimonies and reasonings.

²⁴⁶ *Lucidissimas et evidentissimas*. *Luc*. 'their testimony is unequivocal;' *evid*. 'the terms in which that testimony is conveyed, are unambiguous.' — So that they may be compared to some of those beautiful orbs above us; which are not only luminous, but exposed to view.

cited from Peter stands good here, that "the word of God is a lamp shining to us in a dark place." ²⁴⁷ Now, if there is a part of this lamp which does not shine; it will become part of the dark place, rather than part of the lamp itself. Christ has not so enlightened us, as to wilfully leave some part of his word dark, when at the same time, he commands us to give heed to it. For in vain he commands us to give heed, if it does not shine.

So that, if the dogma of Freewill is obscure or ambiguous; it does not belong to Christians and to the Scriptures, and should be altogether abandoned, and ranked among those fables which Paul condemns Christians for wrangling about. ²⁴⁸

115

For if it belongs to Christians and to the Scriptures, then it ought to be clear, open, and evident, and just like all the other articles of the faith, which are most evident. For all the articles which Christians receive, should not only be most certain to themselves, but also fortified against the assaults of other men, by such manifest and clear Scriptures, that they shut every man's mouth from having the power to say anything against them. As Christ says in his promise, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist." If our mouth is therefore so weak in behalf of this dogma, that our adversaries can resist it, then what Christ says is false: that no adversary can resist our mouth. So that, we will either meet with no adversaries while maintaining the dogma of Freewill (which will be the case if it does not belong to us); or if it does belong to us, then we will have adversaries, it is true; but they shall be such as cannot resist us.

SECT. 16. Meaning and exemplifications of the promise, 'All your adversaries shall not be able to resist.'

But this inability of the adversaries to resist (since its mention occurs here) does not consist in their being compelled to abandon their own mindset, ²⁴⁹ nor in being persuaded either to confess, or to be silent.

116

For who would compel the unwilling to believe, to confess their error, or be silent? What is more loquacious than vanity? asks Augustine. But their mouth is so far stopped, that they have nothing to say in reply. And even if they say much in reply, yet in the judgment of common sense, they say nothing. This is best shown by examples. When Christ had put the Sadducees to silence by citing Scripture (Mat 22.23-32), and proving the resurrection of the dead from the words of Moses (Exo 3.6), "I am the God of Abraham," "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living" — upon this, they could not resist or say anything in

²⁴⁷ See above, Sect. 14. *Stat ibi*. 'qui vigent,' 'in statu suo manent,' 'incolumes sunt,' 'dignitatem suam retinent,' 'nonnunquam stare dicuntur,' as opposed to 'concido,' 'loses none of its authority here.'

²⁴⁸ *Christianis rixantibus*. Luther does not appear to refer to any single text explicitly, but to the many warnings of this kind, which are dispersed throughout the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. The nearest references seem to be, 1Tim 1.4, 6. ("Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying, which is in faith." "From which some having swerved, have turned aside to vain jangling.") 2Tim 2.23. ("But avoid foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they gender strifes.") And Tit 3.9. ("But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.")

²⁴⁹ Originally, "humour." Lat. *Sensu suo cedere*. 'Sensus' is properly, 'the frame of thought, or of feeling,' whatever that may be; 'the state of mind.' 'Communis sensus, which follows just below, is properly, 'the common judgment, or feeling, of mankind;' and it is thence transferred to express a certain imaginary standard of judgment, or court of appeal, the voice of unadulterated and unsophisticated nature, which we call 'common sense.'

reply. But did they therefore recede from their opinion? And how often did he confute the Pharisees, by the most evident Scriptures and arguments, so that the people clearly saw them convicted, and they themselves perceived it? Still, however, his adversaries continued. Stephen, in Acts 7, ²⁵⁰ so spoke, according to Luke, that "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit which spoke in him." But what was their conduct? Did they yield? Far from it. Being ashamed to be overcome, and having no power to resist, they go mad; and stopping their eyes and ears, they suborn false witnesses against him. (Act 6.10-14) See how he stands before the council, and confutes his adversaries!

117 [\[long note\]](#)

After having enumerated the benefits which God had bestowed upon that people from their origin, and having proved that God had never ordered a Temple to be built to him (for he was tried on this charge, and this was the point of fact at issue), ^{iv} he at length concedes that a Temple had indeed been built to him, under Solomon.

118

But then he abates the force of his concession, ²⁵¹ by subjoining in this manner; "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands." And in proof of this, he alleges the last chapter of the Prophet Isaiah, "What house is this that you build for me?" (Isa 66.1) Tell me, what could they say now, against so plain a Scripture? But not at all moved by it, they remained fixed in their own sentiment. This leads him to inveigh against *them* also: ²⁵² "You uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost." 'They resist,' he says — whereas, in point of fact, they were not *able* to resist.

Let us come to the men of our day, ²⁵³ as when John Huss disputes in this manner against the Pope, from Mat 16.18, etc. "The gates of hell do not prevail against my Church." (Is there any obscurity or ambiguity in these words?)

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But against the Pope, and his abettors, the gates of hell *do* prevail, since they are notorious for their manifest impiety and wickednesses all over the world. (Is this also obscure?) Therefore, the Pope and his partisans are not that Church of which Christ speaks. What could they then say against him; or how could they resist the mouth which Christ had given him? Yet they *did* resist, and persevered in their resistance, till they burnt him: so far were they from altering their mind. Nor does Christ suppress this when he says, 'the adversaries shall not be able to resist,' They are adversaries, he says; therefore they will

²⁵⁰ This should be Act 6.10. There is a good deal of confusion in Luther's reference to this history. He represents the violence with which they rushed upon him at the close of his defence (especially when he had testified 'that he saw the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God'), as expressed before his apprehension and arraignment, and he refers the whole transaction to Acts 7, in which the first incidents are recorded in the preceding chapter.

²⁵¹ *Subsumit*. I do not find any authority for this word; but taking the general principle of the preposition *sub*, when used in composition (*secretly, diminutively*); the amplification in the text seems most nearly to express the author's meaning. "Tandem concedit... At ibi subsumit." *subs.* implies 'a secret, or partial, retraction of his concession.'

²⁵² *Unde et in eos*. In contradistinction to their fathers.

²⁵³ The Council of Constance, A. D. 1415. was Luther's day, and even *our* day, as compared with that of Christ and his first Martyr. [It was the dawn of the Reformation.](#)

resist. If they did not resist, they would not be adversaries, but friends; and yet they will not be able to resist. What is this, but to say that in resisting, they will not be able to resist?

SECT. 17. We must be content with this sort of victory. Our adversary will not confess himself beaten.

Now, if we are also able to so confute Freewill, that our adversaries cannot resist — even if they retain their own mindset, and in spite of conscience, hold fast to their resistance — we will have done enough. For I have had abundant experience that no man chooses to be conquered. As Quintilian says, 'there is no one who would not rather seem to know, than to be a learner.' Even this is a sort of proverb in everybody's mouth among us, more from use (or rather abuse) than affection: 'I wish to learn; I am ready to be taught; and when taught better things, I wish to follow them. I am a man; I may err.' The truth is, men use such expressions as these because, under this fair mask, just as under a show of humility, they are allowed to confidently say, 'I am not satisfied; I do not understand him; he does violence to the Scriptures; he is an obstinate assertor' — because they are sure, truly, that no one can suspect such humble souls as theirs, of being pertinacious [stubborn] in their resistance to truth; and of making a stout attack upon truth, once they have recognised her presence. ²⁵⁴

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So then, it should not be ascribed to their own perverseness, that they keep their old mind; but to the obscurity and ambiguity of the arguments with which they are assailed.

This was just the conduct of the Greek philosophers also. So that none of them might seem to yield to another, even though manifestly overcome, they began to deny first principles, as Aristotle recites. Meanwhile, we kindly persuade ourselves and others, that there are many good men in the world who would be willing to embrace the truth, if they only had a teacher who could make things plain to them; and that it is not to be presumed that so many learned men, through such a series of ages, have been in error, or that they have not thoroughly understood the truth. As if we didn't know that the world is the kingdom of Satan in which, besides the blindness adherent as a sort of natural excrescence ²⁵⁵ to our flesh, spirits of the most mischievous nature have dominion over us, so that we are *hardened* in that very blindness — no longer held in chains of mere *human* darkness, but of a darkness imposed on us by devils.

SECT. 18. Why great geniuses have been blind about Freewill: viz. that they might expose Freewill. But it is no wonder that the natural man is blind to the things of God.

'If the Scriptures are quite clear, then why have men of excellent understanding been blind on this subject for so many ages?'

I answer, they have been thus blind, to the praise and glory of Freewill. So that this magnificently boasted power by which man is able to apply himself to those things which concern his everlasting salvation; this power, I say, which neither sees what it sees, nor

²⁵⁴ *Pertinaciter resistere,fortiier impugnare*. The unsuspected case was the real case: notwithstanding all his ostentatious professions of humility, Erasmus was not only rejecting the clearest evidences of truth — which is bad enough — but even fighting against *what he knew to be truth* — which is far worse.

²⁵⁵ *Excrescence*: an abnormal outgrowth or enlargement of some part of the *body*; here of the *flesh*.

hears what it hears (much less understands or seeks after these things), might be shown to be what it is.

121

For to this belongs what Christ and his Evangelists so often assert from Isaiah, "Hearing, you shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing, you shall see and shall not perceive." (Isa 6.9) What does this mean, if not that the free will, or the human heart, is so trodden underfoot by Satan that, unless it is miraculously ²⁵⁶ raised up by the Spirit of God, it cannot of itself either see or hear those things which strike upon the very eyes and ears, so manifestly as to be palpable to the hand. Such is the misery and blindness of the human race. For it is thus that even the Evangelists themselves cite this passage of Scripture, after expressing their wonder that the Jews were not taken with the works and words of Christ, which were absolutely irresistible and undeniable. ²⁵⁷ This suggests, truly, that left to himself, man, though seeing, does not see; and hearing, he does not hear. What can be more marvellous? "The light," John says, "shines in darkness, and the darkness apprehends it not." (Joh 1.5) ²⁵⁸

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Who would believe this? Who ever heard the like? That the light shines in darkness, and yet the darkness remains darkness, and is not made light?

Besides, it is not at all wonderful that men of excellent understanding have for so many ages been blind in divine things. In human things, it would be wonderful. In divine things, the wonder is rather that one or two are *not* blind; while it is no wonder at all if *all*, without exception, are blind. For what is the whole human race, without the Spirit, but the kingdom of the devil, as I have said? It is a confused chaos of darkness. This is why Paul calls the devils, "the rulers of this darkness;" and says in 1Cor 2.8, "None of the princes of this world knew the wisdom of God!" What do you suppose he thought of the rest, when he asserts that the *princes* of the world were slaves of darkness? For, by *princes* he means the foremost and highest persons in the world, those whom *you* call men of excellent understanding. Why were all the Arians blind? Were there not men of excellent understanding among them? Why is Christ "foolishness" to the Gentiles? ²⁵⁹ Are there not men of excellent understanding among the Gentiles? Why is he "a stumbling-block" to

²⁵⁶ *Mirabiliter suscitetur*. *Mir.* would express either the *nature* or the *degree* of influence exerted; but here it must be the *nature*: the very least degree of the Holy Ghost's regenerating energy, applied to the natural soul, produces this result; an energy which does not admit degrees. One soul is not more regenerated than another: and every such act of regeneration is a miracle; an exercise of super-creation grace, and of super natural power, effecting a supernatural constitution and state, in those that are the subjects of it. "Unless a man is *begotten from above*, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Unless a man is begotten of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Of his own will he begat us by the word of truth." "Everyone who does righteousness has been begotten of him."

²⁵⁷ See especially John 12.37-41. It is remarkable that this passage of Isaiah is quoted more often than any other in the New Testament; being found in each of the Evangelists, in Acts 28, and in Rom 11.

²⁵⁸ *Apprehendunt*. More proper than our version comprehend; which implies 'compassing about,' and so (translatively) 'taking in the whole of a substance.' οὐ κατέλαβεν αὐτό, 'did not lay hold of it, so as to possess it;' 'did not receive,' or 'admit' the light; but (as Luther explains it) remained darkness still. See Sleusner in v. καταλαμβάνω (*katalambano*) 'excipio,' 'admitto.'

²⁵⁹ 1Cor 1.23. Our authorized version, and most copies, read "Greeks:" by which St. Paul frequently denominates that part of the world which is not Jewish, such as Rom 1.16. It would seem to give more point to Luther's antithesis here: but "Gentiles" is the more authentic reading. See Griesbach's text and note *in loc*.

the Jews? Have there not been men of excellent understanding among the Jews? "God knows the thoughts of *the wise*;" says Paul, "for they are vain."

123

He would not say, "of *men*," as the Psalm itself has it; ^{Psa 94.11} but he singles out 'the first and best among men,' that we may estimate the rest of them from *these*.

I will perhaps speak more at large about these things, later. Suffice it for an exordium,²⁶⁰ to have premised that 'the Scriptures are most clear;' and that 'our dogmas may be so defended by these, that our adversaries will not be able to resist.' Those dogmas which cannot be so defended, are other people's, and do not belong to Christians. Now, if there are those who do not see this clearness, and are blind, or stumble in this sunshine, then these, on the supposition that they are ungodly men, show how great is the majesty and power of Satan in the sons of men — even such that they neither hear nor apprehend the clearest words of God. It is just as if a man, beguiled by some sleight-of-hand trick, supposed the sun to be a piece of unlighted coal, or imagined ²⁶¹ a stone to be gold! On the supposition that they are godly persons, let them be reckoned among those of the elect, who are led into error a little, so that the power of God may be shown in us. Without this power, we can neither see nor do anything at all. For it is not weakness of intellect (as you complain), which hinders the words of God from being apprehended. On the contrary, nothing is more adapted to the apprehension of the words of God, than weakness of intellect. For it is *because* of the weak, and *to* the weak, that Christ both came, and sends his word. ^{Luk 5.31} But what hinders is the mischievousness of Satan, who sits and reigns in our weakness, resisting the word of God.

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If it were not for this acting of Satan, the whole world of men would be converted by one single word of God, once heard; nor would there be any need of more. ²⁶²

SECT. 19. Erasmus is shown to admit that Scripture is clear.

And why do I plead so long? Why do we not finish the cause with this exordium, and pronounce sentence against you on the testimony of your own words, according to that saying of Christ, "By your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned." ²⁶³ (Mat 12.37) You assert that the Scripture is not clear on this point. And then, as though the sentence of the judge were suspended, you dispute on both sides of the question, advancing all that can be said both *for* and *against* Freewill. This is all that you seek to gain by your whole performance. For the same reason, you have chosen to call

²⁶⁰ *Exordium*, an introduction or preface to a topic.

²⁶¹ *Putet, sentiat*. *Put.* is rather the matter of reasoning and argument; *sent.* is rather the matter of sense. Both are intermixed here, though each has its distinct appropriation: he thinks about the sun, he handles the stone. — A double error is pointed out by the illustration. These ungodly men *assert* what is not, and *deny* what is.

²⁶² Luther does not distinguish here, as he ought to do, between what Satan *has made of us*, and what Satan *personally does in us*. The soul of man, in its natural state, is so blinded and hardened and satanized, that even if there were no immediate agency of his upon any individual soul, the effect of 'one' or even 'many' words of God (unaccompanied by his quickening Spirit) would not be such as Luther describes; but it would still reject the truth!

²⁶³ A forced application of the words. The Lord is there speaking of the words being a sure index of the mind. Luther seems to have some confusion in his mind, from Luke 19.22. "Out of your own mouth I will judge you," etc.

this a *Diatribē* rather than an *Apophysis*,²⁶⁴ or anything else: because you write with the intention of bringing all the materials of the cause together, without affirming anything. If the Scripture is not plain, then why are those of whom you boast — that is, so numerous a series of the most learned men, whom the consent of so many ages has approved even to this very day — are not only blind on this subject, but even rash and foolish enough to define and assert Freewill *from the Scripture*, as though that Scripture were positive and plain.

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Most of these men come recommended to us, you say, not only by a wonderful knowledge of the sacred writings, but by piety of life. Some of them, after having defended the doctrine of Christ by their writings, gave testimony to it with their blood. If you say this sincerely, it is a settled thing with you, that Freewill has assertors endowed with wonderful skill in the Scriptures, and who have borne witness to it with their blood, as a part of Christ's doctrine. If this is true, they must have considered the Scripture as clear. Otherwise, how could they be said to possess a wonderful skill in the sacred writings? Besides, what levity and temerity of mind would it have been in them, to shed their blood for a thing that is uncertain and obscure? This would not be the act of Christ's martyrs, but of devils. Now, therefore, you also 'set before your eyes and weigh with yourself, whether you judge that more ought to be attributed to the prior judgments²⁶⁵ of so many learned men, so many orthodox men, so many holy men, so many martyrs, so many ancient and modern theologians, so many universities, so many councils, so many bishops, and so many popes — who have thought the Scriptures clear, and have confirmed their opinion by their blood as well as by their writings — than to your own single judgment, which is that of a private individual, denying that the Scriptures are clear'²⁶⁶ — when maybe you never issued one tear, or one sigh, for the doctrine of Christ.

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If you believe that these men thought correctly, then why not follow their example? If not, then why boast with such a puffed cheek and full mouth, as if you would overwhelm me with a tempest and flood of words? This, however, falls with still greater force upon your own head, while *my* ark rides aloft in security. For you, in the same instant, attribute the greatest folly and temerity to so many and such great ones, when you write that they were most skilful in the Scriptures, and yet they asserted by their pen, by their life, and by their death, a sentiment which you nevertheless maintain to be obscure and ambiguous. What is this, if not to make them most ignorant in knowledge, and most foolish in assertion? As

²⁶⁴ A Greek term, which may express either affirmation or negation; but here it clearly denotes affirmation, with an allusion either to the 'explicit avowal of private opinion,' or to 'the judge delivering his sentence in court.'

²⁶⁵ *Praejudiciis*. A forensic term, expressing either, 1. 'precedents which apply to an undecided cause;' or 2, 'matters relating to the cause in hand, which have already been decided;' or 3, 'a previous judgment of the cause itself;' as here. These men had sat in judgment upon this question before, and had decided it.

²⁶⁶ *Jam et tu pone*. Luther here retorts Erasmus' own words upon him. "Et tamen illud interim lectorem admonitum velim, si etc. ...ut tum denique sibi ponat ob oculos tam numerosam seriem eruditissimorum virorum, etc. ...tum illud secum expendat, utrum plus tribuendum esse judicet tot eruditorum, tot orthodoxorum, etc. ...praejudiciis, an unius aut alterius privato iudicio.'

their private despiser, I would never have paid them such honour as you do, their public commender. ²⁶⁷

SECT. 20. Erasmus reduced to a dilemma.

Here I hold you fast, then, by a *horned syllogism*, as they call it. ²⁶⁸ For one or the other of these two things that you say must be false: either that 'these men were worthy to be admired for their knowledge of the sacred writings, life, and martyrdom;' or that 'the Scripture is not plain.'

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But since you would rather be driven upon *this* horn, that the Scripture is not plain (what you are driving at throughout your whole book), it remains that when you pronounced them to be most expert in Scripture, and martyrs for Christ, you did it either in fun or in flattery. It was certainly not done seriously, merely to throw dust in the eyes of the common people, and to give Luther trouble by loading his cause with hatred and contempt, through vain words. However, I pronounce neither true; but both false. I affirm, *first*, that the Scriptures are most clear; *secondly*, that those persons, so far as they assert Freewill, are most ignorant of the Scriptures; and *thirdly*, that they made this assertion neither with their life, nor by their death, but only with their pen — and that was absent-mindedly.

I therefore conclude this little disputation ²⁶⁹ thus. According to your own testimony, 'By Scripture — seeing that is obscure — nothing certain has yet been determined, nor can be determined, on the subject of Freewill.' 'By the lives of all men from the beginning of the world, nothing has been shown in support of Freewill.' This is what I argued above. Now, it is no part of Christian doctrine to teach anything which is neither enjoined by a single word *in* Scripture, nor demonstrated by a single fact *out* of Scripture; rather, it belongs to the 'true stories' of Lucian. ²⁷⁰ Except that Lucian — sporting as he does on ludicrous subjects, in mere jest and wittingly — deceives nobody and hurts nobody.

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But these antagonists of ours play the madman on a serious subject — even one pertaining to eternal salvation — to the destruction of innumerable souls.

SECT. 21. Luther claims victory already, but will proceed.

Thus, too, I might have put an end to this whole question about Freewill, since even the testimony of my adversaries is on my side, and at war with theirs — for there is no stronger

²⁶⁷ *Privatus* etc. The substance is, 'Insignificant Luther, whom Erasmus taunted with his obscurity, and with his contempt of these great men (though, in fact, he had only shaken off the yoke of their undue authority without expressing any sentiment of contempt), would never have so vilified them in his privacy, as Erasmus the man of name and fame was doing by his public extolment of them.'

²⁶⁸ *Cornuto syllogismo. Corn. syll.* Dilemma; so called, because the horns of the argument are, in this kind of syllogism, so disposed that to escape the one, you must run upon the other. The term 'horns' is applied to argumentation, from a certain disposition of forces, naval as well as military, in which they resemble the horns of the crescent moon.

²⁶⁹ *Disputatiunculam. Disp.* The diminutive implies a discussion subordinate to the main point in debate.

²⁷⁰ See Part i. Sect. 5. note 9. Lucian, the Epicurean philosopher of Samosata, in Syria, ridiculed all religions; and he served Christianity, without meaning it, pretty much as Erasmus was doing — by depreciating the fashionable and reigning idolatry. He died wretchedly, A. D. 180. — Much of his writings is in dialogue — Erasmus' favourite composition — with which he interweaves many 'true stories' of very doubtful credit.

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proof against an accused person, than his own proper testimony against himself. But, since Paul commands us to stop the mouths of vain babblers, let us take the very pith and matter of the cause in hand, treating it in the order in which Diatribe pursues her march. Thus, I will *first* confute the arguments adduced in behalf of Freewill; *secondly*, I will defend our own confuted arguments; and *lastly*, I will make my stand for the grace of God, in direct conflict with Freewill.

PART III. LUTHER CONFUTES ERASMUS' TESTIMONIES IN SUPPORT OF FREEWILL.

SECTION 1. Erasmus' Definition of Freewill examined.

AND first, as bound in duty, I will begin with your very definition of Freewill; which is as follows:

'Moreover, by Freewill here, I mean that power of the human will, whereby a man is able to apply himself to those things which lead to eternal salvation, or to turn himself away from them.'

Doubtless with great prudence, you lay down a bare ²⁷¹ a definition here, without opening any part of it as is customary with others: perhaps afraid of more shipwrecks than one! I am therefore compelled to beat out the several parts of it for myself. The thing defined, if it is strictly examined, is certainly of a wider range than the definition. It is therefore what the Sophists would call a defective definition, which is their term for those which do not fill up the thing defined. ²⁷² For I have shown above, that Freewill belongs to none but God only. You might, perhaps with propriety, attribute will to man. But to attribute *free* will to him in *divine* things ²⁷³ is too much, since the term Freewill, in the judgment of all ears, is properly applied to 'that which *can* do, and which *does*,' towards God, whatever it pleases, without being confined by any law or command.

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You would not call a slave free, who acts under the command of his master. With how much less propriety do we call a man or an angel *free*, when they live under the most absolute subjection to *God* (to say nothing of sin and death), so as not to subsist for a moment by their own strength.

Instantly, therefore, even at the very doors of our argument, we have a quarrel between the definition of the *term*, and the definition of the *thing*. The word signifies one thing, and the thing itself is understood to be another. It would be more properly called *vertible* will,²⁷⁴ or *mutable* will. For thus Augustine (and after him, the Sophists) extenuates the glory and virtue of that word *Free*, adding this disparagement to it: they speak of the vertibility of the free will.' It would become us to speak this way, that we might avoid deceiving the hearts of men by inflated, vain, and pompous words. Augustine also thinks that we should speak in sober and plain words, observing a fixed rule. For in teaching, a dialectic simplicity and strictness of speech is required — not big swelling words, and figures of rhetorical persuasion. ²⁷⁵

SECT. 2. Definition continued.

²⁷¹ Bald and bare; without any appendage of amplification, resolution of parts, or illustration.

²⁷² The idea is that of a mould not filled up: the definition is not commensurate with the thing defined.

²⁷³ See Part i. Sect xxv. note.

²⁷⁴ *Vertible*: able to turn or be turned; changeable.

²⁷⁵ 'A fixed rule,' as opposed to whim, taste or chance; 'sober,' as opposed to 'extravagant,' 'plain,' or 'proper,' as opposed to figurative, 'strictness of speech,' (*i.e.* words used in their own genuine and natural sense) as opposed to 'metaphor;' logic' as opposed to rhetoric.'

But, lest I seem to take pleasure in fighting for a word, I will acquiesce for the moment in this abuse of terms, great and dangerous as it is, so far as to allow a 'free' will to be the same as a 'vertible' will. I will also indulge Erasmus with making Freewill 'a power of the *human will*,' as though Angels did not have it — since, in this performance, he professes to treat only human Freewill. Otherwise, in this particular also, the definition would be narrower than the thing defined.

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I hasten to those parts of the definition on which the subject hinges. Some of these are sufficiently manifest; others flee the light, as though a guilty conscience made them afraid of everything. Yet a definition ought to be the plainest and most certain thing in the world; for to define obscurely, is just like not defining at all. These parts are plain: (1) a power of the human will; (2) by which a man is able; (3) unto eternal salvation. But those other words, 'to apply himself;' and again, 'those things which lead;' and again, 'to turn himself away;' — these are the words of the hoodwinked fencer.²⁷⁶ What will we then divine that phrase 'to apply himself' to mean? Again, 'to turn himself away'? What are those words, 'which lead to eternal salvation'? What corner are they slinking into? I perceive that I have to deal with a veritable Scotus or Heraclitus;²⁷⁷ who wears me out with two sorts of labour.

First, I have to go in search of my adversary, and grope for him in the dark amidst pitfalls, with a palpitating heart (it is a daring and dangerous enterprise); and if I do not find *him*, then I have to fight with hobgoblins, and beat the air in the dark, to no purpose.

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Secondly, if I manage to drag him into the light, then at length, once I am worn out with the pursuit, I have to close with him in an equal fight.

By 'a power of the human will,' then, is meant, I suppose, an ability, faculty, disposedness, or suitedness to will, to refuse, to choose, despise, approve, reject, and perform whatever other actions there are of the human will. But I do not see what is meant by this same power 'applying itself' and 'turning itself away,' if it is not this very willing and refusing, this very choosing and despising, this very approving and rejecting — in short, if it is not 'the *will* performing its very office.' So that we must suppose this power to be 'a something interposed between the will itself and its actings:' a power by which the will itself draws out the operation of willing and refusing, and by which that very act of willing and refusing is elicited. It is not possible to imagine or conceive anything else here. If I am mistaken, let the fault be charged upon the author who defines it, not upon me who is searching out his meaning. For it is rightly said by the jurists, that the words of the one who speaks obscurely, when he might speak more plainly, are to be interpreted against himself. And

²⁷⁶ *Andabatae*. A man fighting in the dark, with his eyes blinded: a name given (quasi anabatai sive antanabatai) to certain fencers, or gladiators, who fought on horseback with their eyes covered; or more properly, to the man who went into the chariot to fight with the charioteer. It was one of the games of the Circus, where the peculiarity consisted in the conflict being maintained in the dark. Jerome has the expression, 'More andabatarum, gladium in tenebris ventilans;' alluding to the former of these customs.

²⁷⁷ *Scotus*. The celebrated Duns Scotus, a Franciscan; the great opponent of Thomas Aquinas, the Dominican. He acquired the name of the 'subtile doctor,' as his opponent did that of the 'angelic doctor.' *Heraclitus*, the weeping philosopher, was characterised as 'tenebrosus,' or 'obscure;' from the enigmatic style in which he communicated his reveries. Socrates is said to have expressed an admiration of some of his pieces, so far as he could understand them; but to have intimated the danger there was of being drowned in his incomprehensible depths.

here, by the way, I could be glad to know nothing of these Moderns ²⁷⁸ with whom I have to deal, and their subtleties: for we must be content to speak grossly, ²⁷⁹ so that we may teach and understand.

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'The things which lead to eternal salvation,' are the words and works of God, I suppose. These are set before the human will, that it may either apply itself to them, or turn away from them. By the words of God, I mean the Law as well as the Gospel: works are demanded by the Law; and faith by the Gospel. ²⁸⁰ For there are no other things that lead either to the grace of God, or to eternal salvation, save the word and work of God — since grace, or the Spirit, is the life itself to which we are led by the word and work of God. ²⁸¹

SECT. 3. Definition continued.

But this life, or eternal salvation, is an incomprehensible thing to human conception, as Paul cites from Isaiah (in 1Cor 2.9): "What eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, are the things which God has prepared for those who love him." For this also is placed among the chief articles of our faith. In confessing them, we say, 'and the life ever-lasting,' And what the power of Freewill is, in receiving this article, Paul declares in 1Cor 2.10: "God," he says, "has revealed them to us *by his Spirit*." It is as if he had said, 'unless the Spirit had revealed them to us, no man's heart would know or think anything about them; Freewill is that far from being able to apply itself to them, or to covet them.'

Consult your experience. What have the most excellent wits among the heathens thought of a future life, and of the resurrection?

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Has it not been that the more they excelled in genius, the more ridiculous the resurrection and eternal life appeared to them? Unless you would say that those philosophers and other Greeks, those who called Paul a babbler, ²⁸² and an assertor of new Gods when he taught these things at Athens, were *not* men of genius. In Acts 26.4 ²⁸³ Porcius Festus calls Paul a madman for preaching eternal life. What does Pliny bark about these things in his

²⁷⁸ *Moderni*. Quasi *hodierni*. The subtile doctor and his contemporaries, together with those who preceded them, from Peter Lombard downwards, were but men of 'today,' compared with the ancient logicians and with the Fathers. Also, the Schoolmen were divided into three classes, like the Academics: old, middle, and new. Scotus was of the last.

²⁷⁹ Crassè. 'Dull, heavy, fat-headed,' as contrasted with their wire-drawn refinements.

²⁸⁰ Luther speaks here, as theological writers commonly do. But the truth is, the Law required *faith*, and the Gospel requires *works*: though the *form* of the two several dispensations was as Luther represents them. The Law was designed to shut the Church up unto faith; the Gospel, to open it by that faith which is itself a work (for "this is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." John 6.29) to those works which alone are acceptable to God; viz. the actings and manifestations of a self-emptied, contrite, and believing soul.

²⁸¹ He does not speak of any particular word or work of God, but of His whole word, and of His whole work; excepting only what he does by His special grace, in and upon the hearts of his people.

²⁸² *Babbler*. Σπερμολογος (*spermologos*) is a term of contempt, applied properly to persons who went about the forum picking up the seeds and crumbs, or whatever else might fall between buyer and seller, and making a living out of them. Hence it is applied to a loose, ignorant, unordered, and unmeasured speaker; one who retails the sort of refuse, or common-place scraps, which he has picked up in the streets. *New Gods* [*foreign gods*, *Gr. xenos*] not in the invidious, or disparaging sense of demons, or of ξαίμονεδ (*xaimoned*), but some additional deities: objects of worship, having the same sort of claim to reverence which the rest of their multiplied divinities had.

²⁸³ He says Acts 24; but the allusion is manifestly to Acts 26.

seventh book? What does Lucian say, who was so great a wit? Were these men stupid? No, it is true of most men, even today, that the greater their genius and erudition, the more they laugh at this article, and consider it a fable; and they do that openly. For, as to the secret soul, unless he is sprinkled with the Holy Ghost, no man either positively knows, or believes in, or wishes for eternal salvation, even though he may frequently boast of it with his voice and his pen. I would to God that you and I, my Erasmus, were free from this same leaven, so rare is a believing mind as applied to this article! Have I hit the sense of your definition?

SECT. 4. Inferences from Erasmus' definition.

So then, Freewill, according to Erasmus, is a power of the *will*, which is able, of itself, to will and not to will the word and work of God. By this word and work, it is led to those things which exceed both its sense and thought.

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But if it is able to *will* and to *refuse*, it is also able to love and to hate. If it is able to love and to hate, then it is also able, in some small degree, to do the deeds of the Law, and to believe the Gospel. Because, if you *will*, or if you *refuse* a certain thing, it is impossible for you *not* to be able to work something towards it by means of that will, even though you are not able, through another's hindering, to finish it. Now, since death, the cross, and all the evils of the world are numbered among those works of God which lead to salvation, the human will must be able to choose even death and the man's own destruction. Indeed, it is able to will *all* things while it is able to will the word and work of God. For what can there be anywhere, that is below, above, within, or without, the word and work of God, except God himself? ²⁸⁴ And what is now left to grace, and the Holy Spirit? This is manifestly to attribute divinity to Freewill — since to *will* the Law and the Gospel, to *reject* sin, and to *choose* death, is the property of divine virtue exclusively, as Paul teaches in more places than one.

Hence it appears that no man since the Pelagians days, has written more correctly on Freewill, than Erasmus has. For I have said before, that Freewill is a term peculiar to God, and it expresses a divine perfection. However, up to now no man has attributed this divine power to it, except the Pelagians. For the Sophists, whatever they may think, certainly speak very differently about it. No, Erasmus far exceeds the Pelagians: for they attribute this divinity to the whole of the free will, and Erasmus attributes divinity to *half* of it. They have Freewill consist of two parts; a power of discerning, and a power of choosing. They pretend the one belongs to the understanding, and the other to the will, as the Sophists also do.

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But Erasmus, making no mention of the power of discerning, confines his praises to the power of *choosing*, singly; and so he deifies a sort of crippled and half-begotten Freewill. What would he have done, do you think, if he had been set to describe the whole of this faculty?

²⁸⁴ *Intrà extrà*. On *this* side of it, or *beyond* it; when joined with the preceding words 'infrà, suprà,' these express the universal comprehension of the word and work of God; as containing all that is above, beneath, and on all sides of us — with only one exception.

Yet, not content with this, he even exceeds the heathen philosophers. For they have not yet determined 'whether any substance can put itself into motion.' And on this point, the Platonics and Peripatetics ²⁸⁵ differ from each other throughout the whole body of their philosophy. But according to Erasmus, Freewill not only moves *itself*, but it even applies itself, by its own power, to those things which are eternal and incomprehensible to itself. As a perfectly new and unheard-of definer of Freewill, he leaves heathen philosophers, Pelagians, Sophists, and all others, far behind him! Nor is this enough: he does not spare himself, but even disagrees and fights with himself more than with all the rest. He had said before that 'the human will is altogether inefficacious without grace.' Did he say this in jest? But now, when he defines it seriously, he tells us that the human will possesses that power by which it efficaciously applies itself to those things which belong to eternal salvation — that is, to those things which are incomparably above its power. Thus, in this place, Erasmus is superior even to himself. ²⁸⁶

SECT. 5. Erasmus' definition.

Do you perceive, my Erasmus (without meaning it, I suppose) how you betray yourself by this definition, to be one who understands nothing at all about these things, or who writes them in sheer thoughtlessness and contempt, without proving what he says, or what he affirms?

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As I have remarked before, you say less and claim more for Freewill, than all the rest of its advocates have done, because you do not even describe the whole of Freewill, and yet you assign everything to it. The Sophists (or at least their father, Peter Lombard ²⁸⁷) deliver what is far more tolerable to us when they affirm that Freewill is the faculty of first discerning good from evil, and then choosing good or evil, as grace is either present or lacking. ²⁸⁸ He agrees entirely with Augustine, that Freewill, by its own strength, cannot help but fall, and has no power save to commit sin.' On this account, Augustine says it should be called *Bondwill*, rather than Freewill; in his second book against Julian.

But you represent the power of Freewill to be equal on both sides, insofar as it can, by its own strength and without grace, both apply itself to and turn itself away from good. You are not aware how much you attribute to it by this pronoun 'itself,' or 'its own self,' while you say, 'it can apply itself!' In fact, you exclude the Holy Spirit with all his power, as altogether superfluous and unnecessary. Your definition is therefore damnable, even in the judgment of the Sophists. If they were not so maddened against me by the blindings of envy, they would rave at *your* book rather than *mine*. But since you attack Luther, you

²⁸⁵ That is, adherents to the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle.

²⁸⁶ Erasmus has made Freewill greater than itself. Luther makes a pun on this, and intimates that he has even out-heroded Herod here; not only exceeding philosophers, etc. but even his own extravagant self.

²⁸⁷ Peter Lombard (c. 1096–1160) – a scholastic theologian, and Bishop of Paris. When he arrived in Paris about 1134, Bernard of Clairveaux recommended him to the officials of the church of St. Victor. He taught at the cathedral school of Notre Dame for ten years, where he met Peter Abelard and Hugh of St. Victor. He authored *Four Books of Sentences*, which became a standard textbook of theology. Martin Luther wrote glosses on the *Sentences*, and John Calvin quoted from it over 100 times in his *Institutes*. Lombard's most controversial doctrine in the *Sentences* was identifying charity with the Holy Spirit (Book I, dist 17). He said that when a Christian loves God and his neighbour, this love *literally* is God; the Christian thus becomes divine and partakes in the life of the Trinity. This form of mysticism was widespread in the Middle Ages.

²⁸⁸ They ascribed the power of discerning, *out of hand*; but the power of choosing good, *conditionally*.

say nothing but what is holy and catholic, ²⁸⁹ even though you contradict both yourself and them. So great is the patience of the saints. ²⁹⁰

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I do not say this as approving the sentence of the Sophists on Freewill, but as thinking it is more tolerable than that of Erasmus; because they approach nearer to the truth. But neither do they affirm, as I do, that Freewill is a mere nothing. Still, inasmuch as they affirm (the Master of the Sentences ²⁹¹ in particular) that it has no power of itself without grace, they are at war with Erasmus; indeed, they seem to be at war with themselves also, and to be torturing one another with disputes about a mere word — they are fonder of contention than of truth, as becomes Sophists. For, suppose a Sophist of no bad sort to come my way, with whom I was holding a familiar conversation and conference on these matters in a corner; and whose candid and free judgment I would ask in some way such as this:

'If anyone were to say to you that something is free, which by its own power can only incline to one side (that is, to the bad side), having power, it is true, on the other side (that is, on the good side), but that other inclination is by a virtue that is not its own — indeed, it is simply by the help of another — could you refrain from laughing, my friend?'

For, upon this principle, I would easily make out that a stone or the trunk of a tree has Freewill. For it can incline both upwards and downwards; but by its *own* power, indeed, it can only downwards. Yet, by another's help, and by that help only, it can incline upwards also. And thus, as I have said before, by an inverted ²⁹² use of all languages and words, we will at length come to say, 'No man is all men;' 'nothing is everything:' by referring the one term to the thing itself, and the other term to some other thing, which is not part of it, but may possibly be present to it and befall it. ²⁹³

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It is in this way that, after endless disputes, they make the free will to be free by an accident; viz. as being that which may be made free by another. But the question is about the freedom of the will, as it is in itself, and in its own substance. And if this is the question resolved, there remains nothing but an empty name for Freewill, whether they will or not. The Sophists fail in this also: that they assign to Freewill a power of discerning good from evil. They also lower regeneration, and the renewal of the Holy Ghost, and claim that extrinsic aid as a sort of outward appendage to Freewill. ²⁹⁴ I will say more of this later.

²⁸⁹ *Catholicum*. *Cath.* 'Ad omnes pertinens,' 'quod ubique et apud omnes disseminatum est, et ab omnibus recipi debet.' 'What all are bound to receive as true.'

²⁹⁰ A sarcastic allusion to Rev 13.10; 14.12.

²⁹¹ Master, etc. A title with which Peter Lombard was dignified, from his work entitled 'The Sentences,' by which he was supposed to have rendered the same service to Divinity, which Gratian, his contemporary, had done to Law. He was the father of scholastic theology, which succeeded that of the Fathers; his work being considered as the great source of that science in the Latin church. He died A. D. 1164.

²⁹² Turning words topsy-turvy.

²⁹³ For example, 'Nothing is all things.' Why, God made all things out of nothing. You might call that 'nothing,' 'all things;' but this is by referring the term 'nothing' to the thing itself, and 'all things' to the existent One — who being present, communicates being (which He has in himself) to this 'nothing.'

²⁹⁴ *Velut externè affingunt*. The gift of the Spirit, though of course not inherent, they represented as inseparably attached to the free will; and so it is communicated as matter of course.

But enough of your definition. Let us now see the arguments which are to swell this empty little word. ²⁹⁵

SECT. 6. Ecclesiasticus 15.15-18

The first is taken from Wisdom 15.15-18 ²⁹⁶: "The Lord made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his own counsel. He added his commands, and his precepts. If you are willing to keep his commandments, and to perform acceptable faithfulness forever, they shall preserve you. He has set fire and water before you; stretch forth your hand to whichever you will. Before man is life and death, good and evil, whichever he likes shall be given to him." ²⁹⁷

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Although I might justly reject this book, I admit it for the moment, so that I may not lose my time by involving myself in a dispute about the books received into the Hebrew canon (which you ridicule and revile not a little) — comparing the Proverbs of Solomon and the Love-song (as you entitle it by an ambiguous sort of jeer) with the two books of Esdras, Judith, the history of Susannah and of the Dragon, and Esther. ²⁹⁸ This last, however, they have received into their canon, although in my judgment, it deserves to be excluded more than all the rest. But I would answer briefly in your own words: 'the Scripture is obscure and ambiguous in this passage.' It therefore proves nothing with certainty. And maintaining the negative as we do, I demand that you produce a place which proves by clear words, what Freewill is, and what Freewill can effect. Perhaps you will do this on the Greek calends. ²⁹⁹ However, to avoid this necessity, you waste many good words in marching over the ears of corn, ³⁰⁰ and reciting so many opinions on Freewill, that you almost make Pelagius evangelical. ³⁰¹

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Again, you invent four kinds of grace so that you may be able to assign some sort of faith and charity even to the heathen philosophers. Again, you invent that threefold law of nature, works, and faith. This is a new figment by which you enable yourself to maintain that the precepts of the heathen philosophers have a mighty coincidence with the precepts of the Gospel. Then again, you apply that affirmation in Psalm 4.6: "The light of your countenance has been marked upon us, Lord." ³⁰² This speaks of the knowledge of the

²⁹⁵ *Inflatura*. A figure taken from blowing a bladder, or raiding a bubble, or making a musical instrument sound aloud: 'to give size, or substance, or sound, to this empty, speechless thing.'

²⁹⁶ *Ecclesiasticus*: also known as *Wisdom* or *Sirach*, in the Apocrypha.

²⁹⁷ The Greek text, from which our authorized version is a faithful translation, omits the words 'conservabunt te,' and 'adjecit mandate et praecepta sua.' Also in verse 17, 'bonum et malum.' The Syriac, or vulgar Hebrew, in which this book was originally written, is lost, although Jerome professes to have seen it. What Jesus the Son of Sirach produced in the Syriac, his grandson translated into Greek, for the benefit of his countrymen in Egypt, who, by long disuse, had forgotten the Hebrew tongue.

²⁹⁸ The rest of the chapters of the Book of Esther, which are found neither in the Hebrew, nor the Chaldee.

²⁹⁹ *Graecas calendas*. A day that will never come; a Latin proverb taken from the Greeks having no calends to their months, as the Latins had. [A calend is the first day of each month in the Roman calendar.](#)

³⁰⁰ *Super aristas incedis*. Applied proverbially, to 'one who affirms nothing absolutely.' He skims the ears of corn, fearing to set his foot on them.

³⁰¹ *Pelagius*. The great heresiarch of Freewill, in the fifth century; a native of Wales, and supposedly a monk of Bangor who exchanged his original name of Morgan, for the more imposing one of Pelagius.

³⁰² We read Psa 4.6, "The Lord lift you"up," etc., as a prayer; but it may with equal propriety be read as an affirmation.

very countenance of God (that is, of an operation of faith) to blinded reason. Now, let any Christian put all these things together, and he will be obliged to suspect that you are sporting and jesting with the dogmas and worship of Christians. For I find it most difficult indeed to attribute all this to ignorance, in a man who has so thoroughly ransacked ³⁰³ all our documents, and so diligently treasured them up and remembered them. But I will abstain for the present, content with this short hint till a fitter opportunity offers itself. But let me beg of you, my Erasmus, do not tease *us* any more in this way, with your 'Who sees me?' Nor is it safe, in so weighty a matter, to continually play at making Vertumnuses of words with *everybody*. ³⁰⁴

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SECT. 7. Opinions on Freewill stated.

You make three opinions on Freewill out of one. You account it a harsh opinion, ³⁰⁵ which denies that a man can will anything good without special grace — that he can begin anything good, go on with anything good, and complete anything good. But though harsh, you account it highly approvable. It approves itself to you as leaving man in possession of desire and endeavour, but not leaving him anything to ascribe to his own powers. The opinion of those who maintain that Freewill can do nothing but sin, that only *grace* works good in us, seems still harsher to you. But harshest of all, is that opinion which affirms that Freewill is an empty name: that God works both good and evil in us. It is against these two last opinions, that you profess to write.

SECT. 8. Erasmus inconsistent with his definition.

Do you even know what you are saying, my Erasmus? You make three opinions here, as if they were the opinions of three different sects. You do not perceive that it is the same thing declared in different words, with a twofold variety by us, who are the same persons, and professors of one sect. But let me warn you of your carelessness, or dullness of intellect; and expose it.

I ask then, how does the definition of Freewill which you have given above, correspond with this first opinion of yours; which you declare to be highly approvable?

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For you said that Freewill is a power of the human will, by which a man can apply himself to good. But here you say and approve its being said that a man cannot will good, without grace. Your definition affirms what its illustration denies; and there is found 'a yea and nay' in your Freewill. Thus, at the same time you both approve and condemn us; no, you

³⁰³ *Nostra omnia sic perlastravit*. I refer the 'nostra omnia' to the sacred records, the authorized documents of Christianity; not to the writings of Luther and his friends. *Perlastr.* does not express real insight into the things contained in those documents, but complete outside inspection. This is just the sort of knowledge which Luther would choose to ascribe to him, and which is amply sufficient to exempt him from the plea of ignorance.

³⁰⁴ 'Us,' as opposed to everybody. He represents him as playing at peep with the learned; and as deceiving the people by his tricks on words, by which he gave the same word as many faces as Vertumnus, who plagued the wise; he deceived the vulgar. Vertumnus had many faces: hence, 'Vertumnus verborum ludere,' to *play at* making words like Vertumnus; that is, different in appearance, while are really the same. Erasmus could say and unsay everything by his copiousness, versatility, and ambiguity of words.

³⁰⁵ Erasmus does not introduce the word 'harsh' in describing this first opinion. Luther ascribes it to him, as implied in his description of the other two.

condemn and approve *yourself* in one and the same dogma and article. ³⁰⁶ Do you not think it good, that it applies itself to those things which pertain to everlasting salvation? This is what your definition attributes to Freewill; and yet there is no need of grace if there is so much good in Freewill, that it can apply itself to good. So then, the Freewill which you define is different from the Freewill which you defend; and Erasmus has two Freewills more than others have, and those are quite at variance with each other.

SECT. 9. The approvable opinion considered.

But, dismissing that Freewill which your definition has invented, let us look at this contrary one, which the opinion itself sets before us. You grant that a man cannot will good without special grace. And we are not now discussing what the *grace of God* can do, but what man can do *without grace*. You grant, therefore, that Freewill cannot will good. This is nothing else than saying it cannot apply itself to those things which pertain to eternal salvation, as you sang out in your definition. Indeed, you say a little before, that the human will is so depraved that, having lost its liberty, it is compelled to serve sin, and cannot restore itself to any better sort of produce. If I am not mistaken, you represent the Pelagians to have been of this opinion. Now, I think there is no escape here for my Proteus.

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He is caught and held by open words; to wit, that the will, having lost its liberty, is driven into, and held fast in, the service of sin. O exquisite Freewill which having lost its freedom, is declared by Erasmus himself to be the servant of sin! When *Luther* said this, 'nothing had ever been heard that is more absurd,' 'nothing could be published that is more mischievous than this paradox.' Diatribes must be written against him!

But perhaps nobody will take my word for it, that Erasmus has really said these things: let this passage of Diatribe be read, and it will excite wonder. I am not greatly surprised. The man who does not consider this a serious subject, and is never affected with the cause that he is pleading, but is altogether alienated from it in heart, and is tired of it, and chills under it, or is nauseated by it — how such a one can one do other than say absurd things here and there, incongruous things, discordant things, pleading the cause as he does. He is like a drunken or sleeping man who belches out 'yes' and 'no,' as the sounds fall variously upon his ears. It is on this account that rhetoricians require *feeling* in an advocate; and theology much more requires such a degree of emotion in her champion, that it will render him vigilant, sharp-sighted, intent, thoughtful, and strenuous.

SECT. 10. The approvable opinion further considered.

If Freewill without grace, having lost her freedom, is obliged to serve sin, and cannot will good, then I would like to know what that desire is, what that endeavour is, which this first and approvable opinion leaves to a man? ³⁰⁷ It cannot be good desire, it cannot be good endeavour: because he cannot will good — as the opinion says, and as you have conceded. Therefore, evil desire and evil endeavour alone are left — which, now that liberty is lost, are compelled to serve sin. And what is meant, I ask, by that saying, 'This

³⁰⁶ The definition says, 'can apply itself to those things,' etc. The approvable opinion says, 'cannot will good.'

³⁰⁷ 'It leaves man in possession of desire and endeavour,' etc.

opinion leaves desire and endeavour, but it does not leave that which may be ascribed to the man's own powers?'

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Who can conceive of this? If desire and endeavour are left to Freewill, then why should they not be ascribed to it? If they are not to be ascribed, then how can they be left? Are this desire and endeavour, which subsist *before* grace, left even to that very grace which is to come, and not to Freewill? This is to be at the same time *left* and *not left* to this same Freewill. If these are not paradoxes, or rather monsters, I do not know what monsters are.

SECT. 11. Freewill is not 'a negative, intermediate power of the will.'

But perhaps Diatribe is dreaming that there is something between being able to will good, and *not* being able to will good, which is the mere power of willing — distinct from any regard to good or evil. Thus, we are to evade the rocks by a sort of logical subtlety. We affirm that in the will of man, there is a certain power of willing, which cannot indeed incline to good without grace; and yet, even without grace, it does not directly will only evil. It is a pure and simple power of willing, which may be turned by grace upwards to good, and by sin downwards to evil. But what then becomes of that saying, 'having lost its liberty, it is compelled to serve sin?' Where, then, is that 'desire and endeavour' which is left? Where is that power of applying itself to those things which belong to eternal salvation? For that power of applying itself to salvation cannot be a mere abstract power of willing, unless salvation itself is called *nothing*.

Then again, desire and endeavour cannot be a mere power of willing, since desire must lean and endeavour somewhere, and cannot be carried towards nothing, or remain quiescent. In short, wherever Diatribe is pleased to turn herself, she cannot escape contradictions and conflicting expressions — so that, even Freewill herself is not so much a captive, as Diatribe who defends her. She so entangles herself in her attempts to give liberty to the will, that she gets bound with indissoluble chains, in company with her freedmaid.

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Then again, it is a mere fiction of logic, that there is this middle faculty of mere willing in man; nor can it be proved by those who assert it. Ignorance of things, and servile regard for words, has given birth to this fancy, as if the will must straightway be in substance, what we set it out to be in words. The Sophists have numberless figments of this sort. The truth is rather what *Christ* says: "He that is not with me is against me." He does not say, 'He that is not with me, nor against me, but in the middle.' For, if God is in us, then Satan is absent, and only to will good is present with us. If God is absent, then Satan is present, and there is no will in us but towards evil. Neither God, nor Satan, allows a mere abstract power to will in us — but as you have rightly said, having lost our liberty, we are compelled to serve sin; that is, we *will* sin and wickedness; we *speak* sin and wickedness; we *act* sin and wickedness. See into what a corner Diatribe has been driven without knowing it, by invincible and most mighty Truth. Truth has made her wisdom folly, and compelled her, when meaning to speak *against* us, to speak *for* us, and against herself. Freewill does this when she attempts anything good; for then, by *opposing* evil, she most of all does evil, and opposes good. Thus, Diatribe is as much a speaker as Freewill is an actor. Indeed, the whole Diatribe itself is nothing but an excellent performance of Freewill, condemning by

defending, and defending by condemning ³⁰⁸ — that is, she is twice a fool, while she would be thought wise.

SECT. 12. The approvable opinion compared with the other two.

The first opinion, then, as compared with itself, is such as to deny that man can will anything good; and yet it maintains that desire is somehow left to man, but this desire is not his. Let us now compare it with the other two.

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'The second is harsher, which judges that Freewill has no power except to commit sin,' This, however, is Augustine's opinion, expressed in many other places, especially in his treatise on the Letter and Spirit (the fourth or fifth chapter, if I am not mistaken), where he uses these very words.

'That third opinion is the harshest of all, which maintains that Freewill is an empty name, and that all we do is necessarily under the bondage of sin.' Diatribe wages war with these two. Here I admit that probably I may not be German enough, or Latinist enough, to enunciate the subject matter perspicuously. But I call God to witness that I meant to say nothing else (and nothing else is to be understood) by the expressions used in these last two opinions, than what is asserted in the first opinion. Nor did Augustine, I think, mean anything else; nor do I understand anything else by his words, than what the first opinion asserts. So that, in my view, the three opinions recited by Diatribe are only that one sentiment which *I* have promulgated. For when it has been conceded and settled that Freewill, having lost her freedom, is compelled into the service of sin, and has no power to will anything good, I can conceive nothing else from these expressions, except that Freewill is a bare word, the *substance* expressed by that word having been lost. *Lost liberty*, my art of grammar calls *no liberty* at all; and to attribute the name 'liberty' to that which has no liberty, is to attribute a bare name to it. If I wander from the truth here, let whoever can, recall me from my wanderings; if my words are obscure and ambiguous, let whoever can, make them plain and confirm them. I cannot call *lost health*, health; and if I were to ascribe such a property to a sick man, what have I given him but a bare name?

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But away with such monstrous expressions! For, who can bear that abuse of language by which we affirm that man has Freewill, and yet, in the same breath, assert that he has *lost* his liberty, and is compelled into the service of sin, and can will nothing good. Such expressions are at variance with common sense, and absolutely destroy the use of speech. *Diatribe* is to be accused, rather than *we*: she blurts out her own words as if she were asleep, and gives no heed to what is spoken by others. She does not consider, I say, what it means, and what force it has, to declare that man has lost his liberty, and is compelled to serve sin, and has no power to do anything good. For if she were awake and observant, she would clearly see that the meaning of these three opinions, which she differentiates and opposes to one another, is one and the same thing. For the man who has lost his liberty, who is compelled to serve sin, and who cannot will good — what can be inferred more correctly concerning this man, than that he does nothing but sin, or will evil? Even the Sophists would establish this conclusion by their learned syllogisms. So that Madam

³⁰⁸ 'Not only ruining her own cause, but establishing her adversary's.'

Diatribes is very unfortunate in entering the fray with these two last pillions,³⁰⁹ while she approves the first, which is the same thing. Again, her manner is to condemn *herself*, and approve my sentiments, in one and the same article.

SECT. 13. Ecclesiasticus 15.14-18 resumed and expounded.

Let us now return to the passage in Ecclesiasticus; comparing that first opinion which you declare to be approvable, with *it* also, as we have now done with the other two. The opinion says, 'Freewill cannot will good.' The passage from Ecclesiasticus is cited to prove that 'Freewill is nothing, and can do nothing,' The opinion which is to be confirmed by Ecclesiasticus, then, declares one thing, and yet that passage is alleged to confirm another. It is like a man going to prove that Christ is Messiah, adduces a passage which proves that Pontius Pilate was Governor of Syria; or something else which is as wide from it as the extreme notes of the double octave. ³¹⁰

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Just such is your proof of Freewill here — not to mention what I have dispatched already, that nothing here is clearly and certainly affirmed, or proved, as to what Freewill is, and what it can do. But it is worthwhile to examine this whole passage.

In the first place, he says, 'God made man in the beginning.' Here he speaks of the creation of man; and up to here, he says nothing either about Freewill, or about precepts.

It follows, 'and left him in the hand of his own counsel,' What do we have here? Is Freewill erected here? Not even here is there any mention of the precepts for which Freewill is required; nor do we read a syllable on this subject in the history of the creation of man. If anything is meant, therefore, by the words 'in the hand of his counsel,' it must rather be what we read in the first and second chapters of Genesis: 'Man was appointed lord of the things which were made, so as to have a free dominion over them,' as Moses says, "Let us make man, and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea," etc. Nor can anything else be proved from these words. For in that state, man had power to deal with the creatures according to his own will, they being made his subjects. And he calls this *man's* counsel, in opposition to *God's* counsel. But after this, when he declared man to have been thus constituted the ruler, and to be left in the hand of his own counsel, he goes on:

"He added his own commands and precepts."

To what did he add them? Why, to the counsel and will of man; and over and above that establishment of the dominion of man over the rest of the creatures.

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By these precepts, He took away from man the dominion over one part of His creatures (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for instance), and rather willed that it should *not* be free. Having mentioned the adding of precepts, He next comes to man's will towards God, and the things of God.

"If you are willing to keep the commandments, they shall preserve you," etc.

³⁰⁹ *Pillion*: A seat behind the rider of a horse.

³¹⁰ *Quod disdiapason conveniat*. A Greek proverb, denoting the greatest possible dissimilitude.

From this place, then, 'if you are willing,' is where the question of Freewill begins. So that we may learn from the Preacher, that man is divided between two kingdoms. In the one kingdom, he is borne along by his own will and counsel, without any precepts or commandments from God: to wit, in the exercise of his relations to the inferior creatures. Here he reigns, and is lord, having been left in the hand of his own counsel. It is not that God so leaves him even here, as not to cooperate with Him in all things; but that He leaves him a free use of the creatures, according to his own will, not restricting him by laws or injunctions. It is as if you said, by way of comparison, 'The Gospel has left us in the hand of our own counsel, to rule over the creatures, and to use them as we please; but Moses and the Pope have not left us in this counsel, but have restrained us by laws, and have rather subjected us to *their* wills.'

But in the other kingdom, man is not left in the hand of his own counsel, but is borne along and led by the will and counsel of God. So that, while in his *own* kingdom he is borne along by his own will, without the precepts of another; in the kingdom of *God*, he is borne along by the precepts of another, without his own will. And this is what the Preacher affirms, "He added precepts and commands. If you will," etc. ³¹¹ [\[see fn\]](#)

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SECT. 14. Ecclesiasticus at least does not decide for Freewill.

If these things are quite clear, then, we have proved that this passage from Ecclesiasticus makes *against* Freewill, not *for* it; as subjecting man to the precepts and will of God, and withdrawing him from his own will. But if they are not quite clear, I have at least made out that this passage cannot be brought to support Freewill, because it is capable of quite a different interpretation from theirs. For instance, as I just mentioned, *our* interpretation is so far from being absurd, that it is most sound, and consonant with the whole tenour of Scripture. Whereas *theirs* is repugnant to that testimony, and it is fetched from this single passage in contradiction to the whole volume besides. We therefore stand firm and without fear in our good sense of the words, which negates Freewill until they confirm their affirmative, harsh, and forced sense of them.

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When the Preacher therefore says, "If you are willing to keep the commandments, and to maintain acceptable faith, they shall preserve you" — I do not see how Freewill is proved

³¹¹ I object to this distinction, as I have already done to the same in substance (Part ii. Sect. 19.); nor can I believe it was in the mind of the Apocryphal writer. Man did not have *Freewill* given to him in the exercise of one set of his relations (those to the creatures, for instance), more than in another. Dominion and superiority did not confer Freewill. He was, in reality, made accountable for his use of the creatures; they were not given to him to do what he pleased with. But, if it had been so, this would not have prevented his liability to have his will moved by a power *without* him. Insubjection and unaccountableness are of a perfectly different nature from Freewill. A despot may be ruled *within*, as well as a slave. But, taking the writer to mean that he was left to do his own will, this does not necessarily imply more than that he was left a free agent. And this he was left, with respect to all his relations, higher as well as inferior; and so are we. The difference between Adam's state before his fall, and ours who have been begotten of him — after having fallen *in* and *with* him — does not consist in his having been in any way independent of God — which *we* are not — or having had a will that was inaccessible to divine control — which *we* do not have — but only in his ignorance of, and freedom from evil. He knew only good, and the devil as yet had no part in him. But even in that state, he did only, and only *could* do, what God willed that he should do; and though *without excuse* in choosing evil (as having faculties and capacities, and being placed in circumstances, by and in which he should at once have rejected the temptation), did so choose, through the operation (not indeed compulsory, but efficacious) and according to the will of Him who does all things: whose glory as well as prerogative it is to govern a world of *free agents*.

by these words. The verb is in the conjunctive mood (*'If you will'*); which asserts nothing indicatively.³¹² Take an example or two. 'If the devil is God, he is worthy to be worshipped,' 'If a donkey flies, it has wings,' 'If the will is free, grace is nothing,' If the Preacher meant to assert the freedom of the will, he should have said, 'Man *can* keep the commandments of God;' or, 'Man has *power* to keep the commandments,'

SECT. 15. What is meant by 'If you will,' etc.

But here Diatribe cavils that in saying, "If you will keep," the Preacher intimates that there is a will in man both to keep, and *not* to keep —

'for what meaning is there in saying to a man who has no will, 'If you will'? Would it not be ridiculous to say to a man who is blind, 'If you will see, you will find a treasure?' Or, to a deaf man, 'If you will hear, I will tell you a pretty story?' This would be only laughing at their misery.

I answer that these are the arguments of human reason, which is prone to pour out a flood of such wise sayings. Now I have to dispute not only with the Preacher, but with human reason, about an inference. ³¹³ That lady interprets the Scriptures of God by her own consequences and syllogisms, drawing them wherever she will. I will undertake my office willingly and with full confidence of success, because I know that she chatters nothing but what is foolish and absurd — and does this most of all, when she sets about showing her wisdom on sacred subjects.

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Now, if I were to ask in the first place how the intimation is proved, or how it follows, that man has a will that is free — as often as it is said, 'If you will,' 'if you will do,' 'if you will hear,' — Diatribe will say, it is because the nature of words and the custom of speech among men seem to require so. She measures the things and words of God, then, by the things and usage of men. What can be more perverse than this, when the one sort is earthly, and the other heavenly? Thus she betrays her foolish self: how she thinks nothing but what is human, about God.

But what if I were to prove that the nature of words and the custom of speech, even among men, is not always such that it makes those persons objects of ridicule, who have no power to comply with the demand, as often as it is said to them, 'If you will,' 'if you will do,' 'if you will hear?' How often do parents mock their children by bidding them to come to them, or to do this or that, for the mere purpose of making it appear how utterly incapable they are of doing so, and of forcing them to call upon the parent for his helping hand! How often does the faithful physician command his proud patient to do or to leave undone things which are either impossible, or noxious, that he may drive him to that knowledge of his disease, or of his weakness, through testing himself, to which he could not lead him by any other means! What is more frequent, or more common, than words of insult and provocation, if we would show either to friends or to enemies, what they can do, and what they cannot do? I mention these things, only by way of manifesting to human reason, how

³¹² Grammar: these are moods or verb tenses in Greek, which affect the meaning of the word.

³¹³ *De sequelá*. What follows, or is supposed to follow, from an assertion proved or admitted, but is not the immediate point in debate. 'Consequence,' deduction, 'inference.'

foolish Diatribe is in attaching her inferences to the Scriptures; and how blind she is, not to see that these inferences are not always realized, even in human words and actions.

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Yet, if she but sees them fulfilled now and then, she quickly rushes forward precipitously, and pronounces that they take place generally, in all human and divine forms of speech. Thus she contrives to make a universal of a particular, as is the manner of her wisdom.

SECT. 16. Use of such forms of address.

Now, God deals with us as a father deals with his children, to show us our impotency of which we are ignorant; or as a faithful physician does to make our disease known to us; or he insults us as his enemies who proudly resist his counsel, proposing laws to us (which is the most convincing way of doing it), saying, 'do, hear, keep;' or, 'if you hear, if you are willing, if you do.' Will the following be a just inference from it? 'So then, we can *will* freely, otherwise God is mocking us.' Is *this* not rather the inference: 'So then, God is testing us, whether we are friends or foes. If we are his friends, he may lead us to the knowledge of our impotency, by the law; or if we are proud enemies, then indeed he may truly and deservedly insult and deride us.' ³¹⁴

This is the reason God gives laws; as Paul teaches. ³¹⁵ For human nature is so blind as not to know its own strength, or rather its own disease; and besides, it is so proud as to think that it knows and can do all things.

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Now, God has no more effectual remedy for this pride and ignorance, than propounding his law, about which I will say more in its proper place. Let it suffice to have taken but a sip of the cup here, that I might confute this inference of foolish, carnal wisdom: 'If you *will* — *therefore* the will is free,' Diatribe dreams that man is sound and whole, just as he is in the sight of his fellow men, in mere human affairs. Hence, she cavils and says, 'Man is mocked by such words as "if you will," "if you will do," "if you will hear," unless his will is free,' But Scripture declares man to be corrupt and captive; and not only so, but a proud despiser of God, and one who is ignorant of his corruption and captivity. So she plucks him by the sleeve, and endeavours to awaken him by such words as these, that he may own, even by sure experience, how incapable he is of any of these things.

SECT. 17. Diatribe is insincere in her inference.

But I will become the assailant myself in this conflict, and ask, 'If you indeed think, Madam Reason, that these inferences stand good ('if you *will* — *therefore* you *can* will freely'), then why do you not follow them? You say in that approvable opinion of yours, that Freewill cannot will anything good. By what sort of inference, then, will it at the same time flow from this passage (as you say it does), 'If you are willing to *keep*,' that man can

³¹⁴ It is not Luther's business to state where this difference of reception arises; which is only through the free favour of God, making some to be his friends by his Spirit working in due season, while he leaves others in their native enmity. Luther would not hesitate to assign this cause; but here he only deals with the fact that the Lord tests and evinces these different characters of men, by such calls to obedience.

³¹⁵ "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom 3.20) "Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound." (Rom 5.20.) "What then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions." (Gal 3.19) "Therefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." (Gal 3.24)

both *will* freely, and *cannot will* freely? Do sweet water and bitter flow from the same fountain? [Jas 3.11](#) Are you not, even yourself, the greater mocker of man here, when you say that he is able to keep what he cannot even will or wish? It therefore follows on your part, that you do not think this a good inference, 'If you *will* — therefore you *can* will freely,' even though you maintain it so vehemently. Or else, from your heart, you do not affirm that the opinion is approvable which maintains that 'man cannot will good.' — Reason is so entrapped in the inferences and words of her own wisdom, as not to know what she says, or what she is talking about.

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Unless, of course, Freewill can only be defended by arguments that mutually devour and make an end of each other (as indeed it is most worthy of her) — just as the Midianites destroyed themselves, by a mutual slaughter while making war against Gideon and the people of God.

But let me expostulate still more at large with this wise Diatribe. The Preacher does *not* say, 'If you have a *desire* or *endeavour* to keep, which is nevertheless not to be ascribed to your own powers;' — as *you* might collect from his words. Rather, 'If you *will* keep the commandments, they will preserve you.' Now, if *we* drew inferences such as *you* are prone to do in your wisdom, we would infer, 'therefore, man *can* keep the commandments.' And thus, we would leave in man not only a little bit of a desire, or a sort of endeavouring, but we would ascribe to him the whole fulness and abundance of *power* to keep the commandments. Otherwise, the Preacher would be mocking the misery of man by commanding him to keep what he knew man is *unable* to keep. Nor would it be enough that man have the desire and endeavour. Not even by *this* would the Preacher escape the suspicion of using mockery: he must intimate that man has in him a power of keeping.

But let us suppose this desire and endeavour of Freewill *is* something. What would we say to those Pelagians who, from this passage, were used to denying grace altogether, and who ascribed everything to Freewill? Without doubt, the Pelagians have gained the victory if Diatribe's consequence is allowed. For the words of the Preacher import keeping, and not merely desiring or endeavouring. Now, if you deny to the Pelagians the inference of keeping, they will, in turn, much more properly deny you the inference of endeavouring. And if you take away complete Freewill from them, they will take from you that little particle of it which you say remains — not allowing you to claim for a particle, what you have denied to the whole substance.

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So that, whatever you urge against the Pelagians, who ascribe a *whole* ³¹⁶ to Freewill from this passage, will come much more forcibly from us, in contradiction to that little bit of a desire which constitutes *your* Freewill. ³¹⁷ The Pelagians will also agree with us so far as to admit that, if their opinion cannot be proved from this passage, then much less can any other opinion be proved from it. For, if the cause is to be pleaded by inferences, then the Preacher argues most strongly of all for the Pelagians, as he speaks expressly of entire

³¹⁶ As distinct from a fraction. See note on p. 166.

³¹⁷ *Tutum libero arbitrio tribuentibus*. The Pelagians spoke more wisely than many who oppose them. They maintained 'the integrity of Freewill' as an absolute power of willing good. Freewill is Freewill, and if there is anything of it in man, there is the whole of it.

keeping. 'If you will keep the commandments.' Indeed, he speaks of faith also: 'If you will keep acceptable faith,' So that, by the same inference, we ought to have it in our power to keep faith also. However, this faith is the sole and rare gift of God, as Paul says. ³¹⁸

In short, since so many opinions are enumerated in support of Freewill, and not one of them fails to seize for itself this passage from Ecclesiasticus, and since those opinions are different and contrary — it must follow that they deem ³¹⁹ the Preacher contradictory and opposite, each to the other severally, in the self-same words.

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They can therefore prove nothing from him. Still, if that inference is admitted, he argues for the Pelagians only, an against all the rest. And so, he argues against Diatribe, who cuts her own throat here. ³²⁰

SECT. 18. Concludes that Ecclesiasticus proves nothing for Freewill, whether what is said is understood of Adam, or of men generally.

But I renew my first assertion; viz. that this passage from Ecclesiasticus patronises none of those, absolutely, who maintain Freewill; but it opposes them all. For that inference, 'if you *will* — therefore you *can*,' is inadmissible. And the true understanding of such passages as these is that, by this word and the like, man is warned of his impotency which, being ignorant and proud, if it were not for these divine warnings, he would neither admit nor feel.

And here I do not speak of the first man only, but of *any* man, and *every* man; though it is of little consequence whether you understand it of the first man, or of any other man whatsoever. For although the first man was not impotent through the *presence* of grace, God still shows him abundantly by this precept, how impotent he would be in the *absence* of grace.

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³¹⁸ Luther no doubt refers to Eph 2.8, "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." His interpretation, if I understand the text rightly, is incorrect: it is not *faith* that is spoken of as the gift of God, but 'his whole salvation.' The truth of his affirmation, however, though not fairly deducible from *this* text, is unquestionable; and it may be shown from particular testimonies, as well as from the general tenour of Scripture. [For example,] Mat 16.17; Joh 6.44, 65; Eph 1.19; Col 2.12 (to which many others might be added) are decisive.

³¹⁹ *Deem*: here it means to judge or declare, and not just indicate or suggest.

³²⁰ *Suo ipsius gladio jugulatur*. By quoting a passage for herself, which directly contradicts her.

Now if that man, *having* the Spirit, ³²¹ was not able to will good — that is, to will obedience — while his will was still new, and good was newly proposed to him, ³²² because the Spirit did not add it — then what could *we*, who do not have the Spirit, do towards the good which we have lost? It was shown, therefore, in that first man, by a terrible example, for bruising our pride, what our Freewill can do when left to itself — yes, when urged and increased continually, more and more, by the Spirit of God. The first man could not attain to a more enlarged measure of the Spirit, of which he possessed the firstfruits, but fell from the possession of those firstfruits. How then should we, in our fallen state, have power to recover those firstfruits which have been taken from us? Especially since Satan now reigns in us with full power — who laid the first man prostrate by a mere temptation, when he had not yet reigned in him.

It would be impossible to maintain a stronger debate against Free will, than by discussing this text of Ecclesiasticus in connection with the fall of Adam. But I do not have room for such a descant here, and perhaps the matter will present itself elsewhere. Meanwhile, let it suffice to have shown that the Preacher says nothing in support of Freewill here (which its advocates, however, consider to be their principal testimony); and that this and similar passages, 'If you will,' 'if you will hear,' 'if you will do,' do not declare what man *can* do, but only what he *ought* to do. ³²³

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SECT. 19. Gen. 4.7 considered.

Another passage is cited by our Diatribe from the fourth chapter of Genesis, where the Lord says to Cain, "The desire for sin shall be subject to you, and you shall rule over it."

³²¹ *Cum adesset Spiritus*. Luther assumes that Adam, in his creation state, had the Spirit; of which there is no proof, and the contrary seems evidently to have been the fact. Made perfect after his kind, it was no part of his creation dues or gifts to have the Spirit. He was formed to glorify God, as his creature: which implies a substance distinct from, and existing in a state of severance from his Creator; like a piece of mechanism put out of the hand of its artificer. He was left to himself, therefore, having his own high moral powers and acquirements, but no extrinsic aid; to make trial and to show what man in his entireness is, and what he would become through temptation, if not inhabited by his Creator. This trial and manifestation would furnish an inference with respect to other creatures; even as the same inference had already been furnished by the angelic nature. But this trial could not have been made, and this exhibition therefore could not have been effected, if he had possessed the Spirit; or in other words, if he had been united to God — so united that he could not have been overcome. That union, therefore (as Luther, and others with him, would say), was dissolved; the Spirit which he had possessed was withdrawn during his temptation. Then, was he any longer the same substance, or person, which had received the command? On this representation, the command was given to him, *having the Spirit*; and he was tested, *not* having he Spirit. — So demonstrable is it that Adam did not have the Holy Ghost, whose *in-dwelling* 'does not pertain to the perfection of man's nature.' — But the argument from Adam's state to ours is quite strong enough without this unwarranted assumption of Luther's. He that had just come out of the hands of his Creator, made in his image, and pronounced by him to be 'very good,' could not stand against a single and solitary temptation: therefore, what should *we* do?

³²² As opposed to that 'stale and rejected' thing which good is to us.

³²³ I cannot help regretting that Luther, after the example of his opponent, has given so much space to this Apocryphal testimony from Ecclesiasticus. I could have been glad if he had not only stood upon his right, which he hints at in the opening of his discussion, declining to answer; but had used the occasion to protest against the honour put upon this book, and the rest of its brothers and sisters, by binding them up in our Bibles and reading them in our churches. The collateral matter of the argumentation, however, is highly valuable; and Luther could afford to make his adversary a present of an argument. Here, indeed, he may almost be said to have used a cannon to kill flies. For is it not *Adam*, clearly, of whom the Preacher speaks; whose will is not the matter in debate? And what, as we have seen, is said even of *that* will, which might not be said of *ours*? It was left free to choose; and *if* it should choose good, good would result from that good.

'It is shown here,' says Diatribe, 'that the motions of the mind towards evil may be overcome, and do not induce a necessity of sinning.'

This saying, that 'the motions of the mind towards evil may be overcome,' is ambiguous; but the general sentiment, consequence,³²⁴ and facts, compel us to *this* understanding of it: that 'it is the property of Freewill to overcome its own motions towards evil, and that those motions do not induce a necessity of sinning,' Why is it again omitted here, 'which is not ascribed to Free will? ³²⁵ What need is there of the Spirit, of Christ, or of God, if Freewill can overcome the motions of the mind towards evil? Again, what has become of that approvable opinion which says that Freewill cannot even *will* good?

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Here, however, victory over evil is ascribed to this substance which neither wills nor wishes good. Our Diatribe's carelessness is beyond all measure here. Hear the truth of the matter in a few words. I have said before, man has it shown to him by such expressions as these, not what he *can* do, but what he *ought* to do. Cain is told, therefore, that he ought to rule over sin, and to keep its lustings in subjection to himself. But he neither did nor could do this, seeing that he was now pressed to the earth by the foreign ³²⁶ yoke of Satan. It is notorious that the Hebrews frequently use the future indicative for the imperative: as in the twentieth chapter of Exodus; 'You shall not have any other Gods,' 'You shall not kill,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' and countless similar instances. On the contrary, if the words are taken indicatively, according to their literal meaning, ³²⁷ they would become so many promises of God, who cannot lie; and thus, *nobody* would commit sin, and there would be no need, therefore, of these precepts. In fact, our translator would have rendered the words better in this place, if he had said, 'Let its desire be subject to you, and you rule over it;' just as it should also have been said to the woman, 'Be subject to your husband, and let him rule over you,' That it was *not* said indicatively to Cain, appears from this: in that case it would have been a divine promise; but it was *not* a divine promise, for the very reverse happened, and the very reverse was done by Cain. v [\[long note\]](#)

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SECT. 20. Deu. 30.19 considered.

Your third passage is from Moses, 'I have set before your face the way of life and of death; choose that which is good,' etc. 'What could be said more plainly,' asks Diatribe? 'He leaves freedom of choice to man.'

I answer, what can be plainer than that you are *blind* here? I ask you, where does he have freedom of choice? In saying, 'choose?' So then, as soon as Moses says 'choose,' it comes to pass that they *do* choose! Again, therefore, the Spirit is not necessary. And since you so

³²⁴ *Vi sententiae, consequentiae et rerum hue cogitur.*

³²⁵ Referring to the 'satis probabilis opinio;' 'sed non relinquit, quod suis viribus ascribat.' See above, Sect. 8.

³²⁶ *Alieno imperio.* 'A dominion out of himself;' so that he is no longer his own master.

³²⁷ *Ut sonant.* The sound, as opposed to the sense, or real import. [\[Biblical Hebrew, unlike modern Hebrew, does not have future or past tenses; but it does have the indicative: perfect or imperfect. – WHG\]](#)

often repeat and hammer in ³²⁸ the same things, let me also be allowed to say the same thing many times over.

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If there is freeness of choice ³²⁹ in the soul, then why has your approvable opinion said that the free will cannot will good? Can it choose *without* willing, or *against* its will? — But let us hear your simile.

It would be ridiculous to say to a man standing in a street where two ways meet, 'you see two ways; enter whichever you please,' when only one is open.

This is just what I said before about the arguments of carnal reason. She thinks that man is mocked by an impossible precept; whereas *we* say, he is admonished and excited by it, to see his own impotency. Truly then, we are in this sort of street; but only one way is open to us; or rather, no way is open. ³³⁰ But it is shown to us by the law, how impossible it is for us to choose the one — leading to good, I mean — unless God gives us his Holy Spirit. How broad and easy the other way is, if God allows us to walk in it. Without mockery, then, and with all necessary gravity, it should be said to a man standing in the street, 'enter whichever of the two you please,' if either he has a mind to appear strong in his own eyes (being infirm), or if he maintains that neither of these ways is shut against him.

The words of the law, then, are spoken not to affirm the power of the will, but to enlighten blind reason, so that she may see what a nothing her light is, and what a nothing the power of the will is.

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"By the law is the knowledge of sin," says Paul; he does not say the 'abolition,' or the 'avoidance,' of it. The principle ³³¹ and power of the law has for its essence the affording of knowledge, and that is only of sin — not the displaying or conferring of any power.

For this ³³² knowledge neither *is* power, nor *confers* power, but it instructs and shows that there is no power in that quarter, and it shows how great is the infirmity in that quarter. For what else can the knowledge of sin be, but the knowledge of our infirmity and of our wickedness? Nor does he say, 'by the law comes the knowledge of virtue, or good;' but all the law does, according to Paul, is to cause sin to be known.

This is that passage from which I drew my answer, 'that by the words of the law man is admonished and instructed what he *ought* to do, not what he *can* do;' that is, to know his sin, and not to believe that he has some power. So that, as often as you throw the words

³²⁸ *Inculces*. A figurative expression from 'treading in with the feet;' hence it is applied to those efforts by which, like the pavier ramming down his stones, we aim to drive or beat our meaning into a person's head. Erasmus not only repeats, but pursues long desultory arguments, heaping one upon another, to prove his point.

³²⁹ *Libertas eligendi*. Choice there must be, or there is no will; but that choice may be made under a wrong bias. This is properly the question of Freewill; viz.: whether the will is under such a bias or not.

³³⁰ *Imo nulla patet*. Referring to what he has said before, about God's doing everything; and our doing all we do, by necessity. So, even the way of evil is only broad and easy, 'si Deus permittat.'

³³¹ *Tota ratio et virtus legis*. *Rat.* a word of very extensive and various signification, expresses 'the nature, order, object, structure, and relations of any substance.' 'Principle' seems best to express it here, as comprehending both design and constitution. *Rat. et virt.* The law is both framed for this purpose, and effects it.

³³² I insert 'this,' because the two *ibis*, which follow, make it plain that it is not knowledge in general, but this knowledge in particular, of which he speaks.

of the law in my face, I will answer you, my Erasmus, with this saying of Paul: "By the law is the *knowledge of sin*," not power in the will. Now, gather your larger Concordances, and heap together all the imperative verbs into one chaotic pile (so they are not words of promise, but words of exaction and law), and I will quickly show you that these always intimate not what men *do*, or *can* do, but what they *ought* to do.

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Your grammar-masters, and boys in the streets, know this; that by verbs of the *imperative* mood nothing else is expressed but what *ought* to be done. What *is* done, or *may be* done, must be declared by *indicative* verbs.

How does it happen then, that you theologians, as if you had fallen into a state of second childhood, no sooner get hold of a single imperative verb, than you are foolish enough to infer an indicative; as if an act were no sooner commanded, than of necessity it becomes straightway, a thing done, or at least practicable. For how many things happen between the cup and the lip, ³³³ to prevent what you have ordered, and what was moreover quite practicable, from taking place? Such a distance is there between imperative and indicative verbs in common and most easy transactions. But, ³³⁴ when the things enjoined, instead of being as near to us as the lip is to the cup, are more distant than heaven from earth — and, moreover, *impracticable* — you suddenly make indicatives for us out of imperatives. So that, you would have the things to have been kept, done, chosen, and fulfilled, or about to be so, as soon as the word of command has been given, we indeed 'do, keep, and choose,' by our own power. ³³⁵

SECT. 21. Passages from Deu. 30, etc. considered.

In the fourth place, you adduce many like verbs of choosing, refusing, and keeping; such as, 'if you will keep,' 'if you will turn aside,' 'if you will choose,' etc. from the third ³³⁶ and from the thirtieth chapter of Deuteronomy. 'All these expressions,' you say, 'would be unseasonable,³³⁷ if man's will were not free to do good.'

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I answer, you also are very unseasonable, my Diatribe, in deriving Freewill from these verbs! For you professed to prove only desire and endeavour in your Freewill, and you adduced no passage which proves such endeavour, but instead, a string of passages which, if your consequence were valid, would assign 'a whole' to Freewill. ³³⁸ Let us here, then, again distinguish between the words adduced from Scripture, and the consequence which Diatribe has appended to them. The words adduced are imperative, and only express what ought to be done. For Moses does not say, you *have* strength or power to choose, but only says 'choose, keep, do.' He delivers commands to do, but he does not describe man's

³³³ *Inter os et offam*. 'The mouth and the cake;' but I have preferred the more common proverb.

³³⁴ *Et vos*. It would be read with more spirit in the form of a question: — 'And do you so suddenly make,' etc.?

³³⁵ Luther is abundant in reply to this passage from Deuteronomy. 1. It proves too much. 2. It is not ridiculous, if the way is supposed shut. 3. The law gives knowledge of sin. 4. Imperative verbs are not indicatives.

³³⁶ The reference to Deut. 3 appears to be incorrect. These expressions are all found in the 30th; and those like them in Deu 27, 28, 29. But chap. 3 is a mere narrative.

³³⁷ *Unseasonable: not in keeping with; inconsistent with*.

³³⁸ *Totum*, as opposed to *particula ejus reliqua*; that small remaining particle of Freewill which Erasmus professed to support and prove: his texts would make it an integer, not a fraction. See above, Sect. 4.

power of doing. Yet the consequence added by this unschooled Diatribe, ³³⁹ infers that man can therefore do these things; otherwise they would be enjoined in vain. To which the answer is, 'Madam Diatribe, you draw a bad inference, and you do not prove your consequence. It is because you are blind and lazy that you think this consequence follows, and has been proved.' These injunctions, however, are not delivered unseasonably, or in vain, but are so many lessons by which a vain and proud man may learn his own diseased state of impotency, if he tries to do what is commanded. So again, your simile is to no purpose, where you say;

'Otherwise it would be just as if you were to say to a man who is so tied and bound, that he can only stretch out his arm to the left. See! you have a cup of most excellent wine at your right hand, and a cup of poison at your left: stretch out your hand to whichever side you please.'

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I have a notion that you are mightily tickled with these similes. But all the while you do not perceive that, if your similes stand good, they prove much more than you have undertaken to prove; no, they prove what you *deny* and would have disapproved: namely, that Freewill can do everything. For, throughout your whole treatise, forgetting that you have said 'Freewill can do *nothing* without grace,' you prove that 'Freewill can do *everything* without grace,' Yes, this is what you do, in the end, by your consequences and similes. You make out that either Free will, left to herself, can do the things which are said and enjoined, or else they are idly, ridiculously, and unseasonably enjoined. However, these are but the old songs of the Pelagians, which even the Sophists have exploded,³⁴⁰ and you yourself have condemned. Meanwhile, you show by this forgetfulness and bad memory of yours, how you are both entirely ignorant of the cause, and indifferent to it. For what is more disgraceful to a rhetorician, than to continually discuss and prove things that are foreign to the point at issue; indeed, to continually harangue against both his cause and himself? ³⁴¹

SECT. 22. His Scriptures prove nothing; his additions to Scripture are too much.

I therefore affirm again, that the words of Scripture adduced by you are imperative words, and neither prove anything, nor determine anything, on the subject of human power; they only prescribe certain things to be done, and to be left undone. While your consequences (or additions) and similes prove *this* (if they prove anything): that Freewill can do everything without grace.

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This proposition, however, is not one which you have undertaken to prove, but have even denied. So that proofs of this kind are nothing but the strongest *disproofs*. For let me test now, whether it is possible to rouse Diatribe from her lethargy. Suppose I were to argue

³³⁹ Originally, "*sciolous* Diatribe": knowing superficially or imperfectly.

³⁴⁰ *Explode*: to show a theory or claim to be baseless.

³⁴¹ *Contra causam et scipsum*. Not only in opposition to the cause he was advocating, but even to his own admissions and assertions. But what a string of charges is here! — *Sciolist!* a mere smatterer in learning and knowledge. — *Pelagian!* which every would-be orthodox disclaims — *negligent, desultory, undiscerning, heartless!* quam nihil vel intelligas vel afficiaris causae!

this way: When Moses says, 'choose life, and keep the commandment,' unless a man can choose life and keep the commandment, it is ridiculous for Moses to enjoin this of man. By this argument, would I have proved that Freewill can do nothing good; or that it has endeavoured, but not of its own power? ³⁴² No, I would have proved by a pretty bold sort of comparison, ³⁴³ that either man can choose life and keep the commandment (as he is ordered to do), or else Moses is a ridiculous teacher. But who would dare to call Moses a ridiculous teacher? It follows, therefore, that man can do the things commanded of him.

This is the way in which Diatribe continually argues against her own thesis. She is engaged by it, not to maintain any such position as this, but to show a certain power of endeavouring in Freewill. However, she is so far from proving it, that she makes little mention of it in the whole series of her arguments. Indeed, she rather proves the contrary, so as to be, herself, the ridiculous speaker and arguer everywhere. ³⁴⁴

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With respect to its being ridiculous, it is according to the simile you introduced — that a man tied by the right arm is bid to stretch out his hand to the right, when he can only stretch it to the left. Would it be ridiculous, I ask, if a man who was tied by *both* hands, were to proudly maintain or ignorantly presume that he could do what he pleased on both sides of him? To bid such a man to stretch out his hand to whichever side he likes, is not with the design of laughing at his captive state, but to evince the false presumption of his own liberty and power, or to make notorious to him, his ignorance of his captivity and misery. Diatribe is always dressing up for us a man of her own invention, who either can do as he is bid, or at least knows that he cannot. But such a man is nowhere to be found. And if there were such a man, then it would indeed be true that, either impossibilities are ridiculously enjoined of him, or else the Spirit of Christ is given in vain. ³⁴⁵

But the Scripture sets before us a man, who is not only bound, wretched, captive, sick, and dead, but who adds this plague of blindness (through the agency of Satan his prince) to his other plagues; and so he thinks that he is at liberty, happy, unshackled, able, in good health, and alive. For Satan knows that if man were acquainted with his own misery, he would not be able to retain a single individual of the race in his kingdom. And that is because God could not choose but at once to pity and help him, once he had come to recognise his misery, and cried out for relief. Seeing that he is a God so greatly extolled throughout the whole Scripture, as being near to the contrite in heart, that in Isa 61.1-3, Christ declares himself to have been even sent into the world by Him, for the purpose of preaching the Gospel to the poor, and healing the broken-hearted. [Luk 4.18](#)

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³⁴² *Sine suis viribus*. He plays upon 'the approvable opinion;' which leaves aside endeavour, but does not leave it to be ascribed to Freewill's own power.

³⁴³ *Satis forti contentione*. *Cont.* is sometimes used in a rhetorical sense to express one of the parts of an oration; 'disputatio sive disceptatio,' as opposed to 'quaestio' or 'controversia;' what might properly be called 'the argumentation.' But here it is used in another rhetorical sense, to express 'contrast, comparison, or antithesis;' 'Moses' folly,' set in array against 'man's power.'

³⁴⁴ She imputed this to Luther: she would make either him or Moses absurd; the real absurdity lay in adducing arguments which either proved nothing, or proved the opposite.

³⁴⁵ If he can do what is bid, there is no need of the Spirit; if he knows he cannot, there is no longer any use for prescribing it.

So that, it is Satan's business to keep men *from* the recognition of their own misery; and to keep them *in* the presumption of their own ability to do all that is commanded. But the legislator Moses' business is the very opposite of this: HE is to lay open man's misery to him by the law so that, having hereby broken his heart, and confounded him with the knowledge of himself, he may prepare him for grace, ³⁴⁶ and send him to Christ, and so he may be saved forever. What the law does, therefore, is not ridiculous, but exceedingly serious and necessary. ³⁴⁷

Those who are now brought to understand these matters, understand at the same time, without any difficulty, that Diatribe proves absolutely nothing by her whole series of arguments; while she does nothing but get together a parcel of imperative verbs from the Scriptures, of which she knows neither the meaning nor the use. Having done so, she next adds her own consequences and carnal similes, and thus mixes up such a potent cake, ³⁴⁸ that she asserts and proves more than she had advanced, and argues against herself.

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It will not be necessary, therefore, to pursue my rapid course ³⁴⁹ through her several proofs any further, since they are all dismissed by dismissing one, as they all rest on one principle. Still, I will go on to recount some of them, that I may drown her in the very flood in which she meant to drown me. ³⁵⁰

SECT. 23. Isa. 1.19; 30.21; 45.20; 52.1-2; and some other passages considered; they prove too much; no distinction between Law and Gospel, etc.

In Isaiah 1.19 we read, "If you are willing, and will hear, you will eat the good of the land." It would have been more consistent, as Diatribe thinks, to have said, If *I* am willing; 'If *I* am unwilling;' on the supposition that the *will* is not free.

The answer to this suggestion is sufficiently manifest from what has been said above. But what congruity would there be in its being said here, 'If *I will*, you shall eat of the good of the land?' Does Diatribe, from her exceeding wisdom, imagine that the good of the land could be eaten *against* the will of God; or that it is a rare and new thing for us to receive good only if HE wills?

³⁴⁶ *Ad gratiam*. Not, what is often understood by grace, 'the gift of the Spirit;' but what grace truly is in its essence: 'the free favour of God.'

³⁴⁷ *Ridicula. .seria. . necessaria*. Ridiculous may have respect either to the *laugher*, or the *laughed at*; what we do in sport, or suffer as objects of sport. The law neither mocks nor makes a fool of herself, though her ordinances are impossible to man; she neither mocks by calling merely to expose, nor subjects herself to derision, by speaking where she has nothing to gain.

³⁴⁸ *Offam* seems to be some allusion to Cerberus. Virgil's *Aeneid* vi. 420. [In Greek mythology, Cerberus is the three-headed dog, guarding the entrance to Hades. Exiting \(as well as entering\) the underworld is accomplished by giving Cerberus a mead-soaked barley cake.](#)

³⁴⁹ *Percurrere*. Luther applies the same term to his review of Erasmus' preface, implying short and lively animadversion [\[harsh criticism\]](#) rather than grave and elaborate research. So, just afterwards, 'recensere;' 'enumeration,' or 'recital,' rather than 'investigation.'

³⁵⁰ *Obruatur copid*, seems to be some allusion to the dragon, Rev 12.15. "And the serpent cast out of his mouth water, as a flood, after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood."

So it is in Isaiah 30, ³⁵¹ "If you seek, seek; turn, and come." Diatribe says, 'To what purpose is it that we exhort those who have no power at all over themselves? Is it not as though we said to a man bound with fetters, move yourself that way?'

Rather say, to what purpose is it that you quote passages which, of themselves, prove nothing, but by adding a consequence — that is, by corrupting their meaning — ascribe everything to Freewill? Whereas, only a sort of endeavour was to be proved, and that was not ascribable to Freewill.

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I would say the same about that testimony in Isa 45.20, "Assemble yourselves, and come; turn to me, and you shall be saved: "and of that in Isa 52.1-2, "Arise, arise, shake yourself from the dust, loose the chains from off your neck." Also that in Jer 15.19: "If you will turn, I will turn you; and if you will separate the precious from the vile, you shall be as my mouth." But Malachi makes still more evident mention of the endeavour of Freewill, and of the grace which is prepared for the endeavourer. He says, "Turn to me, says the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn to you, says the Lord." ³⁵²

In these passages, our Diatribe reveals no difference at all between *law* words and *gospel* words. So truly blind and ignorant is she, that she does not see which is Law and which is Gospel. Out of the whole book of Isaiah, she does not bring a single law word, except that first one, 'If you have been willing.' All the other passages are made up of gospel words, by which the contrite and afflicted are called to take comfort from offers of grace. ³⁵³

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But Diatribe makes *law* words of them. And I ask, what good will someone do in theology, or in the Scriptures, who has not yet gotten so far as to know what the Law is, and what the Gospel is; or if he does know, disdains to observe the difference? Such a one must confound everything — heaven and hell, life and death — and he will take no pains to know any thing at all about Christ. Later I will admonish my Diatribe more copiously on this subject. Look now at those words of Jeremiah and Malachi: 'If you will turn,' 'I will turn you,' and, 'Turn to me, and I will turn to you.' Does it follow, 'Turn,' therefore you *can* turn? Does it follow, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart,' therefore you shall

³⁵¹ The reference seems to be to verse 21, where our translation has it, "And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left."

³⁵² Isa. 45.20; 52.1, 2. Jer 15.19. The reference was originally Zechariah, but it seems to properly belong to Malachi 3.7. See above, Part ii. Sect. 13. note °.

³⁵³ *Verbo gratiae oblate*. The expression, 'offers of grace,' is exceptionable, as implying freeness of choice; in direct contrariety to Luther's position and arguments. The truth is that, while he abhorred free *choice*, he liked free *offers*. I could have been glad if he had expressed his meaning more definitely; which is little else than the promises of God received in such a way that they are *generally set forth* to us in holy Scripture; that is, received as promises of free favour made to persons of a certain character; and not to individuals, *as such*. What but these are the very and legitimate stay of God's eternally foreknown, elect, predestined, and now quickened child, in the day of his tearing and smiting? Is he to hear a voice, or see a vision, or receive some providential token, personal to himself, before he presumes to call upon the name of the Lord? Are not these, "Ho, every one that thirsts;" "To this man I will look;" "Come to me, all you that travail and are heavy-laden;" "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him" — his warrant for drawing near, and his first words of consolation? But these, at last, are not offers of grace by which God throws himself, as it were, at the knees and feet of his creatures subjecting himself to a refusal; no, with full assurance that he must receive one, unless he superadds a special and distinct impulse of his own to secure acceptance — but testimonies of his own mouth, and hand, and ordinances, borne to those souls which he, in his own good time, has made ready to welcome them, that he will bind up, and heal, and own these poor destitutes, amidst the gathered remnant of his heritage.

be *able* to love him with all your heart? What is the conclusion, then, from arguments of this kind, if not that Freewill does not need the grace of God, for she can do everything by her own power? How much more properly are the words taken, just as they stand! ³⁵⁴ 'If you have been turned, I also will turn you,' that is, 'if you stop sinning, I also will stop punishing;' and if you lead a good life when you are converted, I also will do you good, and will turn your captivity and your evils. ³⁵⁵

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But it does not follow from these words, that a man can turn to God by his own power; nor do the words affirm this. They simply say, 'If you are converted,' admonishing man what he ought to be. Now, once he has known and seen this, he would seek the power which he does not have, from the source where he might gain it. ³⁵⁶ That is, if Diatribe's Leviathan (her appendage and consequence, I mean) did not get in the way, saying, 'It would be said in vain, "Turn," unless a man could turn by his own power,' What sort of a saying this is, and what it proves, has been declared abundantly.

It is the effect of stupor or lethargy to suppose that Freewill is established by those words, 'Turn,' 'If you will turn,' and the like; and not to perceive that, on the same principle, it would also be established by this saying, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart;" since the *demand* in the one case, is equivalent to the *command* ³⁵⁷ in the other. Nor is the love of God, and of all his commandments, less required than our own conversion, since the love of God is our true conversion.

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And yet no man argues for Freewill from that commandment of love; rather, all argue it from *these* words: 'If you are willing,' 'If you will hear,' 'Turn,' and the like. If it does not follow from the commandment to 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart,' that Freewill is anything, or has any power, then assuredly it does not follow from *these* words: 'If you will,' 'If you hear,' 'Turn,' and the like. These either demand less, or they demand less vehemently, than the commandment to 'Love God,' and 'Love the Lord.' ³⁵⁸

Whatever reply is therefore made to that saying, 'Love God' — forbidding us to conclude Freewill from it — the *same* reply is to be made to all other expressions of command or demand, forbidding the *same* conclusion. Namely, the command to love shows 'the

³⁵⁴ *Verba, ut posita sunt.* Without additions, such as Erasmus'.

³⁵⁵ I do not know that any reasonable objection can be made to Luther's paraphrase of Jeremiah 15.19, and Malachi (he calls him Zechariah) 3.7. But the quotation from Jeremiah seems perfectly out of place: it is a personal matter between the Lord and his Prophet, a converted man: what has this to do, then, with the question of Freewill?

³⁵⁶ *Quaerat unde possit.* I have been inclined to connect these words with the preceding sentence, by which he is admonished what he ought to be; and having understood and discovered this, he is *admonished* to seek the power which he has no place where he might get it if Diatribe were not to intervene, etc. The punctuation, however, forbids this connection, and it does not appear to be Luther's meaning. He imputes it to Diatribe's false suggestion that if man, warned that he ought to turn to God, does *not* find out his own impotency, and seek his conversion from God. But there is much more that goes to this seeking than Luther seems to include in it: under the clearest light, men will still resist conviction — and the heart to *seek*, is as much a gift, as conversion itself.

³⁵⁷ More literally, 'since the meaning of the *commander* and the *demand*er is equal on both sides.'

³⁵⁸ *Dilige Deum. Ama Dominum.* *Dil.* and *am.* are here used as of like import. Sometimes they are put in contrast, and that is done variously; *diligo* being sometimes the stronger, and sometimes the weaker term. In distinguishing them, 'amo' may be understood to denote the love of appetite; and 'diligo' the love of reason.

matter of the law' ³⁵⁹ — what we *ought* to do — but it does not show the power of the human will — what we *can* do; or rather, what we *cannot* do. The same is shown by all other expressions of demand. It is evident that even the schoolmen, with the exception of the Scotists and the Moderns, ³⁶⁰ assert that man cannot love God with his whole heart. From this it follows that neither can man fulfil any of the other commandments, since they all hang on this, as Christ testifies. [Mat 22.40](#) Thus, it remains a just conclusion, even from the testimony of the scholastic doctors, that the words of the law do not prove a power in the free will; rather, they show what we *ought* to do, and what we *cannot* do.

SECT. 24. Mal. 3.7 more particularly considered.

But our Diatribe, with still greater absurdity, not only infers an indicative sense from that saying of Zechariah, 'Turn to me,' but she maintains that it even proves a power of endeavouring in Freewill, and grace prepared for the endeavourer.

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Here at last she remembers her endeavour. And by a new art of grammar, 'to turn' signifies for her the same as 'to endeavour.' Thus the sense is, 'Turn to me,' that is, 'endeavour to turn, and I will turn to you,' that is, I will '*endeavour* to turn' to you. At last, then, she attributes endeavour even to God — intending perhaps to prepare grace for *His* endeavourings also. For if 'to turn' signifies to endeavour in *one* place; why not in *all*?

Again, in that passage of Jeremiah, 'If you separate the precious from the vile,' she maintains that not only 'endeavour,' but even 'freedom of choice,' is proved — what before she had taught us was lost, and turned into a necessity of serving sin. You see, then, that Diatribe truly possesses a free will in her handlings of Scripture, by which she compels words of one and the same form, to prove *endeavour* in one place, and *free choice* in another, just as she pleases.

But bidding adieu to such vanities, the word 'turn' properly has two uses in Scripture: a legal, and an evangelical one. In its *legal* use, it is an exacter and commander — requiring not only endeavour, but change of the whole life. Jeremiah frequently uses it this way, saying, 'Turn every one from his evil way,' 'Turn to the Lord,' where it evidently involves an exacting of all the commandments. When it is used *evangelically*, it is a word of divine promise and consolation. By this use, nothing is demanded *from* us, but the grace of God is offered *to* us. Such is that use in Psalm 126: 'When the Lord turns again the captivity of Zion,' and Psalm 116, 'Turn again, then, to your rest, O my soul!'

177 [\[long note\]](#)

And thus Zechariah contrives to dispatch both sorts of preaching (law as well as grace) in a very short compendium. It is all *law*, and the sum of the law, when he says, 'Return to me.' It is *grace* when he says, 'I will return to you.' Therefore, as far as Freewill is proved by that saying, 'Love the Lord' — or by any other saying of any particular law — just so far and no farther is it proved by this summary *law* word, 'Turn.' It is the part of a wise reader of Scripture then, to observe which are *law* words, and which are *grace* words, so that he may not jumble them all together, like the filthy Sophists and this yawning Diatribe. ^{vi}

³⁵⁹ *Forma legis*. More literally, 'the shape, mould, or image of the law;' 'what is comprehended in it.'

³⁶⁰ *Scotistis et Modernis*. See above, Part iii. Sect. 2. notes.

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SECT. 25. Eze. 18.23 considered.

For see now, how she treats that famous passage in Ezekiel 18, "As I live, says the Lord, I would not have the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live." First, 'It is so often repeated,' she says, 'in the course of this chapter — "shall turn away," "has done," "has wrought" — in respect to both good and evil. Where then are those who *deny* that man does anything?'

What an excellent consequence is here! She was going to prove desire and endeavour in Free will, but then she proves the whole act, everything done to the uttermost by Freewill. Where now are those who maintain the necessity of grace and of the Holy Spirit? For this is her ingenious way of arguing:

'Ezekiel says, If the wicked man turns away from his wickedness and does justice and judgment, he shall live. Why, then, the wicked man presently *does* so, and he *can* do so.'

Ezekiel intimates what *ought* to be done; Diatribe considers this as what is *done*, and *has been done* — again introducing a new sort of grammar by which she may teach us that it is the same thing to *owe*, as to *have* — it is the same thing to be *enacted*, as to be *performed* — the same thing to *demand*, as to *pay*.

After this, she lays hold on that sweetest of gospel words, 'I would not have the death of a sinner,' and gives this turn to it.³⁶¹ Does the holy Lord deplore that death of his people, which he works in them himself? If he would not have the death of a sinner, then truly, it is to be imputed to our *own* will if we perish. But what can you impute to a being who has no power to do anything, either good or evil?

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Pelagius also sang the same sort of song when he ascribed to Freewill not only desire and endeavour, but complete power to fulfill and do everything. For these consequences prove this power if they prove *anything*, as I said before. And therefore, they fight as stoutly, and even more so, against Diatribe herself (who denies this power in Freewill, and would prove endeavour only), as against us who deny Freewill altogether. But without dwelling on her ignorance, I will state the matter as it really is.

SECT. 26. The true meaning of Eze. 18.23 stated.

It is a gospel word, and a word of sweetest consolation to poor miserable sinners, when Ezekiel 18.23 says, "I would not have the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live, by all means." So is that of Psalm 30.5 also, "For his wrath is but for a moment, and his will towards us is life rather than death." And that of the Psalm, "How sweet is your mercy, Lord!" [Psa 109.21 DRA](#) Also, "Because I am merciful." [Jer 3.12](#) And that saying of Christ, in Matthew 11.28, "Come to me, all you who labour, and I will refresh you." Also Exo 20.6, "I show mercy to those who love me, to many thousands." Indeed, what is more than half of the Scripture but mere promises of grace, by which mercy, life, peace, and salvation are offered to men? ³⁶² And what other import do these words of

³⁶¹ *Sic versat. Vers.* implies a forced application of it; as if you were to turn a body that is already in motion, out of its natural course; or give motion to one that is at rest.

³⁶² See above, Sect. 23. note ^a.

promise have than this: "I would not have the death of a sinner?" Is it not the same thing to say, 'I am merciful,' as to say, 'I am not angry,' 'I do not wish to punish,' 'I do not wish you to die,' 'I wish to pardon you,' 'I wish to spare you?' Now, if these divine promises did not stand in the word, to raise up those whose consciences have been wounded with the sense of sin, and terrified with the fear of death and judgment, what place would there be for pardon, or for hope?

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What sinner would not despair? But, just as Freewill is not proved by other words of pity, or promise, or consolation, so neither is it proved by this, "I would not have the death of a sinner."

But our Diatribe, again confounding the distinction between law words and words of promise, makes this place from Ezekiel a law word, and expounds it thus: 'I would not have the death of a sinner; that is, I would not have that he sins mortally, or becomes a sinner guilty of death; but rather that he turn from his sin, if he has committed any, and so live.' For, if she did not expound it so, then it would not serve her purpose at all. But such an exposition entirely subverts and withdraws this most persuasive word of Ezekiel, 'I would not have the death of a sinner,' If we are determined to read and understand the Scriptures in this way, by the exercise of our own blindness, then what wonder is it if they are obscure and ambiguous? For he does not say, 'I would not have the sin of a man,' but 'I would not the death of a *sinner*.' This clearly intimates that he speaks of the punishment of sin, which the sinner is experiencing for his sin: that is, the fear of death. Yes, He raises up and consoles the sinner, now laid on this bed of affliction and despair, that he may not quench the smoking flax, or break the bruised reed, but may excite hope of pardon and salvation; that he may rather be converted (I mean, converted to salvation from the punishment of death) and live; that is, be happy, and rejoice in a quiet conscience." ³⁶³

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For this also must be observed: that the voice of the law is sounded only over those who neither feel nor acknowledge their sin (as Paul says in Rom 3.20, "By the law is the knowledge of sin"). So too, the word of grace comes only to those who, feeling their sin, are afflicted and tempted to despair. Thus it is, that in all law words, you see sin charged by showing us what we ought to do. In all words of promise, on the other hand, you see intimated the misery which sinners labour under (that is, those who are to be raised up from their dejection by them). As here, the word, 'I would not have the death of a sinner,' expressly names death and the sinner — the very evil which is felt, as well as the very man who feels it. But in this word, 'Love God with all your heart,' what is pointed out is the good we owe, not the evil we feel, that we may be brought to acknowledge how incapable we are of doing that good.

SECT. 27. Eze. 18.23 negatives Freewill, instead of proving it.

So then, nothing could have been more unaptly adduced in support of Freewill, than this passage from Ezekiel; which even fights against it most lustily. For in this, it is implied

³⁶³ His state as a sinner is a state of eternal death, the just punishment of his sin; and he has the beginning of this state in his now realizing apprehensions of it. When *converted*, he is delivered from this state of punishment; and when he *lives*, he is brought into the joy of this changed state.

how Freewill is affected, and what it is able to do when sin has been discovered, and when the matter is now to turn itself to God. It is implied in this, I say, that it could do nothing but fall into a still worse state, adding desperation and impenitence to its other sins, unless God presently comes to its succour, and recalls and raises it up ³⁶⁴ by his word of promise. For God's eagerness in promising grace to restore and raise up the sinner, is a very mighty and trustworthy argument, that Freewill of herself cannot help but fall from bad to worse— and as the Scripture says, "to the deepest hell." ³⁶⁵

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Do you think that God is so light-minded as to thus fluently pour out words of promise, when they are not necessary to our salvation — for the mere pleasure of talking? You see from this fact, then, that not only do all law words stand opposed to Freewill, but even all words of promise utterly confute it. In other words, the whole Scripture is at war with it. So that this saying, 'I would not have the death of a sinner,' has no other object, as you perceive, than that of preaching and offering divine mercy throughout the world; ³⁶⁶ which none but those who have been afflicted and harassed to death, receive with joy and gratitude. These do so, because the law has already fulfilled its office in them, by teaching the knowledge of sin; while those who have not yet experienced this office of the law, and who neither acknowledge their sin, nor feel their death, despise the mercy promised in that word. ^{vii}

183-184 [long note]

SECT. 28. How far God may be said to bewail the death He produces.

But, as to why some are touched by the law and others are not, ^{viii} so that the former take in the grace offered, and the latter despise it, this is another question, and one that is not treated by Ezekiel in this place. He speaks of God's preached and offered mercy, not of His secret and awful will, by the counsel of which he ordains whom and what sort of persons He wills to be made capable of receiving, and to become actual participants of his preached and offered mercy. This will of God is not the object of our researches, but of our reverent adoration. It is by far the most venerable secret of the divine majesty, which He keeps locked up in his own bosom, and which is much more religiously ³⁶⁷ prohibited to us, than the Corycian caves are prohibited to the countless multitude.

When Diatribe now cavillingly asks whether 'the holy Lord bewails that death of his people, which he produces in them himself? — a suggestion too absurd to be entertained,'

³⁶⁴ *Revocaret et erigeret.* *Revoc.* implies 'departure;' the soul has gone further and further off from God, through despair of mercy: *erig.* implies 'fallen,' 'thrown down,' 'prostrated' like Saul before the witch of Endor.

³⁶⁵ The Psalms abound with expressions of this sort: see especially the 38th and 88th; from the latter of which, these words appear to be a quotation. "For my life draws near to the grave" (v. 3); or, according to the older version, "to hell." (v. 2.)

³⁶⁶ See above, note ^a. The account I have given there of Luther's meaning is abundantly confirmed here. Mercy is to be preached, and what *he* calls 'offered' generally to all men; but only those in whom the law has done its office will receive it. And whom did Luther understand by these, but God's elect? *His* offer, therefore, is a nugatory offer to all but the elect; and these *must* receive it — not 'physically' must, but 'morally.'

³⁶⁷ *Religiosius.* 'By religious considerations.' — The multitude might look into the entrance; priests might enter into the penetralia; but the multitude might not go in to explore. If they did, they were filled with terrors; appalling sights confounded them. Just so, and with still more fearful apprehensions of a religious nature, we are prohibited, says Luther, from attempting to penetrate the secret of God. But the question is, where does this secret begin? Luther says, 'in the fact that some are touched by the law, and others are not.'

I answer (as I have already done) that we must argue in one way concerning God, or the will of God, insofar as His will is proclaimed to us, revealed, offered for our acceptance, and made the ground of worship; and argue in another way, concerning God insofar as he is unproclaimed, unrevealed, unoffered, and unworshipped.

185-188 [\[long note\]](#)

So far as God hides himself, and chooses to be unknown by us, we can have nothing to do with him. Here is the true application of that saying, 'What is above us, is nothing to us,' And lest anyone suppose this is *my* distinction, let him know that I follow Paul, who writes to the Thessalonians concerning Antichrist (2Thes 2.4), that "he would exalt himself above all that is proclaimed by God, and that is worshipped." ^{ix} This plainly intimates that a man might be exalted above God, so far as he is *proclaimed* and *worshipped* — that is, above that word and worship by which God is made known to us, and maintains intercourse with us. But if God is regarded *not* as He is an object of worship, and as He is proclaimed, but as He is in his own nature and majesty, then *nothing* can be exalted above Him, but everything is under His powerful hand.

God must be reserved to himself, then, so far as He is regarded in the majesty of his own nature. For in this regard, we can have nothing to do with him; nor is it in this regard that He wills to be dealt with by us. But so far as He is clothed with his word, and displayed to us by it — that word by which He has offered himself to our acceptance; that word which is his glory and beauty, and with which the Psalmist celebrates him as clothed — *so far*, and *only* so far, we transact with Him. In *this* regard, we affirm that the holy God does not bewail that death of his people which He himself *works* in them; but He bewails that death which He *finds* in his people and is taking pains to remove. For this is what the proclaimed God is about, even taking away sin and death, that we may be saved. For "He has sent his word and healed them." ³⁶⁸

189-190 [\[long note\]](#)

But the God which is hidden in the majesty of his own nature, neither bewails nor takes away death; but works life and death, and all things in all things. ^x For when acting in this character, He does not bound himself by his word, but has reserved to himself the most perfect freedom in the exercise of his dominion over all things.

But Diatribe beguiles herself through her ignorance, making no distinction between the *proclaimed* God, and the *hidden* God; that is, between the *word* of God, and God *himself*. God does many things which he has not shown us in his word.

191-193 [\[long note\]](#)

He also wills many things which he has not shown us that he wills, in his word. For instance, he does not will the death of a sinner — not according to his word, truly — but he wills it according to that inscrutable will of his. Now, our business is to look at his word, and to leave that inscrutable will of his to itself: for we must be directed in our path by

³⁶⁸ Psalm 107.20. Luther applies this healing 'to all men;' but the Psalmist declares it only of 'those who cry unto the Lord in their trouble and in particular dispensations of his hand.' — This is not all men. [\[Luther has not said 'all men', so I'm not sure what Vaughan refers to. In the next sentence, Luther admits God's sovereignty 'in all things.' Here he distinguishes those in whom God is himself the worker of their death \(presumably those who are the objects of His wrath\), and those in whom He finds death where He would not have it: these He heals \(redeems\). Luther thus affirms the condition of all men, as born into sin and death; and out of them God redeems some, who are His elect. – WHG\]](#)

that word, and not by that inscrutable will. Indeed, who could direct himself by that inscrutable and inaccessible will? It is enough for us to barely know that there is a certain inscrutable will in God.

What that will wills, why it so wills, and how far it so wills, are matters which it is altogether unlawful for us to inquire into, to wish for knowledge about, to trouble ourselves with, or to approach even with our touch. In these matters, we have only to adore and to fear. So then, it is rightly said, 'If God does not will death, we must impute it to our own will that we perish;' — rightly, I say, if you speak of the proclaimed God. For he would have all men to be saved, ¹Tim 2.4 coming, as he does, with his word of salvation to all men; and the fault is in our own will, which does not admit him; as he says, in Mat 23.37, "How often would I have gathered your children, and you would not?" But why this majesty of His does not remove this fault of our will, or change it in all men (seeing that it is not in the power of man to do so); or why he imputes this fault of his will to man, when man cannot be without it — these are questions which it is not lawful for us to ask; and which, if you were to ask them, you would never get answered. The best answer is that which Paul gives in Rom 9.20: "Who are you that replies against God?" Let these remarks suffice for this passage from Ezekiel, and let us go on to the rest. ^{xi}

SECT. 29. Exhortations, promises, etc. of Scripture, are useless.

After this, Diatribe objects that if no one has it in his power to keep what is commanded, then all the exhortations with which the Scripture so much abounds — together with those manifold promises, threatenings, expostulations, upbraidings, beseechings, blessings and cursings, and those numerous swarms of precepts — are necessarily without meaning. ³⁶⁹

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Diatribe is always forgetting the question at issue, and proving something different from what she undertook to prove. Nor does she perceive how much more strongly everything she says, is against herself than against us. For she proves from all these passages a liberty and power to keep all the commandments, by force of the inference which she suggests from the words quoted. But all the while she meant only to prove 'such a Freewill as can will nothing good without grace, together with a sort of endeavour, which is not to be ascribed however to its own powers.' I see no proof of such endeavour in any of the passages quoted. I see only a demand for those actions which *ought* to be performed. I have said this too often already; but such frequent repetition is necessary because Diatribe so often blunders upon the same string,³⁷⁰ putting off her reader with an useless profusion of words.

SECT. 30. Deu. 30.11-14 considered.

Nearly the last passage which she adduces from the Old Testament, is that of Moses in Deut. 30.11-14: "This commandment, which I command you this day, is not above you, nor far off from you, nor placed in heaven, that you might say, who of us is able to ascend up into heaven to bring it down to us, that we may hear and fulfil it? But the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it."

³⁶⁹ *Frigere necessariò. Frig.* A metaphor taken from vegetable or animal substances, which are nipped with cold. These exhortations, etc. have no warmth, no life, no power, no meaning in them, without Freewill.

³⁷⁰ 'Ut eitharoedus; Ridetur, chordâ qui semper oberrat eadem.' — Horace, Art. Poet. 355.

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Diatribes maintains that it is declared in this place, that we not only have power to do what is enjoined, but that it is downhill work to do so; that is, it is easy or at least not difficult.

Thanks to you for your immense learning! If then Moses so clearly pronounces that there is not only a *faculty* in us, but even a *facility* to keep all the commandments, then why submit to all this toil? Why have we not at once produced this passage, and asserted Freewill in a field that is without opponent? ³⁷¹ What need do we have for Christ any longer? What need of the Spirit? We have at length found a place which stops every mouth, and distinctly pronounces not only that the will is free, but that the observance of all the commandments is easy! How foolish Christ was to purchase that unnecessary Spirit for us at the price of his own out-poured blood, that it might be made easy for us to keep the commandments. It is a facility which it now seems that we possess by nature! No, let Diatribe herself recant her own words, in which she said that Freewill can will nothing good without grace; and let her now say that Freewill is of so great a virtue as not only to will good, but to keep even the greatest and all the commandments with great ease.

O, see what the result is of having a mind which feels no interest in the cause that is pleaded! See how impossible it is for this mind not to betray itself! Is there a need to confute Diatribe any longer? Who can confute her more thoroughly than she confutes herself? This, truly, is the animal which devours its own stomach. ³⁷² How true is the proverb, 'a liar ought to have a good memory!'

196

I have spoken on this passage in my commentary on Deuteronomy. ³⁷³ I shall therefore treat it concisely here, shutting out Paul from our discussion, who handles this passage with great power in Romans 10. You will perceive that nothing at all is affirmed here, nor is one single syllable uttered about facility or difficulty, about the power or the impotency of Freewill or of man, to keep or not to keep the commandment — nothing except that those who entangle the Scriptures in the net of their own consequences and fancies, must thereby render them obscure and ambiguous to themselves, in order to make what they please of them.

³⁷¹ *Libero campo*. I understand it, 'liber ab hoste. seu antagonista;' but I do not find any parallel.

³⁷² *Se ipsam comedit*. What this animal is, and whether real or fabulous; I must leave in some doubt. The lobster comes nearest to the description of which it is said, 'At the same time that they cast their shell, they also change their stomach and intestines. The animal, while it is moulting, is said to feed upon its former stomach, which wastes by degrees, and is at length replaced with a new one.' — Bingley's *Animal Biography*, vol. iii. p. 511. But the pelican seems the more probable allusion here; whose method of taking its sustenance from its pouch, might well account for the figment of its eating itself, or preying on its own stomach. The scolopendra discharges its own bowels, in order to disgorge the hook; and the scorpion, inclosed with burning coals, stings itself to death: but neither of these seems applicable here. The name *bestia* is said to be ascribed properly to wild and noxious animals, but not confined to these; while *bellua* expresses size rather than fierceness.

³⁷³ See Luther's commentary on Deuteronomy, *in loco*, where he notices and chides this unjustifiable use which the Sophists make of it. He gives another turn to the "secret things" of the preceding chapter; considering them as secrets revealed to Israel, that he may obey. Also, he understands St. Paul's application of this text as an accommodation of the original words, not a quotation according to their true sense, as spoken by Moses. But his comment will be found strongly to confirm the view which I have given of this text, in note x. Moses' words can only be fulfilled, he says, under the Gospel. Yet Moses says, "See, I have set before you this day life and death," etc. Then what is more natural, than to understand him as calling upon them to see the Gospel in their Law, and to yield a gospel obedience to that Law? — which every spiritual Israelite no doubt did.

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But now, if you have no eyes, at least turn your ears to what is spoken here, or strike your hand over the letters. ³⁷⁴ Moses says, 'it is not above you, nor placed afar off, nor seated in heaven, nor beyond the sea,' What is the meaning of 'above you'? 'afar off'? 'seated in heaven'? or 'across the sea'? Will they even make our grammar and the most common words obscure to us — till they make it impossible for us to say anything that is certain — just to affirm their claim that the Scriptures are obscure?

According to my grammar, it is not quality or quantity of human strength, but distance of place, which is meant by these words. What is expressed by 'above you' is not a certain power of the will, but a place which is above us. So the words 'afar off,' 'across the sea,' 'in heaven,' do not denote any power in man, but a place that is removed from us — upwards, to the right hand, to the left hand, backwards, or forwards. There may be those perhaps, who will laugh at my thick-headed way of speaking, when with out-stretched hands I present a sort of chewed morsel ³⁷⁵ to these full-grown gentlemen, as though they had not yet learned their A-B-C's, and teach them that syllables must be combined into words. But what can I do, when I see men hunting for darkness in the midst of such clear light, and studiously wishing to be blind; after adding up such a series of ages to us, so many geniuses, so many saints, so many martyrs, so many doctors; after vaunting this passage of Moses with such vast authority — although they do not deign to inspect the syllables of which it consists, nor to put so much of a constraint on their own thoughts as to consider for once the passage of which they boast.

198

Go *tell* us now, Diatribe, how does it come to pass that one obscure individual sees what so many public characters, and the nobles of so many ages, have *not* seen? Assuredly, this passage proves they have not been seldom blind, if but a little child had sat in judgment upon them.

Then, what does Moses mean by these most obvious and clear words, if not that he has discharged to perfection, his office as a faithful lawgiver? He has brought it to pass that there is no cause why they did not know, and have in array before them, all the commands of God — no room is left for them to urge by way of excuse, that they did not know or did not have the commandments, or must seek them from some other quarter. The effect of this would be that, if they did not keep them, the fault would be neither in the law, nor in the lawgiver, but in themselves — for they have the law; and the lawgiver has taught them. So that, there is no plea of ignorance remaining for them, but only a charge of negligence and of disobedience. He is saying,

'It is not necessary to fetch laws from heaven or from the parts beyond the seas, or from afar off; nor can you pretend either that you have not heard them, or that you do not possess them: you have them near to you, they are what you have heard by the command of God from my lips; you have understood them with your heart, and have received them

³⁷⁴ *Manibus palpa*. If you cannot see, or hear, submit to have your finger put upon each letter, that you may trace it out; as a child is taught to read.

³⁷⁵ *Praemansum porrigentem*. *Proem*. A word of doubtful authority, but well-fitted to express the first process in the art of teaching, by which the scholar eats as it were out of the master's mouth.

as read and expounded by the mouth of the Levites ³⁷⁶ who are continually in your midst. This very word and book of mine is witness. It remains only that you may do them.'

199

What is ascribed here to Freewill, I ask, save that she is required to fulfil the laws which she has? And the excuse of ignorance and lack of laws is taken away.³⁷⁷

SECT. 31. Some of the Old Testament witnesses for Freewill.

These are nearly all the texts which Diatribe adduces from the Old Testament in support of Freewill; by releasing them, ³⁷⁸ we leave none remaining which are not released as well — whether she brings more, or intends to bring more, since she can bring nothing but a parcel of imperative, or conjunctive, or optative ³⁷⁹ verbs, by which is signified not what we *can* do, or *are* doing (as I have replied to Diatribe, so often repeating the same thing), but what we *ought* to do, and what is required of us, to the end that our own impotency may become notorious to us, and the knowledge of sin be granted.

200

If these texts indeed prove anything, through the addition of consequences and similes which are the invention of human reason, they prove that Freewill possesses not only endeavour, or some small particle of desire, but an entire power and the freest ability to do *all* things ³⁸⁰ without the grace of God, and without the aid of his Holy Spirit.

So that, nothing is further from the thing proved by this whole discourse that has been trodden into us — as it has been, by continual repetitions — than the proposition which she had undertaken to prove. Namely, 'that approvable opinion, by which Freewill is determined to be so impotent, that it can will nothing good without grace; and that it is compelled to serve sin; and that it possesses endeavour, which is not to be ascribed to its own energies.' Truly, this is a monster which can at the same time do nothing by its own

³⁷⁶ *Tractandas accepisti*. In Deu 31.9-13, the ordinance is, "And Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark, the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord your God, in the place which he shall choose, you shall read this law before all Israel, in their hearing. Gather the people together," etc. etc. See also vv. 24-26. Also Jos 8.31-35. Also Neh 8.1-8. Also 2Chr 17.7-9; 30.22. — I render the expression 'ore assiduo' *continually*. But if I could have found authority for the use of the word 'assiduus,' I would rather have given it a reference to what is said in Nehemiah, "And the Levites caused the people to understand the law, etc. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." Luther is correct, then, in suggesting that the Levites (including the priests under this name) were to handle or discourse on the law to the people, and not simply to read it. And although he anticipates the injunction as given on this occasion, it had in substance been given before (see Deu 10.8-9.) at the second delivering of the Tablets.

³⁷⁷ I do not quite fall in with Luther's interpretation of this text, as I have hinted in note x of Sect. 28. and note c of Sect. 30. (Why are we to shut out Paul in our interpretation of it? Is not the Holy Ghost the best commentator upon the Holy Ghost's words?) But I do not the less resist its application in support of Freewill. The thing required is near you, what ought to be in your mouth and in your heart. Is it therefore immediately and necessarily there? and is that of our own giving and getting?

³⁷⁸ *Quibus solutis*. *Sol.* 'Quod ligatum est, a vinculis libero;' the bands of these captive texts having been loosed: they had been tied and bound in the service of Freewill.

³⁷⁹ *Optative*: indicating an option or wish.

³⁸⁰ *Totam vim*, as opposed to a fraction; *liberrimam potestatem*, 'the absolute and unrestrained use of this integral power.'

energies, and yet it possesses a power to endeavour in its own energies. And so it consists by a most manifest contradiction. ³⁸¹

SECT. 32. New Testament Scriptures for Freewill considered, beginning with Mat 23.37-39.

We come now to the New Testament, where a large force of imperative verbs is again mustered into the wretched service of Freewill. And the auxiliaries of carnal reason, such as consequences and similes, are fetched in. This is like a picture, or a dream, in which you see the Lord of the flies,³⁸² with his lances of straw and shields of hay, set in battle array against a real and well-appointed army ³⁸³ of human warriors.

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Such is the kind of warfare which the human dreams of Diatribe, carry on against troops of divine testimonies.

First, like the Achilles of the flies, she marches out that text in Mat 23.37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered your children together, and you would not?" 'If all things are done by necessity,' she says, 'might not Jerusalem have justly answered the Lord, Why consume yourself with vain tears? If you were unwilling that we listen to the Prophets, why did you send them? Why impute to us what has been done by your own will, which is our necessity?' So much for Diatribe.

My reply is this: granting for the moment, that this inference and proof of Diatribe's is good and true, what is proved by it, I ask? Is it that approvable opinion which says that Freewill cannot will good? Why, here is proved a will that is free, that is every bit whole, and is able to do everything which the Prophets have spoken! Diatribe did not take it upon herself to prove this sort of will in man. No indeed; let Diatribe herself be the respondent here, and let her answer us. If Freewill cannot will good, then why it is imputed to her that she did not hear the Prophets? Being teachers of good, why was it not possible for her to hear through her own strength? Why does Christ weep 'vain tears,' ³⁸⁴ as though they could have willed what he assuredly knew that they could *not* will? Let Diatribe deliver Christ from a charge of madness, I say, in support of that approvable opinion of hers, and immediately our opinion will be liberated from this Achilles of the flies.

202

So that this text of Matthew either proves a complete Freewill, or else it fights against Diatribe herself, as stoutly as against us, laying her prostrate with her own weapons. ³⁸⁵ I assert, as I have done before, that the secret will of God, as regarded in the majesty of his

³⁸¹ *Quae constat contradictione manif.* Its constituting elements are power and no power; which cannot subsist together: what becomes of the compound then?

³⁸² Originally "king of the flies." Luther alludes to Beelzebub in Mat 12.24, which means 'lord of the flies;' also called "prince of the demons" there. This is a double-insult to Diatribe: she is both weak and evil.

³⁸³ *Veram et justam aciem.*

³⁸⁴ Luther seems to have confounded this passage in Mat. 23 with Luke 19.41-44. "And when he had come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it." etc. It is remarkable that the words which are so closely parallel in Luke 13 were not spoken at the same time with those recorded in Mat. 23. The latter were spoken in the Temple at the close of the Lord's public ministry: the former while he was yet in Galilee.

³⁸⁵ *Suo illam jaculo.* Nothing less than a complete Freewill can repel the objection here brought by Diatribe: therefore, either there is a complete Freewill, which she denies, or all such objections have no weight at all.

own nature, is not matter of debate. ³⁸⁶ The rashness of man — which through a continual perverseness, always leaves necessary topics to attack and counter it — should be called away and withdrawn from occupying herself in scrutinizing those secrets of His majesty, which it is impossible to penetrate. ³⁸⁷ For God dwells in light which no man can approach; as Paul testifies. (1Tim 6.16) Let her rather occupy herself with the incarnate God, or (as Paul says) with Jesus the crucified: the one in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, but hidden. ³⁸⁸ He will abundantly teach her what she ought to know, and not know. It is the incarnate God then, who speaks here. *I* would, and *you* would not. The incarnate God, I say, was sent into the world for this purpose: that he might be willing, that he might speak, that he might do, that he might suffer, that he might offer ³⁸⁹ all things which are necessary for salvation, to all men.

203-206 [long note]

Although he stumbles upon many who, being either left or hardened by that secret will of His majesty, do not receive him — willing as he is, speaking, working, and offering as he does. This is just what John says, 'The light shines in darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it.' And again, 'He came to his own, and his own did not receive him.' [Joh 1.5,11](#)

Thus, it is the act of this incarnate God to weep, wail, and groan over the destruction of the wicked, while the will of Majesty purposely leaves and reprobates some, that they may perish. Nor should we inquire why he does so, but to reverence God, who is both able and willing to do such things. No one, I suppose, will cavil here, that the will of which it is said, 'how often I would,' was exhibited to the Jews even before God's incarnation. For they are charged with having slain the Prophets who lived before Christ, [Mat 23.31](#) and by so doing, with having resisted his will. Christians know that everything which was done by the Prophets, was done by them in the name of that Christ who was to come; of whom it had been promised that he would become the incarnate God. So that whatever has been offered to man by the ministers of the word, from the beginning of the world, may be rightly called the will of Christ. ^{xii}

SECT. 33. The reality of God's secret will is maintained.

But reason, who is quick-scented and saucy, will say here, 'This is an admirable refuge which you have discovered. So then, as often as you are pressed by the force of your adversary's arguments, you have but to run back to this terrible will of sovereignty, and you compel your antagonist to silence when he has become troublesome — just as the astrologers evade all questions about the motions of the whole heavens, by their invention of Epicycles.' ³⁹⁰

³⁸⁶ Luther expresses this more briefly, but obscurely: 'de secretâ, illâ voluntate majestatis non esse disputandum.'

³⁸⁷ *Scrutandis. attingere.* *Scrut.* comes nearest to our rummage: (videtur esse a scrutis, quasi sit ita in loco aliquo praetentare, et versare omnia, ut etiam scruta misceantur.) Hence it is applied to a dog hunting by the scent. It expresses the search for a thing, rather than the improper handling of the thing found. So Luther applies it here; as is plain from 'attingere:' the attaining to, or reaching the thing which was gone after.

³⁸⁸ See 1Cor 1.23; 2.2; Col 2.3. In this latter text, Luther gives the sense strictly according to the original, which our version does not: εν ω εισι... αποκροφει.

³⁸⁹ See above, Sect. 23. note ^a ([page 171](#)).

³⁹⁰ *Epicycles.* A little circle whose centre is in the circumference of a greater; or a small orb which, being fixed in the deferent of a planet, carries it round its own axis, while it is itself carried round the axis of the planet. An invention of some bungling philosophers to account for the anomalies of planetary motion.

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I answer, It is not my invention but a direction confirmed by the divine Scriptures. Thus speaks Paul in Rom 9.19: "Why does God complain then? Who resists his will? O man, who are you that contends with God?" "Does the potter not have the power?" and the rest. And before him, Isaiah said in 58.2, "For they seek me daily, and desire to know my ways, as a nation which has done righteousness. They ask of me the ordinances of justice, and desire to draw near to God." In these words, I imagine, it is abundantly shown to us that it is not lawful for man to scrutinize the will of sovereignty.³⁹¹ Besides, this the kind of question which most of all leads perverse men to *attack* that awful will; so that it is especially seasonable to exhort them to silence and reverence when we prosecute it. In other questions, where the matters treated are those which allow for an explanation, and which we are commanded to explain, I do not proceed this way.

208 [long note]

Now if a man will not yield to my admonition, but persists in scrutinizing the counsels³⁹² of that will, I let him go on and fight with God, as the giants did of old, waiting to see what sort of triumphs he carries off. And I am very sure in the meantime, that he will take nothing from our cause, and confer nothing upon his own. For it will remain fixed, that either he must prove Freewill to be capable of doing everything, or else the Scriptures which he quotes must contradict his own position. Whichever of these is the result, he lies prostrate as a conquered man, and I am found standing on my feet as the conqueror.^{xiii}

SECT. 34. Mat. 19.17 and other like passages considered.

Your second text is Mat 19.17. "If you will enter into life, keep the commandments." Diatribe asks, 'With what face could it be said, "If you will," to a man whose will is not free?' I reply to her, Does this saying of Christ's then establish that the will is free?

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Why, you meant to prove that Freewill can will nothing good, and will necessarily serve sin if grace is out of the way. With what face, then, do *you* now make it all free?

The same may be said of the words, 'If you will be perfect,' if any man will come after me,' 'whoever would save his soul,' 'if you love me,' 'if you abide in me.' — Indeed, let all the conjunctions 'if,' and all the imperative verbs, as I have said,³⁹³ be collected together to assist Diatribe, at least in the number of her quotations. — All these precepts are

³⁹¹ This text does not seem to bear on the point in hand; viz. that we should not scrutinize the personal will of God; or as he terms it, 'the will of majesty,' or sovereignty. Luther understands 'their seeking God daily, and desiring to know his ways, and asking of him the ordinances of justice; as if they not only complained of God's appointments towards them being unjust, but were prying curiously into their secret springs. But does God, speaking by his Prophet, really mean any more than that they were hypocrites and formalists, yet expected the acceptance of true and devout worshippers? Accordingly, they were answered by showing them that their fasts were not such as he had chosen, and that the worship which he accepts is the reverse of theirs. 'Ask of me the ordinances of justice,' are the only words which bear at all upon the subject; and these do not necessarily imply, or with any probability imply here, a spirit of curiousness.

³⁹² *Rationem scrutari. Rat.* More literally, *the method* of that will. 'Ratio' expresses most nearly the 'all about it.' *Scrut.* (see last Section, note P) does not necessarily denote a bad state of mind; though it is clearly so here: a mind which doubts the fact that God has such a will, questions his right to have it, and cavils at its decisions. To inquire what the word of God has recorded concerning this will with deep reverence — and to meekly, rejoicingly, submit to that record — would not be making war as the giants of old did against Jupiter.

³⁹³ See above, Sect. 20.

meaningless, ³⁹⁴ she says, if nothing is attributed to the human will. How badly that conjunction 'if' agrees with mere necessity!

I answer, if they are meaningless, it is your own fault that they are so, or rather, that they are nothing at all. You make this non-entity of them by asserting that nothing is ascribed to the human will, so long as you represent that Freewill *cannot* will good. And here, on the other hand, you represent that it *can* will all good — unless the same words are both hot and cold in the same instant. As you use them, they at once *assert* everything and *deny* everything. ³⁹⁵ Truly I am at a loss to think why an author would be pleased to say the same thing so many times over, perpetually forgetting his thesis — unless perchance, through mistrust of his cause, he had a mind to gain the victory by the size of his book, or to wear out his adversary by making it tedious and burdensome to peruse.

210

By what sort of consequence, I would ask, does it follow that *will* and *power* must at once be present to the soul, as often as it is said, 'If you will,' 'if a man wills,' 'if you are willing,' Do we not most frequently denote impotency and impossibility by such expressions, rather than the contrary? As in these examples: 'If you would equal Virgil in singing, my Maevius, you must sing other songs;' 'If you would surpass Cicero, my Scotus, you must exchange your subtleties for the most consummate eloquence;' 'If you would be compared with David, you must utter Psalms like his,' By these conditionals, it is plain that what is denoted are things which are impossible to attain by our own powers; while by a divine power all things are possible to us. Thus it is with the Scriptures also: such words declare what may be done in us by the power of God, and what we cannot do of ourselves.

Besides, if such things were said about actions that are absolutely impossible, such as those which even God would never at any time do by us, then they would be rightly called either cold or ridiculous, for being said to no purpose. But the truth is, these expressions are used not only to show the impotency of Freewill, which causes none of these things to be done by us, but they also intimate, at the same time, that all such things are *about* to be done, and are *to be* done (at some time or other), even though they are done by another's power (even God's). And this is only if we admit that in such words, there is some intimation that the things which are to be done, are *possible*. It is as if someone interpreted the words this way: 'If you are willing to keep the commandments,' that is, 'If at some time you possess a *will* to keep the commandments (though you would possess a will, not of yourself, but of God who gives it to whomever He wills to give it), then they shall preserve you.'

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Or to speak more freely, these verbs, particularly the *conjunctive* verbs, seem to be inserted this way on account of God's predestination also — as being that which we do not know — and to involve it. As if they meant to say, 'If you will,' 'If you are willing,' that is, 'If you are such in the sight of God, that He counts you worthy of this will to keep the commandments, then you shall be saved,' Each of these two things is couched under this

³⁹⁴ *Frigent*. See above, Sect. 29. note ^v.

³⁹⁵ It is you who take away all warmth and life from such passages as these, by making the will a contradiction; it can do nothing, it can do all things: these assertions destroy each other, and leave nothing as the result, unless they mean opposite things, such as 'yes,' and 'no,' at the same instant.

trope: ³⁹⁶ namely, that, on the one hand we can do nothing of ourselves; and on the other, whatever we do, God works it in us. I would speak this way to those who would not be content to have it said that only our *impotency* is expressed by these words, but who would maintain that they prove a certain *power* and *ability* to do those things which are enjoined. Thus, it would at once be true that we could do *none* of the things commanded, and could at the same time do *all* of them — *if* we were to apply impotency to our own powers, and power to the grace of God. ³⁹⁷

SECT. 35. Erasmus' objection that precepts are given, and merit is ascribed to Freewill, considered. — Erasmus inconsistent with himself.

Thirdly, Diatribe is affected by this consideration:

'Where there is such frequent mention of good and bad works,' she says, 'where there is mention of reward, I do not see how there can be a place for mere necessity. Neither nature, nor necessity, has merit.' ³⁹⁸

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Nor do *I* truly understand how there can be a place for mere necessity; except that the 'approvable opinion' asserts mere necessity in saying that Freewill can will nothing good; but here, it attributes even merit to it. Freewill has made such advances during the growth of this book, and Diatribe's disputation, that now she not only has *desire* and *endeavour* as hers (however, by a strength that is not her own); and she not only *wills* and *does* good; but she even *merits* eternal life. Because Christ says in the Mat 5.12, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for your reward is abundant in the heavens." *Your* reward; that is, *Freewill's* reward: for so Diatribe understands this text, making Christ and the Spirit to be nothing. For what need is there of Christ and the Spirit, if we have good works and merits through Freewill?

I mention this, so that we may see how common it is for men of excellent abilities to be prone to show a blindness in matters which are manifest to even a dull and uncultivated mind; and how weak an argument is drawn from human authority in divine things, where divine authority alone has weight. ³⁹⁹

SECT. 36. New Testament precepts are addressed to the converted, not to those in Freewill.

Two distinct topics must be spoken to here: first, the precepts of the New Testament; and secondly, merit. I will dispatch each of these in few words, having spoken of them rather

³⁹⁶ *Tropo*. Any figurative mode of speech, as opposed to one that is plain, simple, and straightforward, whatever the particular nature of the obliquity is — whether grammatical, as here, or rhetorical.

³⁹⁷ Luther gives three answers to these texts. 1. Erasmus is inconsistent with himself. 2. They teach human impotency. 3. They insinuate the possibility of divine help, and glance at his predestinative favour. — In some instances, doubtless, as in Matthew 19 and its parallels (Mark 10, Luke 18), a peculiar design may also be traced — the teaching of the natural man's impotency, and the hint at what God, according to his eternal purpose, will do in his people — but all these, multifarious as they are, may be resolved into, 'the Lawgiver speaks,' whose voice implies neither power in man, nor promise in God. The end is not always conviction of sin in mercy; sometimes it is "whom he will, he hardens;" but always, it is man made to show what he is, to the more perfect manifestation of God by him. See Sect. 28. notes ^{tvx}.

³⁹⁸ *Natura, necessitas*. By 'nature,' in this connection, I suppose he means an inherent, settled, constitution of things, which produces actions involuntarily: by 'necessity,' he means 'a compulsory influence' exercised on such a constitution, from without.

³⁹⁹ The inconsistency is Erasmus': his Freewill is necessity; but according to him, it is the subject of reward.

extensively on other occasions. The New Testament properly consists of promises and exhortations, just as the Old Testament properly consists of laws and threatenings.

213-214 [\[long note\]](#)

For, in the New Testament, the Gospel is preached; which is nothing else but a discourse offering the Spirit, together with grace, for that remission of sins which has been obtained for us by the crucifixion of Christ: and all of this is done gratuitously, only because the mercy of God the Father befriends us, unworthy as we are, and deserving damnation as we do, rather than anything else. Then follow exhortations, to stir up those who are already justified, and have already obtained mercy, to strenuously bring forth the fruits of that freely bestowed righteousness and of the Spirit; for acting out love in performing good works; and for bearing the cross and all other tribulations of the world with good courage. This is the sum of the entire New Testament.

Diatribes abundantly shows how entirely ignorant she is of this matter, in not knowing how to make the least differentiation between the Old and New Testaments. For she sees almost nothing in either, except laws and precepts by which men are to be conformed to good manners. What new birth is — what renewal, regeneration, and the whole work of the Spirit are — she does not see at all. This is to my utter wonder and astonishment, that a man who has laboured so long and so studiously in the Scriptures, should be so perfectly ignorant of them.

So then, this saying, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in the heavens," squares just about as well with Freewill, as light agrees with darkness. For Christ does not exhort Freewill in this, but he exhorts his Apostles to bear the tribulations of the world. They were not only in a state above Freewill, already being partakers of grace, and also just persons; but they were even established in the ministry of the word; that is, in the highest station of grace. But we are engaged in discussing *Freewill*, specifically as she subsists without grace. Freewill is instructed by laws and threatenings (that is, by the *Old Testament*) into the knowledge of herself, so that she may run to the promises that are set forth in the *New*.^{xiv}

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SECT. 37. Merit and reward may consist with necessity.

But as to merit, or a reward being proposed, what is this but a sort of promise? This does not prove that we have any power — for nothing else is expressed by it except that if a man had done this or that thing, then he would have a reward. But our question is not *how* a reward,⁴⁰⁰ or *what sort* of a reward, will be rendered to a man; but whether we can *do* those things for which a reward is rendered. This was the thing to be proved. Are these not ridiculous conclusions: The reward of the judge is proposed to all who are in the race; therefore all can run and obtain it? If Caesar conquers the Turk, then he will enjoy the kingdom of Syria: therefore Caesar *can* and *does* conquer the Turk.⁴⁰¹ If Freewill rules over sin, it shall be holy to the Lord; therefore Freewill is holy to the Lord. But I will say

⁴⁰⁰ *Quo modo*. How, in point of action; what he must do that he may be entitled.

⁴⁰¹ Consider that Constantinople fell in 1453. And by 1525, the Ottoman Empire controlled much of the western world. Their first major defeat would not be until Lepanto, in 1571. Wishing for the fruits of war, won't win the war. That's a logical fallacy of monumental proportions, as Luther strongly impresses by this comparison.

no more about these superlatively stupid and palpably absurd reasonings, except that it is most worthy of Freewill to be defended by such convoluted arguments.

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Let me rather speak to this point: that 'necessity has neither merit, nor reward.' If we speak of a necessity of *compulsion*, the point is true. If we speak of a necessity of *immutability*, it is false.⁴⁰² Who would give a reward, or impute merit, to an unwilling workman? But to those who wilfully do good or evil, even though they cannot change this will by their own power, there naturally and necessarily follows reward or punishment; as it is written, "You will render to every man according to his works." It naturally follows, if you are submerged in water, you will drown; if you swim out, you will save your life.

To be brief, in the matter of merit or reward, the inquiry is either about the *worthiness*, or about the *consequence*, of our actions.

If you look at *worthiness*, there is no such thing as merit or reward. For if Freewill can will nothing good of itself, and it only wills good *through* grace, who does not see that this *will* to do good, together with its merit or its reward, is of grace only? We are speaking, as you know, of Freewill that is *separate* from grace, and inquiring what power is proper to each. Here again, Diatribe is at variance with herself in arguing for freedom of the will from merit. She is in the same condemnation with me whom she opposes, fighting equally against herself as against me, saying that there is merit, reward, and liberty. For she asserts here, as she does above, that Freewill can will nothing good, and has undertaken to prove the sort of Freewill that *does* will good.

If you look at the *consequences* of actions, there is nothing either good or bad, which does not have its reward. And we get into mistakes for this reason: that in speaking of merits and rewards, we stir useless considerations and questions about the worth of actions — which have none — when we ought to be debating only about their consequences.

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For hell and the judgment of God await the wicked by a necessary consequence, even though they themselves neither desire, nor think of such a reward for their sins — indeed, even though they exceedingly detest and execrate it,⁴⁰³ as Peter says. In like manner, the kingdom awaits the godly, though they neither seek it, nor think of it themselves; being a possession prepared for them by their Father, not only before they were in existence, but even before the foundation of the world.

No, if the godly were doing good so that they might obtain the kingdom, they would never obtain it; they would instead belong to the community of the wicked who, with an evil and mercenary eye, "seek their own,"⁴⁰⁴ even in God. But the sons of God do good through a

⁴⁰² For this distinction, see above, Part i. Sect. 11; Sect. 25.

⁴⁰³ *Detestentur, execrentur*. For the proper meaning of detestor, see above, Part 5. Sect. 7. note ¹. It is opposed to 'obtestor,' such as calling God to witness unto evil and not unto good. '*Malum alicui imprecari, Deos testes ciendo;*' '*execrari*.' Here, however, I understand it literally, according to its derived meaning; and so, 'execrator,' which properly denotes removing out of sacred relations, or subjecting to a curse. The allusion is to 2Pet 2.10-15. "But these. . . speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption; and will receive the reward of unrighteousness." Blawfhmentev. The original text makes the reference plainer than our version.

⁴⁰⁴ "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." (Phi 2.21) Not content with seeking their own glory, etc. in their dealings with man, they seek it even from the hands of God: *He* is to do them good, not himself.

gratuitous good pleasure; not seeking any reward, but simply seeking the glory of God, and aiming to do the will of God. They are prepared to do good, even though according to an impossible supposition: there is no such thing as either the kingdom or hell-fire. I think these things are quite sure from that single saying of Christ in Mat 25.34: "Come you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom, which has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

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How do they earn that which even now is theirs, and which was prepared for them before they were born? So that we would speak more correctly if we said that the kingdom of God rather earns us for its possessors, than we earn it — thus placing merit where they place reward, and reward where they place merit. For the kingdom is not *to be* prepared, but it *has been* prepared; the children of the kingdom are *to be prepared* for it, and are not *to prepare* the kingdom. That is, the kingdom earns her children; the children do not earn the kingdom. Hell, in like manner, earns her children, and prepares them, rather than they prepare it — since Christ says, "Depart you cursed into everlasting fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels." ^{xv}

SECT. 38. Why there are promises and threatenings in Scripture.

Then, what do those declarations mean which promise the kingdom and threaten hell? What does that word 'reward' mean, being repeated so often throughout the Scriptures? "Your work has a reward," ^{1Cor 3.14} He says. "I am your exceeding great reward." ^{Gen 15.1} Again; "Who renders to every man according to his works." ^{Psa 62.12} And Paul in Rom 2.7 says, "To those who by the patience of good works seek for eternal life," and many similar sayings.

The answer is that all these sayings prove nothing but a *consequence* of reward, and by no means a *worthiness* of merit ⁴⁰⁵ — those who truly do good, do it not through a servile and mercenary disposition to *gain* eternal life, but they still seek eternal life; that is, they are in the way by which they will arrive at and obtain eternal life.

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So that, to seek eternal life, is to painfully strive, and to endeavour with urgent labour, because it tends to follow from a good life. Now, the Scriptures declare that these things will take place, and will follow from a good or evil life; in order that men may be instructed, warned, excited, or terrified. For as by the law, is the knowledge of sin, ^{Rom 3.20} and the warning of our impotency, yet is it not inferred from this law that we have any power. Even so, we are warned and taught by those promises and threatenings, what

⁴⁰⁵ *Sequelam mercedis, meriti dignitatem*. The expression seems inverted; 'worthiness of merit' is taken for 'merit which has worth in it.' The meaning clearly is this: 'reward follows as a consequence, but there is nothing of meritorious worthiness in the subject.' Luther, in what follows, overstates the matter of disinterestedness; and afterwards he virtually contradicts himself. We are not called to be insensible to the end, but we are urged to keep it in view; and why, except as a source of encouragement? This he presently affirms. What, indeed, is that phrase 'following because,' if not an admission of the same thing? The cure for servility is, "to the praise of the glory of his grace" — 'saved already' — the triumph sure' — 'Christ magnified by my body' — God does all our works in us' — 'we will do what he enables' — 'we will suffer what he appoints to us' — 'happy by the way' — 'how much more happy when in my Father's house!' — There is nothing mercenary here; but the end is neither hidden, nor undesired. See above, note ¹.

follows from that sin and impotency of ours, which the law has pointed out to us — but nothing of worthiness is ascribed by them to our merit.

Therefore, as law words stand in place of instruction and illumination, to teach us what we *ought* to do and, as the next step, what we *cannot* do — so words of reward, while they intimate what is to happen, stand in place of exhortation and threatening, to stir up, comfort, and revive the godly.⁴⁰⁶ This is that they may go on, persevere, and conquer in doing good, and enduring evil, lest they become weary or broken-hearted. Just as Paul exhorts his Corinthian converts, saying, "Quit yourselves like men," "knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."⁴⁰⁷

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Thus God revives Abraham by saying, 'I am your exceeding great reward.' It is just as if you cheered a person, by telling him that his works assuredly please God: it is the sort of consolation which the Scripture frequently uses. Nor is it a small degree of consolation for a man to know that he pleases God, even if nothing else followed from it — which is impossible, however.

SECT. 39. Reason objects to the account, but is answered 'such is the will of God.'

All that is said about hope and expectation must be referred to this consideration: that the things hoped for will certainly take place; although godly men do not hope because of the things themselves, or seek such benefits for their own sake. So again, *ungodly* men are terrified and cast down by words of threatening which announce a judgment to come, that they may cease and abstain from evil; that they may not be puffed up; and that they may not grow secure and insolent in their sins.

Now, if reason turned up her nose here and said, Why would God have these impressions made by his words, when no effect is produced by such words, and when the *will* cannot turn itself either way? Why does he not perform what he does, without taking notice of it in the word? Seeing that He can do all things *without* the word; and seeing that the will neither has more power, nor of itself performs more through hearing the word, if the Spirit is lacking to move the soul within. Nor would the will have less power, or perform less, though the word were silent, if the Spirit were granted — since it all depends on the power and work of the Holy Ghost.

My reply is that God has determined to give the Spirit *by* the word, and not *without* it, having us for his cooperators, to sound *without*, what he alone and by himself breathes *within*, just where he pleases, producing effects which he could no doubt accomplish without the word — but it is not his pleasure to do so.

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And who are we, that we should demand the reason why God wills so? It is enough for us to *know* that God wills so; and it becomes us to reverence, to love, and to adore this will,

⁴⁰⁶ *Excitantur, consolantur, eriguntur*. *Exc.* is a more general term, applicable to any who want excitement; but *erig.* applies especially to those who have fallen or been cast down, and so want raising up. How beautifully this process is described in Ezek. 34!

⁴⁰⁷ Luther quotes these words as if they were parts of the same sentence: but the one is part of 1Cor 15.58; the other of 1Cor 16.13.

putting a restraint on rash Reason. Even Christ, in Matthew 11, assigns no other cause for the Gospel being hidden from the wise and revealed to babes, than it seemed good to the Father.⁴⁰⁸ Thus he might nourish us without bread; and He has, in point of fact, given us a power of being nourished without bread, as he says in Mat 4.4, "Man is not nourished by bread alone, but by the word of God."⁴⁰⁹ Still, it pleased him to nourish us inwardly by his word, through the means of bread; and that bread is fetched into us from without.⁴¹⁰

It stands good, therefore, that merit is not proved by *reward* — in the Scriptures, at least. And again, that Freewill is not proved by *merit*; much less such a Freewill as Diatribe has undertaken to prove: one which cannot will anything good, of itself.

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For, if you were even to concede that there is such a thing as merit, and added those usual similes and consequences of Reason — such as, that commandments are given in vain; that reward is promised in vain; that threatenings are held forth in vain, *unless* there is Freewill — if anything is proved by these arguments, I say, it is that Freewill, of herself, can do everything. For, if she cannot do everything for herself, that consequence of reason retains its place. 'Therefore, it is vain to command, it is vain to promise, it is vain to hold out threatenings,' Thus Diatribe continually disputes against herself, while opposing me. The truth, meanwhile, is that God alone works both merit and reward in us, by his Spirit. But he announces and declares each of these to the whole world, by his outward word. This is in order that his own power and glory, and our impotency and ignominy, may be proclaimed even among the ungodly, the unbelieving, and the ignorant — even though none but the godly understand that word with the heart, and keep it faithfully; the rest despise it.

SECT. 40. Apology for not considering all his pretended texts separately — Absurd cavil from Mat 7.16.

And now, it would be too tiresome to repeat the several imperative verbs which Diatribe enumerates out of the New Testament; always appending her own consequences, pretending that all these expressions are vain, superfluous, meaningless, absurd, ridiculous, and nothing at all, *unless* the Will is free. I have already declared, to a high degree of nauseating repetition, what an absolute nothing is made out by such expressions as these. If they prove anything, they prove an entire Freewill.

Now, this is nothing but a complete overturning of Diatribe, who undertook to prove such a Freewill as can do nothing good, and serves sin; but really proves a Freewill which can do everything — so continually ignorant and forgetful is she of her own self. They are mere cavils then, when she argues thus:

⁴⁰⁸ Here we are reminded again of the defect of Luther's views. It is not arbitrary will, but the counselled will of God accomplishing the best end by just and necessary means, which gives occasion to this arrangement. The declaration of his truth by the word, to the self-made-impotent is necessary to the manifestation of himself, through his dealings with them. The "Even so, Father," would be enough; but he has been so kind as to show us more; and there are places and seasons where this 'more' should be brought into sight. See Sect. 28. notes ^{tvx}.

⁴⁰⁹ The original text in Deuteronomy 8.3 says, עַל־כֵּל־מִצְוָה, 'Every that proceeds,' meaning no doubt, as the Lord quotes it, 'every *word of command* which he gives.'

⁴¹⁰ Thus it is God's word which imparts to the natural bread its power of nourishing; but still he is pleased to use that bread: so the spiritual bread of the word only nourishes when he gives the word for it to do so; but still he uses that spiritual bread, when he wills to nourish.

'You shall know them by their fruits,' says the Lord: by fruits he means works. He calls these works *ours*: but they are *not* ours, if all things are performed by necessity.'

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What! Are those possessions not most rightly called ours, which it is true, we have not made ourselves, but which we have received from others? Why should those works not then be called ours, which God has given to us by the Spirit? Shall we not call Christ ours, because we have not made him, but only received him? On the other hand, if we say that we *make* all those things which are called ours, why then, we have made our own eyes for ourselves, we have made our own hands for ourselves, we have made our own feet for ourselves — unless we are forbidden to call our eyes, hands, and feet ours! Indeed, what do we have, which we have not received; as Paul says? ^{1Cor 4.7} Shall we say, then, that these possessions are either *not* ours, or they have been *made* by ourselves? But let it be, now, let it be that these fruits are called ours, *because* we have produced them — what then becomes of grace and the Spirit? For he does not say, 'by their fruits, which are in some very small degree and portion theirs, you shall know them.' ⁴¹¹ These, rather, are the ridiculous, superfluous, vain, meaningless sayings — indeed, a parcel of foolish and odious cavils — by which the sacred words of God are polluted and profaned.

SECT. 41. Luk 23.34 is *against*, not *for* Freewill.

Thus, too, that saying of Christ on the cross is sported with ⁴¹² : "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

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Here, when you expect a sentence that attaches ⁴¹³ Freewill to the testimony just adduced, she again takes herself to her consequences. 'How much more justly,' she says, 'would he have excused them by saying that they were those who did not have a free will, and could not do otherwise, even if they would!' And yet, that sort of Freewill which can will nothing good, though it is the sort of Freewill in question, is not proved by this consequence. Rather, it is that sort of Freewill which can do everything; the sort which no one contends for, and which everyone denies, except the Pelagians.

But now, when Christ expressly says that they know not what they do, does he not at the same time testify that they *cannot* will good? For, how can you will what you do not know? Surely there can be no desire for an unknown thing. What can be more stoutly affirmed *against* Freewill, than it is such a perfect nullity in itself, that it is not only incapable of willing good, but of knowing how much evil it is doing, and even what 'good' is. Is there any obscurity in any word here? 'They know not what they do.' What remains in Scripture, which may not prove Freewill, by Diatribe's suggestion, when this most clear saying of Christ affirms the contrary to her? A man might just as easily say that Freewill is proved

⁴¹¹ Erasmus argues that it is necessary to their being called ours, that they be done by our own natural powers. Then they are *wholly* done by our natural powers, for he calls them *ours* without addition or subtraction. —Then there is no Spirit and race in our good works. —Another of the 'nimis probats' [*also approved*].

⁴¹² *Luditur*. 'Ludo se, delectationis causa, exercere.' I do not know any classical authority for this passive form of the verb 'ludo.' — *Verbum*, etc. *luditur*.

⁴¹³ *Astrueret*. 'Juxtà struo,' 'propè extruo:' not *super*-structure,' but 'additional or contiguous structure.' — Luther here objects to flying off from the proof alleged, in pursuit of something more remote.

by that saying, "The earth was empty ⁴¹⁴ and void;" or, "God rested on the seventh day:" and the like. Then the Scriptures will be ambiguous and obscure indeed! These sayings would mean all things, and mean nothing, in the same moment. But such an audacious handling of the word of God argues for a mind that is signally contemptuous both towards God, and towards man — which deserves no patience at all. ⁴¹⁵

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SECT. 42. Joh 1.12 is all for grace.

So again, that saying in John 1.12, "To them he gave power to become the sons of God," she takes in this way: 'How can power be given to them, that they should become the sons of God, if there is no liberty in our will?'

This passage, also, is a cudgel ⁴¹⁶ *against* Freewill, as is nearly the whole Gospel of John; yet this is adduced in *support* of it. See, I beg you, that John is not speaking of any work of man's, whether great or small; but of the actual renewal and transmutation of the old man, who is a son of the devil; into the new man, who is a son of God. This man is simply passive (as they say), and does nothing, but is altogether a thing that is made. For John speaks of his being *made*: "to be made the sons of God." This is by a power freely given to us by God. It is not by a power of Freewill which is natural to us. ⁴¹⁷

But our Diatribe infers from this, that Freewill is of such a power as to make sons of God; or else she is prepared to conclude that this saying of John is ridiculous and meaningless. But who has ever extolled Freewill to such a height, as to give it the power of making sons of God — especially such a Freewill as can will nothing good. And this is the one which Diatribe has taken up to prove. ⁴¹⁸ But let this pass with the rest of those consequences, so often repeated, by which, if anything is proved, it is nothing but what Diatribe denies: namely, that Freewill can do everything. What John means is this: that by Christ's coming into the world, a power is given to all men through the Gospel (that Gospel by which grace is offered, and not by which work is demanded), which is magnificent in the extreme — even that power of becoming the sons of God, if they are willing to believe!

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But this 'being willing,' this 'believing in his name,' — because it is a thing which Freewill never knew, and never thought of before, it is a thing which she is yet much further from being able to attain to, by her own powers. For how could reason imagine that faith in Jesus, the son of God and of man, is *necessary*, when she does not yet comprehend, nor can she believe, that there exists a person who is at the same time both God and man — even if the whole creation were to proclaim it with an audible voice. On the contrary, she

⁴¹⁴ *Inanis*. We say, 'without form;' but Luther has it 'without substance;' having nothing in it, or upon it.

⁴¹⁵ Luther answers, 1. it is inference. 2. The text is against you. 3. Such use of Scripture is criminal.

⁴¹⁶ *Malleus*. More properly, 'a mallet;' 'fabrile instrumentum ad tundendum.' — [a club](#).

⁴¹⁷ *Vi insitâ*. *Ins.* properly, 'what is inserted as a graft;' but transferred to signify 'what is natural, innate, inherent.' 'Naivus, innatus, ingenuus.'

⁴¹⁸ *Assumsit*. Scil. ad probandum. What he elsewhere expresses by 'probandum suscepit.'

is all the more offended by such preaching, as Paul testifies in 1Cor 1.18, 23. That is how far she is from being either willing or able to believe. ⁴¹⁹

John therefore proclaims those riches of the kingdom of God, which are offered to the world by the Gospel, not by the virtues of Freewill. This intimates, at the same time, how few there are who receive them because, truly, Freewill resists the proposal. Through the dominion which Satan has over her, her power is nothing but to spurn the offer of grace, and of that Spirit ⁴²⁰ who would fulfil the law.

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So exquisite is the force of her desire and endeavour to fulfil the law! But hereafter I will show more at large what a thunderbolt this text of John's is against Freewill. Meanwhile, I am not a little indignant that passages which are so clear in their meaning, and so powerful in their opposition to Freewill, should be cited by Diatribe *in her favour*. Her dullness is such that she sees no difference between law words and words of promise. For having first of all established Freewill by law testimonies, most ridiculously, she then reaches the height of absurdity ⁴²¹ by confirming it with words of promise. This absurdity, however, is easily explained by considering with what an averse and contemptuous mind Diatribe engages in the discussion. To her, it is no matter whether grace stands or falls; whether Freewill is laid prostrate or maintains her seat — if only she may prove herself the humble servant of a conclave of tyrants, by tittering a number of vain words to excite disgust against our cause.

SECT. 43. Objections from Paul summarily dispatched.

After this we come to Paul also, the most determined enemy to Freewill, who is nevertheless compelled to establish Freewill by what he says in Rom 2.4, "Or do you despise the riches of his goodness and patience and longsuffering? Or do you not know that his goodness leads you to repentance?" How can contempt for the commandment be imputed, where the will is not free? How can God invite us to repentance, when he is the author of impenitence? How can it be that damnation is just, when the judge constrains us to the crime? ⁴²²

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I answer, let *Diatribe* look to these questions, for what are they to *me*? She has told us in her approvable opinion, that Freewill cannot will good, which compels us necessarily into the service of sin. How is it, indeed, that contempt of the commandment is imputed to her

⁴¹⁹ We have here Luther's usual, exceptionable expression about 'offers.' (See Sect. 23. note ^a); and his mention of the person of Christ suggests over again the importance of the distinction of which I remarked in Part ii. Sect. 8. note ^r. If we do not keep the divine and the human *person* of Christ distinct, but regard him simply as a person who has put another *nature*, the human *nature*, upon his former and eternal, divine nature; his whole history and the things said of him are a Babel: not so if we are brought to apprehend him as the co-equal of the Father and of the Holy Ghost acting in and by a human person which he has taken into union with himself. — The text evidently proves nothing for Freewill: it only says "as many as received him;" without saying by what power; Avheth the natural or supernatural. I do not agree with Luther, in it being the making of the old man into the new man: it is thi state of privilege and glory, into which the son of Adam and child of the devil has been brought, by that preceding process of transmutation.

⁴²⁰ See note ^f, Sect. 36.

⁴²¹ *Ineptissimè longè absurdissimè. Inept.* The weaker term; denoting properly, 'unaptness,' 'impertinence,' 'silliness;' *absurd.* 'the extreme of incongruity and extravagance.' *Ineptus* est tantum non aptus; *absurdus*, repugnans, abhorrens: itaque absurdus majUs quiddam. significat; velut qui *surdis auribus* audiri dignus est.

⁴²² Referring, no doubt, to Rom 3.5-8.

if she cannot will good, and if she has no liberty, but is under necessary bondage to sin? How is it that God invites us to repentance, when he is the author of man's impenitence — in that God deserts him or does not confer grace upon him, when man cannot will good if left alone? How is it that the damnation is just when the judge, by withdrawing his help, makes it unavoidable that the ungodly man is left to do wickedly, since he can do nothing else by his own power?

All these sayings recoil on the head of Diatribe; or if they prove anything, they prove (what I have said) that Freewill can do *everything*, in contradiction to what she has said herself, and everybody else. These consequences of reason annoy ⁴²³ Diatribe throughout all her Scripture quotations. Is it not truly ridiculous and meaningless, to attack and exact ⁴²⁴ in such vehement language, if there is not one present who can fulfil the demand? All the while, the Apostle has for his object, to lead ungodly and proud men to the knowledge of themselves, and of their own impotency, *by means of these threatenings*, so that having humbled them by the knowledge of sin, he may prepare them for grace. ⁴²⁵

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SECT. 44. Wickliff's confession is confessed.

And why do I need to recount, one by one, all the texts which are adduced from Paul's writings, when she but collects a number of imperative or conjunctive verbs, or those expressions which Paul confessed for use in exhorting Christians to the fruits of faith? ⁴²⁶ Because, by adding her own consequences, Diatribe imagines ⁴²⁷ a Freewill of such and so great a virtue that, without grace, it can do everything which Paul the exhorter prescribes. Christians, however, are not led by Freewill, but by the Spirit of God. (Rom 8.14.) Now, to be led is not to lead ourselves, but to be driven along, just as the saw or the hatchet ⁴²⁸ is driven along by the carpenter.

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And here, lest anyone doubt that Luther said such "absurd" things, Diatribe recites Wickliff's words, which I deliberately own, avowing his article ^{xvi} as I do: that 'all things are done by necessity;' that is, by the unchangeable will of God; 'and our will, though not indeed *compelled* to do evil, is incapable of doing any good by its own power'. ^{xvii}

⁴²³ [Annoy: to harm or molest, like a dog tearing at the flesh.](#)

⁴²⁴ *Invadere et exigere.* *Inv.* expresses the assault upon the person: 'in aliquem locum vado;' ingredior (et ferè cum aliquâ vi, aut impetu), aggredior, irrumpo, irruo. *Exig.* 'extrâ ago;' educo. Saepè est reposcere, flagitare, in re pecuniariâ: itemque, exigendo obtinere. — The figure is that of a bailiff seizing a man's person and demanding payment of a debt.

⁴²⁵ It is not necessary to suppose this ulterior design, neither will it extend to all the cases which the Apostle had in view; though such effect is frequently produced by the instrumentality of these Scriptures. Such appeals are among the strong manifesters of what is in man; in him as what he has made himself, not as what God made him; in him, therefore, without excuse. By such manifesters, God, as his pleasure is, both hardens and converts. In chap. ii. it is an exposure of the heart of the Jew as boasting himself against the heathen; in chap iii. it is the infidel disporting himself against the truth: whose damnation is shown to be just by the language which he uses; the language of a heart, which *has made itself vile*.

⁴²⁶ See Sect. 36. note ^f Gospel precepts, whether from the Lord's mouth, or Paul's pen, are words to the Lord's called only; showing how the saved should walk: that we, having been delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. (Luk 1.74, 75.)

⁴²⁷ *Concipit.* 'Translatè ponitur pro efformare, comprehendere, intelligere;' 'forms an idea.'

⁴²⁸ I cannot think Luther very happy in this illustration: the hatchet and the saw have no choice in the hand of the carpenter; but we are led freely, delightingly.

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He was falsely condemned by the Council of Constance ⁴²⁹ (or rather by conspiracy and sedition). Indeed, even Diatribe herself defends him in conjunction with me, asserting as she does, that Freewill can will nothing good by its own powers, and that it serves sin *necessarily* — though, in the course of her proof, she establishes the direct contrary.

⁴²⁹ We have heard of the Council of Constance already (see Part ii. Sect. 8. note ^v); it was numerous, turbulent, and long: it put down three Popes, and erected one; raved about reform, and confirmed sword-preaching — the outrages of the Teutonic knights in Poland and Prussia; where they obtained a professed subjection to the Gospel by fire and sword! — condemned a dead saint, and burnt two living ones; denied necessity, made a Sigismund blush, and did one good thing amidst all these bad ones, by setting Councils above Popes.

PART IV. LUTHER DEFENDS CERTAIN TESTIMONIES AGAINST FREEWILL.

SECTION 1. Erasmus has but two Texts to kill.

LET what has been said suffice in answer to Diatribe's first part, in which she endeavours to establish the reality of Freewill; and let us now consider her second part, in which she seeks to confute the testimonies on our side of the question: those, I mean, by which its existence is negated. You will see here what a man-raised smoke is, when it is opposed to God's thunders and lightnings!

First then, after having recited innumerable texts of Scripture in support of Freewill, as a sort of army too dreadful to encounter (so that she may give courage to the confessors and martyrs, and all the holy men and women who stand up for Freewill; and may inspire fear and trembling in all who are guilty of the sin of denying it); she pretends that the host which comes to oppose Freewill is contemptible in number, and goes on to represent that there are but two passages which stand conspicuous above the rest on this side of the argument. She has nothing in her mind but slaughter, it would seem, and making sure to accomplish it without much trouble. One of these is from Exo 9.12, "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart:" the other is from Mal 1.2-3, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

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Strange, what an odious and unprofitable discussion Paul took up, in Diatribe's judgment, when he expounded both of these at large to the Romans! In short, if the Holy Ghost were not a little knowing in rhetoric, there would be danger lest Paul's heart melt within him through this great reach of art, proclaiming such vast contempt for Freewill; and lest, absolutely despairing of his cause, he yielded the palm to Freewill before the trumpet had yet called the champions into the fray. Shortly, however, I will come up as the reserve ⁴³⁰ to these two Scriptures, and show my forces also. Yet, where the fortune of the battle is such that one man puts ten thousand to flight, ^{Jos 23.10} what need is there of forces? If one text of Scripture has conquered Freewill, her innumerable forces will be of no use to her.

SECT. 2. Kills opposing texts by resolving them into tropes, which he defends by Luther's example.

Here, therefore, Diatribe has discovered a new method of eluding the plainest texts, by choosing to understand the simplest and clearest forms of speech, as tropes. In the former instance, when pleading for Freewill, she eluded ⁴³¹ the force of all the imperative and

⁴³⁰ *Succenturiatus*. 'Succenturiati dicuntur, qui explendae centuriae gratiâ subjiciunt se ad supplementum ordinum.' Luther would consider himself as 'the leader of an army of reserve;' though such an army would be unnecessary, since the two invalidated texts would keep their ground. — *Pugnae fortuna*. Luther says here, 'more Ethnicorum' who, it is well known, ascribed everything to Fortune, erecting temples and altars to her, and accounting 'Fortunatus' ('favoured by fortune') the most illustrious title they could ascribe to their generals. But Luther well knew the God of battles; nor did he mean to ascribe their issue to any other than Him; "even the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle!"

⁴³¹ *Elusit*. It was evading the natural and legitimate interpretation of those words, when she practised with them so as to pass them off as assertives.

conjunctive law words by example, adding inferences, and superadding similes of her own invention.⁴³²

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So now, on setting out to plead against us, she turns and twists all words of divine promise and affirmation whichever way she pleases, by discovering a trope in them: so that Proteus may be inapprehensible on both sides alike.⁴³³ Indeed, she demands this for herself with great superciliousness⁴³⁴ at *our* hands; because *we* also, she pretends, are prone to make our escape from the pursuer when hard-pressed,⁴³⁵ by discovering tropes.

In that phrase, for instance, 'Stretch out your hand to whichever you will; that is, 'grace will stretch out your hand to whichever she wills.' 'Make yourself a new heart;' [Eze 18.31](#) that is, 'grace will make you a new heart,' and the like.⁴³⁶ It seems a great shame then, if Luther has leave to introduce so violent and forced an interpretation; but we may not so much as be allowed to follow the interpretations of the most approved doctors.

You see then, that our dispute here is not about the text as it is in itself;⁴³⁷ nor is it, as in former instances, about inferences and similes — but about tropes and interpretations.

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'O when will it be,' as some say, 'that we get a plain and pure text,⁴³⁸ without inferences and tropes, for and against Freewill? Has Scripture no such texts? And will the cause of Freewill be forever an undecided one — one that is not settled by any sure text, but driven like a reed by the winds — because nothing is brought forwards in debating it, except a number of tropes and inferences, produced by men mutually quarrelling with each other?'

SECT. 3. Trope and consequence, when they are to be admitted.

Let us rather judge that neither inference nor trope should be admitted into any passage of Scripture, unless an evident context,⁴³⁹ and some absurdity which, in its plain meaning, offends against one of the articles of our faith,⁴⁴⁰ constrain us to such an interpretation and inference. On the contrary, we should everywhere stick close to that simple, pure, and natural sense of words, which both the art of grammar, and the common

⁴³² *Adjectas. affictas. Adj.* 'addere,' 'adjungere:' *affict.* 'saepius est fingendo addere.'

⁴³³ *Utrobique.* In both parts of the discussion — the former, where Freewill is maintained; the latter, where its opponents are repelled. *Incomprehensibilis.* 'Uncatchable;' if there were such a word!

⁴³⁴ *Superciliousness: the trait of displaying arrogance by patronizing those considered inferior.*

⁴³⁵ *Ubi urgemur, elabi. Elab.* The primary idea is that of the snake slipping out of the hand, or water gliding secretly from its source; this is transferred to a 'silent escape from a pursuing enemy.' *Urgr.* is the state of one driven along by the goad or spear, when he can advance no further. (See Part i. Sect. 9. note ^d.) In this state, says Erasmus, they cry out "trope," "trope;" as a sort of new discovery which they have made.

⁴³⁶ *Extende manum. Facile vobis.* See above, Part iii. Sect. 6. Ezek. 18.31.

⁴³⁷ *Non de textu ipso.* Since it is not interpretation, it must refer to genuineness. It is not like Ecclesiasticus 15, where the authority of the book quoted is doubtful; or other texts which might be named, where the soundness of some particular verse or word might be disputed, though the book were authorized — but whether the acknowledged text is to be understood tropically, and whether certain proposed interpretations are admissible.

⁴³⁸ *Simplicem, purumque. Simp.* 'Free from figure.' *Pur.* 'Free from human additions.'

⁴³⁹ *Circumstantia verborum evidens.*

⁴⁴⁰ *Absurditas rei manifestae.*

use of speech as God created it in man, direct us to. ⁴⁴¹ For if any man may, at his pleasure, invent inferences and tropes for Scripture, what will all of Scripture be, but a reed shaken by the winds, or a sort of Vertumnus? ⁴⁴² Then it will indeed be true that nothing certain can be affirmed or proved, touching any article of faith, since you may quibble it away by some pretended trope. ⁴⁴³ Rather, let every trope be avoided, as the most destructive poison, which Scripture herself does not compel us to receive.

240-241 [\[long notes\]](#)

See what has befallen that great trope-master Origen ^{xviii} in expounding the Scriptures! What just occasion he affords to the calumniating Porphyry! ^{xix} Even Jerome ^{xx} thinks it of little avail to defend Origen. What has come to the Arians, through that trope of theirs, by which they make Christ a mere nuncupative God? ⁴⁴⁴ What has come to these new prophets in our day, who in expounding Christ's words, 'This is my body,' find a trope — one of them in the pronoun 'this;' another in the verb 'is;' a third in the noun 'body?' ^{xxi}

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It is the result of my observation, that of all the heresies and errors which have arisen from false expositions of Scripture, none have proceeded from understanding words in that simple sense in which they are bandied among men almost the world over; but they proceed from neglecting their simple use, and affecting tropes or inferences which are the laboured offspring of their own brain.

SECT. 4. Luther denies having used trope in his interpretation of "Stretch out" and "Make yourself."

For example; I do not remember that I ever applied such a violent sort of interpretation to the words 'Stretch out your hand to whichever you will,' so as to say, 'Grace will stretch out your hand to whichever she wills.' — 'Make yourself a new heart,' that is, 'Grace will make you a new heart,' and the like; although Diatribe maligns me in a published treatise, as having spoken thus. In fact, she is so distracted and beguiled ⁴⁴⁵ by her tropes and inferences, that she does not know what she says about anybody.

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What I really said is, when the words "stretch out your hand," etc., are taken simply, according to their real import, and exclusive of tropes and inferences, they express no more than to demand that we stretch out our hand. By this is intimated what we ought to do according to the nature of the imperative verb — as explained by grammarians, and applied in common speech.

⁴⁴¹ *Quam grammaticae... habet.* Luther had no doubt where the use of speech was derived to man (μεροπες ανθρωποι); however some heathen and demi-heathen philosophers may have made it matter of speculation: even from God who prompted its exercise when he brought the animals to Adam to see what he would call them (Gen 2.19,20); and who afterwards came down to confound that one language which he had given. (Gen 11.5-9.)

⁴⁴² [In Roman mythology, Vertumnus is the god of seasons and change.](#)

⁴⁴³ *Quod non queas aliquo tropo cavillari.* You have but to insinuate that the texts brought to prove it are figurative, and do not mean what they seem.

⁴⁴⁴ *Deum nuncupativam.* A sort of titular God; one called, but not really so. See Part ii. Sect. 8. note ^r.

⁴⁴⁵ *Distenta et illusa. Dist.* 'Distractus, duplici curâ occupatus; cui duo simul res, diversis partibus, curam injiciunt. Rectiùs à 'distineo,' quam 'distendo,' ducitur.

Diatribes, however, neglecting this simple use of the verb and dragging in her tropes and inferences by force, interprets it thus: "Stretch out your hand;" that is, 'you can stretch out your hand by your own power: "Make a new heart;" that is, 'you can make yourself a new heart. Believe in Christ;" that is, 'you can believe.' Thus, it is the same thing in her account whether words are spoken imperatively or indicatively; if not, she is prepared to represent Scripture as ridiculous and vain. Yet these interpretations, which no scholar ⁴⁴⁶ can bear, may not be called forced and far-fetched ⁴⁴⁷ when used by theologians, but they are to be welcomed, as those of the most approved doctors who have been received for ages! ⁴⁴⁸

But it is very easy for Diatribe to allow tropes and to adopt them in this text. It is no matter to her whether what is said is certain or uncertain. No, her very object is to make everything uncertain; counselling as she does, that all dogmas on Freewill should be left to themselves rather than investigated.

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It would have been enough for her, therefore, to get rid of sayings by which she feels hard-pressed, in any way she can. ⁴⁴⁹ But I — who am in earnest and not in sport, and in search of the most indubitable truth for establishing the conscience of men — must act very differently. For me, I say that it is not enough that you tell me there *may be* a trope here. The question is whether there *ought* to be and *must* be a trope here. If you have not shown me that there must necessarily be a trope here, then you have done nothing. Here stands the word of God: "I will harden Pharaoh's heart!" If you tell me it *must* be understood, or *may* be understood as, 'I will permit it to be hardened,' then what I hear you say is that it may be so understood; I hear that this trope is commonly used in popular discourse, as in, 'I have ruined you, because I did not instantly correct you when you were going astray.' But this is not the place for this sort of proof. The question is not whether such a trope is in use. It is not the question whether a person might use it in this passage of Paul's writings. The question is whether it would be *safe* for him to use it, and *certain* that he used it rightly, in this place; and whether Paul *meant* to use it. We are not inquiring about another man's use of it — the *reader's* use — but about Paul, the *author's* use of it.

What would you do with a conscience which questioned you in this way? 'Look, God the author of the book says, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." The meaning of the word *harden* is obvious and notorious. But a human reader tells me, 'to harden, in this place, means to *give occasion for hardening*, because the sinner is not instantly corrected.'

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With what authority, with what design, with what necessity, is that natural meaning of the word so tortured for me? What if my interpreting reader is mistaken? Where is it proved that this torturing of the word ought to take place here? It is dangerous, it is even

⁴⁴⁶ *Nulli grammatico ferendas. Gram.* 'ad grammaticam periens;' but this term, it seems, was especially applied to those who interpreted classical writers; such as Donatus, Festus, Polinius, Asconius and others; not to teachers of grammar: inferring from *grammatista*, which is sometimes used invariably.

⁴⁴⁷ *Affectatas.* So, in the last section, 'affectatis proprio . . . ebrotropis;' 'nimio, aut pravo, affectu et studio cupitus, . . . esitus.' 'De re majore studio et curâ conquisitâ et elabor..' Our English term 'affected,' as opposed to 'natural,' implies the same thing: what is factitious [*i.e. artificial*], and the result of that. It is not 'the design with which,' that is marked in these two passages, but 'the labour and search employed.'

⁴⁴⁸ *Has. . . . probatissimorum sunt doctorum.* The sentence is ungrammatical.

⁴⁴⁹ *Utcunque amoliri dicta. Amol.* dier. prop, de iis et magno conatu et molimine dimoventur.

impious, to torture the word of God without necessity and without authority. Will you next tutor this labouring little soul ⁴⁵⁰ with, 'Origen thought so?' Or thus: 'Cease to pry into such matters, seeing that they are curious and vain.' She will reply, 'Moses and Paul ought to have had this admonition given to them before they wrote; or rather, God himself. To what end do they distract us with curious and vain sayings?

SECT. 5. Diatribe must prove by Scripture or miracle, that the *very* passage in question is tropical.

This wretched evasion of using tropes, then, is of no service to Diatribe; but we must keep strong hold of our Proteus here, till he makes us perfectly sure that there is a trope in this identical passage, either by the clearest scripture proofs, or by evident miracles. We do not give the least belief to her merely thinking so, even if it is backed by the toil and sweat of all ages.⁴⁵¹ But I will go further, and insist that there can be no trope here, but this saying of God must be understood in its simplicity, according to the literal meaning of the words. For it is not left to our own will to make and remake words for God as we please. What would be left in all of Scripture, which does not simply return to Anaxagoras' philosophy, ⁴⁵² 'Make what you please of anything.'

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Suppose I were to say, "God created the heavens and the earth;" that is, 'He set them in order; but he did not make them out of nothing,' Or, 'He created the heavens and the earth;' that is, the angels and the devils, or the righteous and the wicked. Upon this principle, a man has but to open the book of God, and by and by he is theologian. ⁴⁵³ Let it be a settled and fixed principle, then, that when Diatribe cannot prove that there is a trope in these passages of ours, which she is refuting, ⁴⁵⁴ then she is obliged to concede to us. And the words must be understood according to their literal import, even if she were to prove that the same trope is most frequently used elsewhere, in all parts of Scripture, and also in common discourse. If this principle is admitted, then all our testimonies which Diatribe meant to confute, have been defended at once; and her confutation is found to have effected absolutely nothing, to have no power, and to be a mere nothing. When she therefore interprets that saying of Moses, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart," to mean 'My leniency in bearing with a sinner leads others, it is true, to repentance; but it would render Pharaoh more obstinate in his wickedness' — that is a pretty saying, but there is no proof

⁴⁵⁰ *Animulae*. We are reminded of the Emperor Adrian's animula vagula blandula. *Anim.* vel contemptûs, vel blanditiae ..sâ. Here, it implies 'tenderness;' a weakling soul, tenderly felt for, by the Lord and by his messengers.

⁴⁵¹ *Industriâ consentiente*. *Indust.* 'Vis ingenii quâ quippiam cogitamus, et adipiscimur. Itaque supra naturam et ingenium cogit studium, et artem, et laborem.' He refers to the 'affectas tropis' and 'affectatas interpretationes,' which he reprehended in the last section. There was much of scholastic art in cloistered industry in them; but he must have light from heaven — the Holy Ghost's testimony either in the word, or in the palpable, new-wrought miracle — before he would be satisfied that there is a trope in these words.

⁴⁵² Anaxagoras, a philosopher of Clazomenae, the preceptor of Socrates, among many other paradoxes, is said to have insisted that 'snow was black, because it is made of water.'

⁴⁵³ *Quis non... Theologus*. If a man's own whimsies, without search or proof, are to be protruded as doctrines and interpretations of Scripture, then we have but to open the book and consult our fancy, and straightway we may dub ourselves divines.

⁴⁵⁴ *Quos diluit*. *Dil.* properly 'lavando aufero, as the water washes the sides of the canal, or the heavy rain washes away the labours of the husbandman: hence it is transferred to the removal of filth from any substance; and particularly, in a forensic sense, to the purging of a charge. 'Diluere crimen est purgare refellere, criminibus respondendo et accusationes refutando.' 'Si nollem ita diluere crimen, ut dilui.' — Cic. pro Milon.

that she ought to speak this way; and not being content with a mere 'ipse dixit,' ⁴⁵⁵ we demand proof.

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So she interprets that saying of Paul's plausibly; "He has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he hardens;" that is, 'God hardens when he does not instantly chastise the sinner; he has mercy when, by afflictions, he shortly invites us to repentance.' But what proof is there of this interpretation?

So too, is that of Isaiah, "You have made us err from your ways; you have hardened our heart from fearing you." ⁴⁵⁶ What if Jerome, following Origen, interpreted it this way: 'The man is said to seduce, who does not immediately call back from error.' Who will assure us that Jerome and Origen interpret this passage rightly? And what if they do? It is our compact that we contest the matter *not* on the ground of any human teacher's authority, but on the authority of Scripture alone. Who are these Origenes and Jeromes, then, whom Diatribe throws in my face — forgetting her solemn covenant — when there are almost none of the ecclesiastical writers who handled the Scriptures more foolishly and absurdly than Origen and Jerome?

In a word, such a licentious interpretation comes to this: by a new and unheard-of sort of grammar, all distinctions are confounded. Thus, when God says, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart," you change persons and understand him to say, 'Pharaoh hardens *himself* through my leniency.' 'God hardens our heart;' that is, we harden our *own* hearts, through God deferring our punishment. "You, O Lord, have made us err;" that is, we made ourselves err through your not chastising us. Thus, 'God having mercy,' no longer signifies giving grace, or 'exercising compassion,' 'forgiving sin,' 'justifying,' or 'delivering from evil.' On the contrary, it signifies 'His inflicting evil, and punishing us.'

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You will, in the end, make out by these tropes, that God had pity on the children of Israel when he carried them away into Assyria and Babylon. For it was there that he chastised his offenders; it was there that he invited them to repentance by afflictions. On the other hand, when he brought them back and delivered them, he did not *pity*, but *hardened* them — that is, by his leniency and pity, he occasioned their being hardened. Thus, sending Christ the Saviour into the world should not be called an act of *mercy* in God, but an act of *hardening*; since by this mercy he has given men an occasion to harden themselves. On the other hand, in having laid Jerusalem waste, and having destroyed ⁴⁵⁷ the Jews to this very day, he shows mercy towards them; inasmuch as he chastises them for their sin, and invites them to repentance. In carrying his saints to heaven at the day of judgment, he will not perform an act of mercy but of induration. ⁴⁵⁸ For he will give them an opportunity to

⁴⁵⁵ [An unsupported dogmatic assertion.](#)

⁴⁵⁶ Isa 63.17. Our authorized version reads it as a question, "O Lord, why have You made us to err," etc.

⁴⁵⁷ *Perdidit*. 'Ἀπολλύω, ἀποβάλλω, destruo, everto, deperdo, Si vocem spectes, est a *per* et *do*; si notionem, a *περθω*, vasto, esse videtur.' There is a miraculous peculiarity in Israel's case as a nation: perishing, he does not perish; destroyed, he is still preserved. I therefore hesitated to render *perd.* according to its natural and proper meaning; and was disposed to adopt 'give up,' 'abandon,' 'cast off,' or 'scatter.' This would not, it seems, have been incongruous with its essential meaning. But why would Luther have used this term in preference to the others? Has their dispersion not in fact been their *destruction as a state, city, and nation*?

⁴⁵⁸ [Induration: any pathological hardening or thickening of tissue. Here, a hardening of the heart.](#)

abuse his goodness. In thrusting the wicked into hell, he will show mercy, because it will be chastising the sinner. I ask you, whoever heard of such compassions and wraths of God as these?

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Say that good men are made better by the forbearance, as well as by the severity of God. Still, when we speak of good and bad men promiscuously, these tropes will turn the mercy of God into wrath, and his wrath into mercy, by a most perverse use of speech. For they call it *wrath* when God is conferring benefits; and they call it *pity* when he is inflicting judgments. Now, if God is said to harden, when he is conferring benefits and bearing with evil; ⁴⁵⁹ and He is said to have mercy when he is afflicting and chastising, then why is he said to have hardened Pharaoh rather than the children of Israel, or even the whole world? Did he not confer benefits upon the children of Israel? Does he not confer benefits upon the whole world? Does he not bear with the wicked? Does he not send his rain on the evil and the good?

Why is he said to have had compassion on the children of Israel, rather than upon Pharaoh? Did he not afflict the children of Israel, in Egypt and in the desert? ⁴⁶⁰ I grant that some abuse God's wrath and goodness, and others rightly use it. But you define hardening as 'God's indulging the wicked with forbearance and kindness.' 'God's having compassion,' as not indulging, but visiting and cutting short. So far as God is concerned, therefore, he hardens by perpetual kindness; he shows mercy by perpetual severity. ⁴⁶¹

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SECT. 6. Erasmus' trope makes nonsense of Moses, and leaves the knot tied.

But this is the best of all, that 'God is said to harden, when he indulges sinners with forbearance, and to pity, when he visits and afflicts, inviting to repentance by severity.' What did God omit, I ask, by afflicting, chastising, and calling Pharaoh to repentance? Do we not number ten plagues as inflicted in that land? If your definition stands good — that, 'to have mercy is to immediately chastise and call the sinner' — then assuredly God had mercy on Pharaoh. Why then does God not say, 'I will have mercy on Pharaoh,' instead of saying, 'I will harden Pharaoh's heart?' For when he is in the very act of pitying him — that is, as *you* would have it, of afflicting and chastising him — he says, 'I will harden him;' that is, as *you* would have it, 'I will do him good, and bear with him.' What can be more monstrous to hear than this? What has now become of your tropes, your Origen, your Jerome, and your most approved doctors, whom the solitary individual, Luther, is rash enough to contradict? But it is the foolishness of the flesh which compels you to speak this

⁴⁵⁹ *Benefacit. tolerat. Benef.* "heaps his benefits;" *tol.* "endures with much long-suffering."

⁴⁶⁰ If God hardens by conferring benefits, why is he said to have hardened Pharaoh rather than the children of Israel? If God shows mercy by afflicting, why is he said to have had mercy on Israel in afflicting him, and not on Pharaoh?

⁴⁶¹ Luther admits that there is a different effect produced in different characters; the good profit by both good and evil; some use, and others abuse, both kindness and wrath. But the question here is, what character will we assign to God's dispensations of judgment and of mercy as falling generally upon men; upon good and evil intermixed: *cum simul de bonis et malis loquimur*? The result will be that God's mercy is anger; and his anger is mercy. — The truth is, God does harden by mercies as well as judgments; and he does soften by judgments, as well as by mercies. But both the hardening and the softening are distinct from the dispensations which are made the instrument of producing them. It is a variety in the spirit which meets with them, and upon which they act, which causes variety in the result.

way — sporting as she does with the words of God, which she cannot believe were spoken in earnest.

The text itself, therefore, as written by Moses, proves incontrovertibly that these tropes are mere inventions and of no worth in this place. And it proves something very different and far greater is meant by the words, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" — over and above the bestowal of benefits, together with affliction and correction. For we cannot deny that both these expedients were tried in Pharaoh's case, with the greatest care and pains.

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For what wrath and correction could be more urgent than that which he was called to endure, while stricken with so many signs and plagues that even Moses himself testifies the like were never seen! No, even Pharaoh himself was moved by them more than once, as though he repented — though he was not moved to purpose, ⁴⁶² nor abidingly. At the same time, what forbearance and kindness could be more abundant than that which so readily took away his plagues, so often forgave his sin, ⁴⁶³ so often restored his blessings, and so often removed his calamities? Each sort of dispensation, however, is unavailing. The Lord still says, 'I will harden Pharaoh's heart,' You see, then, that even if your hardening and your mercy (that is, your glosses and tropes) were admitted in their highest degree, use, and exemplification — such as they are exhibited to us in Pharaoh — there still remains an act of hardening; and the hardening of which *Moses* speaks must be of one sort, and what *you* are dreaming of must be another.

SECT. 7. Necessity still remains, and you do not clear God.

But since I am fighting with men of fiction and with ghosts, let me also be allowed to conjure up my ghost and imagine what is impossible: that the trope which Diatribe sees in her dream is really used in this passage. Thus I may see how she evades being compelled to affirm that we do everything by God's will alone, and by a necessity that is laid upon us; and I may also see how she excuses God from being the author ⁴⁶⁴ and blameworthy cause of our induration.

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If it is true that God is said to harden us, when he bears with us through an exercise of his leniency, and does not quickly punish us, then each of the two following principles still remains.

First, man nevertheless necessarily serves sin. For, when it has been granted that Freewill cannot will anything good (and such a Freewill is what Diatribe has undertaken to prove), it is made no better by the forbearance of a long-suffering God, but is necessarily made worse, unless through the mercy of God, the Spirit is added to it. So that, all things still happen by necessity; as it respects us.

Secondly, God seems to be as cruel in bearing with men out of leniency, as he is thought to be through *our* representation that he hardens in the exercise of that inscrutable will

⁴⁶² *Permovetur* — 'Valdè movetur;' what goes through the substance and disturbs it throughout; not merely stirs the surface and margin.

⁴⁶³ *Remittit peccatum*. So far as withdrawing present judgment may be taken as a sign of forgiveness: but was his sin blotted out? — any one of the sins which had instrumentally provoked the visitation?

⁴⁶⁴ *Autor et culpa*.

of his. ⁴⁶⁵ For, since he sees that Freewill can will nothing good, and is made worse by his leniency in bearing with us, this very leniency presents him in the cruelest form, as one who is delighted with our calamities. For he could heal them if he would; and he could avoid bearing with us if he would; or rather, he could not bear with us, unless it were his will to do so. For who could compel him to do so, against His will? If that will therefore remains, without which nothing happens in the world; and if it is granted that Freewill can will nothing good — then all that is said to excuse God, and to accuse Freewill, is said to no purpose. For Freewill is always saying,

'I cannot, and God *will* not: what can I do? Let him show me mercy, truly, by afflicting me; I am never the better for it, but must be made worse, unless he gives me the Spirit. This he does not give, which he would give, if it were his will to do so. It is certain, therefore, that he does not will to give it.' ⁴⁶⁶

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SECT. 8. Diatribe's similes of sun and rain are rejected.

Nor are the similes which she adduces at all to the purpose when she says,

'As mud is hardened by the self-same sun which melts wax; and as the cultivated ground produces fruit by means of the self-same shower from which the untilled ground sends forth thorns; even so, by the self-same forbearance of God, some are hardened and others converted.'

We do not divide Freewill into two different sorts, making one to be mud and the other wax; nor one to be cultivated ground, and the other neglected ground. But we speak of one sort of Freewill, which is equally impotent in all men, and which in these comparisons is nothing but the mud, nothing but the untilled ground, seeing that it cannot will good. Nor does Paul say that God, in his role as the potter, makes one vessel to honour and another to dishonour, out of a *different* lump of clay; but "of the SAME lump, the potter makes," etc. So that, as the mud always becomes harder, and the uncultivated ground becomes thornier, by the sun and rain severally, even so, Freewill is always made worse by the indurating mildness of the sun as well as by the liquefying violence of the rain. ⁴⁶⁷ If the definition of Freewill is one, then, and its impotency is the same in all men, then no reason can be assigned why one man's Freewill attains grace, and another man's does not — if no other cause is declared than the forbearance of an enduring God and the correction of a pitying one. For it is assumed, by a definition which makes no distinctions, that Freewill in every man is a power which can will nothing good.

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Then it will follow that neither does God elect any man, nor is there any place left for election; but man's Freewill alone elects, by accepting or rejecting forbearance and wrath. But deprive God of his wisdom and power in election, and what do you make him but a

⁴⁶⁵ *Volendo voluntate illa imperscrutabili*. See above, Part iii. Sect. 28. notes ^{t v x}.

⁴⁶⁶ Luther's drift is, 'There must be a will of God distinct from that which he has revealed for the regulation of man's conduct: what he calls the inscrutable will, or will of the hidden God. My quarrel against him is that he does not show the connection and coincidence between these two wills; and he does not show a reason for this apparently harsh conduct. See, as before.

⁴⁶⁷ *Tempestate pluviae liquefaciente*.

sort of phantom of fortune, whose nod is the rash ordainer of all things? ⁴⁶⁸ Thus, we shall at length come to this: that men are saved and damned without God's knowing it, seeing that he has not separated the saved and the damned by a determined election. Rather, bestowing on all, without distinction, first a kindness which bears with them and hardens them; and then a pity which corrects and punishes them — He has left it to men to determine whether they will be saved or damned; and God himself, meanwhile, has just stepped out, perhaps to a banquet of the Ethiopians, as Homer describes him. ⁴⁶⁹

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Aristotle also paints just such a God for us, ^{xxii} as one who sleeps, for example, and allows any who will, to use and abuse his goodness and his severity. ⁴⁷⁰ And how can reason judge otherwise of God, than Diatribe does here?

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For just as she herself snores away, and despises divine things, so she judges even of God, that in some sort he snores away; and having nothing to do with the exercise of wisdom, will, and present power ⁴⁷¹ in electing, separating, and inspiring, He has committed to men this busy and troublesome work of accepting or rejecting his forbearance and his wrath. This is what we come to, when we covet to mete out and excuse God by the counsel of human reason. Instead of reverencing the secrets of His Majesty — overwhelmed with his glory — we break in to scrutinize them. Instead of uttering one single plea in excuse for Him, we vomit forth a thousand blasphemies! We also forget ourselves meanwhile, and chatter like mad people, both against God and against ourselves in the same breath — even though our design is to speak with great wisdom, both for God and for ourselves.

You see here, in the first place, what this trope and gloss of Diatribe's makes of God. But do you not also see how vastly consistent she is with herself in it? Before, she had made Freewill equal and alike in all, by including all in one definition. But now, in the course of her disputation, she forgets her own definition, and makes one a cultivated Freewill, and another an uncultivated Freewill — setting out a diversity of Freewills according to the diversity of works, habits, and characters. There is one that can do good, another that cannot do good: and it does this by its own powers, before grace is received. By these powers of its own, she had laid it down in her definition, that Freewill could not of itself will anything good. Thus it comes to pass that, if we will not leave to the will of God alone, both the will and the power to harden, and to show mercy, and to do everything, then we must ascribe to Freewill herself, the power to do everything without grace: even though we have denied that it can do anything good without grace.

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⁴⁶⁸ *Cujus numine omnia temerè fiunt*. Chance is the God.

⁴⁶⁹ For Zeus went yesterday to Oceanus, to the blameless Ethiopians for a feast, and all the gods followed with him; but on the twelfth day he will come back again to Olympus. — *ILIAD*, A. 423-425.

⁴⁷⁰ *Correptione*. The word has occurred several times before, and I have rendered it by 'correction,' 'chastening,' 'severity.' It properly denotes hastily snatching up a substance, and is sometimes applied to the seizure of the body by disease. Hence, it is transferred to a figurative cutting short; "At that time the Lord began to cut Israel short" (2Kng 10.23); and so, to 'reprehension, chiding and chastisement' in general.

⁴⁷¹ *Sap. vol. praesentiā elig, discern, inspir. omissá*.

The simile of the sun and rain, then, has no force as to this point. A Christian will use that simile with far greater propriety, by considering the Gospel as the sun and rain (as in Psalm 19, and Hebrews 6); the cultivated ground as the elect; the uncultivated ground as the reprobate. The elect are edified and made better by the word; the reprobate are offended and made worse. Whereas Freewill, left to herself, is in all men the uncultivated ground; indeed, the kingdom of Satan.

SECT. 9. Erasmus' two causes for tropicizing are considered.

Let us also look into her reasons for imagining this trope in this place. It seems absurd, says Diatribe, that God, who is not only just but also good, should be said to have hardened a man's heart in order to manifest his own power by the man's wickedness. So she runs back to Origen, who confesses that God gave occasion for the induration, but flings the blame back upon Pharaoh. Origen has remarked, besides, that the Lord said, "For this cause *I have raised you up*:" He does not say, 'for this cause have I *made you*.' No: for Pharaoh would not have been wicked if he had been the way God made him; God beheld all his works, and they were very good. So much for Diatribe.

Absurdity, then, is one of the principal reasons for not understanding Moses' and Paul's words in their simple and literal sense. But what article of faith is violated by this absurdity, and who is offended by it? Human reason is offended. And truly, she who is blind, deaf, foolish, impious and sacrilegious in her dealings with all the words and works of God, is brought in here to be the judge of God's works and words. On the same principle, you will deny all the articles of the Christian faith; for it is the most absurd thing possible, and as Paul says, "to the Jews it is a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles, foolishness," that God should become man, the son of a virgin; that he should have been crucified; that he should be sitting at the right hand of the Father.

258 [\[long note\]](#)

It is absurd, I say, to believe such things. Let us therefore invent some tropes like those of the Arians, to prevent Christ from being God *absolutely*.⁴⁷² Let us invent some tropes like those of the Manicheans,^{xxiii} to prevent his being a real man; and let us make him out to be a sort of phantom, which glided through the virgin 'like a ray of the sun through a piece of glass,' and was crucified. A nice way of handling Scripture!

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And yet these tropes get us no further forward, and they do not serve to evade the absurdity: for it still remains absurd in the eye of reason that this just and good God should demand impossibilities of Freewill; and when Freewill cannot will good, but serves sin by necessity, that it should nevertheless impute it to her. And so long as he withholds the Spirit, God would not be a whit more kind or more merciful than if he were to harden or permit men to be hardened. Reason will again and again repeat that these are not the acts of a kind and merciful God. These things so far exceed her apprehension, and she so wants power to take even her own self captive, that she cannot believe God is good if he were to act and judge so. But setting faith aside, she demands to be able to touch and see and comprehend how it is that God is just and not cruel. Now, she would have this sort of comprehension if it were said of God, 'He hardens nobody, he damns nobody; on the

⁴⁷² *Simpliciter*, as opposed to *figuratively*. See Sect. 3. note ^q.

contrary, he pities everybody, he saves everybody;' so that hell would be destroyed, and the fear of death removed, and no future punishment would be dreaded. Hence it is, that she becomes so boisterous and so vehement ⁴⁷³ in excusing and defending the just and beneficent God.

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Faith and the Spirit, however, judge differently. They believe that God is good, even if he were to destroy all men. And of what use is it that we are wearied to death with these elaborate speculations, that we may be enabled to remove the blame of induration from God to Freewill. Let Freewill do what she can, with all her means ⁴⁷⁴ and exercising all her might, she will never furnish an example of avoiding being hardened, where God has not given his Spirit — or of earning mercy, where she has been left to her own powers. For what difference does it make, whether she is hardened or deserves to be hardened, since hardening is necessarily in her, so long as that impotency is in her, by which she cannot will good; and this is according to Diatribe herself. The absurdity is not removed by these tropes; or if it is removed, then it is removed only to make way for greater absurdities, and to ascribe all power to Freewill. Away with these useless and misleading tropes, then, and let us stick to the pure and simple word of God.

SECT. 10. That God made all things very good, is not a sufficient reason.

'The other principal reason why this trope should be received, is that the things which God has made are very good. And God does not say, I have *made you* for this very thing, but for this very thing I have *raised you up*.'

First, I answer that this was said *before* the fall of man, when the things which God had made were very good. But it quickly follows in the third chapter, how man was made evil, deserted by God, and left to himself. All men are born from this man, so corrupted, and thus are born wicked — Pharaoh among the rest.

261-264 [\[long note\]](#)

As Paul says, "We were all by nature the children of wrath, even as others." God therefore made Pharaoh wicked; that is, out of a wicked and corrupted seed. As he says in the Proverbs of Solomon, "The Lord has made all things for himself, yes, even the wicked man for the day of evil" (not indeed by creating wickedness in him, but by forming him out of an evil seed and ruling him.) It is not a just conclusion therefore, that 'God formed the wicked man, therefore he is not wicked,' For how can it be that he is not wicked, springing as he does from a wicked seed? As he says in Psalm 51, "Behold I was conceived in sins." And Job says, "Who can make clean that which has been conceived of unclean seed?" For although God does not make sin, still he does not cease to form and to multiply a nature which has been corrupted by sin, through the withdrawal of the Spirit — as if a carpenter

⁴⁷³ *Æstuat et contendit*. *Æst.*, denoting violent heat in general, is especially applied to the boiling and swelling of the sea when it ebbs and flows, or rises in surges and waves. *Contend.* expresses the full stretch of every nerve and muscle in close conflict.

⁴⁷⁴ *Toto mundo totisque viribus*. *Mundus* is properly 'the stuff of the world' — the materials of which it is constituted — and it is thus transferred to all kinds of furniture and provision, especially to 'women's dress and ornaments;' 'instrumentum ornatus muliebris.' I would not be sure that Luther does not have some allusion to Madam Diatribe's adornments here.

made statues out of rotten wood. Thus, men are made just such as their nature is, through God's creating and forming them of that nature. ^{xxiv}

Secondly, I answer that if you would have those words, "very good," understood of the works of God *after* the fall, then observe that they are not spoken of us, but of God. He does not say, man saw the things which God had made, and they were very good.

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Many things seem very good to God, and are so, which appear to us to be very bad, and are so. Thus, afflictions, calamities, errors, hell — indeed all the best works of God — are very bad and damnable in the sight of the world. What is better than Christ and the Gospel? But what more hateful to the world? How those things are then good in the sight of God, which are evil in our eyes, is a mystery known to God only, and to those who see with God's eyes; that is, those who have the Spirit. But there is no need of so subtle a strain of argumentation just yet. ⁴⁷⁵ The former answer is sufficient for the present.

SECT. 11. How God works evil in us, considered.

Perhaps it is asked, how God can be said to work evil in us; for example, to harden us, to give men up to their lusts, to tempt, and the like? Truly, we should be contented with the words of God and simply believe ⁴⁷⁶ what they affirm, since the works of God quite surpass all description. But in order to humour reason, which is another name for human folly, I am content to be silly and foolish, and if I can, try to move her at all by turning babbler.⁴⁷⁷

In the first place, even reason and Diatribe concede that God works all things in all things; and that nothing is effected or efficacious without him. He is omnipotent; and this pertains to his omnipotence, as Paul says to the Ephesians (Eph 1.21).

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Satan, then, and man having fallen from God, and being deserted by Him, cannot will good; that is, he cannot will those things which please God, or which God wills. Men are turned perpetually towards their own desires, so that they can only seek what is their own, and not His. ⁴⁷⁸ This will and nature of theirs, therefore, which is thus averse to God, still remains a something. Satan and the wicked man are not a nothing, having no nature or will, even though they have a nature which is corrupt and averse to God. This remainder of nature of which we speak, therefore, in the wicked man and in Satan — seeing it is the creation and work of God — is not less subject to omnipotence and to divine actings, than all the other creations and works of God.

Since then God moves and actuates all things in all things, it can only be that He also moves and acts in Satan and in the wicked. But He acts in them according to what they are, and what he finds them to be. That is, since they are averse to Him and wicked, and

⁴⁷⁵ *Tam acutâ disputatione*. A sharp, keen, refined distinction: something like what is ascribed to the "word of God" (Heb 4.12) "piercing even to dividing asunder the soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow." *Disp.* 'the act of disputing,' or 'the debate held.'

⁴⁷⁶ *Simpliciter credere*. 'Simply,' as opposed to arguments and investigations. Faith receives *implicitly* what God *explicitly* declares.

⁴⁷⁷ *Balbatiendo*. Properly, to 'lisp, stammer, or stutter.' There seems to be some allusion to 2Cor 11: "Would to God that you could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me." "I speak as a fool." "I speak foolishly."

⁴⁷⁸ *Self* is their idol, to the dethronement of God. Their own interests and gratification are sought, not God's. Phi 2.21.

are hurried along by this impulse of the divine omnipotence, they do only those things which are averse to him and wicked. Just as a horseman, driving a horse which is lame in one or two of his feet, drives him according to his make and power. And so the horse goes awry. But what can the horseman do? He drives the horse, such as he is, in a drove of sound horses; he makes *him* go awry, and the *others* go well; ⁴⁷⁹ it cannot be otherwise, unless the horse is cured. You see by this illustration, how it is that when God works *in* bad men and *by* bad men, evil is the result; but it cannot be that God does wickedly, even though he works evil by the agency of evil men. This is because, being good himself, He cannot do wickedly. ⁴⁸⁰

267-269 [\[long note\]](#)

But still, he uses evil instruments which cannot escape the seizure and impulse of his power. The fault that evil is done, therefore, is in the instruments, which God does not allow to remain idle; meanwhile, God himself is the impeller of them. It is just as if a carpenter were to cut badly by cutting with an axe that is 'toothed and sawed.' Hence it arises that the wicked man cannot help but go astray and commit sin continually; for being seized and urged by the power of God, he is not allowed to remain idle; but he wills, desires, and acts according to what he is. ^{xxv}

SECT. 12. How God hardens.

These are sure and settled verities *if*, in the first place, we believe that God is omnipotent; and in the second place, that the wicked man is the creature of God. But being averse to God, and left to himself without the Spirit of God, man cannot will or do good. God's omnipotence makes the wicked man unable to escape the moving and driving of God; but being necessarily subjected to God, he obeys him. Still, his corruption or aversion to God, makes him unable to be moved and dragged along according to good.

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God cannot relinquish the exercise of his omnipotence just because of the wicked man's aversion to Him; nor can the wicked man change his aversion into good will. Thus it comes to pass that, of necessity, the man errs and sins perpetually, until he is rectified by the Spirit of God. However, in all these things, Satan yet reigns in peace and keeps his palace in quietness, in subordination to this impulse of the divine omnipotence. ⁴⁸¹

After this follows the business of hardening; which is done in the following way. The wicked man is altogether occupied with himself and his own matters, as I have said (and the same is also true of Satan, his prince). He does not inquire after God, nor care for those things which are God's; but he seeks his own wealth, his own glory, his own works, his own wisdom, his own power — in short, a kingdom, of his own. And what he wants is to enjoy these things in peace. Now, if anyone resists him, or has a mind to diminish anything from these possessions, then his aversion, indignation, and rage with which he is stirred up against his adversary, are no less vehement than his desire with which he pursues these possessions. And he is just as incapable of restraining his rage, as he is of

⁴⁷⁹ Illo malè, istis benè. More literally, 'he does well with, and he does ill with.' *Azit cum* must be understood.

⁴⁸⁰ This is very much like saying, '*does* good because he *is* good, and *is* good because *he* is good.' It is too much like the 'ipse dixit' of the Pythagoreans.

⁴⁸¹ [That is, Satan does not operate independently of God's omnipotent will. – WHG](#)

restraining his desire and pursuit; and he is just as incapable of restraining his desire, as he is of putting an end to his existence. He is incapable of these, inasmuch as he is the creature of God, even though a vitiated ⁴⁸² one.

This is the history of that rage of the world against God's Gospel. That which is stronger than the creature, to conquer this quiet possessor of the palace, comes by the Gospel. It condemns those desires for glory and riches, and for his own wisdom and righteousness — in short, everything in which he confides. This same provoking of the wicked — effected by God's saying or doing something contrary to their wishes — is their hardening and burdening.

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For, though they are averse of themselves, through the very corruption of their nature, they are also turned still more out of the way, and made even worse, by being resisted and robbed *under* their averseness. Thus, when God was proceeding to snatch his usurped dominion out of the hands of wicked Pharaoh, He provoked him, and still more hardened and weighed down his heart. God did this by assailing him with the words of Moses, who threatened to take away his kingdom, and to withdraw the people from his dominion. Meanwhile, God did not give him the Spirit within, but allowed his own wicked and corrupt nature, in which Satan was reigning, to grow red hot — to boil over, to rage, and to attain its height, accompanied with a sort of vain confidence and contemptuousness.

SECT. 13. Mistakes prohibited.

Do not let anyone therefore think that God, when he is said to harden or to work evil in us (for to harden is to make evil), does so by *creating* evil in us anew, as it were. It is as if you fancied a malignant vintner who was full of mischief, to pour or mix poison in with the wine. No mischief is in his vessel; the vessel all the while does nothing itself, save that it receives or endures the malignancy of the mixer. But when many hear it said that God works both good and evil in us, and that we are subjected to the operations of God by a mere passive necessity, they seem to fancy that man is a good sort of creature, or at least he is not a bad one; and in some way such as this, he is made the subject of a bad work of God's. These persons do not sufficiently consider what a restless sort of actor God is, in all his creatures, and how he allows none of them to have a holiday. But let him who would have any understanding about such sayings, settle it thus with himself: that God works evil in us (that is, *by* us), not through any fault of *His*, but through our own faultiness.

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We being evil by nature, and God being good, He hurries us along by means of his own agency (such is the nature of his omnipotence). And being good as he is in himself, He cannot do other than to work evil by an evil instrument. However, he makes good use of it (such is his wisdom), by turning it to his own glory and our salvation. ⁴⁸³

In like manner, God finds the will of Satan evil, without creating it evil. What has become evil, through God's deserting of Satan, and through Satan's sinning — and God finding it evil — He lays hold of it in the course of his operations, and moves it wherever he will. Yet

⁴⁸² *Vitiated*: impaired; ruined in character.

⁴⁸³ The wheels of God's omnipotent providence (see Eze 1.15-21) carry the evil as well as the good along with them in their goings: and this is unto God's glory; but is it also unto salvation? — This is Luther's defective view.

this will of Satan does not cease to be evil, just because God moves it thus. Just so, David says of Shimei (2Sam 16.10), "Let him curse, for God has commanded him to curse David." How does God command him to curse? Such a malignant and wicked act! There was no external commandment of this kind to be found anywhere. David must, then, regard this consideration: that the omnipotent God speaks, and it is done; that is, He does all things by his eternal word. So then, the divine agency and omnipotence seizes hold of the will of Shimei, together with all his members — that will which was already evil, and which had previously been inflamed against David. He met Shimei at just the right moment, having deserved such a cursing — and even the good God commands this curse (that is, he speaks the word and it is done) which is poured out by a wicked and blasphemous organ. For He seizes hold of that organ, and carries it along with Him in the course of his own agency.

SECT. 14. Pharaoh's case considered.

Thus God hardens Pharaoh when he presents his words and works to his wicked and evil will, which that will *hates* — no doubt through innate faultiness and natural corruption.

273-274 [\[long note\]](#)

Now, God does not change this will inwardly, by his Spirit; but He persists in presenting and imposing His words and works. And Pharaoh, on the other hand, considering his strength, wealth and power, confides in them through the same natural depravity. It then comes to pass, on the one hand, that he is puffed up and exalted by his own fancied greatness. And on the other hand, he is rendered a proud despiser of Moses, coming to him in a lowly form, and by the plainness of the word of God. Pharaoh is first hardened thus. And then, the more that Moses urges and threatens him, the more Pharaoh is provoked and aggravated — for this evil will of his would not of itself be stirred to action, nor hardened. But since the omnipotent actor drives it along by an inevitable impulse, as He does the rest of his creatures, will it must. Add to this, that at the same time, He presents from without, that which naturally irritates and offends the will. So that Pharaoh cannot avoid being hardened, any more than he can avoid the agency of the divine omnipotence, or the aversion or malignancy of his own will. Pharaoh's hardening by God is thus completed.

He sets before his maliciousness that which, of his own nature, he hates from without. After this, he does not cease to stimulate that evil will, just as he finds it, by his own omnipotent impulse within. Meanwhile, the wickedness of his will being such, the man cannot help but hate what is contrary to himself, and to trust in his own strength. Thus he is made obstinate to such a degree that he neither hears nor has any understanding, but is hurried away under the possession of the devil, like one mad and raving. ^{xxvi}

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If this view of the case is satisfactory, I have gained my cause. We agree to explode ⁴⁸⁴ the tropes and glosses of men, and to understand the words of God literally, so that it may not be necessary to make excuses for God, nor to accuse him of injustice. When he says, I will harden Pharaoh's heart, he speaks in plain language, as if he were to say, I will cause the heart of Pharaoh to be hardened; or, it will be hardened through my doings and workings. We have heard how this is effected: by My exciting his own evil will inwardly using that

⁴⁸⁴ [Explode: to show a theory or claim to be baseless.](#)

general sort of impulse by which I move all things, so that he will go on under his own bias, and in his own course of willing — nor will I cease to stimulate him, nor can I do otherwise. At the same time, I will present him with a word and a work which that evil bias of his will run afoul of. For he can do nothing else but choose ill, while I stimulate the very substance of the evil which is in him, by virtue of my omnipotence.

Thus God was most sure, and with the greatest certainty, he pronounced that Pharaoh would be hardened. He was most sure that Pharaoh's will could neither resist the excitement of God's omnipotence, nor lay aside its own maliciousness, nor receive Moses as a friend when he presented himself to Pharaoh as an adversary. Rather, Pharaoh's will would remain evil, and he would necessarily become worse, harder, and prouder, while in pursuing his own natural bias and course, he encountered an opposition which he did not like, and which he despised through a confidence in his own powers.

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Thus, you see it confirmed here by this very assertion: that Freewill can do nothing but evil. This is because God — who neither mistakes through ignorance, nor lies through wickedness — so confidently promises the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. He is sure, truly, that an evil will can will only evil; and if a good which contravenes its own lust is proposed to it, his will can only be made worse by it. ⁴⁸⁵

SECT. 15. Impertinent questions may still be asked.

It remains therefore, that a man may ask,

'Why does God not cease from that very stimulation of his omnipotence by which the wicked man's will is stirred up to continue in its wickedness, and to grow worse?'

I answer,

'This is to desire that God cease to be God for the sake of the wicked; it to wish that his power and agency cease. In fact, it is to desire that God cease to be good, lest they be made worse.'

But why does he not at the same time change those evil wills which he excites? This pertains to the secrets of his Majesty, in which his judgments are incomprehensible. We have no business asking this question; our business is to adore these mysteries. And if flesh and blood are offended here and murmur, let them murmur. It will get no further, however. God will not be changed for these murmurs. And what if ungodly men go away scandalized in great numbers? The elect will remain, notwithstanding.

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The same answer will be given to those who ask,

'Why did he allow Adam to fall? And why does he go on to make all of us, who are infected through the same sin — when he might have kept Adam from sinning, and might either have created us from another stock, or have purged the corrupted seed first?'

⁴⁸⁵ "Let my people go that they may serve me," is a good demand; but it is directly contrary to Pharaoh's will, its course and propensity. (See the preceding note.) — Luther makes this act of God negative except as it respects God's general and particular operations in his providence. He does not change the will; he keeps his moral creature in being; he thwarts his inclinations. — What is Satan, meanwhile; and what does he do?

He is God, whose will has no cause or reason ⁴⁸⁶ which can be prescribed to it for rule and measure, seeing that it has no equal or superior, but is itself the rule of all things. If it did not have any rule or measure, nor any cause or reason, then it could no longer be the will of God. For what He wills is not right because he *ought* to will so, or ought to have willed so. On the contrary, it is right simply because He wills so; therefore, what is done must be right. Cause and reason are prescribed to the *creature's* will, but not to the *Creator's*; unless you were to set another Creator over his head. ⁴⁸⁷

SECT. 16. The trope compared with the text.

The "trope-making" Diatribe is sufficiently confuted by these considerations, I think. But let us come to the text itself, so that we may see what sort of agreement there is between herself and her text.

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It is customary with all those who elude arguments by tropes, to stoutly despise the text itself, and to make it their only labour to pick out some word and torture it with tropes, and to crucify it by the sense that they impose on it, without having the least regard to the surrounding context, or to the words which follow and precede, or to the author's scope or cause. Thus it is with Diatribe here: nothing heeding what Moses is about, or what the aim of his discourse is, she snatches this little phrase out of the text: 'I will harden' (which offends her). And she fashions it according to her own pleasure, not at all considering in the meanwhile, how it is to be brought back and inserted again into the text, and fitted in so as to square with the body of the text. This is why Scripture is not considered very clear by those most learned doctors who have had the greatest possible acceptance among men for so many ages. What wonder is it? The sun himself could not shine if such tricks were played with him. ⁴⁸⁸

But I have already shown that Pharaoh is not properly said to be hardened because he is endured by God with leniency, and not quickly punished, since he was chastened with so many plagues. If 'hardening' is to endure through divine leniency, and not to directly

⁴⁸⁶ *Nulla est causa, nec ratio.* *Cau.* is the correlative of effect; 'what gives origin to this will;' *rat.* is 'the principle, rate, method, and design of its operations;' which supposes some extrinsic standard. There is no such source or standard for God's will: no cause which produces it; no rightness which it exemplifies.

⁴⁸⁷ The defects of Luther's theology are strongly manifested in this paragraph. He has no answer to give, where a satisfactory one is at hand: God continues to move the wicked, because it is for his glory that they should go on to act, just as they are. For the same cause he ordained and brought about, or as Luther speaks, *permitted* Adam's fall. — God does not *create* wicked men. (See above, Sect. 10. note ^z.) It is strange that he should use the word 'create,' as applied to our *generation* from Adam. — 'When a thing is made up of particles which all existed before, but that very thing, so constituted of pre-existing particles, had no existence before — when it refers to a substance produced in the ordinary course of nature by an internal principle, but is set to work *by* and received *from* some external agent or cause, and it works by insensible ways which we do not perceive — *this* we call generation.' Locke's Essay, vol. i. chap. xxvi. sect. 2.

God's will is cause and reason to itself. But he has a reason for all he does; and this reason, so far as respects his acting with which we have to deal, is resolvable into self-manifestation. (See former notes.) — As to these and like questions, which Luther judges it improper to ask, the whole matter is this: Does the word of God furnish an answer to them, or not? If it does, then we are bound to entertain them and supply the true answer. How much better than to leave the caviller strong in his unanswered cavils! And what is the result? A *known* God instead of an *unknown* God; a God whom we revere, admire, and delight in, when we would otherwise only tremble and shudder before him!

⁴⁸⁸ *Artibus petitus.* *Pet.* 'made the subject of attack; whether by violence, stratagem, or supplication;' it probably alludes here to some magical incantations by which sorcerers pretended to darken the sun! — See Hor. Epod. v. xvii.

punish, then what need was there for God to so often promise that He would harden Pharaoh's heart (as a future act), when the miracles were now being performed?

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All the while, *before* these miracles and this hardening —having endured through divine leniency, and not been punished — Pharaoh was a man who had inflicted so many evils on the children of Israel in his full-blown pride, which were the offspring of his prosperity and wealth. So then, this trope does not at all fit the purpose here; since it might be applied promiscuously to all those who sin under the endurance of divine indulgence. At this rate, we might say that *all* men are hardened: since there is no man who does not commit sin; and no man *could* commit sin if he were not endured with divine indulgence. This hardening of Pharaoh is therefore something different from, and beyond that general endurance of divine leniency.⁴⁸⁹

SECT. 17. Moses' great object in such repeated testimonies of God's design and work of hardening, is to strengthen Israel.

Rather, Moses' object is not so much to announce Pharaoh's wickedness, as to affirm God's truth and mercy — that truly, the children of Israel might not mistrust the promises of God, by which he had engaged to liberate them. This deliverance being a vast thing, God forewarns them of its difficulty, so that their faith may not falter. They would thus know that all these things had been predicted, and were being accomplished through the arrangement of that very Person who gave them the promises. It is just as if he had said,

'I am delivering you, it is most true. But you will hardly believe it, for Pharaoh will make such a resistance, and will so put off the event. But do not trust in my promises a whit less. All this putting-off of his will, is effected by my workings, that I may perform more and greater miracles to confirm you in your faith, and to show my power, that you may hereafter place greater confidence in me with respect to all other things.

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This is just what Christ also does, when he promises the kingdom to his disciples at the last supper: he foretells many difficulties — his own death, and their manifold tribulations — so that when the event had taken place, they might believe in him much more from then on.⁴⁹⁰

Indeed, Moses sets this meaning very clearly before us, when he says, "But Pharaoh shall not let you go, so that many signs may be wrought in Egypt." And again: "To this end have I stirred you up, that I might show in you my power, and that my name might be declared in all the earth."⁴⁹¹ You see here, that Pharaoh is hardened for this very purpose: that he may resist God, and may put off the redemption of Israel, in order to make an occasion for showing many signs, and for declaring the power of God. And it is to this end: that he

⁴⁸⁹ The word *lenitas*, which occurs so frequently in this passage, properly denotes 'softness,' 'gentleness,' 'kindness,' as opposed to 'roughness,' 'harshness,' 'severity;' and it seems most aptly to express that forbearance or indulgence with which the Lord God suffers long, and is kind.

⁴⁹⁰ "Now I tell you before it comes (*Judas' treachery*), so that when it has come to pass, you may believe that I am He." "And now I have told you before it came to pass (*his going to the Father*), so that when it has come to pass, you might believe." "But these things I have told you (*their own persecutions*), so that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them." (John 13.19; 14.29; 16.4)

⁴⁹¹ Exo 7.4; 11.9.

may be spoken of, and believed in, throughout the earth. What else is this, but that all these things are spoken and done to confirm faith, and to comfort the weak, that they may freely trust in God from then on, as the true, faithful, powerful and merciful One? It is as if to say to his little ones, in the softest words, 'Do not be terrified by Pharaoh's hardness of heart: I am the worker of that very hardness also, and I hold it in my own hands. I who am your deliverer will use it with no other effect, than it will cause me to work many signs, and to declare my greatness, to the end that you may believe in me.'⁴⁹²

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Hence we have that saying which Moses repeats after nearly every plague, "And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, that he did not let the people go, as the Lord had spoken." What is this saying, "As the Lord had spoken," if not that God might be seen to be true, who had declared beforehand that Pharaoh would be hardened? If there had been any vertibility here,⁴⁹³ any freeness of will in Pharaoh, such that he had power to incline towards either side, God could not have foretold his induration with such certainty. But since the Promiser here is one who can neither be mistaken, nor tell a lie, it was necessarily and most assuredly to come to pass, that Pharaoh should be hardened. And this could not be, unless the induration were altogether outside the limits of man's power, and stood only in the power of God. This is just as I described it above: to wit, either God was certain that He would not omit the general exercise of his omnipotence in the person of Pharaoh, or because of Pharaoh, seeing that it is what he cannot even omit.⁴⁹⁴

Furthermore, he was equally sure that the will of Pharaoh, naturally wicked and averse to Him, could not consent to the word and work of God which was contrary to it.

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So that, though the impulse to will was preserved inwardly in Pharaoh by God's omnipotence, and a contradictory word and work of God was outwardly thrown to meet it,⁴⁹⁵ nothing else could be the result, but a stumbling and a hardening of the heart in Pharaoh. For if God had omitted the acting of his omnipotence in Pharaoh at the moment when he threw the contradictory message of Moses into his path, and if Pharaoh's will be supposed to have acted by itself alone, by its own power, then possibly there might have been ground for questioning to which of the two sides it would have inclined itself. But now, he is driven and hurried along to an act of willing. No violence is done to his will, it is true, because he is not forced against his will; but a natural operation of God hurries him along to a natural acting of his will, such as it is, and that is a *bad* one. It then follows

⁴⁹² Luther circumscribes the design. Doubtless, God would comfort and encourage his people by these acts and predictions: but self-manifestation was His one ultimate object; and in order for this: confounding his enemies, and rendering them yet more inexcusable, as well as emboldening his beloved ones. Was there not "also a manifestation of what human nature is, hereby made in his own people? Did they *all* believe, after all these signs? Where did those hankerings after Egypt come from? What about, "It would have been better for us to have served the Egyptians?" The whole is resolvable into that great first principle, 'God showing what he is, by his dealings with the human nature as exhibited both in the elect and in the reprobate — in his friends and in his enemies.' But what a maze, or rather what a mass of inconsistency this history would be, and not only this history, but the whole Bible, without that principle?

⁴⁹³ *Vertible*: Able to turn or to be turned; changeable.

⁴⁹⁴ Here, *omit* means "fail to do," as opposed to "leave out".

⁴⁹⁵ *Occursu objecto*. It is contrived that this word and work of God should come into contact with the edge of the will, excited into action by omnipotency, through an act like that of throwing a bone to a dog, or casting a stumbling-block in the path of a traveller

that he cannot help but run afoul ⁴⁹⁶ of the word, and by so doing he is hardened. Thus, we see that this text fights manfully against Freewill, inasmuch as God who promises cannot lie; and if He does not lie, then Pharaoh's heart cannot help but be hardened.

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SECT. 18. Paul's reference to this passage in Romans 9. Diatribe is hard put to it, and obliged to yield.

But let us look at Paul also, who in Romans 9 adopts this passage from Moses. How sadly Diatribe is tormented here. She twists herself into all manner of shapes, to avoid losing Freewill. Once she says it is the necessity of a *consequence*, but not the necessity of a *consequent*. Once it is an ordered will, or a signified will, ⁴⁹⁷ which may be resisted; whereas a will of good pleasure cannot be resisted! Once the passages adduced from Paul do not oppose Freewill because they do not speak of the salvation of man. Once the foreknowledge of God presupposes ⁴⁹⁸ necessity; another time it does not. Once grace prevents the will — causing it to will — accompanying it on its way and giving the happy issue. Once the first cause effects everything; another time it acts by second causes, itself doing nothing.

By these and such mocking words, she only aims to get time, and to meanwhile snatch the cause out of our sight, and drag it somewhere else. She gives us credit for being as stupid and heartless, or as little interested in the cause, as she herself is. Or as little children, when frightened or at play, cover their eyes with their hands, and think nobody sees them, because they see nobody. Even so, Diatribe, not being able to bear the rays (or rather the lightning) of the clearest possible words, uses all sorts of pretences to make it appear that she does not see the real truth — that she may persuade us, if possible, to cover our eyes, so as not to see it ourselves. But all these are the marks of a convinced mind, which struggles rashly against invincible truth.

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That figment of the necessity of a *consequence*, as somehow differing from the necessity of a *consequent*, has been confuted already (Part i. Sect. xi.). Let Diatribe invent and re-invent, cavil and re-cavil, as much as she pleases. If God foreknew that Judas would be a traitor, Judas necessarily became a traitor. Nor was it in the power of Judas (or *any* creature) to do otherwise, or to change his will, though he did what he did by an act of willing, and not by compulsion. But to will that act, was the operation of a substance which God put into motion by His own omnipotence, as he also does everything else. For it stands as an invincible and self-evident proposition, that God neither lies, nor is mistaken.

⁴⁹⁶ *Impingere. Imp.* (se scilicet subaudito) est 'ire impactum,' 'praecipitem ferri in aliquid.' — Here, as before, we have God's actuation, the man's will, and *testing, provoking* dispensation. But there seems a little confusion in the admission concerning the man's (Pharaoh's) own will, as separated from the divine impulse. He now seems to make the crisis of the evil lie there. I can understand that there might be inertness in the case which he supposes: but if there is an act of will, in an essentially bad will, I cannot understand how it would be other than evil. (See above, note ^k) The case is merely hypothetical, put for the sake of illustration. But like many other intended illustrations, it is confusing rather than distinguishing the object on which it would shine. And it is impossible: for God always acts, and therefore he always actuates the wicked; that is, he keeps them in their place and state as moral *agents*, which is a state of activity.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ordinatam sen voluntatem signi.* The distinction amounts to that of 'regulated' and 'absolute' will, limited and restrained by ordinance, or by some outward sign which has revealed it; and will of pure, uncontrolled good pleasure. The former of these, it is intimated, may be resisted; the latter cannot.

⁴⁹⁸ I understand *ponit* in a logical sense, 'takes for granted,' assumes as a *datum*.

The words under our consideration are not obscure or doubtful words, although all the learned of all ages may have been so blind as to understand and interpret them otherwise. Prevaricate as much as you may, your own conscience, and that of all men, is compelled to acknowledge that if God is not mistaken in what he foreknows, then the *very* thing foreknown must necessarily take place. Otherwise, who could trust His promises, who would fear His threatenings, if what he promises or threatens does not *necessarily* follow? Or, how can He promise or threaten, if his foreknowledge deceives him, or He can be thwarted by our mutability? This excessive light of undoubted truth manifestly shuts every mouth, puts an end to all questions, and decrees a victory in spite of all evasive subtleties. We know very well that the foreknowledge of man is beguiled. We know that an eclipse does not happen because it is foreknown, but it is foreknown because it is going to happen. But what have we to do with this sort of foreknowledge? We are arguing about the foreknowledge of *God*.

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SECT. 19. Diatribe's concessions and retractions exposed.

Deny the necessity of the thing foreknown being effected, and you take away the faith and fear of God; you throw down all of God's promises and threatenings; indeed, you deny the very being of God. But even Diatribe herself, after a long struggle in which she has tried all her arts, is at length compelled by the force of truth to make confession of our sentiment. She says:

'The question about the will and purpose of Diatribe's God is a more difficult one. For God wills the same things which he foreknows. And this is what Paul subjoins: "Who resists his will, if he pities whom he will, and hardens whom he will?" [Rom 9.18-19](#) For if he were a king, he would do what he liked, so that no one would be able to resist him; he would be said to do what he would. Thus the will of God, being the principal cause of all events, seems to impose a necessity upon our will.'

This is what she says. And I thank God that Diatribe has at last recovered her senses. What has become of Free will now? But this eel again slips out of our hands by saying in a moment,

'But Paul does not resolve this question; on the contrary, he chides the inquirer; indeed, but O man, who are you that replies against God?' [Rom 9.20](#)

O exquisite evasion! Is this what you call handling the word of God? — to deliver a mere *ipse dixit* ⁴⁹⁹ in this manner, by your own authority, out of your own head, without producing testimonies of Scripture, without working miracles? — or rather, to thus corrupt some of the clearest words that God ever spoke? 'Paul does not resolve this question,' she says. What is he doing then? 'He chides the inquirer,' she says. Is this chiding not the most complete resolution of the question? What was in fact asked in this question concerning the will of God? Was it not asked whether he puts a necessity upon our will? Paul answers, "*Thus* (that is, because God *does* so) he has mercy on whom he

⁴⁹⁹ *Ipse dixit*: An unsupported dogmatic assertion.

will have mercy, and whom he wills, he hardens. It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God who shows mercy." ⁵⁰⁰

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Not content with having resolved the question, Paul moreover introduces those who, in opposition to this answer, murmur for Freewill — who prate that there is no such thing as merit, nor are we condemned by any fault of our own, and the like — for the very purpose of putting a stop to their indignation and murmurs.

Paul says, "You say to me, then, why does he still find fault? For who resists his will?" Do you notice the personification? ⁵⁰¹ Upon hearing that the will of God imposes a necessity on us, they blasphemously murmur and say, Why does he still find fault? That is, why does God so press, so drive, so demand, so complain? Why does He accuse? Why does He condemn? — as if we men could do what he demands, if we pleased. God has no just cause for this complaint. Let him rather accuse his own will — let him prefer his complaint there — let him press and drive there. For who resists his will? Who can obtain mercy when God does not choose that they should receive it? Who can melt himself, if it is God's will to harden him? It does not lie with us to change God's will, much less to resist it. His will chooses that we should be hardened; and by that will we are compelled to be hardened — whether we would have it or not.

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If Paul had not resolved this question, or had not unequivocally determined that a necessity is imposed on us by the divine prescience, then what need was there to introduce persons who murmur and allege that it is impossible to resist His will? For who would murmur or be indignant, if he did not think that this necessity had been determined? The words in which Paul speaks of resisting the will of God are not obscure. Is it doubtful what he means by 'resisting,' or by 'will;' or of whom he speaks when he speaks of the will of God? *Let* countless thousands of the most approved doctors be blind here; and *let* them pretend that Scripture is not clear; and *let* them be afraid of a difficult question. We have some of the clearest words of this import: "He pities whom he will; whom he wills, he hardens." Also, "You say to me, therefore, why does he find fault? Who resists his will?"

Nor is it a difficult question; indeed, nothing can be plainer to common sense than that *this* consequence is certain, solid, and true: 'If God foreknows an event, it necessarily comes to pass.' This necessarily follows once it is presupposed, upon the testimony of Scripture, that God neither errs nor is deceived. ⁵⁰² I confess that the question is a difficult one — indeed, one which is impossible to resolve — if in the same instant you determine to maintain both God's foreknowledge, and man's liberty. For what is more difficult, or

⁵⁰⁰ Luther makes some confusion in the order of the verses, putting the 18th in place of the 15th. But his argument is not dependent on the transposition. The more explicit testimony of verse 18 is implied in verse 15; but verse 18 precedes both the cavil and the reproof.

⁵⁰¹ *Prosopopoeia*. 'The introducing of imaginary persons;' literally, 'the making of persons;' — a well-known figure of rhetoric. Paul had before been simply stating truth in plain language. Now he brings in a supposed objection. Luther asks Erasmus whether he notices this? It was essential to his correct understanding of the passage, that he should have remarked this change in the Apostle's mode of address: that he personifies, and what sort of persons he fabricates.

⁵⁰² *Errat. fallitur*. *Err.* a mistake in his own apprehensions. *Fall.* appearances beguile him. It is not disappointment as to the event, which is the subject of remark here; but an object seen far off is made to appear different from what it really is.

rather more impossible, than to contend that contradictions and contraries are not at variance with each other; or that a number is at the same time ten and nine? There is no difficulty in the question we are handling. Rather, the difficulty is gone after and brought in, just as ambiguity and obscurity are gone after and introduced into the Scriptures, by violence. ⁵⁰³

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So then, he stops the mouths of those wicked ones who have been offended by those most plain words. And why are they offended? Because they perceive that the divine will is fulfilled by our necessity; and because they perceive it has been unequivocally determined that there is nothing of liberty or of Free will left to them — but all things are dependent on the will of God alone. He stops their mouths, I say, but it is by bidding them to be still, and to reverence the Majesty of the divine power and will, ⁵⁰⁴ over which we have no right of control. Meanwhile, it has full power over us, to do what seems good to it. It is not that any injury is done to us by its operations, since it owes us nothing. It has received nothing from us, and it has promised nothing to us, beyond what it chose and was pleased to do.

SECT. 20. Where true reverence for the Scriptures lies.

Here then is the place, here is the time, for adoring not the fictitious inhabitants of those Corycian caves, but the real Majesty of God in his fearful wonders, and in His incomprehensible judgments — and for saying "Your will be done, in heaven, so on earth." On the other hand, we are never more irreverent and rash than when we attempt and accuse these very mysteries and judgments, which are unsearchable. Meanwhile, we imagine that we are exercising an incredible degree of reverence in searching the holy Scriptures. Those Scriptures, which God has commanded us to search, we do not search in one direction, but in another — a direction in which he has forbidden us to search them. Thus, we do nothing but search them with a perpetual temerity, if not blasphemy.

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Is it not such a search, when we rashly endeavour to make the most free foreknowledge of God, accord with our liberty? And when we are ready to detract from the prescience of God, if it does not leave us in possession of liberty, or if it induces necessity? Is it not to say, with the murmurers and blasphemers, 'Why does he yet find fault? Who resists his will? What has become of the most merciful God? What has become of Him who does not will the death of a sinner? Has he made us that he might delight himself with man's torments?' and like things. Shall these not be howled out forever among the devils and the damned?

But even natural reason is obliged to confess that the living and true God must be such a one as to impose necessity upon us, seeing that He himself is free. For instance, he would be a ridiculous God, or more properly an idol, if he were either to foresee future things doubtfully, or be disappointed by events. Even the Gentiles have assigned irresistible fate

⁵⁰³ That is, by doing violence to the text; by forcing an unwarranted and unfounded interpretation upon it. — WHG

⁵⁰⁴ *Majestatem*. A form of expression common among men, with application to earthly potentates. 'His Majesty' does so and so. It is a sort of personification of the sovereign's state, power, and excellency. So here, of God's power and will.

to their gods. ⁵⁰⁵ He would be equally ridiculous if he did not have power to do all things, and did not effect all things; or if anything is really brought to pass without him. Now, if the foreknowledge and omnipotence of God are conceded, then it naturally follows, by an undeniable consequence, that we were not *made* by ourselves, nor do we *live* by ourselves, nor do we *perform* anything by ourselves, but it is all through His omnipotence. And now, since He both knew beforehand that we would be such a people, and He goes on to make us that way, and to move and govern us as such — what can be imagined in us, I ask, that is free to have a different outcome given to it, from what He foreknew, or is now effecting?

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So that, God's foreknowledge and omnipotence are diametrically opposite to man's Freewill. Either God will be mistaken in his foreknowledge, and disappointed in his actings (which is impossible), or we will act, and act according to his foreknowledge and agency. By the *omnipotence* of God, I do not mean a power by which he might do many things which he does not do; but that acting omnipotence by which, with power, he does all things, in all things. It is in this manner, that the Scripture calls God omnipotent. This omnipotence and prescience of God, I say, absolutely abolishes the dogma of Freewill. Nor can the obscurity of Scripture, or the difficulty of the subject, be made a pretext ⁵⁰⁶ here. The words are most clear; even children know them. The subject matter is plain and easy; it is one which proves itself even to the natural judgment of common sense. So that, let your series of ages, times, and persons who write and teach otherwise, be ever so great, it will profit you nothing.

SECT. 21. What carnal reason hates.

This common sense, or natural reason, is most highly offended, truly, that God should leave men, should harden them, should damn them, of his own sheer will — as if He were delighted with the sins and torments of the wretched, which are so great and eternal — where he is declared to be a God of such great mercy and goodness. It has been deemed unjust, cruel, and insufferable to entertain such a sentiment concerning God. It is this which has offended so many, and such great men, during so many ages — and who would *not* be offended?

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I myself have been offended at it, more than once, to the very depth, and lowest depth ⁵⁰⁷ of despair, so as to wish that I had never been created a man — *until* I learned how salutary that despair was, and how akin it is to grace. Hence, all this toil and sweat in putting

⁵⁰⁵ *Fatum in-eluctabile*. Even those who made the fatal sisters superior to Jupiter himself, still had an uncontrolled ordainer of events: inexorable, infallible, invincible *fate*.

⁵⁰⁶ *Praetexti*. Properly, 'a fine web of art spread before a substance to cover, or disguise it.' — *Judicium naturale*, like *ratio naturalis* above, opposes 'natural' to 'spiritual.' The conclusions are so obvious, that we do not need the Spirit to draw them.

⁵⁰⁷ *Abyssum*. '*Alyssus est profunditas uquarum impenetrabilis, sive spelunae aquarum latentium, de quibus fontes et flumina procedunt, vel quae occulte subtereant.*' Hence applied to 'the abyss.' "They besought him that he would not command them to go out into the abyss." (Gr.) "Have you come here to torment us *before the time*?" Luther had felt the very hell of despair.

'And in the lowest deep,
'A lower deep still threatening to devour me
Opens wide.'

forward ⁵⁰⁸ the goodness of God, and accusing the will of man. Here lay the discovery of those distinctions between God's regulated and absolute will, between the necessity of a consequence and of a consequent, and much of a similar kind; which have produced no result however, except that the ignorant have been imposed upon by "vain babblings, and by oppositions of science, falsely so called." ⁵⁰⁹ Still, there has always remained this sting fixed in the deep of their hearts, both to the learned and to the unlearned (if they have ever come to be serious), that they could not believe the prescience and omnipotence of God, without perceiving *our* necessity.

Even natural reason, though offended by this necessity, and making such vast efforts to remove it, is compelled to admit its existence, through the conviction of her own private judgment. It would be the same, even if there were no Scripture.

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For all find this sentiment written in their hearts, so as to recognise and approve it when they hear it discussed, even against their will:

First, that God is omnipotent, not only in what he is able to do, but also in what he actually does, as I have said; ⁵¹⁰ otherwise he would be a ridiculous God;

Secondly, he knows and foreknows all things, and can neither mistake, nor be misled.

These two things being conceded through the testimony of their heart and senses, they are by and by compelled to admit by an inevitable consequence, that we were not made by our own will, but by necessity; and hence, we do nothing by right of Freewill, but just as God has foreknown and directs us by a counsel and an energy which is at once infallible and immutable. So then, we find it written at once in all hearts, that there is no such thing as Free will, even if this writing is obscured through the circumstance of so many contrary disputations, and so many persons of such vast authority, having taught differently for so many ages. So too, every other law — which has been written in our hearts (according to Paul's testimony) — is recognised when rightly handled. But it is obscured when distorted by ungodly teachers and laid hold of by other opinions. ⁵¹¹

SECT. 22. Paul's argument resumed. Diatribe is dishonest and cowardly — would escape but cannot.

I return to Paul. Now, if he is not solving this question, and concluding human necessity from the prescience and will of God, what need does he have to introduce the simile of the

⁵⁰⁸ *Pro excusandâ bonitate Dei. Excus.* 'Item, in excusationem affero.' — For regulated and absolute will see above, Sect. 19. where he distinguishes these as *volunt. ordin. seu signi*, and *volunt. placiti*. — For *consequence* and *consequent*, see Part i. Sect xi.

⁵⁰⁹ 1Tim 6.20. ἀντιθεσεις. 'Doctrina opposita,' 'quaestio quae ad disceptandum proponitur.' — Not what is commonly understood by opposition; but men setting out to canvass doctrines with a great display of school-learning, and maintaining theses which were opposite to the truth.

⁵¹⁰ See above, Sect. 20, p. 288.

⁵¹¹ Paul's testimony can only respect the fact that a law may be written in our hearts, which is not outwardly taught and professed: for it is neither the same law of which Paul speaks; nor does he testify anything about the handling, or recognition of that law. (Rom 2.13-16.) — Luther supposes this law of necessity to lie at the bottom of our hearts, so that, when we hear it duly and truly set out, we accord with it by the exercise of our natural powers; while it may be made illegible, and effaced, by false teaching and prejudice.

potter making out of one and the same lump, one vessel to honour and another to dishonour? [Rom 9.21](#)

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Yet the thing-made does not say to its maker 'why have you made me thus?' [Rom 9.20](#) It is men that he is speaking of, whom he compares to clay, and God to the potter. There is no meaning in the comparison; indeed, if he does not mean that our liberty is nothing, then it is absurd and adduced to no purpose. No, Paul's whole argument in support of grace is abortive. The very scope of his whole Epistle is to show that we can do nothing, indeed even when we seem to be doing good. He says in the same place, how Israel, by following after righteousness, has not attained to righteousness; but the Gentiles, who did not follow it, have attained it. ⁵¹² I will speak more about this at large when I produce my own forces.

But Diatribe, disguising the whole body of Paul's argument, together with its scope, consoles herself meanwhile with garbled and corrupted words. ⁵¹³ It is nothing to Diatribe, that afterwards in Rom 11.20, Paul exhorts them, on the other hand, "You stand by faith; see that you are not lifted up." And again, Rom 11.23: "They also, if they believe, will be grafted in," etc. He says nothing there about the powers of man, but uses imperative and conjunctive verbs, the effect of which has been sufficiently declared already. ⁵¹⁴

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Indeed, Paul himself, in the very same place, as if to prevent the vaunters of Freewill, does not say that *they can believe*, but "God is able to graft them in." In short, Diatribe proceeds with so trembling and hesitating a step in handling these texts from Paul's writings, that she seems, in conscience, to dissent even from her own words. For in those places where she should most of all have gone on and proved her doctrine, she almost always breaks off the discourse with, 'But enough of this;' or, 'I will not investigate this point now;' or, 'It is no part of this subject;' or, 'They would say so and so;' and many like expressions. ⁵¹⁵ Thus she leaves the matter in the middle, making it doubtful whether she is standing up as a champion for Freewill, or only showing her skill in parrying off Paul with vain words. ⁵¹⁶ She does all this in a rule and manner of her own, like someone who is not earnestly pleading this cause. But we should not thus be indifferent; thus skim the ears of corn; thus be shaken like a reed in the wind. Rather, we should first assert confidently, steadfastly, fervently; and then demonstrate by solid, apposite, and abundant proof, the doctrine we maintain. ⁵¹⁷

⁵¹² Rom 9.30. I have not marked the words as a Scripture quotation, because they are not exact. He says *in the same place*, the intervening verses are all dependent upon verse 24, being so many quotations to show that it was God's avowed purpose to call a body of Gentiles into his church, and to save only a remnant of Israel.

⁵¹³ *Excisis et depravatis*. *Exc.* words 'cut out' from the text, in which they stand connected with others. *Depr.* 'turned awry, 'made crooked;' their meaning, through this violent separation, is distorted and polluted.

⁵¹⁴ See above, Part iii. Sect. 34.

⁵¹⁵ *Excusiam. instituti*. *Excus.* 'concutere, scrutamli et explorandi causa.' *Inst.* 'scopus, proposition, inceptum. προαιρεσις.

⁵¹⁶ *Pro libero arbitrio dicere. Eludere Paulum.*

⁵¹⁷ *Super aristas incedere*. See above, Part iii. Sect. 6. note ^b. '*Certo*' as opposed to 'hesitatingly;' *constanter*, as opposed to 'variableness of statement;' *ardenter*, as opposed to 'indifference;' *solidè*, as opposed to 'insubstantial;' *dextrè*, as opposed to 'clumsiness, and lack of address;' *copiosè*, as opposed to 'scantiness of materials.'

Then again, how exquisitely she contrives to preserve liberty in union with necessity, when she says, 'Nor does every sort of necessity exclude freedom of will. For instance, God the Father necessarily begets the Son; but He begets him willingly and freely, inasmuch as He is not compelled to beget him.'

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Are we disputing now, I ask, about compulsion and force? Have I not in all my writings testified that I speak of a necessity of *immutability*?⁵¹⁸ I know that the Father willingly begets; I know that Judas betrayed Christ through an act of his will. But I affirm that, if God foreknew it, then this will was about to arise in this very Judas, most certainly and infallibly. If what I affirm is not yet sufficiently understood, let us refer one sort of necessity — that of force — to the *work*; another sort of necessity — that of infallibility — to the *time*. Let him who hears me understand that I speak of the necessity of *infallibility*, not of *force*. That is, I am not discussing whether Judas became a traitor willingly or unwillingly, but whether, at the time appointed by God, it must infallibly come to pass that Judas, by an act of his own will, betrays Christ.

But see what Diatribe says here: 'If you look at the infallible foreknowledge of God, Judas was necessarily to become a traitor; but Judas might have changed his will,' Do you even know what you are saying, my Diatribe? To omit what has been already proved — that the will can only choose evil — how could Judas change his will, consistent with the infallible foreknowledge of God? Could he change the foreknowledge of God, and make it fallible? Here Diatribe gives in, deserts her standard, throws away her arms, and flees. She refers the discussion — as being none of hers — to those scholastic subtleties which distinguish between the necessity of a consequence and the necessity of a consequent.⁵¹⁹ This is the sort of quibble which she has no mind to pursue.

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Doubtless, it is very prudent of you, having conducted your cause all the way into the midst of a crowded court⁵²⁰ — when a pleader is most necessary — to turn your back and leave the business of replying and defining⁵²¹ to others. You should have acted on this counsel from the first, and altogether abstained from writing, according to that saying, 'The man who does not know how to contend, abstains from the weapons of the field,'⁵²² It was not expected of Erasmus to remove⁵²³ this difficulty, 'how God with certainty foreknows, and yet our actions are contingent.' This difficulty was in the world long before Diatribe's time. But it was expected that he would reply and define. However, being a rhetorician himself, while *we* know nothing about it, he calls in a rhetorical transition to

⁵¹⁸ See above, Part iii. Sect. 37. note ^h.

⁵¹⁹ Consistent with what has been said before (Part i. Sect. 11.), but with a minute variety in the application: Judas' *treachery*, they would say, was necessary, but he was not a *necessary* traitor: he must betray, but not *therefore* necessarily; that is, according to their account of the matter, *compulsorily*.

⁵²⁰ The 'mediae turbae' are the multitudes surrounding the judicial tribunal: 'non usitatâ. frequentiâ stipati sumus.' — Cic. 'Perduxeris' expresses the pomp and the labour with which he had dragged on the cause to issue.

⁵²¹ *Respondendi et definiendi*. *Resp.* respects the adversary's argument, which should be invalidated or taken off: *defin.* is the explanatory statement of the advocate's own case. See above, Part i. Sect. 9.

⁵²² Hor. Art. Poet, v. 379.

⁵²³ *Moveret*. There is a peculiar force, if I am not mistaken, in 'moveret;' he does not say 'remove,' though I have ventured, with good authority, to give it that force; rather, it is a heavy body which he cannot wag.

his aid. Carrying us ignoramus along with him — as if the matter in debate were one of no moment, and the whole discussion were a mere quirk and quibble — he dashes violently out of the midst of the crowd, wearing his crown of ivy and laurel. ⁵²⁴

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But you have not gained your end by this stratagem, brother! There is no skill in rhetoric so great as to be able to deceive a sincere conscience. For the sting of conscience is mightier than eloquence with all her powers and figures. We will not suffer the rhetorician to pass on here to another topic, so that he may hide himself. It is not the place for this exhibition. The hinge of the several matters in dispute (and the head of the cause) is attacked here. It is here that Freewill is either extinguished, or gains a complete triumph. But instead of meeting this crisis, no sooner do you perceive your danger — or rather, perceive that the victory over Freewill is sure — than you pretend to see nothing but metaphysical subtleties in the question. Is this acting the part of a trusty theologian? Are you serious in the cause? How does it happen, then, that you both leave your hearers in suspense, and the discussion in a state of confusion and exasperation? ⁵²⁵ Still, you want to be thought of as having done your work honourably, and to have carried off the palm of victory. Such cunning and wiliness ⁵²⁶ may be endurable in secular causes; but it is most hateful and intolerable in theology, where simple and undisguised truth is the object of pursuit, that *souls* may be saved.

SECT. 23. Much joy to the Sophists and Diatribe in their necessity of a consequent.

The Sophists also have felt the invincible and insupportable force of this argument; they have therefore feigned this distinction between the necessity of a *consequence*, and of a *consequent*.

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But it has been shown already how fruitless this distinction is. ⁵²⁷ They too, like yourself, are not aware what they say, and how much they admit against themselves. For if you allow the necessity of a consequence, Freewill is vanquished and laid prostrate; and it is not at all aided by the consequent's being either necessary or contingent. What is it to me, that Freewill does what she does *willingly* and not by compulsion? It is enough for me that you concede, 'It must necessarily be that Judas does what he does willingly; and that the event cannot be otherwise if God has so foreknown it.' If God foreknows either that Judas will betray the Lord, or that he will change his will to betray him — whichever of the two He foreknows, it will necessarily come to pass. Else God would be mistaken in his

⁵²⁴ Luther thus ridicules his claim to skill and victory. In many sorts of competition, and for many sorts of merit, it was customary to crown the conquerors with various materials — sometimes precious, sometimes of no value — as the highest tribute of honour which could be received. Here, therefore, he represents Erasmus as crowning *himself*, by a feint of rhetoric abandoning his cause, and assuming to be a conquering Bacchus, and an unrivalled Apollo, by wearing the emblems of those divinities.

⁵²⁵ *Perturbatum et exasperatum*. *Perturb.* implies lack of order and distinctness; no first, second, and third, either in reply or advancement; *exasp.* the heat and ruffle with which it is maintained; we speak of 'angry' debate.

⁵²⁶ *Vafritia et versutia*. *Vaf.* expresses the subtle invention which devises; *versut.* is the versatility and adroitness with which the crafty counsel is executed; this is opposed afterwards by *simplex*, 'what is inartificial;' and *aperta*, 'what is manifest to the view.'

⁵²⁷ See above, note ^r.

foreknowledge and foretelling, which is impossible. The necessity of the consequence effects this: if God foreknows an event, that very event necessarily happens. In other words, Freewill is nothing. This necessity of the consequence is neither obscure, nor ambiguous. If the great doctors in all ages have even been blind, they must still be obliged to admit its existence, since it is so manifest and so certain as to be palpable. ⁵²⁸

But the necessity of the *consequent*, with which they comfort themselves, is a mere phantom; as the saying goes, it diametrically opposes the necessity of the consequence. For example, if I say 'God foreknows that Judas will be a traitor; therefore it will certainly and infallibly come to pass that Judas is a traitor,' this is the necessity of a consequence.

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In opposition to this necessity, you console yourself by saying, 'But since Judas may *change* his will to betray, there is therefore no necessity in the consequent' [*i.e., in what must follow*]. I demand of you, how can these two assertions agree with each other: 'Judas may *not be* willing to betray;' and 'it is necessary that Judas *be* willing to betray,' Do they not directly contradict and oppose each other? You say, 'He will not be compelled to betray against his will' — How does this serve the purpose? You have been affirming something about the *necessity* of a consequent — that truly, the consequent is not rendered necessary by the necessity of the consequence; but you have affirmed nothing about the *compulsion* of the consequent. Your answer should have touched the *necessity* of the consequent; and instead, you produce an example which shows *compulsion* in the consequence. I ask one question and you reply to another. All this is the product of that half-asleep half-awake state of mind in which you do not perceive how perfectly inefficient that device is — the necessity of a consequent. ⁵²⁹

SECT. 24. The other admitted text is defended. Nothing to do with salvation. So Jerome had said.

So much for the first of the two passages, ⁵³⁰ It respects the induration of Pharaoh, and involves all texts of a like kind, amounting to a phalanx — and an invincible one at that.

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Let us now examine the second, about Jacob and Esau. When they were not yet born, it was said "The elder shall serve the younger." Diatribe evades this passage by saying, 'It has nothing to do properly with the subject of man's salvation. God may will that a man

⁵²⁸ *Palpari*. 'What you may stroke with the hand.' The gentlemen who have no eyes may still receive sense-testimony to it.

⁵²⁹ *Commentum*. The subtlety means Judas still has a will, which is not forced; therefore there is still Freewill. — Who says 'forced'? But *can* it choose otherwise? A will that can only make one choice, is in bondage. — The example of Judas is introduced by Erasmus, not Luther.

⁵³⁰ See Part iv. Sect. 1. — The course of this long, elaborate, and invincible argument may be traced by the side notes attached to each section; but the reader will forgive me if I endeavour to assist him by the following short summary. Erasmus endeavours to evade this plain text by a trope. 1. Tropical interpretations are generally inadmissible. 2. Absurdity of the proposed one. 3. It does not remove the difficulty. 4. Certain illustrations are objected to. 5. The causes assigned for introducing it are examined. 6. How God hardens is explained. 7. Diatribe is exposed, and Luther's view maintained by an appeal to the context. Also, by an appeal to Paul's comment; which introduces Erasmus' evasion and that of the Sophists. In the course of these considerations several topics are admitted by the way: such as the state of man, limits of inquiry, carnal reason's objections, etc...

be a servant or a poor man, whether the man wills it or not, without being rejected from eternal salvation.'

See how many side-paths and holes of escape a slippery mind seeks, which is intent upon flying away from truth — but still, she does not quite accomplish her flight. Let us suppose, if you will, that this text does *not* pertain to man's salvation (which I will speak about later). Is it to no purpose, then, that Paul adduces it? Would we make Paul ridiculous or absurd in the midst of so serious a discussion? However, this is a fancy of Jerome's, who with abundant arrogance on his brow, while committing sacrilege with his mouth, has the audacity to affirm in more places than one, that those Scriptures which oppose Freewill in Paul's writings, do not oppose Freewill in their proper places, ⁵³¹ from which he quotes them. What is this, if not to say that in laying the foundations of Christian doctrine, Paul corrupts the divine Scriptures and beguiles the souls of the faithful, by a sentiment which is the coinage of his own brain, and which is imposed on the Scriptures by violence? Such is the honour, which the Spirit should receive, in the person of that holy and choice instrument of God, Paul!

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Now, Jerome should be read with judgment. ⁵³² And this saying of his is to be classed among the many which that gentleman (through his laziness in studying, and his dullness in understanding Scripture) has written impiously. Diatribe snaps up this very saying without any judgment, and does not deign to mitigate it as she might at least do, with a gloss of some sort. But she both judges and qualifies the Scriptures by this saying, as an oracle which precludes all doubt. Thus it is, that we take the ungodly sayings of men as so many rules and measures for interpreting the divine word. Can we wonder any longer that God's word has become "ambiguous and obscure," and that so many of the Fathers are blind to its real meaning, when it is thus made impious and profane?

SECT. 25. Paul defended in his use of Gen. 25.21-23. Nothing is gained by supposing the service is temporal.

Let him be anathema, therefore, who says, 'those words do not oppose the doctrine of Freewill in their original places, which oppose what is quoted by Paul.' This is *said*, but it is not *proved*. And it is said by those who neither understand Paul nor the passages cited by him, but deceive themselves by taking the words in their own sense; that is, in an impious sense. For even if this text in particular (Gen 25.21-23.) were meant to speak of temporal servitude ⁵³³ only (which is not true); it is still rightly and efficaciously quoted by Paul to prove that when it was said to Rebekah, ⁵³⁴ "The elder shall serve the younger," it is not because of the merits of Jacob or of Esau, but through Him that calls.

⁵³¹ *Pugnant*. Said with reference to some particular doctrine not named — the doctrine of Freewill doubtless, as maintained by Jerome and those who teach like him.

⁵³² *That is, be judicious in discerning what may not be doctrinally correct in Jerome's writings.*

⁵³³ What is, in fact, gained by this distinction? The principle is the same; God differentiates by his sovereign will. Just so it is, with respect to national and personal election. Yet some seem to think that they have hooked a great fish in discovering that Great Britain may have been elected to hear the Gospel without any of her children having been elected to receive it!

⁵³⁴ Originally *Sarah*. Clearly, it should be Rebekah. Sarah was dead when this prophecy was delivered, which is expressly said to have been delivered to Rebekah. "And she (Rebekah) said, If it be so, etc. And the Lord said to her." Gen 25.22-23. The preceding mention of Sarah in Romans 9 accounts for the mistake.

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Paul's question is whether they attained to what is said of them, by the virtue or merits of Freewill. And he proves that it was *not* by the virtue or merits of Free will, but only by the grace of Him who called him, that Jacob attained to what Esau did not. He proves this by invincible words of Scripture, such as, that they were not yet born; and again, that they had done neither good nor evil. The weight of the matter lies in this proof; *this* is the point under debate. But Diatribe, through her exquisite skill in rhetoric, passing over and disguising all these things, does not at all debate the question of merits (although she had undertaken to do so, and although Paul's handling of the subject requires it). Rather, she quibbles about temporal servitude (as if this were at all to the purpose), only so that she may appear not to be conquered by those most mighty words of Paul.

For what could she have to yelp against Paul, in support of Freewill? What did Freewill profit Jacob, and what hurt was done to Esau by it, when by the foreknowledge and ordination of God, it had been settled what sort of lot each of them would receive? Which was namely, that the one should serve, and the other should rule, when neither of them was yet born, or had done anything. The rewards, which each would receive, were decreed before the workmen were born, and had begun to work. It is to this point, that Diatribe should have directed her reply. This is what Paul insists upon: that they had not yet done nothing good or evil; but *still*, the one is ordained to be the master and the other the servant, by a divine judgment. The question is not whether this servitude respects eternal salvation, but by what merit this servitude is imposed on a man who has not merited anything. But it is most irksome to maintain a conflict with these depraved ⁵³⁵ endeavours to torture and elude Scripture.

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SECT. 26. The service is not *really* temporal, but spiritual.

It is proved from the text itself, that Moses is not treating their temporal servitude and dominion only; and that Paul is right in this also, that he understands Moses to speak with reference to their eternal salvation. Even though this is not so important to the point in hand, I will not suffer Paul to be defiled with the calumnies of sacrilegious men. ⁵³⁶ The divine answer ⁵³⁷ given to Rebekah in the book of Moses is this: "Two sorts of people will be separated from your womb; and the one people will overcome the other, and the elder will serve the younger." [Gen 25.23](#) Here two sorts of people are manifestly distinguished from each other. The one is received into the free favour of God, so as to overcome the elder,

⁵³⁵ *Pravis*. Nearly allied in meaning to the *torquendae Scriptura* which follows: 'what is crooked and awry.' —It is obvious that no objection can be drawn from the statement in this paragraph, and from St. Paul's argument, to what has been advanced in a former note on the subject of original sin (see above, Sect. 10. note ² .). The question is about the difference between Jacob and Esau. Both alike are fallen and self-destroyed in Adam; the question is how either of these receives distinguishing benefits, whether of a temporal or eternal nature. With respect to manifest existence and distinct personal agency, it is plain that neither of them had done good or evil when the words were spoken to Rebekah. There had not as yet been any opportunity to display that which alone could constitute any difference on a ground of Freewill or merit.

⁵³⁶ See the last section. The question of Freewill is not affected. Erasmus follows Jerome, whom Luther has pronounced sacrilegious.

⁵³⁷ *Oraculum*. It is said of Rebekah, that "she went to inquire of the Lord." *Oraculum* is therefore, 'an answer, counsel, or sentence from the gods;' it is the fit term by which to characterise what was said to her.

even though younger; this is not by strength, it is true, but through God's befriending him. How else would the younger conquer the elder, unless God were with him?

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Now, since the younger is about to become the people of God, ⁵³⁸ it is not only external dominion or servitude that is treated here, but everything that pertains to the people of God — that is, the blessing of God, the word, the Spirit, the promise of Christ, and the eternal kingdom. This is even more largely confirmed by the Scripture afterwards, where it describes Jacob as being blessed, and as receiving the promises and the kingdom. Paul briefly intimates these several things when he says, "the elder will serve the younger," sending us back to Moses as the one who treats them more at large. Thus, in opposition to the sacrilegious ⁵³⁹ comment of Jerome and Diatribe, you may say that all the passages which Paul adduces, fight still more stoutly against Freewill in their original places, than they do in his writings.

This is a remark which holds good not only with respect to Paul, but with respect to all the Apostles, who quote the Scriptures as witnesses to their doctrine, and assertors of it. Would not it be ridiculous to quote as a testimony, that which testifies to nothing, and does not bear upon the question? These are considered ridiculous among philosophers who prove an unknown thing by one that is yet more unknown, or by an argument which is foreign to the subject. So then, with what face will we ascribe this absurdity to the chief leaders and authors of the doctrine of Christ, on which the salvation of souls depends? This is especially true in those parts of their writings in which they treat the main articles of the faith. But are such insinuations fitting for those who have no real reverence for the divine Scriptures? ⁵⁴⁰

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SECT. 27. Diatribe's evasions of Mal 1.2-3. Love, by a trope, is used for the effect of love.

That saying of Malachi's which Paul uses, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated," she tortures by three distinct productions of her industry. ⁵⁴¹ The first is, 'If you insist on the letter, ⁵⁴² then God does not love as we love; nor does He hate any man, since God is not subject to affections of this kind.'

What is it I hear? Is the question not turned into *how* God loves and hates; instead of *why* he loves and hates? The question is, by what merit of ours does He love or hate? We know very well that God does not hate or love as we do; since we both love and hate mutably;

⁵³⁸ Isaac's descendants in the line of Jacob were not only to be the typical family — the community which shadowed the Lord's elect church — but also the visible church for a season, and to contain within them the true seed. So that, all the spiritual blessings of God were comprehended in this superiority which is announced as the portion of Jacob.

⁵³⁹ *Sacrilegam*. 'Qui sacra legit,' i.e., *furatur*. Thus, sacrilege is beautifully defined by [Samuel] Johnson to be 'the crime of robbing heaven.' Jerome and those who followed him were guilty of this.

⁵⁴⁰ *Qui sacris scripturis seriò non affiduntur*. Luther has a peculiar use of the word *afficio*, or rather *afficior*, which I recognise here — 'affected to' — denoting a mind interested in, or having its affections excited towards an object.

⁵⁴¹ *Triplici industriâ torquet*. A peculiar use of the word *industriâ* — which commonly denotes 'a state, or act, of mind' — to express 'the result of that act;' and this in an unfavourable sense: a laboured excogitation, in which there is neither genius, nor the Spirit. (See above, Sect. 5. note ^z.)

⁵⁴² *Si literam urgeas*. By way of forcing a tropical interpretation of the text, she intimates that the literal cannot possibly stand. 'If you *drive* the letter;' that is, force us to take it whether we will or not.

but he loves and hates according to his eternal and immutable nature. That is how far He is from being the subject of accident and affection. And it is this very thing, which compels Freewill to be a mere nothing — namely, that the love of God towards men is eternal and immutable, and his hatred towards them is eternal. This is true not only prior to the merit and operation of Freewill, but even to the very creation of the world. And everything is wrought in us necessarily, according to His having either loved us, or *not* loved us, from eternity. This is so true, that not only the *love* of God, but even his *manner* of loving, brings necessity upon us.

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See here what Diatribe's attempts at escape have profited her. Everywhere, the more she strives to slip away, the more she runs around, so unsuccessful is it to struggle against truth. But let your trope be allowed: let the love of God be the effect of love, and the hatred of God be the effect of hatred — are these effects wrought outside or beside ⁵⁴³ the will of God? Will you also say here, that God does not will as we do; nor is He subject to the affection of willing? If these effects take place, then they take place only when he wills; and whatever he wills, he either loves it or hates it. Tell me then, by what merit on their part, severally, is Jacob loved and Esau hated *before* they are born and perform any act? It appears, therefore, that Paul most excellently introduces Malachi in support of Moses' sentiment that God called Jacob before he was born because He loved him, not because He was loved before by Jacob; nor because He was moved to do so by any merit of Jacob's. Thus it might be shown by the case of Jacob and Esau, what our Freewill can do. ⁵⁴⁴

SECT. 28. Malachi speaks of temporal affliction.

The second of these laboured excogitations ⁵⁴⁵ is that,

'Malachi does not seem to be speaking of the hatred by which we are eternally damned, but of a temporary affliction. It is a reprehension of those who would build up Edom.'

Here is a second word of reproach for Paul, as doing violence to Scripture. So we entirely cast off our reverence for the majesty of the Holy Spirit, if we may but establish our own conclusions about it.

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But we will bear this insult for a while, and see what good it does. Malachi speaks of temporal affliction. What of it? Or what has this got to do with the point in hand? Paul is proving from Malachi that this affliction was brought upon Esau without any merit of his, by the mere hatred of God. Paul does so, that he may conclude Freewill is nothing. Here is where you are pressed, and so it is to this point that you should direct your answer. We are disputing about *merit*, and you speak of *reward*. However, you do it in such a way as not to elude what you meant to elude. Indeed, by speaking of reward, you acknowledge

⁵⁴³ *Citra et praeter*. More literally, 'on this side and beyond,' implying therefore that they are altogether *of* him and *through* him and *to* him.

⁵⁴⁴ Erasmus says it is not love and hate, but the effect of these. Luther replies, if it is an effect, it is God's will that effects, and the effect is what he approves: he approves one sort of event to Jacob, therefore, and another to Esau. How much further on are you by that?

⁵⁴⁵ *Excogitation*: the creation of something in the mind; a fancy or imagination.

merit. ⁵⁴⁶ But you pretend that you do not see this. Tell me, then, what was the cause in the divine mind for loving Jacob and hating Esau, when they were not yet in being?

Again, it is false that Malachi speaks only of temporary affliction; nor is his business with the destruction of Edom. You pervert the whole meaning of the Prophet by this laboured subtlety. The Prophet makes it quite plain what he means, by using the clearest terms. His meaning is to upbraid the Israelites with their ingratitude; because, while God has been loving them, in return they are neither loving Him as a father, nor fearing him as a master. He proves the fact of his having loved them, both by Scripture and by actual performance. For instance, although Jacob and Esau were brothers, as Moses writes in Gen. 25, God had nonetheless loved and chosen Jacob before he was born (as we have just shown); but He had so hated Esau as to have reduced his country to a wilderness.

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Moreover, God hates, and He persists in hating, with such pertinacity, ⁵⁴⁷ that after having brought Jacob back from captivity, and restored him, he still did not allow the Edomites to be restored. If they so much as *say* they will build, He threatens their destruction. If the Prophet's own plain text ⁵⁴⁸ does not contain these things, let the whole world charge me with telling a lie. It is not the temerity of the Edomites, then, which is reprehended here, but the ingratitude of the sons of Jacob (as I have said). They do not see that what God is conferring on them, and what he is taking away from their brothers the Edomites, is for no other reason than He loves the one, and hates the other. ⁵⁴⁹

How will it now stand good, that the Prophet is speaking only of temporary affliction? For he declares in plain terms that he is speaking about two distinct nations of people, who had descended from the two Patriarchs. God had taken up one of these to be his people, and had preserved them; the other had been abandoned, and at length was destroyed. Now, the act of taking up a people as His people, or *not* taking them up as such, has no respect to temporal good or evil only, but to everything. For our God is not the God of our temporal possessions only, but of everything we have and look for. Nor will He choose to be your God, or to be worshipped by you, with half a shoulder, or a limping foot, but with all your strength and with all your heart — so as to be your God both here and hereafter, in all circumstances, cases, times, and works.

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SECT. 29. Jacob and Esau are a trope for Jew and Gentiles.

The third of these elaborate excogitations is this:

'By a tropological form of expression, he declares that God neither loves all the Gentiles nor hates all the Jews; but some out of each. By this tropical interpretation, it is made

⁵⁴⁶ To make this text consistent with Freewill, there must be ground of love and of hate in the personal mind and conduct of the two persons. — What follows is a master's view of Malachi's prophecy, and decisive as to the question. Judah's reproach is that he has been freely, distinguishingly loved, and has been so treacherous. The essence of the reproach is the freeness of the love: and what is this *temporality*, which extends from generation to generation, and which comprehends as its central portion 'the eternal God *had*,' in opposition to '*not had*,' but had for an enemy?

⁵⁴⁷ *Pertinacity: persistent determination.*

⁵⁴⁸ *Textus ipsè apertus Prophetæ. Ipse*, without any additions of mine; *apertus*, what requires no opening to make its meaning clear. *Mal 1.4.*

⁵⁴⁹ *Hie odit, illic amat.* More literally, 'hates in the one quarter, and loves in the other.'

clear [she says] that this testimony has no voice for proving necessity, but for repelling the arrogance of the Jews.'

Having made this way of escape for herself, she next goes to the length of maintaining that God is said to hate those who are not yet born, inasmuch as He knows beforehand that they will do things worthy of hatred. Thus the hatred and love of God are no obstacle to Freewill. In the end, she comes to the conclusion that the Jews have been cut off from the olive tree by the *merit* of unbelief; that the Gentiles have been grafted into it by the *merit* of faith — making Paul the author of this sentiment — and she gives hope to those who have been cut off, that they will again be grafted in; and she gives fear to those who have been grafted in, lest they be cut off.

Let me die if Diatribe knows *herself* what she is saying! But perhaps there is also some rhetorical figure here, which teaches scholars to obscure the sense wherever there is any danger of being entrapped by the word. I see none of those tropical forms of speech here; Diatribe may imagine them in her dreams, but she does not prove them. It is no wonder, then, that the testimony of Malachi does not oppose her if taken in a tropological sense, when it has no such sense at all. Again, our subject of disputation is *not* that cutting off and grafting in which Paul speaks of afterwards, ⁵⁵⁰ when he exhorts.

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We know men are grafted in by faith, and are cut off by unbelief, and that they are to be exhorted to believe, so that they may not be cut off. But it does not follow from this, nor is it proved, that they can believe or disbelieve through the power of the free will. And it is this free will which is the subject of our debate. We are not discussing who are believers and who not; who are Jews and who are heathens; what follows for believers and for unbelievers; all this belongs to the exhorter. Our question is, by what *merit*, by what *work*, men attain to that faith by which they are grafted in; or to that unbelief by which they are cut off. This is what belongs to the teacher. ⁵⁵¹ Describe this merit to us! Paul teaches that this befalls, not by any work of ours, but only by the love and hatred of God. And when it has befallen men to believe, He exhorts them to perseverance, that they may not be cut off. Still, exhortation does not prove what we *can* do, but what we *ought* to do. I am forced to use almost more words in keeping my adversary from wandering elsewhere, and leaving his cause, than in pleading the cause itself. However, to have kept him to the point is to have conquered him — so clear and invincible are the words which we have under consideration. Hence, he does almost nothing else but turn aside from it, hurrying away in an instant out of sight, pleading another cause than that which he had taken in hand.

SECT. 30. Paul does not quote the simile of clay in the hand of the potter — Temporal afflictions do not evade its force.

⁵⁵⁰ I insert the word 'afterwards' to give clearness. It is evidently the eleventh chapter to which he refers. — There cannot be a more pernicious practice in the interpretation of Scripture (while there is scarcely any more common), than that of dragging in words which are somewhere thereabouts, but really stand in quite a different connection, and have a completely different scope; to ascertain the meaning of a proposed text. An argument, or rather an illustrative exhortation of the eleventh chapter, separated from the preceding by many intervening subjects of discussion, is adduced by Erasmus to determine the meaning of an express affirmation in the early part of the ninth.

⁵⁵¹ According to Paul's distinction of offices in Rom 12.6-8. "Having then gifts, etc.; or he that teaches, on teaching; or he that exhorts, on exhortation."

She takes her third passage from Isa 45.9, "Does the clay say to its potter, what are you making? And from Jer 18.6, "As the clay is in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand." She then says,

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'These words, again, are much stronger combatants in Paul, than in the Prophets from where they are taken. In the Prophets they are spoken about temporal affliction; but Paul applies them to eternal election and reprobation'

Thus she gives Paul a black-eye for his temerity, or for his evaded ignorance.

But, before we see how she proves that neither of these passages exclude Freewill, let me first observe that Paul does not appear to have taken this passage from the Prophets, nor does Diatribe prove that he has. Paul tends to bring in the name of the writer, or to protest that he takes his sentiment from the Scriptures. Here he does neither. It is therefore more probable that Paul uses this general simile (which different writers adopt for the illustration of different causes), in a sense of his own, for the illustration of the cause which he has in hand. Just as he does with that simile, "A little leaven corrupts the whole lump;" in 1Cor. 5.6 he applies this to corruptive manners, and elsewhere he casts it in the teeth of those who were corrupting the word of God — just as Christ also mentions the leaven of Herod and of the Pharisees. [Mk 8.15](#)

So then, although the Prophets may especially speak of temporal affliction, Paul still uses it in a sense of his own, against Freewill. But this is a point which I decline to address now, so that I may not be so often occupied and put off with questions that are foreign to the subject. But I do not know how far it can be shown that Freewill is *not* taken away, if we are clay in the afflicting hand of God; or why Diatribe insists on this distinction. For it is unquestionable that afflictions come upon us from God, against our own will; and we are under the necessity of bearing them, whether we will or not. Nor do we have it in our own power to avert them, even though we are exhorted, it is true, to bear them with a willing mind. ⁵⁵²

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SECT. 31. The cavil from 1Tim 2.20 is repelled.

But it is worthwhile to hear Diatribe prosecute her cavil that, by introducing this simile, Paul does not exclude Freewill in his argument. She objects that there are two absurdities; one she gathers from Scripture, the other from reason. The Scriptural one runs as follows.

When Paul had said in 2Tim. 2.20 that in a great house there are vessels of gold and of silver, and of wood and of earth; some for honour, and some for dishonour; he quickly adds, "if a man cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel for honour, " etc. Upon this, Diatribe reasons thus:

'What could be more foolish than if a man were to say to an earthen urinal, if you purge yourself, you will be a vessel of honour? However, this would be rightly enough said to

⁵⁵² Erasmus says the Prophets speak only of temporal afflictions. What of it? You do not disprove bond-will by this distinction, if it is just. Rather, you adduce an *instance* of bond-will. These afflictions come, lie, remain against our will. How much does this show about freedom? — Voluntariè. We are taught indeed to make God's pleasure ours; but, whether we are enabled to do so or not, his pleasure alone is done. [[Job 2.10](#); [Luk 22.42](#)]

a cask possessed of reason, which has the faculty of accommodating itself to the will of its master when admonished what that will is.'

From these hints, she would gather that the simile does not square in all respects, and it is so far parried, as to prove nothing. I answer, first, to the exclusion of this cavil, that Paul does not say, if a man cleanses himself from his own filth, but from *these*; that is, from the vessels of reproach. So the sense is, that if a man abides in a state of separation from these ungodly teachers, and has not mixed himself with them, then he will be a vessel of honour, etc. But, what if I were also to grant that this text of Paul's has no more efficacy than Diatribe wishes to give to it — that is, that the simile proves nothing?

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How will she prove that Paul means the same thing in that passage from Rom 9.13, which we are discussing? Is it enough to quote another passage, and to have no care at all whether it has the same scope or a different one? There is no easier or commoner failure in interpreting Scripture, as I have often shown, than to parallelize different passages of Scripture, as being alike.⁵⁵³ Thus, the similitude of texts (on the ground by which Diatribe vaunts herself here) is even more inefficacious than this simile of *ours* which she is confuting. But not to be contentious, let me grant that each of these passages in Paul's writings means the same thing; and that a simile does not always, in all particulars, square with the thing illustrated (without controversy, this is true). Indeed, if it did, it would be neither a simile nor a metaphor, but the very thing itself, according to the proverb, 'Simile halts, and does not always run on all fours.'

But here is Diatribe's error and offence: she overlooks the cause of the comparison which ought to be looked at more than all the rest, and she is captious and contentious about words. Rather, the meaning is to be sought, as Hilary says, not only from the words used, but also from the causes which give rise to them. Thus the *force* of a simile depends on the *cause* of the simile. Why then does Diatribe leave out the matter for which Paul uses the simile, and halt at what he says over and above the cause of the simile?

What he says, 'If a man cleanses himself,' belongs to *exhortation*; the phrase, 'In a great house are vessels,' etc., belongs to *teaching*. So that, from all the circumstances of Paul's words and sentiment, you would understand him to be making a declaration about the diversity and use of vessels.

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The meaning is therefore,

'Since so many are now departing from the faith, we have no consolation except that we are sure the foundation of God stands firm, having this seal to it: the Lord knows those who are his, and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord departs from iniquity,'⁵⁵⁴

Thus far we have the *cause* and the *force* of the simile; namely, that the Lord knows those who are his.' Then follows the simile itself; namely, that there are different vessels, some for honour, and some for disgrace.' Here the doctrine ends; namely, 'that vessels do not

⁵⁵³ *Velut similes coaptare*. I have given the *idea* rather than the exact *word*: it is 'pairing, like horses joined together in a chariot.'

⁵⁵⁴ [2Tim 2.19](#).

prepare themselves, but their master prepares them.' Romans 9.21 also means the same thing: 'that the potter has power,' etc. Thus, Paul's simile remains unshaken and it is most efficacious to prove that Freewill is nothing before God. ⁵⁵⁵

After these follows the exhortation, "If any man purges himself from these;" the force of these expressions is well known from what has been said above.

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It does not follow from this, that he can therefore cleanse *himself*. Indeed, if anything is proved by these words, it is that Freewill can cleanse itself without *grace* — since Paul does not say, 'if grace has cleansed anyone,' but 'if he cleanses himself.' However, much has been said about imperative and conjunctive verbs. ⁵⁵⁶ And the simile, let it be observed, is not expressed in conjunctive verbs, but indicative. Just as there are elect and reprobate, so there are vessels of honour and of ignominy. In a word, if this evasion is admitted, Paul's whole argument falls to the ground. But to what purpose would he introduce persons murmuring against God as the potter, if the fault were seen to be in the vessel, and not in the potter? Who would murmur at hearing that one worthy of damnation is damned? ⁵⁵⁷

SECT. 32. Reason's cavil from this simile, set forth in its audacity.

Diatribes culls a second absurdity from Madam Reason, commonly called Human Reason:

'The fault is not to be imputed to the vessel, but to the potter: especially since he is the sort of potter that creates the very clay itself and moulds it. Here is a vessel cast into eternal fire, which has committed no fault except that of not being its own master.'

Nowhere does Diatribe more openly betray herself than in this place. For here is heard what Paul represents profane men as saying: 'Why does he find fault? Who resists his will?' (It is said in other words, it is true, but with the same meaning.) This is that verity which reason can neither apprehend, nor endure. This is what offends so many persons of excellent talents, received for so many ages! Here, truly, they demand that God should act according to human law, and do what seems right to them; or cease to be God.

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The secrets of his Majesty will profit God nothing. Let him give a reason why he is God, or why he wills or does what has no appearance of justice — as if you were calling a cobbler or a tailor to come and stand at your judgment-seat. The flesh does not think it fit to put

⁵⁵⁵ *Coram Deo*. Referring to a distinction which I have already objected to (See Part i. Sect. 25. note ¹); as though there were some objects and considerations with regard to which it is *not* nothing. Erasmus argues against the conclusion drawn from the simile of the potter, chiefly by appealing to 2Tim 2.20-21. Luther says, 1. You mistake the words "from these." 2. If the simile is inefficacious here, this does not prove it so in Rom. 9. You must prove the similitude which you assume. 3. This passage, rightly interpreted, does mean the same thing, and it does prove the very thing in dispute.

The account which Luther gives of this text in its connection and construction, is perfectly correct. Ruin abounds: "the solid foundation of God nevertheless stands;" evil does not contradict His will and plan, but fulfils it. In a great house, there are vessels of two sorts. God's *eternal* separation of his people is manifested, realized, and consummated by their own God-enabled voluntary separation *in time*, through his Spirit working in due season. Θεμελιος (*themelios*) expresses the whole elect church of God laid by him as a sort of huge foundation-stone with inscriptions. See Zec 3.9.

⁵⁵⁶ See pp. 162-165, Part iii, sect. 20.

⁵⁵⁷ On the contrary supposition to that assumed and reasoned by Paul, the vessel is not the potter's workmanship, as having been made by him just as he is; but his own. Why defend the potter then?

such an honour upon God, as to believe that He is just and good, when he speaks and acts above and beyond the rules prescribed in Justinian's Codex, or in the fifth book of Aristotle's Ethics. Let the creative majesty give way to one single dreg of his creation, and let the famed Corycian cave change places with its spectators, and stand in awe of *them*, not they in awe of *it*! So then, it is absurd that God should damn a person who cannot avoid deserving such damnation. And because this is such an absurdity to the flesh, it must therefore be false that, "He has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he wills he hardens." [Rom 9.18](#) But he must be brought to order, and laws must be prescribed for God, so that he may not condemn anyone who has not first deserved it according to our judgment. Thus only can they be satisfied with Paul and his simile; namely, they allow Paul's recalling it to have no meaning. Rather, they so moderate it that, according to Diatribe's explanation, the potter here makes a vessel for dishonour on the ground of previous deservings — just as God rejects some Jews for their unbelief; and takes up the Gentiles for their faith. But if God's work is such that he regards our merits, then why do men murmur and expostulate? How come they say, 'Why does he find fault? Who resists his will?' What need is there for Paul to shut their mouths? For who can wonder (I will not ask, who is indignant or expostulates) if he is condemned by his own deserving? Again; what becomes of the power of the potter to make what he pleases, if he is subjected to merits and laws? He is not allowed to do what he *wills*, but he is required to do what he *should*.

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Respect to merits is quite at variance with the power and liberty of doing what he pleases. This is proven by the householder in the parable, who opposes the liberty of his *will* in the disposal of his good things, to the murmurs of his labourers who demanded a distribution according to *rights*. These are among the considerations which invalidate Diatribe's gloss.

SECT. 33. Exposed further by asking, why not cavil against the salvation of the saved?

But let us suppose, say, that God were such that he regards merits in the *damned*. Will we not equally maintain and allow that he also looks at merits in the *saved*? If we have a mind to follow Reason, then it is equally unjust to have the unworthy be *crowned*, as to have the unworthy be *punished*. Let us conclude, then, that God *must* justify on the ground of previous deservings; or else we would declare him unjust, as being delighted with evil and wicked men, and inviting them to impiety by crowning them with rewards for it. But woe to us — who would then indeed be wretched beings — if this were our God. For who then would be saved?

See how good for nothing the human heart is! When God saves the unworthy without merit — indeed, when he justifies the ungodly despite much demerit — this heart does not accuse Him of unfairness. This heart does not then imperiously demand of him why he wills it, even though it is most unfair according to her own ⁵⁵⁸ judgment. But because it is advantageous and acceptable to herself, she counts it fair and good. But when God condemns the undeserving — seeing that it is *disadvantageous* to herself — this is unfair, this is intolerable. This is where expostulation, murmuring, and blasphemy come in.

⁵⁵⁸ Luther personifies the heart, or rather the wickedness of the heart, which I have therefore ventured to make feminine.

You see, then, that Diatribe and her friends do not judge according to equity in this cause, but according to whether their interest is affected. If she regarded only equity, she would argue with God for crowning the unworthy, just as much as she does for condemning the undeserving.⁵⁵⁹

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She would also commend and extol God for condemning the undeserving, just as much as she does for saving the unworthy. There is equal unfairness in each case if you refer the matter to our own judgment — unless it is not equally unrighteous to commend Cain for his murder and make him a king, as it would be to cast innocent Abel into prison or put him to death. When it is found, then, that reason commends God for saving the unworthy, but finds fault with him for condemning the undeserving, she stands convicted of not commending God as God, but as one who promotes her own personal interest. In other words, she looks at self and her own things in God, and commends them; not at God and the things of God. The truth is, however, that if you are pleased with God for crowning the unworthy, then you should not be displeased with him for condemning the undeserving. If he is just in the one case, then why not in the other? In the former case, he scatters favour and pity upon the unworthy; in the latter, he scatters wrath and severity upon the undeserving. In both cases, it is excessive and unrighteous according to man's judgment, but it is just and true according to His own. For it is incomprehensible at present, how it is just that He crowns the unworthy — but we will *see* how, when we come to that place where He will no longer be believed, but we will behold Him with open face.^{2Cor 3.18} So again, it is incomprehensible at present how it is just that he condemns the undeserving; but we receive it as a matter of faith, until the Son of man is revealed. xxvii

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SECT. 34. Scripture must be understood with qualifications.

Diatribes, however, is sorely displeased with this simile of the potter and the clay, and not a little indignant to be so hunted by it. She is reduced at length to the extremity of producing different passages from Scripture, some of which seem to ascribe all to man, and some, all to grace. And then she contends in her passion, that both these should be understood with a sober explanation,⁵⁶⁰ and are not to be taken strictly. Otherwise, if we urge this simile, she in turn is prepared to urge us with those imperative and conjunctive texts, especially with this one of Paul's: "If a man purges himself from these." Here she represents Paul as contradicting himself, and she attributes all to man, unless a sober explanation comes to his aid. 'If, then, an explanation of the text is allowed here, so as to leave room for grace, then why may not the simile of the potter also allow a qualification, so as to leave room for Freewill?'

⁵⁵⁹ R.C. Sproul once said that what's surprising is not that anyone is damned, but that anyone is saved. WHG

⁵⁶⁰ *Interpretatione sanâ*. I do not venture to render this by 'qualified interpretation,' though this appears to be nearly the meaning: a 'sound' as opposed to extravagant sense is to be assigned to the words, in contradistinction to their simple literal meaning; this, it is implied, would be extravagant and contradictory. A peculiar use of *interpretatio*, which both Cicero and Quintilian recognise; from whom Erasmus no doubt borrowed it, is 'a giving of the sense, instead of rendering the words' — much as the Levites did when they read the law to the people after the captivity. Neh 8.7-8. See Part iii. Sect. 30. note ^f.

I answer that it is no matter to me whether you take the words in a simple sense, or in a double sense, or in a hundred senses. ⁵⁶¹ What I say is that you gain nothing, and prove nothing (of what you seek to gain and prove), by this "sober" explanation. It ought to be proved by it, that Freewill can will nothing good.

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But in this place, "If a man purges himself from these," the form of expression being conjunctive, neither *anything*, nor *nothing* is proved, for Paul is only exhorting. Or if you add Diatribe's consequence, and say that he exhorts in vain if man cannot cleanse himself, then it is proved that Freewill can do everything without grace. And so, Diatribe disproves *herself*.

I still wait for some passage of Scripture therefore, which teaches this explanation; I do not give credit to those who make it up out of their own heads. I deny that any passage is found which ascribes all to man. I also deny that Paul is at variance with himself when he says, "If a man cleanses himself from these." I affirm that the variance in Paul is no less a fiction, than the explanation which she extorts from it is a laboured invention; and *neither* of them is demonstrated. This I indeed confess: that if it is lawful to expand the Scriptures with these consequences and appendages of Diatribe's — such as when she says that injunctions are vain if we do not have the power to fulfil them — then Paul is really at variance with himself, and all of Scripture with him; because then the Scripture is made different from what it was before. Then she would also prove that Freewill can do everything. But what wonder is it if, in that case, what she says elsewhere is also at variance with her statement 'that God is the sole doer of everything?' But *this* Scripture, so added to, is not only at war with *us*, but also with Diatribe herself, who has laid it down that Freewill can will nothing good. Let her therefore deliver *herself* first of all, and say how these two things agree with Paul: Freewill can will nothing good; and 'if a man cleanses himself, he can therefore cleanse himself, or else it is said in vain.' You see, therefore, that Diatribe is plagued to death, and is overcome by this simile of the potter, and that all her effort is to elude the force of it.

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Meanwhile, she is not heeding how much her interpretation injures the cause which she has undertaken to defend, and how she is confuting and making a jest of herself. ⁵⁶²

SECT. 35. Luther has always maintained the perfect consistency of Scripture — illustrates it in affirmed opposites.

On the contrary, as I said before, I have never been ambitious about interpretations, nor have I ever spoken in this manner: "extend the hand;" that is, 'grace shall extend it.' ⁵⁶³ These are Diatribe's fictions about me, said to benefit her own cause. My affirmation has always been that there is no variance in the words of Scripture, and no need for an 'explanation' to untie a knot. It is the assertors of Freewill who make knots where there

⁵⁶¹ *Simpliciter, dupliciter, centuplic.* Luther makes a pun on the word *simpliciter*, which is properly opposed to figurative, or tropical.

⁵⁶² All this alleged inconsistency in Scripture is the fruit of your additions; by the aid of which you create inconsistencies, but you also contradict your own positions.

⁵⁶³ *Affectavimus, extende.* See above, Sect. 4. text and notes; particularly note ^u.

are none, ⁵⁶⁴ and dream up discrepancies for themselves. For example; those two sayings, "If a man cleanses himself," and "God works all in all," are in no way opposite. Nor is it necessary (to untie a knot) to say, God does something, and man does something. The former of these texts is a conjunctive sentence, which neither affirms nor denies any work or power in man, but it prescribes what work or power there *ought* to be in a man. There is nothing figurative here, nothing which needs explanation: the words are simple, the sense is simple, if you do not add consequences and corruptives in the manner of Diatribe. Then, indeed, the sense would become unsound. But whose fault would that be? Not the text's, but its corrupter's.

The latter text, "God works all in all," is an indicative sentence, affirming that all work, all power is God's. In what respect, then, do two places disagree, of which one has nothing to do with the power of man, and the other ascribes all to God?

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Rather, do they not most perfectly agree with each other? But Diatribe is so plunged over head and ears, choked and sobbed, ⁵⁶⁵ by entertaining this carnal thought, 'that it is vain to command impossibilities,' that she is not able to restrain herself. Whenever she hears an imperative or conjunctive verb, she at once appends her own indicative consequences to it, saying, 'There is something commanded, therefore we can do it, otherwise it would have been folly to command it.' Upon this, she sallies forth and boasts of her victories everywhere, as though she had demonstrated that those consequences, together with her own imagination, were as much a settled thing, as divine authority. Upon this, she does not hesitate to pronounce that in some passages of Scripture, everything is ascribed to man; or that there is therefore a discrepancy, a repugnancy in those places, which must be obviated by an explanation. She does not see that all this is the figment of her own brain, without a single letter of Scripture to confirm it — that besides this, it is a figment of such a kind that, if admitted, it would confute no one more stoutly than herself. For would she not prove by it (if she proves anything), that Freewill can do everything? This is the express contrary to what she has undertaken to prove.

SECT. 36. In merit and reward, etc., she contradicts herself — proves an absurdity, and cannot tell what she means to prove. But in fact, she proves nothing — Paul stands.

It is upon the same principle that she so often repeats the words,

'If man does nothing, there is no room for merit; and where there is no place for merit, there is no place for punishment or reward. '

Again she does not see how much more stoutly she confutes herself by these carnal arguments, than she does me.

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For what do these consequences prove, except that all attainable merit is by Freewill? What room will there be then for grace? Besides, if you say Freewill earns a very little, and

⁵⁶⁴ *Nodos in scirpo quaerunt*. See above, Part i. Sect.26. note ¹.

⁵⁶⁵ *Corrupta*. The figure is that of a man drowned; and the last term expresses the state of his substance, when now it has been long underwater. It is like Virgil's '*cererem corruptam indis*.'

grace earns the rest, then why does Freewill receive the whole reward? Will we also invent a very small degree of reward for her? If there must be a place for merit so that there may be a place for reward, then the merit should be as big as the reward. But why do I waste my words and my time about what is nothing? Even if all of what Diatribe is contriving were built up and could stand; and even if it were partly man's work, and partly God's work, that we have merit — *still*, they cannot define this work in which our merit consists, of what sort and how extensive it is — so that, we are disputing about goats' hair. ⁵⁶⁶

Well then, she proves none of those things which she asserts — neither discrepancy, nor a qualified interpretation — nor can she exhibit a text of Scripture which ascribes all to man. Rather, all these things are phantasms of her own imagination. Paul's simile of the potter and his clay therefore maintains its ground, unhurt and irresistible, a proof that it is not of our own will, what sort of vessels we are formed into. And those exhortations of Paul's, "If a man purges himself," and the like, are models to which we ought to be conformed, but they are no proofs of either our performance or our endeavour. Let this suffice with respect to those passages about Pharaoh's hardening, about Esau, and about the potter.

SECT. 37. Gen. 6.3 maintained.

Diatribe comes at length to those passages which are cited by Luther in opposition to Freewill, intending to confute *them* also. The first of them is Gen 6.3, "My Spirit shall not always abide in man, because he is flesh." She confutes this passage in various ways.

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First, she urges that "flesh" does not signify 'sinful affection' here, but 'infirmity.'

Secondly, she expands Moses' text. Because his saying pertains to the men of that age, not to the whole human race, she would therefore say, 'in *those* men;' — yet again, she is not even applying it to all the men of that age, since Noah is excepted.

Lastly, she urges that this saying imports something else in the Hebrew language; that it refers to the clemency and not the severity of God, according to Jerome. Possibly she means to persuade us that, because this saying does not pertain to Noah but to the wicked, the severity and not the clemency of God therefore pertains to Noah; and the clemency and not the severity of God pertains to the wicked!

But we will pass over these fooleries of Diatribe's, who everywhere tells us that she considers the Scriptures a fable. I do not care what Jerome says in his trifling way here. It is certain that he proves nothing. And we are not inquiring what Jerome thinks, but what the Scripture means. Let the perverters of Scripture pretend that the Spirit of God means his indignation. I affirm that she fails in her proof in two ways: *first*, she cannot produce a single text of Scripture in which the Spirit of God means God's indignation; on the contrary, kindness and sweetness are everywhere ascribed to him; *secondly*, if she could by any means prove that it is somewhere or other taken for indignation, still she cannot directly prove that it necessarily follows that it must also be taken so here. Again, let her pretend that the flesh is taken for infirmity; in the same degree, she still proves nothing. For, though Paul calls the Corinthians *carnal*, he certainly does not mean to impute

⁵⁶⁶ *Land caprind*. See above, Part ii. Sect. 3. note ¹.

infirmity to them, but *fault* — complaining as he does, that they were oppressed with sects and parties. This is not infirmity, or incapacity to receive more solid doctrine, but the old leaven of malice, which he commands them to purge out.

326-327 [\[long note\]](#)

Let us examine the Hebrew. "My Spirit shall not always be judging man, because he is flesh,' This is word for word what Moses says. ^{xxviii} And if we would give up our own dreams, the words are sufficiently clear and manifest, I think, as they stand there. But the words which go before, and which follow after, connected as they are with bringing on the flood, sufficiently show that they are the expressions of an angry God. They were occasioned by the fact that the sons of men were marrying wives through the mere lust of the flesh, and then oppressing the earth with tyranny. This compelled God to hasten the flood, through his anger, scarcely allowing Him to defer for an hundred years what he would otherwise never have brought upon the earth. Read Moses carefully, and you will see that he clearly means this. If you are free to sport with the Scriptures, as if you were looking for scraps and shreds of Virgil in them, ⁵⁶⁷ then what wonder is it that they are obscure, or that you set up not only Freewill, but even Divine will through them. This truly is untying knots and putting an end to questions by a "qualified interpretation"! Jerome and his friend Origen have filled the world with these trifling conceits, and have been the originators of this pestilent precedent, for not regarding the simplicity of Scripture. ⁵⁶⁸

It was enough for me, that it be proved from this text, that divine authority calls men flesh — and such a manner of flesh, that the Spirit of God could not continue among them, but at a fixed period must be withdrawn from them. He explains shortly what he means by declaring that his Spirit will not always judge among men, by prescribing the space of a hundred and twenty years, during which he would still judge. He opposes the Spirit to the flesh because men, being flesh, do not receive the Spirit; and He, being Spirit, cannot approve the flesh.

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From this it would arise, that he must be withdrawn after a hundred and twenty years. Hence, we may understand the passage in Moses thus:

'My Spirit, which is in Noah and my other saints, reproves those wicked men by the word they preach, and by the holy life they lead (for to judge among men is to exercise the ministry of the word among them ⁵⁶⁹ — to reprove, rebuke and entreat, in season and out of season). But it was in vain. For being blinded and hardened by the flesh, they become worse the more they are judged. This is just as it is whenever the word of God comes into the world: men are made worse, the more they are instructed. [Rom 7.7](#) And this is the reason why the wrath of God is now hastened, just as the flood was also hastened in that day. Not only do men sin now-a-days, but even grace is despised, and as Christ says, 'Light has come, but men hate light.' [Joh 3.20](#)

⁵⁶⁷ *Virgilicentonas*. More literally, *Virgilian centos*.

⁵⁶⁸ *Simplicitati scripturarum studeretur*. i.e., taking care to maintain a plain sense where it is practicable, in opposition to a figurative one.

⁵⁶⁹ *Officio verbi inter eos agere*. Implying more than mere preaching; he has before said 'per verbum praedicationis et vitam piorum:' it is word administered by mouth, and life.

Therefore, since men are flesh, as God himself testifies, they can mind nothing but the flesh; so that Freewill can have no power but to commit sin: and since they grow worse, even with the Spirit of God calling among them and teaching them, what would they do when left to themselves without the Spirit of God? Nor does it address the purpose here, that Moses speaks of the men of *that age*. The same is true of *all* men, since all are flesh. As Christ says in Joh 3.6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." On the same occasion, he teaches us himself how great a malady this is, when he says, "No one can enter into the kingdom of God, unless he is born again."

329-330 [long note]

Let the Christian know, therefore, that Origen and Jerome, and all their tribe, are guilty of a pernicious error in denying that *the flesh* means *ungodly affection* in these places. For that expression in 1Cor 3.3, "you are yet carnal," speaks of ungodliness. Paul means that they had ungodly persons still among them; and further, that the godly, so far as they mind carnal things, are carnal, even though they have been justified by the Spirit.

In short, you will observe in Scripture that wherever the flesh is treated in opposition to the Spirit, you may almost always understand that the flesh means everything that is contrary to the Spirit. For instance; "The flesh profits nothing." But where it is treated absolutely, you may know that it denotes the bodily nature and condition: such as, "The two shall be one flesh." "My flesh is food indeed." "The word was made flesh." In these places, you may change the Hebrew idiom and say 'body,' instead of flesh. The Hebrew language expresses by one word, 'flesh,' what we do by the two words 'flesh' and 'body.' I wish indeed that it had been so translated by distinct terms throughout the whole canon of Scripture, without exception. So that, my text from Gen 6.3 will maintain its place boldly, I think, as the opponent of Freewill, since it is proved that the flesh, as spoken of here, is that same substance of which Paul speaks in Romans 8: "neither can it be subjected to the will of God" We will see this when we come to that passage. And Diatribe herself says that it can will nothing good. ^{xxix}

SECT. 38. Gen 8.21 and 6.5 maintained.

The second passage is from Gen. 8.21, "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth." And in chap. 6, "Every thought of man's heart is intent upon evil continually." Diatribe puts this off by saying, 'The proneness to evil, which is in most men, does not altogether take away the freedom of the will.'

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But does God, I ask, speak of *most* men rather than *all* men, when as if repenting himself after the flood, He promises to those who remained of men, and to those who would come after, that he would no longer bring a flood because of man? He subjoins as the reason, that man is prone to evil. It is as if he said, 'If man's wickedness were to be regarded, there would never be any ceasing from a flood. But from now on, I do not mean to look at man's deservings,' etc. So you see, God affirms that men were evil both *before* the flood and *after* it; making what Diatribe says about *most men* nothing. Then again, this proneness or propensity to evil seems a matter of small moment to Diatribe; as though it were within the limits of our own power to raise it up, ⁵⁷⁰ or to restrain it. But the Scripture expresses

⁵⁷⁰ *Erigere*. See Part iii. Sect. 38. note ⁿ .

by this proneness, that constant seizure and impulse of the will towards evil. Why has Diatribe not consulted the Hebrew text here also? Moses says nothing about proneness in it; so that, you have no ground for cavilling. For thus it is written in chap. 6: "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil all his days." He does not say intent upon, or prone to evil, but absolutely evil; and nothing but evil is imagined and thought of by man all his life. The nature of its wickedness is described: that it neither does, nor can do otherwise, seeing that it is evil. For an evil tree cannot bear any fruit other than evil, according to Christ's testimony. [Mat 7.17](#)

As for Diatribe's cavil, 'Why is space given for repentance, if repentance is in no way dependent on the will, but everything is wrought by necessity?' my reply is that you may say the same about all the precepts of God. Why does he enjoin, if all things happen by necessity? He commands, that he may instruct and admonish men what they *ought* to do, so that having been humbled by the recognition of their own wickedness, they may attain to grace, as abundantly declared earlier. ⁵⁷¹ So that this text, also, still stands its ground invincibly as the antagonist of Freewill.

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SECT. 39. Isa 40.2 maintained.

The third passage is Isaiah 40.2: "She has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Jerome, she says, interprets it as concerning divine vengeance, not as grace given in return for evil deeds. This means that if 'Jerome says so, it is therefore true.' I affirm that Isaiah asserts a certain proposition in most express words, and she throws Jerome in my face — a man, to speak in the gentlest terms, of no judgment or diligence. What has become of that promise, on the faith of which we made a compact, that we would plead the Scriptures themselves, and not human commentaries? ⁵⁷²

This whole chapter of Isaiah, according to the Evangelists, speaks of remission of sins as announced by the Gospel. In it they affirm that "the voice of him that cries" pertains to John the Baptist. Now, is it to be endured that Jerome, in his manner, imposes Jewish blindness on us as to the historical sense of the passage, and then imposes his own silly conceits by way of allegory, so that, through a perversion of grammar, we might understand a passage which speaks of remission, to speak of vengeance instead? What sort of vengeance is it, I ask, which has been fulfilled by preaching Christ? ⁵⁷³

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⁵⁷¹ See above Part iii. Sect. 22. etc.

⁵⁷² See Part ii. Sect. 1.

⁵⁷³ There is a vengeance connected with the preaching of Christ; yes, and a necessary part of that preaching. "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." The kingdom of God has enemies who would not be reigned over by the King, to be trodden under foot, as well as princes to be seated on thrones. There are souls to be cut off among the people by not hearing that Prophet, as well as souls to be gathered by hearing him. "We are to God a sweet savour of Christ in those who are saved and in those who perish. To the one we are a savour of life unto life; and to the other a savour of death unto death." [2Cor 2.15-16](#) The Lord Jesus said of his Jewish opposers, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin." [Joh 15.22](#) The manifestation of what is in man — of the Satanic enmity of the human heart — is peculiarly effected by the preaching of Christ. But it is not the *form* of that dispensation to condemn ("God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world" [Joh 3.17](#)), though aggravated guilt and increased condemnation are the actual result of his coming. Nor is Luther's argument invalidated by this result: the people to be comforted are not objects of vengeance, but of favour.

But let us look at the words themselves in the Hebrew. "Be comforted, He says; be comforted, O my people;" or, "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." [Isa 40.1](#) I do not imagine that the one who commands consolation, inflicts vengeance. It then follows; "speak to the heart of Jerusalem and proclaim to her." To *speak to the heart* is a Hebraism meaning, "to speak good, sweet and soothing things," as in Gen 34.3. Sichem speaks to the heart of Dinah, whom he had defiled. That is, he soothed her in her sadness with soft words — as our translation has it. He explains what those good and sweet things are, which God has commanded to be spoken for their consolation, by saying, "For her warfare is finished, in that *her iniquity is pardoned*; seeing that she has received from the Lord's hand, double for all her sins." — 'Warfare,' which our manuscripts faultily render 'malice,' appears to the audacious Jewish grammaticists,⁵⁷⁴ to denote a stated time. For thus they understand Job 7.1: "The life of man on the earth is *warfare*;" that is, there is a fixed time appointed to him. I prefer considering the term 'warfare' to be used literally, according to its grammatical sense; understanding Isaiah to speak of the course and labour of the people under the law, which was like that of combatants in the stadium.

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For thus Paul chooses to compare both the preachers and hearers of the word to soldiers — as when he commands Timothy to fight as a good soldier, and to war a good warfare. And he represents the Corinthians as running in a race course. So again, "No man is crowned unless he strives lawfully." He clothes both the Ephesians and the Thessalonians with armour, and boasts that he himself has fought the good fight, and the like in other places.⁵⁷⁵ So too in 1Kings [*i.e.*, 1Samuel] it is written in the Hebrew text, that the sons of Eli slept with the women who were performing service (literally, *warring*) at the door of the tabernacle of the covenant. Moses also mentions their warfare in Exodus.⁵⁷⁶ Hence too, their God is called the Lord of *Sabaoth*; that is, the Lord of warfare or of armies.

Isaiah therefore declares that the warfare of a legal people with which they were harassed under the law, would be finished. According to the testimony of Peter in Acts 15.8-10, it is like an insupportable burden — being delivered from the law, they have been translated into the new service of the Spirit.

Moreover, this end of their most hard service, and this succession of a new and most free one, is not be given to them through their merit (since they could not even bear that service), but rather through their demerit. For their iniquity was freely forgiven them, and therefore their warfare is finished. Here are no obscure or ambiguous words. He says that their warfare is finished, because their iniquity is forgiven them — plainly intimating that, like soldiers under the law, they had not fulfilled the law, nor could they have fulfilled it, but they had been warring in the service of sin, and had been sinner soldiers.

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As if God were to say, 'If I would have the law fulfilled by them, then I am compelled to forgive them their sins; indeed, I am compelled at the same time to take away the law,

⁵⁷⁴ *Grammatistis*. Not *grammaticus*, but *grammatista*, a name of reproach, which he applies here to the Jewish Rabbins who were sciolists in literature [[self-proclaimed experts](#)], though vast pretenders, and took great liberties with the sacred text. See above, Sect. 4. note ¹.

⁵⁷⁵ 2Tim 2.3; 1Tim 6.12; 1Cor 9.24-27; 2Tim 2.5; Eph 6; 1Th 5; 2Tim 4.7.

⁵⁷⁶ Exod. 38.8. Compare 1Sam 2.22.

because I see that they cannot help but sin. And they do that most of all when they are militating — that is, labouring to press the model of the law ⁵⁷⁷ — through their own strength.' The Hebrew phrase "her iniquity has been forgiven," denotes 'gratuitous good pleasure,' by which iniquity is made a present of (it is forgiven) without any merit; indeed, with absolute demerit. This is what he subjoins.

"For she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins." This, as I have said, means not only the remission of sins, but a finished warfare. This is nothing else but — the law being taken away, which was the strength of sin; and sin being forgiven, which was the sting of death — to reign in twofold liberty, through the victory of Jesus Christ. This is what Isaiah means by saying, "from the hand of the Lord." They have not obtained these things by their own strength or merits, but have received them through the conquests and free gift of Christ. "In all their sins," is another Hebraism; agreeing with what is expressed in Latin by *for* or *on account of* their sins — just as in Hosea 12.12 it is said that Jacob served *in* his wife; that is, *for* his wife. And in the 17th Psalm, they have compassed me round *in* my soul; that is, *for* my soul. Isaiah therefore represents our merits, figuratively, to be the procuring cause of this twofold liberty; namely, the finished warfare of the law, and the forgiveness of sin; this is because our merits have only been sins, and *all* of them sins. [Isa 64.6](#)

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Shall we then suffer this most beautiful and invincible text *against* Freewill to be polluted with Jewish filth, such as Jerome and Diatribe have daubed on it? God forbid! On the contrary, my friend Isaiah keeps his ground as the conqueror of Freewill. He makes it clear that grace is given, not for the merits or endeavours of Freewill, but for its sins and demerits; and that Freewill, by its own powers, can do nothing but maintain the warfare of sin. For even the very law, supposedly given as a help to her, was an intolerable burden; it made her yet more a sinner while militating under it. ⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁷ *Legem exprimere*. Properly, 'to press, wring, strain, or squeeze out;' hence, it is applied figuratively to models in wax, marble, or canvass.

⁵⁷⁸ *Militantem*. The word 'milito,' which occurs in diverse forms throughout this passage, expresses 'the whole state of a soldier' as to doing and suffering, in preparation, conflict, and endurance. — Luther goes far afield for his solution and defence of this text. 1. Warfare is her legal service. 2. She only sinned in that service. 3. She was rewarded for sin, not merit. — The truth, if I am not mistaken, lies nearer home. Why not understand "double for all her sins" as a phrase to denote that, 'great and manifold as her sins had been, she was receiving *double* in divine favour.' *Double* is a finite put for an infinite. (So in Isa. 61.7; Jer 16.18; 17.18; Zec 9.12; Rev 18.6 .) Her *warfare* is the whole interval of her toil and labour. — I cannot help but think that the prophecy in its consummation is still future; though it has already received a partial fulfilment. Jerusalem's warfare is not yet accomplished: but the whole space from the Lord's first coming in the flesh to his coming in glory hereafter, is comprehended in this prophecy in which it will at length be seen that the Jerusalem which then was, had an interest. The *visible* church received this double at the coming, or rather at the ascension, of the Lord Jesus; when her covenant of condemnation was exchanged for a covenant of righteousness. But the prophecy looks farther; even to the end of that new dispensation which John Baptist began, when the true church "the church of the first-born, which are written in heaven" shall receive its consummation and bliss; and the national Israel, which has been running parallel with it throughout the whole of its history, shall receive and enjoy what it has never yet truly possessed: its Canaan and its Temple. Thus, I neither understand the 'warfare,' nor the 'double,' with Luther's strictness. I might rather say, *farfetched-ness*. Nor do I place this text where he would place it, as a testimony against Freewill. It is only by implication a testimony against Freewill; it is a broad, palpable testimony to "reigning grace." Sin is requited with superabounding, free favour; and it is implied that there has been, and could be, nothing but sin going before. The hypothetical and therefore questionable nature of Luther's interpretation, is manifested by his own testimonies: all rest upon 'militia,' which he makes *law-service*. But does he not *cite* the Gospel, which is also called a warfare? To whom are these sayings in Timothy, the Corinthians, Ephesians, etc. addressed?

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SECT. 40. Episode on God's help — Cornelius rescued.

Diatribē argues that,

'Even though sin abounds through the law, and where sin has abounded, grace also abounds — it does not follow from this, that man, assisted by the help of God (even before grace makes him acceptable), cannot prepare himself for divine favour, by means of morally good works.'

I wonder if Diatribē is speaking here of her own head, and has not culled this flower from some document sent or obtained from some other quarter, which she has entwined into her own nosegay.⁵⁷⁹ She neither sees nor hears what her own words mean. If sin abounds by the law, how is it possible that a man can prepare himself by moral works for the divine favour? How can *works* profit, when the *law* does not profit? Or what else is it for sin to abound by the law, if not that works done according to the law are sins? But more about this in another place. Then, what is it that she says? That 'man assisted by the help of God can prepare himself by good works?' Are we arguing about God's help, or about Freewill? What is *not* possible for divine help? But this is just what I said: Diatribē despises the cause that she is pleading; and therefore she snores and gapes so, in the midst of her talk.

She adduces Cornelius the centurion, as an example of a man whose prayers and alms pleased God, *before* he was yet baptized and inspired with the Holy Spirit.

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I too have read Luke's account in the Acts; but I have never found a single syllable which indicates that the works of Cornelius were morally good without the Holy Spirit, as Diatribē dreams. On the contrary, I find that he was a just man, and one who feared God: for so Luke calls him. But for a man to be called a just man and one who fears God, without the Holy Spirit, is to call Belial *Christ*.⁵⁸⁰ — Then again, the whole argument in that passage goes to prove that Cornelius was clean in the sight of God.⁵⁸¹ Even the vision which was sent down from heaven to Peter, and which also rebuked him, testifies of this. Indeed, the righteousness and faith of Cornelius are celebrated by Luke in such great words, and by such great deeds, that it is impossible to doubt them. Diatribē however, with her friends the Sophists, contrives to be blind and to see the contrary — doing so with her eyes open, amidst the clearest light of words and evidence of facts. Such is her lack of diligence in reading and observing the Scriptures — which in *that* case, may well be defamed as obscure and ambiguous. What, clean though he had not yet been baptized,

⁵⁷⁹ *A bouquet or corsage. Libro suo inseruerit.* I have ventured to maintain Luther's figure of 'decerpserit.'

⁵⁸⁰ We receive the Spirit at conversion. Till then, all our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isa 64.6). Only at conversion does the blood of Christ cleanse our sins, and the grace of God in Christ cover us. Thus, the Spirit's presence is evidence of that faith which makes us wholly acceptable to God (Rom 8.9), and which turns our sinful works into "good works." For without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb 11.6). To say that our works prior to conversion "prepare us for grace," is to say they make us worthy of receiving grace. It is to proclaim salvation by works, not of grace. God's grace, His favor, is a gift that cannot be earned, or else it is not a gift — it is only wages due the worker (Rom 4.4). — WHG

⁵⁸¹ He was declared clean *by God* (Act 10.15, 28), through faith (10.30-31), not by works. However, he did not yet have an object for his faith (as with those in the Old Testament). He was an elect of God, drawn to Christ *by God*, for salvation (Joh 6.44). God sent Peter to him with the only means of salvation, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Cornelius *believed* the Gospel (10.43). The union with Christ was then consummated with the gift of the Holy Spirit (10.44). See Vaughan's next note concerning regeneration ("quickening"). — WHG

and had not yet heard the testimony of Christ's resurrection! Does it follow from this that he did not have the Holy Spirit? On the same principle, you would say that John the Baptist also, with his father and mother — next, Christ's mother, and Simeon — did not have the Spirit! But away with such thick darkness! ⁵⁸²

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SECT. 41. Isaiah 40.6-7 maintained.

My fourth text is taken from the same chapter of Isaiah, "All flesh is grass, and all its glory as the flower of grass; the grass withers, and its flower falls, because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it;" etc. This seems to my Diatribe, to suffer great violence when it drawn to the subject of grace and Freewill. Why so, I ask? Because Jerome, she says, takes the Spirit for *indignation*, and the flesh for the *infirm state of man*, which cannot stand against God. Again, the trifling conceits of Jerome are presented to me, instead of Isaiah. I have a harder fight to maintain against the weariness with which Diatribe's carelessness consumes me, than against Diatribe herself. But I have very recently said what I think of Jerome's sentiment. Let us compare Diatribe's *self* with herself. Flesh, she says, is the infirm state of man. Spirit is the divine indignation. Does the divine indignation have nothing else to dry up, then, but only this wretched and infirm condition of man, which it should rather raise up than destroy?

But this is a finer touch still. —

'The flower of grass is the glory which arises from prosperity with respect to bodily things. The Jews gloried in their temple, in circumcision, and in their sacrifices: the Greeks in their wisdom.'

So then, the *flower of grass* and the *glory of the flesh* is the righteousness of works, and the wisdom of the world. How is it then, that righteousness and wisdom are called bodily things by Diatribe? What must then be said to Isaiah, who explains himself in words that are not figurative, where he says, "Truly the people are grass." He does not say, "Truly the infirm condition of man is grass," but "the people are grass;" and he asserts it with an oath. What are the people then? Only the infirm condition of man? Indeed, I do not know what Jerome means by 'the infirm condition of man;' whether he means 'the creature itself,' or 'the wretched lot and state of man.'

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But, whichever of the two it is, the divine indignation assuredly 'carries off wonderful praise and ample spoils,' ⁵⁸³ in drying up a wretched creature, or men who are in a state of unhappiness, instead of scattering the proud, and pulling down the mighty from their seat, and sending the rich away empty; as Mary sings. ⁵⁸⁴

SECT. 42. The true interpretation.

⁵⁸² Cornelius, if I distinguish rightly, was a quickened man, but not a converted man: one begotten again from death by the Holy Ghost, but not yet turned to the Lord — for how could he be turned to whom he did not know? And how could he know of whom he had not heard? But he had already been brought by the Spirit of Christ into a state to receive Him when he was manifested by preaching; and the Lord had reserved, and still reserves, this honour for his outward word, and for his accredited ambassadors.

⁵⁸³ Virg. *Æn.* iv. 93.

⁵⁸⁴ Luk 1.51-52.

But let us bid adieu to our spectres, and follow Isaiah. The people, he says, are *grass*. Now, the people are not merely flesh, or the infirm state of human nature. Rather, the word comprehends whatever is contained among the people: namely, rich men, wise men, just men, holy men — unless the Pharisees, elders, princes, chiefs, rich, etc. were not of the people of the Jews. Its glory is rightly called the flower of grass; for they boasted of their dominion, of their government, especially their law, of God, of righteousness and wisdom; as Paul argues in Romans 2, 3, 9. When Isaiah therefore says, "*all* flesh;" what else is this if not *all* the grass, or *all* the people? For he does not simply say, "flesh," but "all flesh." Now, what pertains to the people is their soul, body, mind, reason, judgment, and whatever else can be mentioned or discovered that is most excellent in man. For the one who says "all *flesh* is grass" excepts no one, but the Spirit which dries up the grass. Neither does the one who says, "the *people* are grass" omit anything. Let there be Freewill, then; let there be whatever is accounted highest and lowest in the people; Isaiah calls *all* of this "flesh" and "grass," seeing that these three nouns — *flesh*, *grass*, *people* — mean the same thing in this place, according to the interpretation of the very author of the book.

Then again, you yourself affirm that the wisdom of the Greeks, and the righteousness of the Jews, which were dried up by the Gospel, are grass, or the flower of grass.

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Do you think that wisdom was not the most excellent thing which the Greeks possessed? Do you think that righteousness was not the most excellent thing which the Jews could work? Show me anything that was more excellent than these. What becomes of your confidence, then, by which I suppose you gave even Philip Melancthon a black-eye? ⁵⁸⁵

'If any man contends that what is best in man is nothing but flesh — that is to say, wickedness — I would be ready to agree with him, provided he but shows by Scripture testimonies, that what he asserts is true.'

You have Isaiah proclaiming here with a loud voice, that the *people*, those who do not have the Spirit of the Lord, is *flesh* — although even this loud voice does not make you hear. You have your own confession (made perhaps without knowing what you were saying), that the wisdom of the Greeks is *grass*, or the *glory of grass*; which is the same as calling it flesh. Unless you choose, instead, to contend that the wisdom of the Greeks does not pertain to reason, or to 'the leading thing,' ⁵⁸⁶ as you call it by a Greek term — the principal part of man. Hear *yourself* at least — if you despise me — when being taken captive by the force of truth, you affirm what is right. You have John declaring, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." [Joh 3.6](#) This passage evidently proves that what is not born of the Spirit, is flesh. Otherwise that division of Christ would not stand, by which he divides all men into two parties, the flesh and the Spirit. You have the nerve to pass over this passage, I say, as if it did not teach you what you were demanding. ⁵⁸⁷

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⁵⁸⁵ *Etiam Philippum sugillabas*. Philip Melancthon maintained a good deal of friendly intercourse with Erasmus, and was much more to his mind than Luther and the rest of the reformers: this explains the use of *etiam* here.

⁵⁸⁶ Το ηγεμονικον, *hegemonikon*.

⁵⁸⁷ Referring to his challenge above; 'provided he but show,' etc.

And you scurry away to another subject, as is your manner. You hold out to us meanwhile, how John says, 'Believers are born of God, and made sons of God; indeed, gods and new creatures.' ⁵⁸⁸ You give no heed to the conclusion which that division leads to, but you teach us in superfluous words, who those are whom the other part of the division comprehends. You trust in your rhetoric, as if there was nobody to observe this most crafty transition and dissimulation of yours. ⁵⁸⁹

It is hard to give you credit for not being artful and chameleon-like here. The man who labours in the Scriptures with the wiliness and hypocrisy which you employ over them, may safely enough profess that he is not yet taught by the Scriptures, but that he wishes to be taught.

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On the contrary, he wishes nothing less, and only chatters in this way, so that he may disparage that most clear light which is in the Scriptures, and may give a blessing to his own obstinacy. Thus the Jews maintain to this day, that what Christ, and the Apostles, and the Church have taught, is not proved by the Scriptures. Heretics cannot be taught anything by the Scriptures. The Papists have not yet been taught by the Scriptures, though even the stones cry out the truth. Perhaps you are waiting for a passage to be produced from the Scriptures, which will consist of these letters and syllables: 'The principal part in man is flesh;' or 'that which is most excellent in man is flesh.' And till then, you mean to march off as an invincible conqueror. This is as if the Jews demanded that a sentence be produced from the Prophets consisting of these words: 'Jesus, the son of a carpenter, born of the Virgin Mary at Bethlehem, is the Messiah, and the Son of God.'

Here, where you are compelled to admit our conclusion by this manifest sentiment, you instead prescribe the letters and syllables which we are to produce for you. Elsewhere, when you are conquered both by the letters and the sentiment, you have your *tropes*; your *knots* to untie, and your "sober explanation." Everywhere you find something to oppose to the divine Scriptures. And this is no wonder, when you do nothing but search for something to oppose to them. One time you run to the interpretations of the ancients; another time to the absurdities of reason. And when neither of these serve your purpose, you talk about things that are afar off, and things that are nearby, to avoid being confined

⁵⁸⁸ 1Joh 5.1; Joh 10.35; 2Cor 5.17.

⁵⁸⁹ Luther's argument is, Freewill is called 'flesh' here; for it is part of 'the people' — which, with all that is in it, gets the name of 'flesh' here: for 'people,' 'flesh,' 'grass,' are declared by Isaiah himself to be the same thing. — You should submit according to your own previous confession, therefore; and with respect to the real nature of flesh, we have it from our Lord's own mouth in John 3. — I do not fall in with his reasoning: if flesh means what he says it does in John, then must it also mean the same here? But why must it mean what he says, in John? Why not there as well as here mean 'the whole substance and constitution of man,' not 'body only,' nor 'ungodly affection.' (See above, Sect. 37. note ⁱ.) 'All flesh,' is 'all human beings;' 'the people' generally distinguishes the Jews from the rest of the world; and so gives emphasis here. It is man's mortality, moreover, rather than his sin, which is brought into view here; as set in contrast with the immutability of God. (See the whole context from ver. 3 to ver. 8, and compare with 1Pet 1.24-25.) The great subject of the prophecy is, the glory Jehovah shall be revealed. God — who is not, like man, grass and a liar — has spoken it. In the word 'grass,' I follow our English version, which has the authority of the original text — קָצִיר herba virens a קָצִיר viruit. But Luther has *faenum*; grass in the state of 'cut and withered.' Thus, again we have a testimony against Freewill by implication only. And though we need not wonder, as Erasmus does, how this should be dragged into the dispute (for if man is grass, what is his will?), I cannot help remarking what I will have occasion to do hereafter more freely: that Luther would have done wisely in keeping back some of his witnesses.

to the text immediately before you. What shall I say? Proteus is no Proteus, compared with you. But you cannot slip out of our hands even by these artifices.

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What victories did the Arians boast, because those letters and syllables *ομοωσιος* (*homooousios*)⁵⁹⁰ were not contained in the Scriptures: considering it nothing, that the reality affirmed by *that* word is most decisively proved by *other* words. But let even impiety and iniquity herself judge whether this is the acting of a good mind — I will not say of a pious one — which desires to be instructed.

Take your victory, then — I confess myself conquered — these letters and syllables, 'the most excellent thing in man is but flesh,' are not found in the Scriptures. But do you see what sort of a victory you have, when I prove that testimonies are found in the greatest abundance to the fact that not one portion, or the most excellent thing in man— or the principal part of man — is flesh; but that the *whole* man is flesh. And not only so, but that the *whole people* is flesh. And as though this were not enough, that the *whole human race* is flesh. For Christ says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Untie your knots, imagine your tropes, follow the interpretation of the ancients, or turn elsewhere and discourse about the Trojan war, so that you may not see or hear the text which is before you. It is not matter of faith with us, but we both see and feel that the whole human race is *born of the flesh*. We are therefore compelled to believe what we do not see: namely, that the whole human race *is flesh*, on the authority of Christ's teaching. Now, therefore, we leave it to the Sophists to doubt and dispute whether the *hegemonikon*, or leading part in man, is comprehended in the *whole* man, the *whole* people, the *whole* race of man. We know that in the subject, 'whole human race,' is comprehended the body and the soul, with all their powers and operations, with all their vices and virtues, with all their folly and wisdom, with all their justice and injustice.

345-346 [long note]

All things are flesh because all things mind the flesh (*i.e.*, the things which are their own), and are destitute of the glory of God and of the Spirit of God, as Paul says in Rom. 3.^{xxx}

SECT. 43. Heathen virtue is God's abhorrence.

As to what you say, therefore, that:

'Every affection⁵⁹¹ of man is not flesh, but there is affection which is called soul, there is affection which is called spirit. By the latter, we strive after whatever things are honourable⁵⁹² — just as the philosophers strove, who taught that death should be encountered a thousand times sooner than allow ourselves in any base act, even if we knew that men would be ignorant of it, and God would forgive it.'

⁵⁹⁰ Referring to the Council at Nicea in 325, when it was concluded that the Father and Son are of the same substance, Gr. *homooousios*.

⁵⁹¹ *Omnis affectus*. Not merely what we commonly denote 'affection,' meaning appetite and passion, but all that is liable to be moved and affected in man: his whole constitution as a moral being.

⁵⁹² *Quo nitimur ad honesta*. *Honestum* is properly opposed to *turpe*: 'placui tibi, qui turpi secernis honestum.' — Hor. It is the 'honore et laude dignum,' as opposed to what is dishonourable: the *καλον* (*kalon*) of the Greeks; something more exalted than the *πρεπον*, (*prepon*) even as that was also more exalted than the *δικαιον* (*dikaion*)

I reply, it is easy for a man who believes nothing, to assuredly believe anything, and say anything. Let your friend Lucian ask you, ⁵⁹³ not I, whether you can show us a single individual out of the whole human race (you will be twice or seven times a Socrates if you please) who has exhibited what you mention here, and what you say that they taught. Why do you tell stories, then, in vain words? Could someone strive after honourable things if he did not even know what honourable is? You call it honourable, perhaps (to hunt out the most eminent example), that they died for their country, for their wives and children, and for their parents; or that, to avoid belying themselves or betraying these relations, they endured exquisite torments. Such were C. Scaevola, M. Regulus, and others. ⁵⁹⁴ But what can you display in all these, save an outside show of good works? Have you looked into their hearts?

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No, it appeared at the same time, on the surface of their performance, that they were doing all these things for their own glory, for they were not ashamed to confess, and to make it their boast, that they were seeking their own glory. For it was glory burning them through and through, which led even these Romans, according to their own testimony, to do whatever they did that was virtuous. This same thing is true both of the Greeks and the Jews, and also of the whole human race.

Now, although this is honourable among men, still nothing can be more dishonourable in the sight of God; indeed, it was the most impious and consummate sacrilege in his sight, that they did not act for the glory of God, nor did they glorify him as God, but by the most impious sort of robbery, they stole the glory from God and ascribed it to themselves. So that, they were never less honourable and more vile, than while shining forth in their most exalted virtues. But now, how could they act for the glory of God, when they knew nothing of God and of his glory? Not because these did not appear, but because the flesh did not allow them to see the glory of God, through the rage and madness with which they were raving after their own glory. Here then, you have the chieftain spirit (*hegemonikon*), that principal part of man striving after honourable things— i.e., exhibiting itself as the robber of God's glory, and affecters of his Majesty — in the case of *those* men most of all, those who are the most honourable and most illustrious for their consummate virtues. Deny now, if you can, that these men are flesh, and in a lost state through ungodly affection.

Indeed, I imagine that Diatribe was not so much offended with its being said that man is flesh or spirit, when she read it according to the Latin translation, 'man is carnal or spiritual.'

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For we must grant this peculiarity among many others with the Hebrew tongue, that when it says, 'Man is flesh or spirit,' it means the same as we do when we say, 'Man is carnal or spiritual;' just as the Latins say, 'The wolf is a sad thing for the folds.' 'Moisture is a sweet thing to the sown corn;' or when they say that, 'man is wickedness and malice itself.' Thus holy Scripture, too, by an expression of intensity, calls man *flesh* as though he were carnality itself. This is because he has an excessive relish for the things of the flesh, and

⁵⁹³ See above, Part ii. Sect. 20. note x.

⁵⁹⁴ That Scaevola who risked his life to rid his country of Porsenna; that Regulus who dissuaded from peace with Carthage though he went back to die for it.

none for anything else — just as it also calls him *spirit*, because he relishes, seeks, does, and endures only the things of the Spirit.

She may ask *this* question, indeed, which still remains: 'Even if the whole man, and that which is most excellent in man, is called *flesh*, does it follow that whatever is flesh must immediately be called *ungodly*?' Whoever does not have the Spirit of God, I call ungodly: for the Scripture declares that the Spirit is given for this very purpose, that he may justify the ungodly.⁵⁹⁵ Again,⁵⁹⁶ when Christ distinguishes the Spirit from the flesh by saying "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and adds that one who is born of the flesh cannot see the kingdom of God, it evidently follows that whatever is flesh, is ungodly, is under the wrath of God, and is far from the kingdom of God.

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Now, if it is far from the kingdom and Spirit of God, it must necessarily follow that it is under the kingdom and spirit of Satan — there being no middle kingdom between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan; these perpetually fight against each other. These considerations prove that the most consummate virtues among the heathens — the best sayings of their philosophers, and the most eminent actions of their citizens — however well they may be spoken, and however honourable they may appear in the sight of the world — are truly but *flesh* in the sight of God, and services rendered to Satan's kingdom; that is, they are impious and sacrilegious, and in all respects evil.

SECT. 44. Consequences of this assumption respecting a part in man which is not 'flesh.'

But let us for a moment suppose that Diatribe's assertion stands good: that the whole constitution of man is *not* flesh (i.e., *wicked*); but part of it, which we call *spirit*, is honest and sound. See what absurdity follows from this — not in the sight of human reason, it is true; but with reference to the whole religion of Christ, and to the principal articles of the faith. For if the most excellent part in man is not ungodly, lost, and damned, but only the fleshly part — that is, the grosser and inferior affections — then what sort of a Redeemer would we make Christ out to be? Would we represent the worth of his most precious blood-shedding as so small, that it only redeemed the vilest part in man; while the most excellent part in man is strong of itself, and has no need of Christ? From now on, then, we must preach Christ, not as the Redeemer of the whole man, but of man's most worthless part, that is, the flesh; while man is his own redeemer in his better part.

Choose whichever of the two you please. If the better part of man is sound, it does not stand in need of Christ as a Redeemer.

350-351 [\[long note\]](#)

If it does not stand in need of Christ, then it triumphs over Christ with a glory superior to his for curing itself, which is the better part; whereas Christ cures only the more worthless.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ut impium justificet*. Luther evidently means by 'justify' here, '*making* righteous;' and that is as to personal character. I do not know where he gets his quotation from; "believes on him that justifies the ungodly." (Rom 4.5), is said with quite another meaning: the nearest I can find is 1Cor 6.11: "And such were some of you; but you are... justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

⁵⁹⁶ *Cùm verò*. I venture to give it this turn, because it is clearly a new and distinct argument which he introduces here: to call 'flesh' is to call 'wicked;' for it is to say, 1. that he does not have the Spirit (which alone makes us godly); 2. that he is a member of the devil's kingdom.

Then again, the kingdom of Satan will also be nothing. It will reign over the viler part of man, while it is itself rather ruled by man, as to his better part. Thus it will be brought to pass by this dogma concerning the principal part of man, that man is exalted above both Christ and the devil; that is, he will be made God of Gods, and Lord of Lords. What then becomes of that approvable opinion, which affirmed that Freewill can will nothing good? Here, on the contrary, Diatribe contends that this same Freewill is the principal part, and the sound part, and the honest part — that which has no need even of Christ, but can do more than God himself and the devil can. I mention this, as in former instances, ⁵⁹⁷ my Erasmus, so that you may see again, how dangerous a thing it is to attempt sacred and divine things without the Spirit of God, under the rash guidance of human reason.

If, then, Christ is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, it follows that the whole world is under sin, damnation, and the devil; and the distinction between principal parts, and *not* principal parts, avails nothing. For 'the world' signifies men who relish worldly things in all parts of their frame. ⁵⁹⁸

SECT. 45. Luther falsely charged. Authority of the ancients is abused, but good for nothing — if good, it contradicts Erasmus.

'If the whole man, even when regenerated by faith, ^{xxx} is nothing but flesh, what becomes of the spirit which is born of the Spirit? What becomes of the son of God? What becomes of the new creature? I would like to be informed about these things.'

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So much for Diatribe. Where to, where to so fast, my dearest Diatribe? What are you dreaming about? You desire to learn how it is that the spirit in man, which is born of the Spirit of God, can be flesh? O how happy and secure is this victory, under the flush of which you insult over your vanquished one, as though it were impossible that I could stand my ground here! Meanwhile, you would gladly make an ill use of the authority of the ancients, who talk about certain seeds of honesty being sown by nature in the minds of men. First of all, you may, if you please and for all I care, *use* or *abuse* the authority of the ancients.

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It is your look-out, what you believe when you believe men who dictate their own opinions without any authority from the word of God. And perhaps it is not a matter of religious anxiety which torments you so much, about what any man believes. For you so easily give credit to men, without heeding whether what they say is certain or uncertain in the sight of God.

I too have my question to propose for information: when did I ever teach what you so freely and so publicly impute to me? Could anyone be so mad as to say that the man who has been born of the Spirit is nothing but flesh? I decidedly separate flesh and Spirit as substances that are at variance with each other. And I affirm, in unison with the sacred

⁵⁹⁷ See Part i. Sect xxii. Part iii. Sect. 32. Part. iv. Sect. 20, 32.

⁵⁹⁸ Luther's order in the last two sections is, 1. Your praise of the heathens is false. 2. Man is 'flesh,' 'man is wickedness.' 3. What would follow if your cavil 'not all' were true. — There is a good deal of subtlety in this part of his argument; and we are ready to say, 'not content with knocking down his adversary, he kicks him when he is down;' but his objections are solid and unanswerable.

oracle, that the man who has not been born again by faith, is flesh. I further affirm that the regenerate man is flesh, only so far as it pertains to that remainder ⁵⁹⁹ of the flesh in him, which fights against the first-fruits of the received Spirit. I cannot think you so base as to wilfully have feigned this by way of exciting ill-will against me. Otherwise, what could you have imputed to me of a more atrocious nature? But either you know nothing of my matters, or you seem unequal to the weight of the subject. You are so pressed and confounded by it, that you do not sufficiently remember what you say either *against* me, or *for* yourself. For in believing, upon the authority of the ancients, that some seeds of honesty are implanted in the minds of men by nature, you again speak with a degree of forgetfulness, having asserted before that Freewill can will nothing good. I do not know how this inability to will *anything* good, is compatible with *some* seeds of honesty. Thus I am perpetually compelled to remind you of the point which is at issue in the cause you have undertaken to plead — the one from which you are perpetually departing through forgetfulness, and maintaining a proposition different from the one you set out with. ⁶⁰⁰

SECT. 46. Jer. 10.23-24 defended.

Another passage is Jer 10.23-24: "I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not his; nor is it in the power of any man to walk and direct his steps." This text, she says, pertains to the prosperity of event, rather than to the power of Freewill.

Here again, Diatribe confidently introduces her gloss at her pleasure, as if she had a sort of plenipotentiary ⁶⁰¹ authority over Scripture. But what need is there for such authoritativeness in this man, to enable him to consider the sense and scope of the Prophet? 'It is enough,' says Mr. Erasmus; 'therefore it is so.' If we allow the adversaries of the truth, this lust for glossing, what will they not gain? Let him teach us this gloss from the context, then, and we will believe him. On the contrary, I will show from that very context, that while the Prophet sees himself engaged in teaching the ungodly with so much importunity, and to no purpose, he at the same time perceives that his word avails nothing unless God teaches it within. And therefore, it is not at the disposal of man to hear and to will good.

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Perceiving this, and alarmed at the thought of God's judgment, he begs Him to correct him with justice, if he must be corrected absolutely; but that he not be delivered over to the wrath of God, together with the ungodly, whom God suffers to be hardened and to continue in unbelief. ⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁹ *Secundum reliquias*. Luther speaks of this remainder, as many other divines do, in a manner which implies that the work of the Spirit on the substance of the soul in regeneration is incomplete: whereas it will receive no increase or alteration forever. Only the body is unrenewed, and will remain so till the resurrection. The variety is in the energizings of the within-dwelling Spirit, which, to God's glory in our real good, are neither uniform nor perpetual; and to give occasion to the unrenewed part of our frame, and to our enemies without, to gain many a transient victory over us. — What I have already said and referred to about 'flesh' and 'spirit,' will serve to show that my account of this remainder would differ a little from Luther's. — See above, Sect. 42. notes ⁱ and ^k. See also Part ii. Sect i. note ^f.

⁶⁰⁰ Luther defends his interpretation of Isa 40.6-7, by 1. Making Jerome and Erasmus ridiculous. 2. Maintaining Isaiah. 3. Appealing to Erasmus' vain show of candour and exposing it. 4. Entertaining the cavil 'not all.' 5. Repelling false charges, and charging inconsistencies.

⁶⁰¹ *Plenipotentiary*: having full power to represent a government; or here, to represent God's word.

⁶⁰² O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks, to direct his own steps. O LORD, correct me, but with justice; Not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing. (Jer 10:23 ^{NKJ})

But let us suppose, however, that this passage is to be understood as speaking of prosperous and adverse events. What if this very gloss were to most effectually subvert Freewill? This new evasion is invented, it is true, in order for persons who are unpractised and unskilled in falsehood, may fancy they have received a satisfactory explanation of the text. This is the same sort of trick which is practised in the attempt to evade the necessity of a consequence. They do not see that they are that much more ensnared and entrapped by these evasions, than by the plain meaning of the words — so misled are they by these new terms! Why, if the event of temporal concerns and transactions over which man is constituted lord and master (Genesis 1), is not under our own control, then how will that celestial substance, the grace of God, which is dependent upon the will of God alone, be under our control? Can the effort of Freewill obtain eternal salvation, when it cannot stay the printer's dagger, or keep even a hair of one's head in place? Have we no power to get possession of the creature, and yet have ⁶⁰³ power to get possession of the Creator? Why are we so mad? For a man to strive after good or evil, implies by far the greatest degree of mastery over events. ⁶⁰⁴ This is because, whichever of the two he is striving after, he is much more liable to be deceived, and has less liberty, than when he is striving after money, glory, or pleasure.

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What exquisite escape, then, has your gloss effected? While it denies man's freedom in paltry creature events, it proclaims it in the high events of God. ⁶⁰⁵ It is like saying, 'Codrus cannot pay half a crown, but he can pay millions of guineas.' I am surprised, too, that Diatribe, who has so persecuted that saying of Wickliff's up to here, 'all things happen by necessity,' should now of her own accord concede that events are necessary to us. ⁶⁰⁶

'Besides, however much you force it,' she says, 'so that it may bear on the subject of Freewill, does not everybody confess that no one can maintain an upright course of life without the grace of God? Meanwhile, however, we also strive according to our own ability, to the extent that we pray daily, "O Lord my God, direct my way in your sight." The one who sues for help, does not lay aside endeavour.'

Diatribe thinks that what she answers is not a straw man; provided she not be silent, but say something. Having done so, she would be thought to have satisfied everybody; so confident is she in her own authority.

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The thing to be proved was whether we strive by means of our own strength; the thing she proves is that she endeavours by praying. Is she mocking us? Is she making fun of the

⁶⁰³ For objections to this distinction, see above, Part i. Sect. 15. note ⁱ.

⁶⁰⁴ *Pertinet igitur*. More literally, 'It most of all pertains to events, that a man strive,' etc.

⁶⁰⁵ *Creatis eventibus. divinis eventibus*. Luther has said (see note ^x), that a dominion has been given to man over the inferior creatures, in the exercise of which he would not object to its being said that he has Freewill. There are creature-events therefore, and God-events; that is, events which are conversant with creatures only, and events which are conversant with God also. Those in which he has to deal with creatures, are of small moment with respect to those in which he has to deal with the Creator. Temporal prosperity is of the former; salvation is of the latter. I deny the justness of the distinction, and I must allow that we have rather too much of the gladiator in this paragraph. Luther's defence of his text is correct; but to give his adversary another thrust when he is fallen, he goes into refinements which will not stand. Doubtless, spiritual things are higher than temporal things, but each is under the sole dominion of God.

⁶⁰⁶ See Part iii. Sect. 44. note ^m.

Papists? Whoever prays, prays by means of the Spirit; indeed, the Spirit himself prays in us (Rom 8.26). How is the power of Freewill proved by the endeavour of the Holy Spirit? Is Freewill the same thing as the Holy Spirit in Diatribe's account? Are we at present discussing what the power of the Spirit is? Diatribe leaves me this passage of Jeremiah thus untouched and unconquerable; and only produces this gloss of her own brain: 'We also strive with our own strength;' and Luther is obliged to believe her — if he pleases. ⁶⁰⁷

SECT. 47. Prov. 16.1 defended.

So again, she maintains that the saying in Proverbs 16.1 also belongs to events: "The preparation of the heart is man's, the government of the tongue is the Lord's."

As if we should be satisfied with this *ipse dixit* of hers, and require no other authority! And it is surely more than enough answer, that if we even grant this to be its meaning, which applies it to events, then clearly the victory is mine, according to what I said last: since Freewill is nothing in our *own* works and events, then much more is it nothing in the works and events *of God*.' ⁶⁰⁸

But observe how sharp she is: 'How can it be man's work to prepare the heart, when Luther affirms that everything is done by necessity?'

I reply, 'Since events are not in our own power, as you acknowledge, how can it be man's work to bring matters to their issue?'

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SECT. 48. Much in Proverbs for Freewill.

Take for my answer, the answer which you have given me. No, truly, we must work especially on this account, because all future things are uncertain to us. As the Preacher says, "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand, because you do not know whether this or that will spring up." I say, they are uncertain to us as to knowledge, but they are necessary as to event. Their necessity inspires us with that fear of God, which is our antidote against presumption and security; while their uncertainty begets a confidence which fortifies our minds against despair.

But she returns to her old song that, 'In the book of Proverbs many things are said in favour of Freewill,' such as this, 'Confess your works to the Lord,' Do you hear, she asks? *Your* works. — That is, there are many imperative and conjunctive verbs in that book, and there are many pronouns in the second person: so Freewill is proved by such supporters. For instance, confess; therefore you can confess: your works; therefore you do them. So that saying, "I am your God," you would understand to mean, 'you make me your God,' "Your faith has made you whole." Do you hear? "*Your* faith." Expound it this way, and you make yourself to have faith,' And now you have proved Freewill. — I am not mocking here, but showing that Diatribe is not in earnest when pleading this cause.

⁶⁰⁷ Luther's order is, 1. To repel Diatribe's gloss. 2. To show the folly and inconsistency of it, if admitted. 3. To confound Diatribes' confusion. The proof which the text fields is broad and palpable, and only loses force by allowing that it may allow a cavil.

⁶⁰⁸ See last section.

That saying in Prov 16.4, "The Lord has made all things for himself; even the wicked for the day of evil," she absolutely moulds into a new shape by words of her own; urging in excuse for God, that He has not *made* any creature evil. ⁶⁰⁹

It is as if I spoke of creation, and not of that constant operation of God on created things, by which God actuates even the wicked; as I have already said about Pharaoh.

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God makes the wicked man, not by creating evil, or an evil creature (which is impossible), but the seed being corrupted upon which God operates, an evil man is made or created. This is not by the fault of the Maker, but through the corruptness of the material.

Nor has that saying from the twenty-first chapter any efficacy in her view, "The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord; he inclines it wherever he will." (Pro 21.1) It is not necessary, she says, that he who inclines, compels — as if we were speaking about compulsion, and not rather about a necessity of immutability!

By God's inclining of the heart is meant, not that sleepy, lazy thing which Diatribe pretends; but that most efficacious operation of God, which the man cannot avoid or change; and by which he necessarily has such a will as God has given him, and such a will as God hurries along with His own motion. I have spoken to this point already. ⁶¹⁰

Besides, since Solomon speaks of the *king's* heart, Diatribe thinks that this text is improperly drawn to express a general sentiment; rather, it means what Job says in another place, "He makes a hypocrite reign for the sins of the people." Job 33.30. At length she concedes that the king is moved by God to evil, but in some way such as this: God allows the king to be driven by his passions, in order that He may chastise his people.'

I reply, whether God permits or inclines, the very act of permitting or inclining arises from the will and operation of God. This is because the king's will cannot escape the actuation of the omnipotent God, in that ⁶¹¹ every man's will is hurried on by Him to will and to do, whether it is good or evil.

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As to my having made a general proposition out of the particular one about the *king's* will; I have done so, as I imagine, neither unseasonably, nor unwisely. For if the king's heart, which seems to be especially free and to have lordship over others, cannot however will otherwise than God would have inclined it, then how much less can any of the rest of men do so? And this same consequence would stand good, not only with respect to the king's will, but also with respect to any man's will. For if one man, however private, cannot will before God ⁶¹² except as God inclines him, the same must be said of all men. So the fact that Balaam could not say what he pleased, is an evident proof contained in the Scriptures,

⁶⁰⁹ See Part iv. Sect. 10. note ^z.

⁶¹⁰ See above, Sect. 11. note ^h.

⁶¹¹ *Quia*. I should have liked *quâ* instead of *quia*, if there had been any authority for it. — For the principle maintained, see above, Sect. 11. and note ^h.

⁶¹² *Coram Deo*. Referring, I suppose, to the former distinction about divine and created events; as if there were some acts in which God left us at liberty. See above, Sect. 31. note ^a.

that man is not the free chooser or doer of his own law ⁶¹³ or work. Otherwise there would be no such thing as *examples* in the Scriptures. ⁶¹⁴

SECT. 49. John 15.5 maintained.

After affirming that many testimonies, such as Luther collects from this book of Proverbs, might indeed be brought together, she claims they would be such that, by a commodious interpretation, they might be made to stand up *for* Freewill, as well as *against* it. At length she adduces that Achillean and inevitable lance of Luther's from John 15.5, "Without me you can do nothing," etc.

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I too commend the skill of this exquisite orator of Freewill, in teaching us, first of all, to shape the testimonies of Scripture by convenient interpretations, as seems good to our own minds, so that they may in reality stand up for Freewill. That is, they may make out, not what they ought to do, but what we please. And then, pretending to have such a great dread of one in particular which she calls *Achillean*, that the stupid reader may hold the rest in exquisite contempt when this one has been vanquished. But I will look sharply after this magniloquous ⁶¹⁵ and heroic Diatribe, to see by what force she gets the better of my Achilles; when she has not yet hit a single common soldier — no, not even a Thersites ⁶¹⁶ — but she has destroyed herself most miserably by her own weapons.

So then, she lays hold of this little word 'nothing,' and slays it by the aid of many words and many examples — dragging it to this result by a commodious interpretation, that 'nothing' may be the same as small and imperfect. That is, she presents in other words, what the Sophists have previously taught on this passage — "without me you can do nothing;" that is, you can do nothing *perfectly*. Such is the power of her rhetoric, that she contrives to make this gloss, which has been stale and mouse-eaten for a long time now, appear like something new. And she insists on it in such a way that you might think she has been the first to bring it forward; that it was never heard of before; and that it is little less than a miracle which she is exhibiting by producing it. Meanwhile, she is quite careless and thoughtless about the text itself, and its context both before and after, from which the knowledge of it is to be sought.

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Not to mention that her aim is to show, by so many words and examples, how this word 'nothing' *may* be taken here for 'something small and imperfect.' It is as if, truly, we were disputing about what *might* be taken so, when the thing to be proved is whether it *ought* to be taken so. The whole of her magnificent interpretation therefore amounts but to this, if anything: that this passage of John's is made uncertain and ambiguous. And what wonder is this, when it is Diatribe's one and only object to make out that the Scriptures

⁶¹³ *Sui juris*. 'Jus (a jubeo, ut quidam volunt) est universim id quod legibus constitutum est, sive naturalibus, sive divinis, vel gentium, vel civilibus.' 'The law or rule, which he prescribes to himself for the regulation of his conduct.' Hence the expression 'sui juris esse, i.e., liberum esse, suique arbitrii.' 'Ut esset sui juris ac mancipii respublica.' — Cic.

⁶¹⁴ Luther defends his quotations from Proverbs, and withdraws the chorus from Erasmus' old song thus: 1. Necessity does not preclude human agency, but quickens it. 2. They are imperative and conjunctive verbs. 3. The nature of God's making and operating in the wicked. 4. The king's heart furnishes an *a fortiori*, but any man's heart will do.

⁶¹⁵ *Magniloquous* (or *grandiloquent*): Speaking pompously; puffed up; bombastic; lofty in style.

⁶¹⁶ *Thersites*: In Homer's *Iliad*, he was a common soldier of the Greek army during the Trojan War.

are everywhere ambiguous (lest she be compelled to use them); and the testimonies of the Fathers are decisive ⁶¹⁷ — that she may have liberty to abuse the Scriptures. This is strange reverence for God, which makes *His* words useless, and *man's* words profitable!

SECT. 50. Inconsistency charged. An advantage is given to heretics.

But the finest thing of all is to see how consistent she is with herself. 'Nothing' may be understood as 'a little.' And in this sense, she says, it is most true that we can do nothing without Christ. For he speaks of Gospel fruit, which befalls none but those who are abiding in the Vine; that is, Christ.

Here, she herself confesses that fruit befalls none but those who abide in the Vine; and she does this in that self-same commodious interpretation by which she proves that 'nothing' means the same as 'small and imperfect.' Perhaps we should also interpret the adverb 'not' commodiously, so as to signify that gospel fruit befalls men outside of Christ in some measure, or in a small and imperfect degree. Thus we would announce that ungodly men, without Christ, with the devil reigning in them and fighting *against* Christ, may yield some portion of the fruits of life; in other words, that the enemies of Christ may act *for* Christ. But no more of this.

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I would like to be informed here, how heretics are to be resisted, who will avail themselves of this law everywhere in their interpretations of the Scriptures, and insist upon understanding 'nothing' and 'not' as denoting an imperfect substance. Such as, 'without him was nothing made;' that is, 'very little' was made. 'The fool has said in his heart there is no God;' that is, 'God is imperfect.' 'He has made us and not we ourselves;' that is, we made a very little of ourselves. And who can number the passages of Scripture in which the words 'nothing' and 'not' occur? Should we say here that the suitableness of the interpretation is to be looked at? What heretic does not consider his own interpretation suitable? What! I suppose this is an untying of knots, to open such a window of licence to corrupted minds and deceiving spirits! ⁶¹⁸ To you, who make havoc of the certainty of sacred Scripture, I can readily believe that such a licence of interpretation would be commodious. But to us who are labouring to settle the consciences of men, nothing can arise of a more inconvenient, a more hurtful, a more pestilent nature than this commodiousness which you recommend. Hear, therefore, mighty conqueress of Luther's Achilles. Unless you prove that 'nothing' in this place, not only *may* but *must* be taken for 'a little,' you will get nothing by all this multitude of words and examples, except that you have been fighting fire with dry stubble. What have I to do with your maybe, when you are required to prove that it 'must be'? Until you have done this, I stand fast in the natural and grammatical signification of the word, laughing at your armies, no less than at your triumphs!

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⁶¹⁷ *Uti. abuti. Ut.* 'To use according to its real nature.' *Abut.* 'To use contrary to the nature, or first intention of a thing, whether for the better or worse.' The Scripture *is* authority; she will not use it. The Fathers *are not* authority; she will use them as though they were.

⁶¹⁸ *Corruptis. fallacibus. Cor.* expresses the state of the receiver; *fal.* the wilfulness of the false prophets: we have the tinder ready, and they strike the spark.

What has now become of that approvable opinion which declares that Freewill can will nothing good? But perhaps the principle of commodious interpretation has arrived here at last. It makes out that 'nothing good' means 'something good,' by an altogether unheard-of art, both of grammar and of logic, which explains that 'nothing' means the same as 'something.' This is what logicians would consider an impossibility, since they are contradictory? What becomes of the assertion that we believe Satan is the prince of this world, reigning (according to Christ and Paul) in the wills and minds of men, who are his captives and serve him? That roaring lion,^{1Pet 5.8} truly, is the implacable and restless enemy of the grace of God and of man's salvation. Will he allow it to come to pass, that man, who is his slave and a part of his kingdom, should endeavour after good, by *any* motion towards it, at *any* moment, such that he may escape Satan's tyranny? Would he not rather with all his might, incite and urge man both to will and to do what is contrary to grace? The righteous, who act under the influence of the divine Spirit, barely resist him so as to will and to do what is good — such is his rage against them.

You pretend that the human will is a thing placed in a free medium, and left to itself. You have no difficulty in pretending at the same time, that the effort of the will is towards either side. This is because you imagine that both God and the devil are afar off, mere spectators of this mutable and free will. You do not believe that they are impellers and agitators of this bondwill of ours, each of them most determined warriors on the side on which he acts. Believe this fact only, and our sentiment stands in full strength, with Freewill laid prostrate at its feet, as I have already shown.

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For, either the kingdom of Satan is a mere nothing in men, and so Christ is a liar; or else, if his kingdom is such as Christ describes it to be, then Freewill is nothing but Satan's captive packhorse, which cannot have freedom unless the devil is first of all cast out by the finger of God.

Do you perceive from this, my Diatribe, what it is, and of what power, which your author (detesting Luther's positiveness of assertion) tends to say, 'Luther drives his cause with a mighty force of Scripture, but all his Scripture is pulled to pieces by one little word?'⁶¹⁹ Who does not know that the whole body of Scripture might be pulled to pieces by one little word? We knew this well enough before we ever heard the name of Erasmus. But the question is, whether it is satisfactory that the Scripture should be pulled to pieces by one little word? The matter in dispute is, whether it is *rightly* pulled to pieces thus, and whether it *must* be pulled to pieces thus. Let a man direct his view to this point, and he will see how easy it is to pull the Scriptures to pieces, and how detestable Luther's positiveness is. But the truth is, he will see that it is not a parcel of little words, nor yet all the gates of hell, that can do anything towards accomplishing this object.

SECT. 51. Luther proves the negative.

Let us then do what Diatribe cannot do for her affirmative. Though we have no business doing so, let us prove our negative. By force of argument, we will extort the concession that the word 'nothing' here, not only *may*, but *must* be taken to signify not 'a little,' but what it naturally expresses. I will do this by arguments made in addition to that invincible

⁶¹⁹ *Uno verbulo*. Alluding to this little word 'nothing,' I suppose. All Luther's force, he would say, is in this Achillean lance; which we break by our interpretation of the word 'nothing.'

one which has already given me victory; namely, that words should be kept to their natural meaning, unless the contrary has been demonstrated.⁶²⁰ Diatribe neither has done this, nor can do it here.

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First, then, I extort this concession from the very nature of the case. It has been proved by testimonies of Scripture, which are neither ambiguous nor obscure, that Satan is by far the most powerful and crafty Prince of the princes of this world,⁶²¹ as I have said. Under his reign, the human will — which is now no longer free and its own master, but the slave of sin and Satan — cannot will anything but what this prince of hers is pleased to *let* her will. Nor will he allow her to will anything good. Even if Satan did not rule her, sin itself, whose servant man is, would be a sufficient clog upon her to prevent her willing good.⁶²²

Secondly, the very sequel of the discourse — which Diatribe in her valour despises,⁶²³ although I had commented on it very copiously in my assertions — extorts the same concession. For Christ goes on thus, in John 15.6: "If a man does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch, and he withers, and they gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burns." I say, Diatribe has passed over these words, acting the part of a most profound rhetorician, in hopes that this transition would be incomprehensible to such unlettered readers as the Lutherans.

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But you will perceive that Christ, becoming the interpreter of his own simile of the branch and the vine here, expressly declares what he would have the word 'nothing' understood to be; namely, that apart from Christ, a man is cast out and withers.⁶²⁴ And what else can 'cast out' and 'wither' mean, if not that he is delivered over to the dominion of the devil, and is continually made worse? And to grow worse and worse is *not* to have power, nor to endeavour. The withering branch, the more it withers, the more it is made ready for burning. If Christ had not thus opened and applied this simile, nobody would have dared to open and apply it this way. It is therefore established that the word 'nothing' must be taken literally here, according to its natural import.⁶²⁵

⁶²⁰ See above, Sect. 3. [Trope and Consequence](#), p. 239.

⁶²¹ *Longè potentiss. et callidiss. mundi*. There is a little ambiguity in the expression; but he clearly means to compare the devil with other earthly Princes.

⁶²² Luther speaks as others do, leaving it to be imagined that sin is a substance, and has a real and positive existence. (See above, Sect. 11. note ^h.) The more correct statement is that the human soul is itself a substance that is sinful and devilish, and it would remain so — *willing* according to its nature — even if Satan and his agency were withdrawn from it.

⁶²³ *Fortiter contemnit*. The taunt is obscure; but I understand it to insinuate that Diatribe has a good deal of that 'better part of valour, which is discretion.'

⁶²⁴ Luther refers to John 15.5, from which Diatribe argues that *nothing* does not mean nothing: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

⁶²⁵ I would rather rest the conclusion on the scope and train of the parable, than upon the interpretation of the figures in any one verse; this is a good general rule for the interpretation of parables. We may overstrain parts; but we cannot be wrong in seizing the general outline, and maintaining the broad principle which is illustrated, where that can be distinctly ascertained. Perhaps I should not interpret this parable just as Luther does. I consider it as a representation of the *visible* church, exhibiting two sorts of members: fruitful and unfruitful. Only the fruitful are Christ's true ones; and their fruitfulness is altogether dependent on a real, continued, and unobstructed union with himself. It is with reference to their continuance in him, that this *nothingness* is spoken of. If they should be cut off from him — suppose them to have been ever so fruitful — (thus the parable speaks), their fruitfulness would cease — *entirely* cease. Both

Let us now also look into the examples by which Diatribe proves that 'nothing' in some places is taken for 'a little,' in order to show that in this part of her argumentation also, she is nothing, and *effects* nothing.

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Yet, even if she had proved something here, she would have effected nothing — such a perfect nothing is she, in all her parts and in all her means.⁶²⁶ She avers,

'It is a common saying that a man does nothing, if he does not obtain what he seeks; but still, the man who endeavours frequently makes some way towards his object.'

I reply that I never heard that this is a common saying; you take the liberty of *imagining* so. Words (so far as they give names to things⁶²⁷) must be considered according to the subject matter, and with relation to the intention of the speaker. Now, a man never calls that 'nothing,' which he *endeavours* when in action; nor is he speaking of his endeavour when he talks about 'nothing,' but of its *effect*. This is what a man is looking at when he says, '*that* man does nothing, or effects nothing;' that is, 'he has not reached his goal; he has not obtained it.' — Besides, if your instance proves anything (which is not the case, however), it makes more for me than for you. For this is the very point I am maintaining and wish to have proved: that Freewill does many things which are but nothing in the sight of God.⁶²⁸ What is the use of her endeavouring, if she does not gain what she seeks? Hence, let Diatribe turn whichever way she will, she founders and confutes herself. This is usually the case with advocates who plead a bad cause.

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SECT. 52. 1Cor 3.7; 13.2; Joh 3.27.

Thus again, Diatribe is unhappy in her instance which she adduces from Paul, "Neither is he that plants anything, nor he that waters, but God who gives the increase." (1Cor 3.7) She says that what is of little moment, and useless of itself, Paul calls 'nothing,'

Who is this? What, you call the ministry of the word 'useless of itself,' and 'of small moment' — that ministry which Paul extols with such great praises everywhere else, and especially in 2Cor 3.5-8, where he calls it the ministration of life and the ministration of glory? Again you are guilty of neither considering the subject matter, nor the intention of the speaker. With respect to giving the increase, the planter and the waterer are nothing; but with respect to planting and watering they are *not* nothing. For it is the chief work of the Spirit in the church of God, to teach and to exhort. This is what Paul means, and his words very clearly express this. But again, granting that this inapplicable example also

the end and the way require that the *nothing* be an *absolute nothing*. Luther cannot state the result of non-union, or dis-union, more awfully than I would do; but I would question whether the parable sets this out with the minuteness which he assigns to it; and I do not see it necessary to the conclusion he is sustaining. It is quite enough that the disunited branch is a cast-away, waiting for the burning.

⁶²⁶ *Per omnia et omnibus modis. Per omn.* the several parts of her argument. *Omn. mod.* the materials of each. Her arguments would not prove her point if they were sound; but they are not so.

⁶²⁷ *Verba, ut vocant. Ut voc. i.e.,* 'quatenus vocabula sunt, sive dictiones quibus res singulae vocantur, aut voce efferuntur.'

⁶²⁸ *Coram Deo.* Erasmus says, nothing means a little; and so men speak of their performances. Luther replies, this is said of the effect, not of the act: but if it is said of the act, this proves for me: doing, he does not — for in the sight of God, his work is nothing. *Coram Deo*, in a former instance (see Sect. 31. note ^a), referred to God's presence as an agent; here he refers to it as a spectator.

applies, like the other, it will stand on my side. For I am maintaining that Freewill is 'nothing' — that is, it is 'useless of itself' before God, as you explain this text. For we speak of this kind of existence, well-knowing that the ungodly *will* is 'a something,' and not 'a mere nothing.' ⁶²⁹

So again, with regard to that saying in 1Cor 13.2, "If I do not have charity, I am *nothing*." I do not see why she adduces this example, unless she quests after number and multitude, or thinks that we lack arms with which to dispatch her. For the man who does not have charity, is truly and strictly 'nothing' before God.

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I maintain the same thing with respect to Freewill. So that this example also stands up for me against Diatribe herself, unless Diatribe is still ignorant of what our ground of battle is. ⁶³⁰ We are not speaking of an existence of nature; but of an existence of grace, as they call it. We know that Freewill performs certain natural acts; that she eats, and drinks, and begets children, and rules the house. So that Diatribe might have forborne mocking us with that nonsensical saying, which is like the ramble of delirium, that if we insist on this word 'nothing,' then a man cannot even sin, without Christ.' On the contrary, even Luther admits that Freewill has a power to commit sin, though it has no other power! The wise Diatribe, you see, must have her joke, even on a serious subject.

What we affirm is that, without the grace of God, man still remains under the control of the general omnipotence of God, who performs, who moves, who carries away all things by a necessary and infallible course. But what the man so carried away does, is "nothing" — that is, it is nothing before God, and it is accounted nothing but sin. Thus — with regard to a being of grace — he is nothing who does not have charity. After confessing of her own accord that we are treating *evangelical* fruit in this verse, fruit which is not produced without Christ, why does Diatribe then instantly turn aside from the question at issue, begin a strange song, and cavil about *natural* operations and *human* fruits? Why — if not that a man who is destitute of the truth, is never consistent with himself anywhere? ⁶³¹

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So again, that saying in John 3.27, "A man can receive nothing, unless it is given to him from heaven."

John speaks of a man who assuredly was something already, and he denies that this man receives anything; that is to say, receives the Spirit with his gifts. For he speaks about *this*, and not about nature. ⁶³² He had no need of Diatribe's instructions, surely, to teach him

⁶²⁹ *Merâm nihil*. Erasmus applies this text to the act of ministering the word; whereas it belongs to the *effect* of that ministry. But if it illustrates the agency of the free will under the ministry, without grace, then this agency is nothing in the sight of God, though not an absolute nothing in itself. — This conclusion, however, is drawn from a double misapplication of the text: it is *act*, instead of *effect*; and it is an act of the hearer, not of the speaker.

⁶³⁰ *Quo loco pugnemus*. The same as 'status causa;' or the question at issue.

⁶³¹ We are reasoning about existence of grace, or 'existence before God,' and her argument is about mere natural existence, which is absolute — when even *she* has avowed the distinction which makes the difference.

⁶³² *De hoc enim*. We shall see hereafter that Luther is mistaken in his view of this text; but the conclusion remains: the nothing is distinct from natural endowments. — Plato's chaos is that 'rudis indigestaque moles,' out of which, 'being itself eternal,' he taught that the eternal God, according to an eternal draught or model in his own mind, had, in his own appointed time, created the world. — Leucippus of Abdera, b.c. 428, was the first who invented the famous system of atoms and a void, which was afterwards more fully explained by Democritus and Epicurus. The void was nothing, till the infinity of eternal atoms rushed into it by a blind and rapid movement, and thus settled into a world — Aristotle's

that the man already had eyes, nose, ears, mouth, mind, will, reason, and all the other properties of a man. Perhaps Diatribe thinks that when the Baptist spoke of a man, he was so mad as to be thinking of Plato's *chaos*, or Leucippus' *vacuum*, or Aristotle's *infinite*, or some other 'nothing,' which was at last to be made 'something' by a gift from heaven! What! Is she bringing examples from Scripture to purposely sport in this way with so weighty a subject? To what purpose is it, then, that she brings forward such a redundancy of material? Is it to teach us that fire, escape from evil, effort towards good, and all the rest, proceed from heaven — as if any man did not know this, or denied it?

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I am speaking of grace; or, as she has expressed it herself, of Christ and gospel fruit. But meanwhile, she chatters away about nature, so that she may gain time, protract the cause, and throw dust in the eyes of the unlearned reader. With all this, however, she not only fails to adduce a single example of 'nothing' taken for 'a little' — which is what she undertook to do — but she even manifestly betrays herself to be one who neither knows, nor cares, what Christ is, or what grace is, or how grace differs from nature. This is a distinction which even the rudest of the Sophists knew, and beat out in their schools by the most common use.⁶³³ Nor is she in the least aware, at the same time, that all her examples make *for me*, and *against herself*. Even this saying of the Baptist, "A man can receive nothing unless it is given to him from heaven," proves that Freewill is nothing. Ah, *this* is the way to conquer my Achilles: Diatribe puts armaments into his hands with which to destroy her in her nakedness and defencelessness. Thus it is, that those Scriptures by which the inflexible dogmatist Luther drives all before him, are somehow scattered by a single wordling.⁶³⁴

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SECT. 53. Diatribe's troop of similes is nothing, and go against her. — What she should have spoken to.

After this, she details⁶³⁵ a great many similes by which all she does is to carry off the foolish reader, as her manner is, into foreign matters; meanwhile, quite forgetting her own cause. For instance, God preserves the ship, it is true, but still the mariner conducts it into port; so that the mariner does something. It is a *distinct* work, truly, which this simile ascribes to God on the one hand — that of preserving — and to the mariner on the other, that of guiding the ship into port. If it proves anything besides this, it proves that

'infinite' is his 'first moveable,' eternally put into motion by his first Mover, and made to be what it is, at its one first projection, by Him. There is not much of essential difference, therefore, between Plato's chaos, Leucippus' vacuum, and Aristotle's infinite: they are each a name for some supposed state in which the world that now is subsisted antecedently to its present one. — For some account of Plato, see the Preface; see also Part ii. Sect. 5. note ^u, where I followed Seneca's account of his term 'idea.' — For some account of Aristotle, see Part iv. Sect. 8. note ^r.

⁶³³ *Detriverunt*. A figure taken from threshing, or more properly, from treading out the pure grain with the feet: "You shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn." Possibly he may have a squift [swipe] at the name of Diatribe in his use of this term; 'even the Sophists have trodden the floor of their schools' to better purpose than she. See the Introduction, p. 3, note ^a.

⁶³⁴ Luther maintains his Achillean lance by 1. Exposing the staleness, unaptness, and unauthorizedness of the evasion which Diatribe proposes. 2. The dangerous conclusions which may be extorted from her concessions. 3. The impossibility of realizing what is thus ascribed to Freewill. 4. 'Nothing' cannot mean a little in this text. 5. And it does not in any of the texts which she adduces.

⁶³⁵ *Enumerat* implies 'the number in full tale' — an ostentatious display of numbers.

the whole work of preserving is God's; and that the whole work of guiding is the seaman's. But still, it is an exquisite and apt simile! ⁶³⁶

So too, the husbandman carries the productions of the earth into his barns; but *God* has given them. Here again, distinct works are ascribed to God and to man — unless she chooses to make the husbandman the creator at the same time, and thus even the joint giver of the fruits. But beyond this, let the same works be assigned to God and to man by these similes, what do they amount to, if not that the creature *co-operates* with the *operating* God? Are we now disputing about cooperation, then? Are we not disputing, rather, about the several force and operation of Freewill? What a flight this is! The orator was to have spoken about a palm tree, but has talked only about a gourd. A cask was to be turned; why then does a pitcher come out there? ⁶³⁷

I also know that Paul works together with God in teaching the Corinthians. He preaches without, while God teaches within: here the work of the two operators is a different one. In like manner, Paul also works together with God, when he speaks in the Spirit of God: and the work of the two is the same.

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For this is what I assert and maintain, that God, when he works outside the confines of the grace of his Spirit, works all in all, even in the wicked. For being the sole maker of all things, He also solely moves, drives, and carries on all things by the motion of his omnipotence. These things cannot escape or change, but necessarily follow and obey; each according to the measure of its own power which God has given to it. So true is it, that even all wickednesses ⁶³⁸ work together with him. Again, when he acts by the Spirit of grace in those whom he has made righteous — that is, in his own kingdom — He in like manner drives and moves them. And seeing that they are new creatures, they follow and work together with him; or rather, as Paul says, they are *led* by him. [Rom 8.14](#)

But this was not the place for these things. Our question is not, What can we do when God works? but, What can we do *of ourselves*? That is, being created out of nothing, can we do or endeavour anything through that general motion of omnipotence, towards preparing ourselves for the new creation of his Spirit? This question should have been answered, instead of turning us aside towards another question. We will answer this question, and our answer is this: before he is created to be a man, he does nothing and endeavours nothing towards making himself a creature; and afterwards, when he has been made and created, he does nothing and endeavours nothing towards continuing himself in being a creature. Rather, each of these events takes place by the sole will of the omnipotent might and goodness of God. He creates and *preserves us* without ourselves, but He does not *work in us* without ourselves — seeing that we are those whom he has created and preserved for this very end: that He may work in us, and we may work together with Him. [Col 1.29](#) This is true whether it is outside the confines of his kingdom by the acting of his general omnipotence, or within the confines of that kingdom by the special power of his Spirit.

⁶³⁶ There is a double failure in the comparison: the works are two, and the agent in each, is one.

⁶³⁷ Hor. Art. Poet. v. 22. — I do not find any classical allusion for the gourd.

⁶³⁸ *Omnia etiam impia*. 'All wicked substances': men and devils

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So (we go on to say), before man is renewed to become a new creature of the kingdom of the Spirit, he does nothing, and endeavours nothing, towards preparing himself for that renewal and kingdom. And afterwards, once he has been created anew, he does nothing, and endeavours nothing, towards continuing himself in that kingdom. Rather, the Spirit alone does each of these things in us, both creating us anew without ourselves, and preserving us once we are so created. As James says, "Of his own will he begat us by the word of his power, that we might be the beginning of his creation;" [Jas 1.18](#) speaking of the renewed creation.⁶³⁹ Still, He does not work in us without ourselves — seeing that we are those whom He has created anew and whom He preserves to this very end: that He might work in us, and that we might work together with Him. ⁶⁴⁰ Thus, he preaches by us, has pity on the poor by us, comforts the afflicted by us. But what is ascribed to Freewill by this? Rather, what is *left* to it but nothing; absolute nothing?

SECT. 54. Inconsistency and audacity of Diatribe; takes up one subject and pursues another; argues by inversion.

Read the Diatribe in this part for five or six pages together, and you will find that all she does — *first* by lugging in similes of this sort, and *afterwards* by citing some of the most beautiful passages and parables from Paul's writings and from the Gospels — is to teach us that *innumerable* texts (as she puts it) are to be found in the Scriptures, which declare the cooperation and helping gifts of God.

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Now, if I gather from these testimonies, that man can do nothing without the helping grace of God, then no works of man are good. But she, on the contrary, using a rhetorical inversion, concludes,

'No indeed, there is nothing which man *cannot* do with the assistance of God's grace; therefore, all man's works may be good. Well then, as many passages as there are in the word of God, which mention divine assistance; there are that many which maintain Freewill. Now, there are countless such passages. I have therefore conquered, if the question is decided by the number of testimonies,'

Thus she says. But do you think Diatribe was quite sober, or of sound mind, when she wrote these words? I will not impute it to malice and wickedness in her, that she preserves such a perfect consistency throughout her whole performance, in always handling topics other than those which she proposed to treat (unless perhaps she has a mind to destroy me by perpetual tiresomeness). However, if she has delighted herself by talking nonsense about so grave a subject, it will be my pleasure, in return, to expose to public scorn the absurdities which she has so wantonly promulgated. ⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁹ *Renovata creatura*. Sometimes called 'the new creation;' but with less propriety. This *new* is all made out of the *old*, which 'new' does not imply, but 'renewed' does. "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." (Jam 1:18 ^{NKJ})

⁶⁴⁰ *Cooperaremur*. The cooperation in both cases consists in our acting concurrently with God, according to our nature. God, by his own agency, calls out our faculties, such as they are, whether natural or renewed, into act and exercise: it is *by*, and not *without*, our faculties that He moves, drives and hurries us along.

⁶⁴¹ *Publicè traducere*. A peculiar use of *traduc.*, 'to expose to ridicule or dishonour, to disgrace.' So 'traducit avos.' — Juv. viii. 17. 'Rideris, multòque magis traduceris.' — Martial. 'Miseram traducere calvam.' — Id.

First, then, I neither question, nor am I ignorant, that all the works of man may be good if they are done with the help of God's grace. *Secondly*, I neither question, nor am I ignorant, that there is nothing which man cannot do with the help of God's grace. But I cannot sufficiently admire your negligence, that having commenced to write about the power of *Freewill*, you proceed to write on the power of *divine grace*. Having done this, as if all were stocks and stones, ⁶⁴² you are audacious enough to publicly say that Freewill is established by those passages of Scripture which extol God's helping grace.

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Not only do you have the audacity to do this, but even to sing your own paeon, ⁶⁴³ as a most glorious, triumphing conqueror! I now know experientially, through this word and deed of yours, what Freewill is, and what her power is. 'She is mad.' What can it be in you, I ask, which speaks this way, if it is not this very Freewill?

But mad as you are, hear your own conclusions: Scripture extols the grace of God; therefore Scripture proves Freewill. Scripture extols the help which is derived from God's grace; therefore Scripture establishes Freewill. What art of logic is it, I ask, from which you learned such conclusions? Why might it not be just the reverse? Grace is preached; therefore Freewill is exploded.⁶⁴⁴ The help which is afforded by grace is extolled; therefore Freewill is destroyed.

For, to what end is grace conferred? Is it so that the pride of Freewill, who is sufficiently strong of herself, may frolic and sport at a Bacchanalia, ⁶⁴⁵ decorated with grace, ⁶⁴⁶ as a sort of superfluous ornament? — Well then, *I* too will draw an inference by inversion. Though confessedly I am no rhetorician, I will do it with a more solid rhetoric than yours. However many passages there are in the divine Scriptures which mention divine help, that many exclude Freewill. Now there are countless such passages. If the question is to be decided by numbers, then, I have conquered.

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For why do we need grace; and for what is the help of grace conferred, if not because Freewill can do nothing, and cannot will good — as this very Diatribe has affirmed in that approvable opinion of hers? When grace is therefore extolled, and the help of grace is proclaimed, the impotency of Freewill is proclaimed in the same instant. This is that sound conclusion, and that legitimate consequence, which not even the gates of hell will overthrow. [Mat 16.18](#)

SECT. 55. Luther ends his defense of his own texts.

Here I make an end of maintaining my own texts against Diatribe's confutation of them, so that my book may not grow to an immoderate size. The rest (if any are worth noticing)

⁶⁴² [Stocks and stones: an Old Testament idiom for making idols out of stone, in the image of stocks \(animals\).](#)

⁶⁴³ *Encomion*. A Greek derivative from which we get our English word 'encomium'. It is applied peculiarly to the laudatory songs which were sung to the praise of the conqueror amidst the tumultuous revels of his Triumph. See *Intro.* p. 4.

⁶⁴⁴ [Explode: to show a theory or claim to be baseless.](#)

⁶⁴⁵ Feasts in honour of Bacchus; which were not only drunken bouts, but scenes of proud display, to the praise of the glory of man. They imitated the poetical fictions concerning Bacchus; putting on fawn skins, crowning themselves with garlands and personating men distracted.

⁶⁴⁶ [Originally, "tricked out with grace."](#)

will be considered in the assertion of my own sentiment. As to what Erasmus repeats in his *Epilogue*, that if our sentiment stands, there are ever so many precepts, ever so many threatenings, ever so many promises, that are all made vain. There is no place left either for merit or demerit, for reward or punishment — and there are other disagreeable consequences. These have so moved the greatest men, as to overthrow them. And again, it is difficult to defend the mercy, or even the justice of God, if God condemns those who sin necessarily.

I have given an answer to all these considerations already. Nor do I either tolerate, or receive, that golden mean which advises (with good intention, I am willing to suppose) that we should concede a very small degree of power to Freewill, in order that the inconsistency of Scripture, and the forementioned inconveniences, may be more easily removed. The truth is, this golden mean neither assists the cause which it is meant to serve, nor gets us any further in the solution of difficulties. Unless you yield the whole and every thing to Freewill, as the Pelagians do, there remains inconsistency in the Scriptures: merit and reward are excluded, the mercy and justice of God are abrogated, and all those inconveniences which we aim to avoid by allowing a very small and inefficacious power to Freewill, remain in force, as I have already shown.

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We must therefore come to the extremity of denying Freewill altogether, and referring everything to God. Then we will find that the Scriptures are *not* inconsistent with themselves, and that our inconveniences are either removed or rendered tolerable.

There is one thing, however, which I deplore, my Erasmus. And that is your persuading yourself that I plead this cause with more zeal than judgment. I cannot endure being charged with such hypocrisy, as to think one thing and write another. Nor is it true what you write about me, that I have been carried forward by the heat of self-defence to the point of now, for the first time, denying Freewill wholly, as if I had previously ascribed something to it. You will not be able to show this something, I well know, in any of my publications. There are theses and questions of mine, still available, in which I perpetually assert, to this very hour, that Freewill is a nothing, and a matter of mere name; such was the term I used about it. Overcome by truth, provoked and compelled by disputation, thus I have been brought to think, and thus I have been brought to write. I have discussed the matter with a considerable degree of vehemence. If it is a crime, it is a crime to which I plead guilty. Indeed, it is my marvellous joy that this testimony should be borne by me to the world, in the cause of God. May God himself confirm this testimony in the last day! So none will then be more blessed than Luther; who is so greatly extolled by the testimony of his own age, as one who has not pleaded the cause of truth sluggishly or deceitfully, but with a high degree, maybe with an excess, of vehemence. Then I will happily escape that judgment spoken of by Jeremiah: "Cursed is the man who does the work of the Lord negligently."⁶⁴⁷

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Now, if I also seem a little severe upon your Diatribe, you must pardon me. It is not from ill-will toward you that I am so. Rather, I have been stirred up to it by the conviction that

⁶⁴⁷ Jer 48.10. *Negligenter*. Our version says 'deceitfully,' but it has 'negligently' in the margin.

you were mightily depressing this cause, which is the cause of Christ, by your authority — while your knowledge, and the matter which you put forth, ⁶⁴⁸ are not such that they entitle you to any superior consideration. And then, who has such a command of their temper everywhere, as not to grow heated somewhere? Your desire for moderation has made you almost cold as ice in this treatise; but you not infrequently contrive to hurl fiery and exceedingly bitter darts, so as to seem absolutely virulent to your reader — unless he regards you with peculiar favour and indulgence. But all this has nothing to do with the cause. We should mutually forgive these asperities, ⁶⁴⁹ seeing that we are but men, and that nothing different from humanity is found in us. ⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁸ *Re ipsâ*. The material which he worked up, as distinguished not only from his name, but from the dress of language which he put upon it.

⁶⁴⁹ *Asperity*: harshness of manner; hard to endure.

⁶⁵⁰ *Nihil humani alienum*. 'Homo sum, nihil a me humani alienum puto,' has furnished Luther with a sentiment which requires a little correction. As a called child of God he had surely something *in him* more than human. — He only means to make a full confession of his humanity — and that is another name for sin of all kinds.

PART V. FREEWILL PROVED TO BE A LIE.

SECTION 1. How Luther proposes to conduct the fight.

WE have now arrived at the last part of this treatise, in which, according to promise, I ought to lead out my own forces against Freewill. But I will not produce them all; for who could do this in a small work, when the whole Scripture is on my side, every point and letter of it. Nor is there any need to do so, since Freewill has already been vanquished and laid prostrate by a twofold victory: vanquished by my having proved that all is *against* her, which she thought was *for* her; vanquished again, by my having shown that all those proofs which she had a mind to confute, remain invincible. Besides, even if she were not already vanquished, it would be enough to prostrate her by one or two lances. For what need is there, when an enemy has been slain by some single weapon, to pierce him through and through with many more as he lies dead. I will therefore be short now, if the subject allows me; and out of the vast variety of armies which I might lead forth into the field, I will summon only two general officers, with a select portion of their legions. These are Paul and John the Evangelist.

SECT. 2. Rom 1.18 pronounces sentence upon Freewill.

Paul, writing to the Romans, thus enters his argument in behalf of the grace of God against Freewill. "The wrath of God," he says, "is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." In these words, you hear a general sentence pronounced upon all men, that they are under the wrath of God. What else is this, if not that they are worthy of wrath and punishment? He assigns as the cause of this anger, that they do nothing but what is worthy of wrath and punishment; that all, truly, are ungodly and unjust, and hold the truth in unrighteousness. Where now is that power of Freewill which endeavours after something good? Paul represents it to be deserving of the wrath of God, and passes sentence upon it as ungodly and unjust. Now, that which is ungodly and deserves wrath, endeavours and has power, not *for* grace, but *against* it. ⁶⁵¹

Luther will be laughed at here for his carelessness in not having examined Paul's text sufficiently; and some will say that in this passage, Paul does not speak of all men, nor of all their endeavours, but only of those who are ungodly and unjust — those, as his words express it, who detain the truth in unrighteousness. And so it does not follow that all are of this character. I remark upon this, that for Paul, it is the same thing to say, 'upon all ungodliness of men,' as to say, 'upon the ungodliness of all men;' for Paul *hebraizes* almost everywhere. ⁶⁵² So that his meaning is, 'all men are ungodly and unjust, and detain the truth in unrighteousness; therefore all men are worthy of wrath.'

⁶⁵¹ Luther's argument is, 'Paul declares that wrath is revealed upon "all men." If so, then it is revealed upon Free will. His labour, therefore, is to show that this text means as much. That it does mean as much is shown, 1. From the very words. 2. From the preceding context.

⁶⁵² *Ebraicatur*. I would not say 'hebraizes' here; for it is Greek as well as Hebrew — perhaps nearly all languages — to speak thus, grammarians call it *Hyperbaton*. To "[hebraize](#)" is also to bring a Jewish understanding to it.

Besides, it is not the relative that is used in the Greek text — *of those who* — but the article, thus: 'The wrath of God is revealed upon the ungodliness and injustice of men, detaining *as they do* the truth in unrighteousness.' — So that this is a sort of epithet applied to all men: 'That they detain the truth in unrighteousness;' just as it is an epithet when it is said, 'Our Father who is in heaven;' it might otherwise be expressed this way, 'Our heavenly Father,' or 'Our Father in the heavens,' ⁶⁵³ For the expression is used to distinguish *them* from those who believe and are godly.

But let these suggestions be frivolous and vain, if the very thread of Paul's argument does not constrain and prove them. He had said just before this, "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone who believes; to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

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The words used here are not obscure or ambiguous: 'To the Jews and to the Greeks — that is, to *all* men — the Gospel of the power of God is necessary in order that believers may be saved from the wrath which is revealed.' He declares the Jews — who excelled other nations in righteousness, in the law of God, and in the power of Freewill — to be without any difference, both destitute of the power of God, and also in need of it, that they may be saved from the revealed wrath. When he makes that power necessary to them, does he not reckon them to be under wrath, I ask? What men would you assume not to be liable to the wrath of God, when you are compelled to believe that the greatest men in the world — the Jews and the Greeks for instance — are *not* so? Again; whom will you except amidst those Jews and Greeks, when Paul embraces them all under one name, without any distinction; and subjects them all to the same sentence? Is it to be supposed that there were *no* individuals in these two most eminent nations, ⁶⁵⁴ who strove after honesty? ⁶⁵⁵ Were there *none* who endeavoured to the uttermost of Freewill? Yet, Paul does not heed this at all. He puts them all under wrath; he pronounces them all ungodly and unjust. Must we not suppose that the rest of the Apostles, by a like sentence, also cast all the other nations, and each individual of them in his lot, as one mass of condemnation, under the curse and dominion of this wrath?

⁶⁵³ An epithet which implies the reason for the Lord's conduct, and which I should venture to render by, '*for that* they detain,' etc. In Latin, 'utpote qui;' 'seeing that they are those who,' etc. I do not agree with Luther in the distinction which he understands the Apostle to make here. I consider him to be speaking strictly of all men; even as he is proceeding to show that all men without exception *in their nature state*, are chargeable with holding the truth in unrighteousness. It is the nature state of man, the state of man without the Gospel, which the Apostle treats, till he comes to the twenty-first verse of the third chapter. The true connection is, 'I shall be glad to come to Rome, for I am not ashamed of the Gospel; for that Gospel is the power of God unto salvation' — that salvation which all men want; which all men want because the wrath of God is revealed upon all men for their ungodliness; for their ungodliness and unrighteousness, because they hold the truth in unrighteousness; and they hold the truth in unrighteousness, because God has made himself manifest to them, but they have not dealt with him according to that manifestation. His great charge therefore, which he goes on to maintain against man universally, both Jew and Gentile, considered as yet without the preached Gospel, is that they hold the truth in unrighteousness. This account of the context does not at all invalidate Luther's application of the text. All he lacks is "all men;" and this he clearly has.

⁶⁵⁴ *Istis duabus*. I would rather understand the Greeks in this connection to be the representatives of the Gentile world, selected as the most favourable or enlightened specimen of it; Jew and Greek, like Jew and Gentile, comprehending the whole human race. Luther understands Paul to express that nation in its individuality, and argues by induction from there to the rest of the nations. The frequent use of this antithesis, Jew and Greek, favours my view: but Luther's argument is not affected by the distinction. His refined Greek is included among my promiscuous Gentiles.

⁶⁵⁵ *Qui ad honesta niterentur*. Referring to Erasmus' noble defence of the heathens and their philosophers, as such great sticklers and strivers for the 'honestum.' See Part iv. Sect. 43. note ^m. See also Part ii. Sect. 8.

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SECT. 3. A published Gospel proves lack of knowledge in the natural man, as well as lack of power.

This passage of Paul's (Rom 1.18) therefore stands boldly, and insists that Freewill, or the most excellent thing in men — even in those who are most eminent, even in those who are endowed with the law, justice, wisdom and all virtues — is ungodly and unjust, and deserves the wrath of God. Otherwise, Paul's argument falls to the ground. But if it stands, then his division by which he distributes salvation to those who believe the Gospel, and wrath to all the rest, leaves no man midway between them. He represents believers as righteous; and unbelievers as ungodly, unrighteous, and subject to wrath. For all he means to say is this: 'the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel, that it is by faith.' Therefore, all men are ungodly and unrighteous, seeing that it would be foolish in God to reveal righteousness to men, which they either knew, or possessed its seeds already. But seeing that God is no fool, and yet He reveals a righteousness of salvation, it is manifest that Freewill, even in the greatest of men, not only *has* nothing and can *do* nothing, but it does not even know what is just in the sight of God. Not unless you choose to say that the righteousness of God is not revealed to those best of men, but only to the baser sort. That would be in opposition to Paul's boast that he is a debtor to the Jew and to the Greek, to the wise and to the unwise, to the barbarian and to the Greek.⁶⁵⁶ So then, comprehending that all men without exception are in one mass here, Paul concludes that all of them are ungodly, unjust, and ignorant of righteousness and faith. This is how far they are from being able to will or to do any good thing.

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This is a firm conclusion from the premise that God reveals a righteousness of salvation to them, as they are ignorant and sitting in darkness — why then, of themselves, they are ignorant. Now, those who do not know a righteousness of salvation, are assuredly under wrath and damnation. They cannot extricate themselves from it because of their ignorance; nor can they even endeavour to be extricated. For what endeavour can you make if you do not know what, where from, where to, or how far you are to endeavour.

SECT. 4. Experience confirms Paul's argument. Freewill neither conceives the truth, nor can endure it.

Fact and experience agree with this conclusion. Show me a single individual out of the whole race of mortals — even if he is the holiest and most righteous of all men — who ever conceived that *this* is the way to righteousness and salvation: truly to believe in Him who is at the same time God and man; who has died for the sins of men, and who has risen again, and is seated at the right hand of the Father? Or, who ever dreamed of this wrath of God, which Paul declares here to be revealed from heaven? Look at the Jews, continually taught, as they have been, by so many miracles, and by so many Prophets. What, do *they* think of this way? Not only have they declined accepting it, but they even hate it to such a degree that there is not a nation under heaven which has persecuted Christ more atrociously to this very day. And yet, who would dare to say that there has

⁶⁵⁶ The allusion is to Rom 1.14. I do not find any text in which he speaks of himself as *debtor to Jews and Greeks*. Luther seems to have confounded the fourteenth verse with the sixteenth, and with some expressions in Rom 2, 1Cor 1, Gal 3, and Col 3.

not been a single individual in such a multitude of people, who has cultivated his free will, and endeavoured to effect something by its power? How is it, then, that all men try after something different from this? How is it that the most excellent of men have not only neglected to cultivate this method of righteousness, and indeed been ignorant of it, but now that it has been published and revealed, they have repelled it with the most consummate hatred, and have been eager to destroy it?

387-388 [long note]

So that, in 1Cor 1.23, Paul declares that this way of salvation is a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles.

Now, since he mentions Gentiles and Jews indiscriminately, and since it is certain that the Jews and the Gentiles are the chief people under heaven; it is at the same time certain that Freewill is nothing but the greatest enemy of righteousness and of man's salvation. This is because it cannot be, but that some among these Jews and Gentiles have acted and endeavoured with the uttermost power of Freewill. And yet, with this very Freewill they have done nothing but wage war against grace. Go now, and say that Freewill endeavours after good, when goodness and righteousness itself is a stumbling-block and foolishness to her! Nor can you say that this verse pertains to some, but not to all. Paul speaks indiscriminately of all when he says, "to the Gentiles foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling-block." He excepts none but those that believe. "To us," he says — that is, to the called and sanctified — "he is the power and wisdom of God." He does not say, 'to some Gentiles,' or 'to some Jews;' but simply 'to the Gentiles and to the Jews who are not of us.' Thus he makes a division which is very plain, between the believing and the unbelieving, leaving not a single individual midway between the two. Now, we are talking about Gentiles who do not have the grace of God. Paul says that the righteousness of God is foolishness to them, and they abhor it! So much for this amiable endeavour of Freewill after good. ^{xxxii}

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SECT. 5. Paul expressly names the greatest of the Greeks, and afterwards condemns the Jews indiscriminately.

Again; see whether he does not himself adduce the very greatest of the Greeks as examples of his assertion, when he says that the wiser of them were made foolish, and their heart was darkened. ^{Rom 1.20-21} Also, that that they were made vain by their reasonings; that is, by their wily disputations. ⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁷ Luther does not quote the words in the order in which we have them in our version, and in which they stand in the original text. "Because, when they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, neither were they thankful. But they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God," etc. — I doubt the propriety of Luther's distinction here between the wiser of them, and the rest of the nation. He appears to have understood the words 'φασκοντες ειναι σοφοι,' (*phaskontes einai sophoi*) as expressing those who said they were wise among them. But there is nothing partitive in the form here. It is a description applied to the persons: of whom he had spoken in the preceding verse, and of whom he continues to speak in the following verses. The whole nation, which was a refined and philosophical nation, boasted of its wisdom. The philosophers led the way in much of the idolatry and sin, but the people followed them; and it is of the whole, inclusively but not exclusively of the philosophers, that the Apostle delivers his testimony. Luther's argument, however, is not affected by this distinction; he only wants to have it secured that the greatest and best of their community are comprehended in the censure.

What, does he not here lay his hands upon what is highest and most excellent among the Greeks, when he lays hold of their reasonings? These are their highest and best thoughts and opinions, which they considered solid wisdom. But this wisdom, which elsewhere he calls foolish in them, ⁶⁵⁸ here he calls vain. And he says that, with much endeavouring, it went from bad to worse: so that at length their heart was darkened, and they worshipped idols, and performed the monstrous acts which he records in the following verses. ⁶⁵⁹

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If the best endeavours and performance, then, in the best of the Gentiles, is evil and wicked, what do you think of the remaining multitude — being, as they were, even a worse sort of heathens? For again. neither does he differentiate here between the better sort; without any respect of persons, he condemns their search after wisdom. Now, when the very act or endeavour is condemned, the endeavourers, whoever they are, are condemned also, even though they may have done what they did with the uttermost might of Freewill. Their very best effort, I say, is declared to be faulty — how much more, then, are the persons employed in it!

Presently, in like manner, he also rejects the Jews without any distinction, as being Jews in the letter and not in the spirit. Rom 2.27: "You, by the letter and circumcision, dishonour God," he says. And again; "For he is not a Jew who is a Jew openly, but who is a Jew secretly." [Rom 2.29](#) What can be plainer than this division? The outside Jew is a transgressor of the law. But how many Jews were there, do you think, who had no faith — men of the greatest wisdom, devotion and honesty, who strove after justice and truth with the greatest earnestness of endeavour? So too, he often bears this record of them: that they have a zeal for God, that they follow after the righteousness of the law, that they labour day and night to obtain salvation, and that they live blameless! ⁶⁶⁰

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And yet they are transgressors of the law, because they are not Jews in spirit, but are even obstinate in their resistance to the righteousness of faith. What remains, then, if not that Freewill is the worst when it is best; and the more it endeavours, the worse it is made. The words are clear; the division is one which allows for no doubt; there is nothing which can be controverted.

⁶⁵⁸ 1Cor 3.18-20.

⁶⁵⁹ *Sequentia monstra, quae*. The form is ambiguous; it might express that their horrific abominations were the natural consequence of their idolatries: which is true, though I do not consider him as affirming it. The form as I have rendered it, though not grammatical, is common.

⁶⁶⁰ *Quod sine querelâ vivant*. Ambiguous — it might mean without a murmur — but it seems clearly to refer to such passages as Phi 3.6; Luk 1.6. — Luther's representation of these Jews requires chastening: they yielded only an outward observance to the law, either in its ceremonial, or in its moral requirements. They did not really fulfil the commandment any more than they entered into the spirit of the ritual. The real Jew, the spiritual Israelite, was enlightened by the Holy Ghost to see, understand, receive, use, and enjoy Christ in both, by faith; having faith bestowed upon him, by an exercise of grace which was distinct from and beyond his covenant.; (See above, Part iii. Sect. 28. note ^v.) But the others were *transgressors of the law*, not because they did not have faith: "For the law is not of faith; but the man who does them shall live in them." (Gal 3.12.) One of the objects proposed by the law was to make them superabounding transgressors (Rom 5.20); and they were constituted such, not by lack of faith in Christ, but by lack of spiritual obedience to its spiritual requirements. Luther confounds Law and Gospel here: the spirit-faith of Abraham with the letter-morality of Moses! It suits his view of the Apostle's argument; but that view is incorrect. (See above, Sect. 2. note ^c.) The Apostle is showing that the law-having Jew is no better than the uncovenanted Gentile: "but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision is made uncircumcision." (Rom 2.25.)

SECT.6. Paul's epilogue establishes his meaning.

But let us hear Paul himself as his own interpreter. Making a sort of epilogue ⁶⁶¹ to his argument, he says in Rom 3.9, "What then? Do we excel them? By no means. For we have charged ⁶⁶² both Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin."

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What has become of Freewill now? All Jews and Greeks, he says, are under sin. Are there any tropes or knots here? What can a qualified interpretation, in which the whole world might join, avail against this sentence which is so plain? He says '*all*,' which excepts none. He who lays it down that they are under sin — that is, that they are servants of sin — leaves nothing good in them. But where has he preferred this charge, that all the Jews and the Gentiles are under sin? Nowhere else; only where I have shown that he does so; that is, when he says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." [Rom 1.18](#) In the words which follow, he proves this by experience. For being displeasing to God, they were subjected to so many vices — convicted as it were by the fruits of their ungodliness — such that, they will and do nothing but evil. ⁶⁶³ He then enters into judgment with the Jews separately, charging the Jew with being a transgressor of the letter; and in like manner, he proves this by their fruits and by experience: "You preach that man should not steal, and you steal. You abhor idols, yet you commit sacrilege." [Rom 2.21-22](#) He excepts none, unless they are in spirit Jews. Nor have you any outlet of escape here, by saying, 'Although they are under sin, what is best in them — such as reason and will — endeavours towards good.' But if good endeavour remains in them, then Paul's assertion that they are under sin is false. For when he specifies Jews and Gentiles, he comprehends *whatever* is in Jews and Gentiles — unless you invert his words, and suppose he had written, 'The *flesh* of all Jews and Greeks is under sin' — that is, their grosser affections.

393 [\[long note\]](#)

But the wrath of God, which is revealed from heaven upon them, will condemn their whole substance unless they are justified by the Spirit. And this would not be so, unless their whole substance was under sin.

SECT. 7. Paul is justified in his quotations.

But let us see how Paul proves his sentiment from the Scriptures — whether the words are more to the point as we read them quoted in Paul, than as we read them in their own places. Paul says,

⁶⁶¹ *Velut epilogum faciens. Epil.* 'Postrema pars orationis qua congregantur et repetuntur ea, quae dicta sunt; Latine peroratio, cumulus, conclusio: ab ἐπιλεγω, insuper dico, dictis addo, repeto.'

⁶⁶² *Causati sumus. προητιασαμεθα (protiasametha).* We say, *proved*; but Luther is more correct, as appears both from the etymology of the word and from the discourse which follows: προαιτ. *ante causam affero; ante arguo.* Most commentators however, and Sleusner among the rest, assign a sense to it like ours; although this is the only place in the New Testament where the word occurs (Rom 3.9). Paul enters quickly into proof; which looks as if he considered what had preceded as little more than laying a charge. — Some MSS. read the simple verb ητιας (*hetias*) which Luther seems to have followed.

⁶⁶³ *Velut fructibus impietatis convicti.* Their abandonment of God, under which they did such vile things, proved what they were with respect to God, who had been provoked to give them up.

FREEWILL PROVED TO BE A LIE

"As it is written, for there is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understands: there is none that seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become abominable; there is none that does good; no, not one," etc. [Rom 3.10-12](#)

Let whoever can, give me a commodious interpretation here. Let whoever dares, invent his tropes; complain that the words are ambiguous and obscure, and defend Freewill against these severe condemnations. Then I will willingly yield and recant, and become a confessor and assertor of Freewill. It is clear these things are said of all men; for the Prophet introduces God looking upon all men, and pronouncing this sentence upon them. He says in Psa 14.2-3, "The Lord looked out from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there were any that understands or seeks after God. But they have all gone out of the way," etc. And Paul prevents the Jews from thinking that these things do not belong to them, by asserting that they *especially* belong to them. "We know, he says, that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law." [Rom 3.19](#) He meant the same, where he said in Rom 1.16, "To the Jew first, and also to the Greek." xxxiii

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You hear, therefore, that all the sons of men, all who are under the law — that is, Gentiles as well as Jews — are unjust in the judgment of God. They do not understand, do not seek after God — no, not even one of them — but all go out of the way, and are unprofitable. I suppose, now, that among the sons of men, and those who are under the law, are also numbered those who are the best and most honourable; those who by the power of Freewill, endeavour after what is honourable and good; and those whom Diatribe boasts about, as having the sense and the seeds of honesty implanted in them — unless perhaps, she maintains that those are sons of angels! xxxiv

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How can someone endeavour after good, then, if all are universally ignorant of God, and neither care for, nor seek after him? How can someone possess a power which is profitable for good, if all turn away from good, and are altogether unprofitable? Do we not know what it means to be ignorant of God, *not* to understand, *not* to seek after God, *not* to fear God — to turn aside, out of the way, and be unprofitable? Are the words not most plain, and do they not teach that all men are both ignorant of God, and despise God? And then, as the next step, that they turn aside towards evil, and are unprofitable for good? We are not talking about ignorance in seeking food, or about contempt of money, but about ignorance and contempt of religion and piety. It is an ignorance and contempt which, beyond all question, are not seated in the flesh, and in the inferior and grosser affections, but in those highest and most excellent powers of man in which justice, piety, the knowledge and the reverence of God ought to reign. That is, these are in the rational faculty and in the will — and so, in the very power of Freewill itself; in the very seed of honesty, or in the very heart of that which is most excellent in man.

Where are you now, my Diatribe, who previously promised that you would willingly agree concerning the most excellent thing in man, that it is flesh — that is, ungodly — if it were proved by Scripture. Agree to this now, therefore, hearing as you do that the most excellent thing in all men is not only impious, but ignorant of God, a contemner of God, turned towards evil, and unprofitable as to good. For what is it to be unjust, if not that the will, which is one of the most excellent things in man, is unjust?

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What does it mean to have no understanding of God and of good, if not that the understanding, which is another of the most excellent things in man, is ignorant of God and of good — that is, it is blind to the knowledge of godliness? What does it mean to have gone out of the way, and to be unprofitable, if not for men to lack any power in any part of them — and least of all in those parts of them which are most excellent — to do good, but only to do evil? What does it mean not to fear God, if not for men, in all their parts — especially in those better parts of yours — to be despisers of God? Now, to be despisers of God, is to be at the same time despisers of all the *things* of God; for instance, of the words, works, laws, precepts, and will of God. Now, what can the understanding dictate that is right, when she is herself blind and ignorant? What can the will choose that is good, when she is herself evil and unprofitable? Indeed, what can the will follow after, when the understanding dictates nothing to her, save the darkness of her own blindness and ignorance? If the *understanding*, then, is in a state of error, and the *will* is in a state of averseness, what good can the man either do or attempt?

SECT. 8. The Prophet's condemnation includes power, as well as act.

But someone may perhaps venture a sophistical distinction, and say that, although the will turns aside and the understanding is ignorant in action, the *will* notwithstanding is able to endeavour, and the understanding is able to get knowledge, by their own powers respectively — seeing that we have power to do many things which we do not, however, actually perform, for *our* question truly is about power, not performance.

I reply; the words of the Prophet include both act and power; and it is the same thing to say, 'Man *does not* seek after God,' as it would be to say, 'Man *cannot* seek after God.' This is an assertion which may be gathered from this: 'If there were a power or force in man to will good — seeing that he is not allowed to rest or take his pastime, through the impulse of the divine omnipotence, as I have shown above' ⁶⁶⁴ — it could only be that this power was moved *towards* something, or at least *in* some one thing, and it was displayed by some sort of use.

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This however is not the case; because God looks down from heaven, and does not see even one who seeks after him, or endeavours. It follows, therefore, that this power which endeavours, or is willing to seek after God, is nowhere to be found; but rather all men go out of the way. Again; if Paul is not understood to speak of lack of power, as well as lack of acting, then his argument would avail nothing. His whole bent is to prove that grace is necessary to all men. Now, if men could begin anything of themselves, grace would not be necessary. But as it is — since they *cannot* — grace is necessary to them. So then Freewill, you perceive, is quite eradicated by this passage, and nothing of goodness or honesty is left in man. He is declared to be unrighteous, ignorant of God, a despiser of God, averse to Him, and unprofitable in his sight. The Prophet is a pretty strong antagonist, therefore, in his own text, as well as under Paul's allegation of him.

Nor is it a small matter, when man is said to be ignorant of God and to despise Him. These are the fountains of all wickednesses, the sink of sin, indeed, the very hell of evil. What

⁶⁶⁴ See above, Part iv. Sect. 11.

evil will be left undone, where there is ignorance and contempt of God? In a word, the empire which Satan has in men could not have been described in fewer or fuller words, than by his calling them ignorant and despisers of God. In this is included unbelief, disobedience, sacrilege, blasphemy towards God, cruelty and lack of compassion towards our neighbour. In this, the love of self pervades all things both divine and human.

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SECT. 9. Paul's big words in Rom 3.19-20 are insisted upon.

But Paul goes on to testify that he is speaking of all men, and especially of the best and most excellent of men. ⁶⁶⁵ He says, "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Because by the deeds of the law no flesh is justified before him." Rom 3.19-20 How is every mouth stopped, I ask, if there still remains a power in us by which we can do something? For a person may say to God,

'It is not an absolute nothing which is here. Here is something which you cannot condemn, seeing that it is what You yourself have given me, that it might be able to *do* something. This at least will not be silent, nor should it be guilty before you.'

If this power of Freewill is whole, and can do something, then it is false that the whole world is guilty, or under charge of guilt before God. ⁶⁶⁶ For this power is no small thing, nor in a small part of the world. But in the whole world, it is a most excellent possession held in common by all, and its mouth should not be stopped. On the other hand, if its mouth *should* be stopped, then together with the whole world, it must be criminal and guilty before God. But with what right should it be called guilty, unless it is unrighteous and ungodly; that is, worthy of punishment and vengeance? Let her look to it, I beg, by what explanation this power of man's is absolved from the guilt with which the whole word is charged upon God's suit, ⁶⁶⁷ or by what art it is excepted from being enclosed within the circle of the whole world?

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These words of Paul's are mighty thunders and penetrating lightnings, and are truly that "hammer which breaks the rock in pieces," as Jeremiah says (23.29). "They are all gone out of the way," "The whole world is guilty," "There is none righteous." By these words, all that is not only in any one man, or in some men, or in some part of them, but all that is in the whole world, in all men, without the exception of a single individual absolutely — is broken in pieces; so that the whole world should tremble, fear, and flee at them. What bigger words, what mightier words, could be uttered than these: the whole world is guilty, all the sons of men are turned aside and unprofitable, none fears God, none is righteous, none understands, none seeks after God? Yet such has been, and still is, the hardness and

⁶⁶⁵ I object, as before, to Luther's interpretation of this text: it is the Jews of whom he is speaking; not of the best and most excellent of men generally. These testimonies are borne to, and concerning Jews, that they also may have their mouths stopped. There could be no question of the Gentile mouths being stopped, and there was none with the Jews; though they shifted off their own charges from themselves to others. But the argument, again, is not affected by this distinction: the whole world is declared guilty, which is all he wants.

⁶⁶⁶ *Deo obnoxius sen reus*. υποδικος τω θεω. *Obnox*. in this distinction it expresses 'liable to charge,' *Reus*, 'one actually arraigned.' Υποο τ θ comprehends the two, 'one charged with crime at the suit of God.'

⁶⁶⁷ *Qaâ interp. reata obstrictus*. *Interp.* See above, Part iv. Sect. 34. note ^e. *Re*. 'the state of the *reus* or accused;' *obst*. 'one tied and bound with the chain of crime solemnly charged, or imputed.'

insensible obstinacy of the human heart, that we neither hear nor perceive these thunders and lightnings, but join in extolling and asserting Freewill and its powers against all these, so as truly to fulfil that saying of Mal 1.4, "They may build, but I will throw down." ⁶⁶⁸

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There is the same bigness of speech in this saying also: "By the deeds of the law, no flesh is justified before him." [Rom 3.20](#) It is a big saying, "By the deeds of the law;" just as this is also: 'The whole world,' or 'All the sons of men.' It is observable that Paul abstains from speaking of persons, and mentions the things they are seeking after — meaning, truly, to involve all persons, and whatever is most excellent in them. For if he had said, 'the common people among the Jews,' or 'the Pharisees,' or 'some of the wicked,' are not justified, then he might seem to have left some out, as not altogether unprofitable, through the power of Freewill and the propping-up of the law. But when he condemns the very deeds of the law, and makes them wicked before God, it becomes manifest that he condemns all who excelled in zeal for the law and its deeds. And yet, those only who were the best and most excellent had a zeal for the law and its deeds; and that was only in the best and most excellent parts of their frames, even their understanding and their will.

If then, those who exercised themselves in the law and its deeds, with the greatest zeal and endeavour of the understanding and of the will — that is, with the whole power of Freewill — and they were even assisted by the law itself, as a sort of divine helper which instructed and encouraged them — if these persons, I say, are charged with ungodliness, in that they are said not to be justified, but are declared to be flesh in the sight of God — then what remains, I ask, in the whole human race, which is *not* flesh and ungodliness? We see all alike condemned, who are of the deeds of the law. Whether they exercise the greatest zeal, or moderate zeal, or no zeal at all, it does not matter. All could yield only a performance of the deeds of the law; and the deeds of the law do not justify.

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If they do not justify, they prove that their fulfillers are ungodly, and leave them so. The ungodly are guilty persons, and deserving of God's wrath. These things are so plain, that no one can even mutter anything against them. ⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁸ Luther should not say 'fulfil;' it is a mere accommodation of Malachi's words, which have no reference to this subject. — Luther refines here too much, and is again guilty of arguing *per sequelam* [[by sequel — this follows that, therefore](#)]. The whole world is guilty. Why then, if there is any good thing in them; any good part in their substance, or any good affection of their substance, it ought to be excepted: or else this part, etc. has an answer for God. But why may they not have abused this good part? The testimony is against their spirit and conduct. By inference, their whole substance and all its affections must be bad; but this is not asserted. Just so, in the last section; 'Man *does* not seek after God' is the same as saying, 'Man *cannot* seek after God,' which he proves by argument and inference.

⁶⁶⁹ Luther misapprehends the condemnation here pronounced by the Apostle. It is not that the works of the law are evil; or that the works of men, so far as they are a fulfilment of it, are evil; but that they do not really perform these works. If they really performed these works, such testimonies as those above would not have been borne against them. The fact that such testimonies *have* been borne (which he has shown to be designed especially for them) proves that they are not keepers of the law but the breakers of it; and as breakers, not as keepers, they are condemned by it. — Luther is again in error about the word 'flesh.' It is not sinful affection here, any more than in the former instances: it is a name for the human species; 'no flesh' is 'no human being.' The argument, however, is not shaken. If the deeds of the law are ever so good, but man and Freewill, instead of attaining to them, are condemned by them; what is man, and what is Freewill?

SECT. 10. Evasion that it is the *ceremonial* law of which Paul speaks.

It is common to elude Paul here, and get out by saying that, 'the deeds of the law' means the ceremonial ordinances, which have become deadly since the death of Christ.

I reply. this is that ignorant mistake of Jerome. In spite of Augustine's bold resistance, it has flowed abroad into the world and continued to this day through God's departure and Satan's ascendancy. By this it has also been brought to pass, that Paul could not possibly be understood, and that the knowledge of Christ has necessarily been obscured. Indeed, if there had been no error besides this in the church, this one was sufficiently pestilent and powerful to make havoc of the Gospel. Unless a special grace has interposed, Jerome has earned hell rather than heaven for this — so far am I from venturing to canonize him, or call him a saint. It is not true, then, that Paul speaks only of ceremonial works here. Otherwise, how will his argument stand, by which he comes to the conclusion that *all* are unrighteous, and in need of grace?

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A man might say, 'I grant that we are not justified by *ceremonial* deeds; still, a man might be justified by the *moral* deeds of the decalogue. So, you have not proved that grace is necessary to us by your reasoning.' Besides this, what would be the use of that grace which has only freed us from the ceremonial ordinances? Those are the easiest of all, and may be extorted from us by at least fear, or self-love.

Again, it is a mistake to say that the ceremonial ordinances have died and become unlawful since the death of Christ. Paul never said this. He says that they do not *justify*; and that they do not *profit* a man before God, so as to free him from the charge of ungodliness. It is perfectly consistent with this, that a man may do them, and do nothing unlawful in doing so. Just as eating and drinking are works which do not justify, and do not commend us to God; yet a man does not therefore commit an unlawful act in eating and drinking.

They also err, in that the ceremonial works were enjoined and exacted by the old law, equally with the decalogue; so that the decalogue had neither less nor more authority than the ceremonial law. And Paul speaks *first* to the Jews; as he says in Romans 1.16. ⁶⁷⁰ Let no one doubt, therefore, "the deeds of the law" means 'all the works of the whole law.' For they must not even be called works of the law, if the law has been abolished, and is deadly. An abrogated law is no longer a law, as Paul knew very well. And therefore, he does not speak of an abrogated law when he mentions the deeds of the law, but of a law which is still in force, and regnant. ⁶⁷¹

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Otherwise, how easy would it have been for him to say, 'The law itself is now abrogated!' which would have been plain and clear. But let us adduce Paul himself, his own best interpreter, who says in Gal 3.10, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the

⁶⁷⁰ I say, to the Jews only; (see above, Sect. 2. note ^c, and Sect. 7. note ^p) though Luther would have it apply to both. Clearly, however, both did not have it in the same form; and the Jew had the ceremonial, which the Gentile confessedly did not. It was necessary to Luther's argument, therefore that he should mark the distinction. He goes on, "Nor had this been abrogated."

⁶⁷¹ *Regnant*: having power and authority.

curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.' You observe here, where Paul is pleading the same cause as he did to the Romans, and in the same words, that he speaks of all the laws which are written in the book of the law, as often as he mentions the works of the law.

What is still more wonderful, is that he absolutely cites Moses when pronouncing a curse upon those who *do not continue* in the law; whereas he himself pronounces those cursed who *are of* the deeds of the law, adducing an opposite passage to confirm his opposing sentiment. Just as the former (Moses) is negative, the latter (Paul) is affirmative. But he does so, because the matter stands thus before God: those who are most zealous of the deeds of the law, least of all fulfil the law — for they lack the Spirit, who is the fulfiller of the law. It is true, they may attempt to fulfil it through their own powers, but they can effect nothing. Thus each saying is true: according to Moses, those are accursed who do not *continue* in the law; and according to Paul, those are accursed who are *of* the deeds of the law. For each of these writers requires the Spirit in the performance. Without this Spirit, Paul says, the deeds of the law, however much is done, do not justify. And for the same reason, without the Spirit, as Moses says, they do not continue in all the things which are written. ^{xxxv}

SECT. 11. Paul's meaning is, 'works of the law, done in the flesh, condemn.'

In fine, Paul abundantly confirms what I am advancing here, by his own division of persons.

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He divides men who are the doers of the law into two parties: the one he makes spiritual doers, the other carnal doers; leaving none between the two. For thus he speaks: "By the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified," What does this mean, if not that they work at the law without the Spirit, seeing that they are *flesh* — that is, ungodly and ignorant of God — and their works profit them nothing? Thus, in Gal 3.2, using the same division, he says, "Did you receive the Spirit from the deeds of the law, or from the hearing of faith?" And again in Rom 3.21, "Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested." And again, "We judge that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." From all of this, put together, it becomes plain and clear that the Spirit is opposed by Paul to the works of the law — just as it is opposed to all other things which are not spiritual, and to all the powers and pretences of the flesh. This makes it certain that this is the sentiment of Paul, agreeing with Christ in John 3.6, that all which is not of the Spirit (however beautiful, holy, and excellent) is flesh. And therefore, even the most beautiful works of the divine law are of this character, by whatever powers they may have been wrung out.

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For the Spirit of Christ is necessary. Without it, they are all deserving only of damnation. Let it be a settled point, then, that what Paul means by 'the deeds of the law,' is not only those which are ceremonial, but all the works of the whole law. It will be settled at the same time, that whatever is done without the Spirit, in doing the deeds of the law, is condemned. But this power of Freewill — truly the most excellent thing in man — seeing that we are now treating Freewill properly so-called, is without the Spirit. Whereas, being 'of the works of the law' is such that nothing better can be said of a man. He does not say, you may observe, 'as many as are of *sins and transgressions* against the law;' but "as many

as are of the *deeds* of the law;" that is, the best of men — men zealous for the law — those who, besides the power of Freewill, have even been assisted by the law; that is, they have been instructed and exercised in it. ^{xxxvi}

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SECT. 12. All the law does is to show sin.

If Freewill — assisted by the law and occupied in the law with all its might — profits nothing, and does not justify, but is left in ungodliness and flesh, then what are we to think it can do alone, without the law?

"By the law," he says, "is the knowledge of sin." He shows here how much, and how far, the law profits a man. In other words, Freewill is so blind when left to herself, as not even to know sin, but to stand in need of the law for a teacher. Now, what can someone endeavour towards taking away sin, who does not know what sin is? This is what he can do: he can take sin as *no* sin, and take what is *not* sin for sin — as experience abundantly shows. How the world persecutes the righteousness of God which is preached in the Gospel! It vilifies it as heresy, error, and all other kinds of the worst possible names, by the instrumentality of those very persons whom she considers the best of men, and the most zealous for righteousness and godliness. Meanwhile, she boasts and brags about her own works and actions as though they were righteousness and wisdom, but in reality, they are sin and error. Paul therefore stops the mouth of Freewill with his words, by teaching that sin is shown to her by the law. She herself is someone who does not know what sin is. This is how far Paul is from granting Freewill any power to strive after good.

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And here is answered that question of Diatribe's, so often repeated throughout her whole treatise, 'If we can do nothing, what is the use of so many laws, so many precepts, so many threatenings, so many promises?' Paul replies here, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." He gives a far different answer to this question than what man or Freewill thinks. Freewill is not proved by the law, he says; she does not work together with it unto righteousness: for righteousness is not by the law, but by the knowledge of sin. This is the benefit, this the effect, this the office of the law: to be a light to the ignorant and blind. And it is such a light that it shows disease, sin, wickedness, death, hell, and the wrath of God, are ours; but it does not help or release us from them. She is content with having shown us what our state is. Upon knowing his disease of sin, the man is sad, afflicted, and despairing. The law does not help him; and much less can he help himself. Another light is necessary to show him his remedy. This light is the word of the Gospel, displaying Christ as the deliverer from all these. It is not Reason or Freewill which makes Him known. No indeed; how could she make him known when she herself is very darkness, needing the light of the law to show her that self-disease which she does not see by her own light, but imagines to be soundness. ⁶⁷²

⁶⁷² How clearly these latter words of Paul confirm the view given in the former note as to his meaning and design! The law cannot justify, for it exposes this state of man which I have been charging upon him; it just manifests what he is. He does not say makes sin, or makes him a sinner; but *is*, or *leads to*, knowledge and acknowledgment of sin. What connection would this clause have with the preceding sentence, if the object were to show that man's law-deeds done *without* the Spirit do not justify, implying that *with* the Spirit they do? But how strong is the argument, when correctly opened, against Freewill! She does not even know, what is sinful and what is not; nor how vile she is, through her propensity to it. — Luther reads the word "justified" in the present tense, for which I do not find any authority: the

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SECT. 13. Confirmed by Gal 3.19 and Rom 5.20.

In Galatians, too, he treats the same question in just the same way, when he asks, What then is the law? And he answers this question, not as Diatribe would, by saying that it proves there is such a thing as Freewill, but by saying, "It was ordained for the sake of transgressions, until the seed comes, to which he had made the promise." For the sake of transgressions, he says. It is not to restrain them, as Jerome dreams (since Paul maintains that it was promised to the Seed who would come, that He would take away and restrain sin by the free gift of righteousness); but to increase transgressions, as he writes in Rom 5.20, "The law stole in, that sin might abound." xxxvii

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It is not that, without the law, there were no sins, or that sins did not abound. But because transgressions were not known to be transgressions, or such great offences, the greater part, and the greatest of them, were accounted righteousness. Now, if sin is not known, there is no room for remedy and no hope, because they would not bear the hand of the physician — for they are whole in their own eyes, having no need of a physician. The law is therefore necessary to make sin known; so that, by knowing the baseness and vastness of his sin, the proud man, who seems whole in his own eyes, may be humbled, and may sigh and pant after the grace which is set before him in Christ. See what a simple sentence is here! "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Yet this sentence of itself is powerful enough to confound and overturn Freewill. For if it is true that she does not know, of herself, what sin and wickedness are, then as Paul says both here and in Rom 7.7 ("I would not have known lust to be sin, except the law had said, You shall not covet"), how will she ever know what righteousness and goodness are?

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If she does not know what righteousness is, how will she ever strive after it? We do not know the sin in which we have been born, in which we live and move and have our being; or rather, which lives and moves and *reigns* in us. How then could we know righteousness which reigns without us, in the heavens? What a mere nothing, and less than nothing, these words make of that wretched thing called Freewill! 673

SECT. 14. Rom 3.21-25 contains many thunderbolts against Freewill.

These things being so, Paul makes a proclamation with full confidence and authority, saying, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the Prophets; the righteousness of God, I say, by faith in Jesus Christ, unto

future defines the sense both of διστί (*disti*) and of ἐπιγνώσις (*epignosis*); that it is *therefore*, not *because*, and 'increased or perfected knowledge,' not 'acknowledgment.' The law not only shows what is sin to a greater extent, but also its power over us, and its malignity, or "exceeding sinfulness;" it exacerbates and excites by forbidding and requiring (see Rom 7.7-12.); and what must that soul, or Freewill be, which is provoked to evil by such a cause?

⁶⁷³ The whole force of the argument from this clause, "By the law," etc., is this: if the law, which does so little, is necessary, what is Freewill by itself? Luther, however, did not thoroughly apprehend the nature and design of that interposed covenant and dispensation; its twofold relation to Israel as the elect nation, and as the visible church — its universal typicality — its strict temporariness — and its precise adaptedness to teach sin; that is, to teach those who have made themselves sinners before they are born into the world, and as such are under the wrath of God, how just that wrath is.

all and upon all those who believe in him. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth as a propitiation by faith in his blood, " etc. Here Paul utters nothing but thunderbolts against Freewill.

First thunderbolt.

He says that the righteousness of God without the law is manifested. He separates the righteousness of God from the righteousness of the law, because the righteousness of faith comes by grace, without the law. When he says, "without the law," he can mean nothing else, than that Christian righteousness is perfectly independent of the works of the law — such that the works of the law have no worth or power to obtain it.

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He says soon after, "We determine that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law:" and he has said already, "By the deeds of the law no flesh is justified before him." From all of this, it is most plain that the endeavour or desire of Freewill is absolutely nothing. For if the righteousness of God consists without the law and without the works of the law, then how will it not much more consist without Freewill? Since it is the highest endeavour of Freewill to be exercised about a moral righteousness, or the works of the law; its blindness and impotency are aided by this. This word 'without' clears away works that are morally good; it clears away moral righteousness; it clears away preparations for grace. In short, invent whatever you may as a performance which Freewill is equal to, and Paul will persist in saying, 'the righteousness of God has nothing to do with this,'

Now, even if I were to grant that Freewill might by its own endeavour make advances somewhere — that is, towards good works, or the righteousness of the civil law, or the moral law — it still advances no way at all towards the righteousness of God, nor does God account its endeavours worthy of any regard towards obtaining his righteousness, when he says that his righteousness avails without the law. If Freewill, then, makes no advances towards the righteousness of God, what would it profit it by advancing through its own performances and endeavours (if this were possible) even to the holiness of angels? These surely are no obscure or ambiguous words; no place is left here for any tropes. Paul manifestly distinguishes two sorts of righteousness. He ascribes one to the law, the other to grace, affirming that grace is freely given without the law and its works; but that the law does not justify or avail anything without grace.

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Let me be made to see then, how Freewill can subsist and be defended amidst these objections.

SECT. 15.

Second thunderbolt.

The second thunderbolt is that he says the righteousness of God is manifested, and is in force, *to* all and *upon* all who believe in Christ; and that there is no difference.

Again, in the clearest terms, he divides the whole human race into two parts, and gives the righteousness of God to believers, while he takes it away from unbelievers. Is anyone so mad then, as to doubt that the power or endeavour of Free will is something different

from faith in Christ? Now, Paul denies that anything which subsists outside the limits of this faith, is righteous before God; and if it is not righteous before God, it must be sin. For with God there is nothing left midway between righteousness and sin, as a sort of neutral substance — neither righteousness nor sin. Otherwise, Paul's whole argument would fail, which proceeds upon this division of things: namely, that whatever is done and carried on among men, is either righteousness or sin. It is righteousness if it is done in faith; it is sin if it is done without faith. With men, there are actions, it is true, of a middle and neutral character, in which they neither owe nor yield anything to each other mutually. But the ungodly man sins against God, whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, because he is perpetually using God's creations wickedly and ungratefully, without giving glory to God from his heart at any moment. ⁶⁷⁴

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SECT. 16.

Third thunderbolt.

This also is no light thunderbolt, where Paul says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God: nor is there any difference." What could be said more clearly, I ask? Suppose a man acts by his Freewill — tell me whether this man sins in that self-endeavour of his. If he does not sin, why does Paul not except him, and instead involves him among the rest, without any distinction? Assuredly, saying *all have sinned* excepts none in any place, at any time, for any performance, for any endeavour. If you except a man for any endeavour or work, you make Paul a liar, because this Freewill worker, or endeavourer, is numbered among the *all*, and in the *all*; Paul should have revered him, and not numbered him so freely and so generally among the sinners.

Fourth thunderbolt.

So again, it is no light thunderbolt, Paul's saying that they are devoid of the glory of God. The glory of God may be understood with a difference here: *actively* and *passively*. Paul contrives this by his use of the Hebrew idioms, in which he is frequent. *Actively*, the glory of God is that with which God glories in us. *Passively*, it is that with which we glory in him. I think it should be understood passively here. The faith of Christ, in the Latin, expresses the faith which *Christ* has;⁶⁷⁵ but in the Hebrew, the faith of Christ is understood to mean the faith which *we* have towards Christ.

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⁶⁷⁴ The believer alone is righteous before God. It is not pretended by those, with whom Luther reasons, that Freewill makes any man a believer: it is a power and exercise distinct from, and prior to faith. If, then, the faithful man alone is just, what is the Freewill man — and of what character is his act? — It is scarcely necessary to notice here, that Luther speaks of God's *manifested* righteous ones. Those who have been justified from everlasting, in the covenant transactions between the divine persons, referred to the Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ (the Father's will appointing to receive them as just, through the merits of the most precious death and passion of his dear Son) are manifested to be such, by the blessed Spirit's acting *upon* and *within* them in due season, and thereby enabling, indeed, constraining them to believe. Now, therefore, they have conformed with that edict of God described above (Sect. 13. note °), which says, "Repent and believe the Gospel:" nor is it until this manifestation has thus been made, that any of their personal actings become the acts of the righteous — or can it in any way consequently be accounted as righteous acts. The acts of Freewill, therefore, being performed *before* the man has entered into this state, are acts of sin.

⁶⁷⁵ Latin: *per fidem Iesu Christi* (Rom 3:22 VUL) 'by the faith of Jesus Christ.' Also Greek: διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom 3:22 SCR) "through the faith of Jesus Christ." (genitive case)

So the righteousness of God, in Latin, means the righteousness which God possesses: but by the Hebrews it is understood to mean the righteousness which we have from God, and before God. Thus, I understand the glory of God not Latin-wise, but Hebrew-wise, as denoting the glory which we have *in* God, and *before* God, and which may be called *glory in God*. Someone glories in God, then, who knows for sure, that God has favour towards him, and counts him worthy of a kind regard — so that what he does is pleasing in His sight, or whatever displeases Him is freely forgiven and borne with.

If the endeavours of Freewill are not sin, then, but goodness in the sight of God, assuredly she may boast. And with confidence in that glory, she may say, 'this pleases God,' 'God looks with an eye of favour upon this,' 'God ascribes worthiness to this and accepts it, or at least He bears with and forgives it.' For this is the sort of glory which the faithful have in God; others who do not have it, are instead confounded before him. But Paul denies this glory to *all* men here. He affirms that they are absolutely devoid of this glory, which experience also proves. Ask the entire party of Freewill endeavourers, without exception, and if you can show me *one* who seriously, from his heart, can say of any one desire and endeavour of his, 'I know this is well pleasing to God,' I will acknowledge that I am conquered, and I will yield the palm to you. But I know that no such man will be found.

Now, if this glory is lacking, so that conscience does not dare to know with certainty, or be confident, that this particular act is pleasing to God, then we may be sure that it does not please God. Because, as the man believes, so it is with him. For he does not believe that he certainly pleases God. However, this is necessary, since this is the very crime of unbelief, to doubt of the favour of God. He would have us believe with the most assured faith that He favours us. Thus we prove by the very testimony of their own conscience, that since Freewill is destitute of the glory of God, she perpetually subjects herself to the charge of unbelief, together with all her powers, desires, and endeavours. ⁶⁷⁶

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Fifth thunderbolt.

But what will the defenders of Freewill say at last to that which follows; "being justified *freely* by His grace?" What is this "freely?" What is this "by His grace?" How do endeavour and merit square with a gratuitous and freely-given righteousness? Perhaps they will say here, that they ascribe the least thing possible to Freewill — by no means a merit of condignity [i.e., [worthiness](#)]. But these are empty words; for the very aim of Freewill is to make room for merit. This has been Diatribe's perpetual complaint and expostulation. 'If there is no freedom in the will, what place is there for merit? If there is no place for merit, what place is there for reward? To what will it be imputed, if a man is justified without merit?'

Paul replies here, that there is absolutely no such thing as merit, but that as many as are justified, are all justified freely. And this is not imputed to anything but the grace of God. But with the gift of righteousness, at the same time, are bestowed the kingdom and eternal

⁶⁷⁶ It will be seen presently, that I consider Luther wrong in the account which he gives here of "the glory of God;" but he is excessive and erroneous, even upon his own representation of his thunderbolt. Freewill, he says, is evil because it is destitute of 'the glory of God;' by which he understands 'assurance that we please God.' She is in fact guilty of unbelief, in not having it. This is outrageous, because faith is *not*, 'I believe God has a favour toward me,' but 'I believe in God.' Neither is it true that God has favour toward everybody. What are Luther's reprobates, then? If everybody is to believe this, many are to believe a lie.

life. Where now is the endeavour, the desire, the pains, and the merit of Freewill? What is the use of these things? You cannot complain of obscurity and ambiguity; the matter and the words are most clear and simple. For what if they do attribute the least thing possible to Freewill — they still teach us that we can obtain righteousness and grace by this very little thing.

417-420 [\[long note\]](#)

For they do not resolve that question, 'Why does God justify this man and leave the other in his sins,' other than by setting up Freewill; that is to say, that the one man has endeavoured, and the other has not; and that God respects one of these characters for his endeavour, and despises the other — that He may not be unjust, as he would be if he acted otherwise. Indeed, even though they pretend both in their writings and in their speakings, that they do not obtain grace by merit of condignity, and do not call it merit of condignity, still they mock us with a word, and no less hold fast to the thing. For what excuse is it, that they do not *call* it merit of condignity, when they still ascribe to it everything which belongs to merit of condignity? For instance, that he who endeavours, finds favour with God; he who does not endeavour, finds none. Is not this plainly a merit of worth? Do they not make God a respecter of works, of merits, and of persons? For instance, that the one has himself to blame for lacking grace, because he has not endeavoured; and the other, because he has endeavoured, gets grace — he would not have had it, if he had not endeavoured. If this is *not* a merit of worth, I would be glad to know what *can* be called merit of worth. You might trifle in this manner with all sorts of words, and say that it is not really a merit of condignity, but it does what merit of condignity usually does. The thorn is not a bad tree, it only does what a bad tree does. The fig-tree is not a sound tree, but it does what a good tree usually does. Diatribe truly is not an abandoned woman, but only says and does what abandoned women are prone to do. ^{xxxviii}

SECT. 17. Sophists are worse than the Pelagians.

These defenders of Freewill have met with the misfortune described in that old saying, 'He falls into Scylla by wishing to avoid Charybdis.' Through a desire to dissent from the Pelagians, they began by denying the merit of condignity,⁶⁷⁷ and by the very ground on which they deny it, they more strongly affirm it; denying with word and pen what in reality and in heart they affirm, and making themselves twofold worse than the Pelagians.

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First, the Pelagians simply, candidly, and ingenuously confess and assert a merit of condignity, calling a boat a boat, a fig-tree a fig-tree; and teaching what they think. But our "friends," ⁶⁷⁸ though they think and teach the same thing, beguile us meanwhile with lying words, and with a false show of dissenting from the Pelagians. But in reality, they do nothing less than this — so that, if you look at the character we impersonate, you see in us the most determined enemies of the Pelagians; but if you look at our real mind, we are double Pelagians.

⁶⁷⁷ *Condignity: punishment that is deserved.*

⁶⁷⁸ *Nostri verò. Friends*, inasmuch as they profess to be antagonists of the Pelagians *together with us*. — What follows — 'si hypocrisin spectes' — 'hâe hypocrisi' — by a figure, this is taken from the histrionic art; that peculiar species of simulation of which the stage-player is guilty, when he puts on his mask, and personates a character in the drama.

Secondly, inasmuch as, by this assumption, we estimate and purchase the grace of God at a far lower rate than the Pelagians. They assert that it is not some small thing which is in us whereby we obtain grace, but many great, whole, full, and perfect endeavours and performances. Our "friends," on the contrary, account it to be a very small thing, and next to nothing, by which we earn grace.

If we must be in error, therefore, those persons err more honestly and with less pride, who affirm that the grace of God is purchased at a great price (reckoning it to be dear and precious), than those who teach that it is bought for a little, and for a very little, accounting it mean and contemptible.

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But Paul beats them both together into one mass by a single word, when he says that "all are justified freely." And again, "that they are justified without the law;" "without the deeds of the law." In asserting free justification as the justifier of all men, he leaves none to work, or to merit, or to prepare themselves, and he leaves no work that can be called congruous or deserving. Rather, he breaks in pieces, by one stroke of this thunderbolt, both the Pelagians with their entire merit, and the Sophists with their little modicum of merit. Free justification does not allow you to set up workers of *any* sort; inasmuch as 'free gift,' and 'prepare yourself by some work,' are manifest opposites. Again, justification by grace does not allow for any personal worthiness, as Paul says afterwards in Rom 11.6, "If by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace." He also says in Rom 4.4, "Now to him that works, the reward is reckoned, not of grace, but of debt." So that my friend Paul stands up as the invincible destroyer of Freewill, laying two whole armies flat on their faces with a single word. For if we are justified without works, all works are condemned, both small and great. He excepts none, but fulminates ⁶⁷⁹ equally against all.

SECT. 18. The Fathers overlooked Paul.

See here, also, how drowsy all our friends have been; and of what profit it is to a man, if he has leaned on the authority of the old Fathers, approved as those have been, through 'such a series of ages.' Have not they also been all equally blind; rather, have not they also over looked Paul's most clear and most express words? Is it possible, that any thing could be said clearly and expressly for grace, in opposition to Freewill, pray, if Paul's discourse be not clear and express?

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He pursues his argument by way of comparison, ⁶⁸⁰ making his boast of grace in opposition to works. And then, in the clearest and plainest terms, he declares that we are justified freely; and that grace is not grace if it is procured by our works. He most explicitly excludes all works in the matter of justification, so that he may establish only grace, and

⁶⁷⁹ *Fulminates*: criticizes severely; explodes against.

⁶⁸⁰ *Per contentionem*. Referring to Paul's continual and repeated opposition of grace to works, in this and the following chapter, as also in chapters 10 and 11. Contention, or comparison, is a figure which Paul abounds in; letter and spirit; law and faith; God's righteousness and their own righteousness; life and death; flesh and Spirit, etc. are set out by him in the most forcible manner, through this sort of competition.

gratuitous justification. ⁶⁸¹ And yet, would we still look for darkness in the midst of this light? And when we cannot ascribe great things and every thing to ourselves, would we endeavour to ascribe very small and inconsiderable things to ourselves, just to carry the point that justification is not free, and without works, and by the grace of God? Truly, it is as if the man who denies that we are supplied with the *greater* things, and the *all* things which are necessary to justification, does not much more deny that we are supplied with the *little* things, and the *few* things — and all the while, he is maintaining that we are justified only by His grace, without works of any kind, and even without the law itself, in which all works, both great and small, both works of congruity, and works of condignity, are comprehended! Go now, and boast of the authority of the ancients, and trust to their sayings, all of whom to a man, as you perceive, have overlooked Paul, that most clear and explicit doctor! No indeed; they have, as it were, designedly gotten out of the way of this day-star, or rather of this sun — being so engrossed, truly, with the carnal imagination, that it seemed absurd to them that there could be no place left for merits.

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SECT. 19. Paul's citation of the example of Abraham searched and applied.

Let me adduce the example of Abraham, which Paul subsequently adduces: "If Abraham, was justified by works, he has glory; but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." [Rom 4.2](#)

Here again, observe Paul's division. He distinctly mentions two righteousnesses of Abraham. One is of WORKS, which is moral and civil; but by this he denies that he was justified before God, even though he was just before men by it. Moreover, he has glory with men; although even this man, by this righteousness, also comes short of the glory of God. Nor can anyone say, that the works ⁶⁸² of the ceremonial law are condemned here, since Abraham lived so many years before the law. Paul speaks simply of the works of Abraham; and those were none other than his best. It would be ridiculous to reason whether a man is justified by bad works. If, then, Abraham is not just by any works of his, and unless he is clothed with another righteousness, that of pure faith, then he is left under the charge of ungodliness, both as to his person and all his works. It is plain that no man makes any advances towards righteousness by his own works: and further, that no works, no desires, no endeavours of Freewill, are of any avail before God; but are all accounted ungodly, unjust, and wicked. If the man is not just, then his works and desires are not just; and if they are not just, then they are damnable, and worthy of wrath.

The other righteousness is that of FAITH, which does not stand in any works, but in God's favour and His manner of accounting of us, through grace. And see how Paul dwells on that word 'accounting of us,' how he urges, repeats, and beats it into us.

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⁶⁸¹ *Solam gratiam. gratuitam justificationem. Sol. gr.* as opposed to grace mixed with works: *gr. just*, justification without any personal worth.

⁶⁸² *Gloriam apud homines. Vacat gloriâ Dei.* Here again, Luther has the mistake already noticed (see notes ^{g h}), respecting the glory of God. It is in quite another sense that all are said to come short, and Abraham is not to boast. He had no cause for boasting before God, because he was not justified to God by his works; otherwise he would have had cause, as he might boast before men, because he was showing himself to be one justified to God by his works done *after* justification.

"To him who works,' he says, 'the reward is reckoned, not of grace, but of debt. But to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness; according to the purpose of the grace of God." [Rom 4.4-5 DRA](#) Then he adduces David speaking in like manner of the reckoning of grace; ⁶⁸³ saying, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord has not imputed sin, " etc. [Psa 32.2](#)

Nearly ten times in that same chapter, he repeats the word *imputation*. To be short, Paul compares the worker and the non-worker: leaving none between these two. He denies that righteousness is imputed to the worker; he asserts that righteousness is imputed to the non-worker, if he but believes. It is not possible for Freewill to escape or slip away here with her endeavour, or pains; for she must be numbered either with the worker, or the non-worker. If with the worker, you hear in this place that no righteousness is imputed to her; and if with the nonworker, whoever believes in God, righteousness is imputed to her. But then she would not be Freewill; she would be the new creature — the soul renewed by faith. ⁶⁸⁴ Now, if righteousness is not imputed to the one that works, it is plain that his works are nothing but sins, wicked and ungodly acts in the sight of God.

Nor is it possible for any Sophist to turn saucy, and say, 'though the *man* is wicked, yet his *work* may not be wicked.'

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For Paul lays hold, not on the person of the man simply, but on the man *at work*, for this very purpose: that he may declare in the most explicit terms, how the very works and endeavours of the man are condemned, whatever those may be, and under whatever name or species they may be classed. Moreover, he treats good works because he is discoursing about justification and merit. And when he speaks of a man who works, he speaks universally about all working men, and all their works; but especially about good and honest works. Otherwise, his division into worker and non-worker would not stand.

SECT. 20. Luther omits much which he might insist upon.

Here I omit those most powerful arguments which are drawn from the purpose of grace, from promise, from the power of the law, from original sin, and from the election of God. There is not one of these, that does not by itself, utterly take away Freewill. For if grace comes from the purpose or predestination of God, then it comes by necessity, not by our pains or endeavour, as I have already shown. So, if God promised grace before the law, as Paul argues both here and in Galatians, then it does not come from our works, or from the law; otherwise, the promise would be nothing. So too, if works have any efficacy, then faith would be nothing (though it is said that Abraham was justified by it before the law). So, because the law is the strength of sin — only manifesting sin and not taking it away — it makes the conscience guilty before God, and threatens wrath. This is what is meant by that saying, "The law works wrath." [Rom 4.15](#) How could it be, then, that righteousness is

⁶⁸³ *Reputatione gratiae*. The account which grace takes of character; — *rep.* is most correctly englished by reckon; but Luther uses it throughout the whole of this passage interchangeably with 'imputo.'

⁶⁸⁴ *Renovata creatura per fidem*. As if the Lord's people were *renewed* by faith! where does their faith come from then? So he had said above, acquiescing in Erasmus' term, 'renatus per fidem;' which I called *ambiguous* there, but we now see to have been meant wrongly. — See above, Part iv. Sect. 45. note ¹.

obtained by the law? And if we are not profited by the law, then how can we be profited by Freewill, when acting without it? ⁶⁸⁵

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Again, seeing that we are all under sin and damnation through the one offence of the one man, Adam, how can we attempt anything which is not sin, and which is not damnable? For when he says *all*, he excepts no one — neither the power of Freewill, nor any workman; whether he works or does not work, endeavours or does not endeavour, he will necessarily be comprehended among the *all*, with the others. Nor could we have sinned, and been condemned, by that single sin of Adam's, unless it were *our* sin. For who could be condemned for another man's sin, especially in the sight of God? But that sin is not made ours by imitation, or by some subsequent act of ours, since this could not be that one sin of Adam, as though *we* had done it and not he; it becomes ours by birth. But this is not the place for discussing that question. However, original sin does not allow Freewill to do anything else, except sin and be damned. ⁶⁸⁶

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These arguments, then, I omit, because they are most manifest, and most powerful. Besides, I have said something about them already. Now, if I had a mind to recite all that Paul has said only to the subversion of Freewill, I could not do this better than by discussing the whole of Paul's writings in the form of a perpetual commentary; and by showing that this so-vaunted power of Free will is confuted in almost every single word of his — just as I have done in these third and fourth chapters. My special object in thus exhibiting these chapters has been *first*, to show the stupid drowsiness with which we have all nodded over his writings — reading them, clear as they are, in such a way as not to have the least idea that they contain the strongest possible arguments against Freewill — *secondly*, to show the folly of that confidence which leans on the authority and writings of the old doctors — and *thirdly*, that I might leave it as matter of thought, what these most manifest arguments are capable of effecting, if handled with diligence and judgment.

SECT. 21. Luther's own view of Paul.

⁶⁸⁵ No Freewill follows from God's "purpose and grace:" "Whom he foreknew, he predestined; whom he predestined, he also called." The calling is of predestination therefore, not of Freewill; "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." — 'No Freewill' follows from God's promise, which was antecedent to the law, and therefore cannot be dependent upon our works, which are *by* the law. Indeed, in its very nature, as Paul argues, *promise* is opposed to *work*. — 'No Freewill' follows from faith ("the just shall live by faith;" "those who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham"); of which the law — that is, works — is not. (Gal 3.11-12.) 'No Freewill' follows from the law: for even the law works wrath — and yet she is a help; Freewill does not even know what sin is, without her.

⁶⁸⁶ Luther has his eye, all the way, upon Rom 5.12-19. His account is this: Adam's sin is ours '*nascendo*' — by our being born of him, as we are; *born of him who did it*; making us voluntary agents in being born, and making God the propagator of sin in causing us to be born from Adam, or as he has described it, making us out of him. (See above, Part iv. Sect. 10; and for objections to his statement, note ^z.) However, Luther's conclusion is right, though he arrives less correctly at it. The truth is, we are born having *previously* sinned; we are guilty, and "children of wrath;" how then can we do anything good? How near Luther is to the truth, and yet he does not reach it! Observe, he would not have it 'sin after birth;' and he would have it 'our own sin, and not Adam's only.' But he does not have that distinct individuality of subsistence given to us in the creation of the *Man*, which makes us truly one with him in his deed; nor does he have the power and order given before; nor does he have God's veracity shown in inflicting the curse. (See above.) He is somewhat clearer, however, than our ninth Article, which lacks distinctness as well as fulness. [[The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. The ninth article is, "Of Original or Birth Sin."](#)]

For my own part I am greatly astonished, that Paul so often uses those universal terms 'All,' 'None,' 'Not,' 'Nowhere,' 'Without.' For instance, "They have all gone out of the way," "There is none righteous," "There is none that does good, no not one," "All have been made sinners, and damned, by the offence of one." "We are justified by faith without the law, without works." So that, if a man had a mind to speak otherwise, he could not speak more clearly, or more explicitly. It is a matter of surprise to me, therefore, how it has come to pass that, in opposition to these universal words and sentiments, contrary words, indeed contradictory ones, have prevailed.

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For instance; 'There are some who do not go out of the way, who are not unjust, not wicked, not sinners, not damned. There is something in man which is good, and leans towards good — as if the man who inclines to good, whoever he is, were not comprehended in the words 'All,' 'None,' and 'Not.' For my part, I would not have anything to oppose or reply to Paul if I wished it. Rather, I would be compelled to comprehend the power of my Freewill, together with its endeavour, among those *alls* and *none*s of which Paul speaks — unless some new art of grammar, or some new use of speech, were introduced.

If Paul used such an expression only once, or in only one place, one might perhaps be allowed to suspect a trope, and to torture the words which I have selected, into some other meaning. But, in fact, Paul uses such expressions perpetually. And not only so, but he uses both affirmatives and negatives together, so handling his sentiment by way of contrast and distribution — by which he arrays the several parts against each other, on both sides — that not only the nature of the words, and the sentence itself, but also the subsequent, preceding, and immediate context, together with the scope and very body of the whole discussion, unite in establishing one common conclusion: that Paul means, 'without faith in Christ, there is nothing but sin and damnation.'⁶⁸⁷

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It was in this way, that I promised to confute Freewill, so that all my adversaries would not be able to resist me. I think I have done so, even if they do not yield to my sentiment, as vanquished, nor hold their peace. It is not within the compass of my power to bring them to this. That is the gift of God's Spirit.

SECT. 22. Paul's crown.

⁶⁸⁷ The words above cited are a sufficient illustration of Luther's meaning in the several terms — 'words,' 'sentence,' 'contrast,' 'division,' 'context,' 'scope,' 'discussion at large,' 'mind of the writer.' — *Extra fidem Christi*, I translate according to Luther's meaning, not according to my own view of the Apostle's argument. Both here and in Galatians, it is common to represent Paul as speaking of 'faith in Christ,' as opposed to 'works.' But in both places, it is 'the Law' as opposed to 'the Gospel,' of which he is speaking. In both places he is showing, in opposition to Judaizers, 'that the Law cannot save; only the Gospel can.' — But then, that this Gospel may save, it must be believed with the heart; 'Christ must be believed *in* and *into*.' Under the right interpretation of these passages, then, two steps are lacking in Luther's conclusion that 'Paul condemns Freewill.' Paul *says* only, 'Without the faith of Christ there is nothing but sin and damnation.' But that faith must be received, or obeyed, before it can save; and that reception or obedience is not of the nature power of Freewill, but of the super-nature power of God's Spirit. — There are more than enough texts to prove both these points. I would rather say, Scripture is explicit enough in her witness to both these points — ("Taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." — "No man can come to me, unless the Father, who has sent me, draws him."). So that, there can be no question of what is *truth* in this matter; though Luther does not come at his conclusion legitimately, through misuse of his premises.

But before we hear the Evangelist John, let us add Paul's finish to his argument on this subject. Where this will not satisfy, I am prepared to set the whole of Paul's writings in array against Freewill, by a perpetual commentary. In Rom 8.5, after ⁶⁸⁸ dividing the whole human race into two parts, flesh and Spirit, as Christ also does in John 3, Paul speaks thus: "Those who are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh; but those who are after the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit."

431-434 [long note]

Here, Paul calls all 'carnal' who are not 'spiritual.' This is plain both from the division and opposition between flesh and Spirit, and also from Paul's own words which follow: "You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of Christ dwells in you. Now if any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." [Rom 8.9](#) For what else does he mean here by the words, 'You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit,' if not this: those who do not have the Spirit are necessarily in the flesh? And he who is not Christ's — whose is he, if not the devil's? It stands good, therefore, that those who do not have the Spirit are in the flesh, and under Satan.

Let us now see what he thinks of the endeavour and power of Freewill in the carnal. "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." [Rom 8.8](#) And again; "The mind of the flesh is death." [Rom 8.6](#) And again, "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." [Rom 8.7](#) Again, "It is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be." ⁶⁸⁹ Let the advocate for Freewill answer me here, how that which is death, which is displeasing to God, which is enmity against God, which is disobedient to God, and which cannot obey Him, can endeavour after good! For he has not been pleased to say, 'the mind of the flesh is dead, or hostile to God,' but "it is death itself; it is enmity itself." Thus it is impossible for it to be subjected to the law of God, or to please God. As Paul had just said, 'For what the law could not do, in that it was made weak by the flesh, God has done,' [Rom 8.3](#) etc. ^{xxxix}

I know, as well you do, Origen's tale about three sorts of affection. One he calls the flesh; another, the soul; another, the spirit. And of these, the soul is the middle one — what may be turned towards either side, the flesh or the spirit. But these are his own dreams; he only *tells*, he does not *prove* them. Paul here calls whatever does not have the Spirit, 'flesh,' as I have already shown. ^{xl}

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So that, those highest virtues of the best of men are 'in the flesh;' that is, they are dead, enemies to God, not subject to the law of God, nor capable of being subjected to it, and displeasing to God. For Paul not only says that they are *not* subjected, but neither *can* they be subjected. So Christ says in Mat 7.18, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good

⁶⁸⁸ *Ubi genus*. Referring to the preceding verses, "Those who are in Christ Jesus; who do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit." As to what follows, it has been seen already (Part iv. Sect. 42. notes ^{i k}) that I do not admit the parallel. Paul clearly divides men into two classes; but the Lord in John 3 is showing the necessity of a new and spiritual birth. The opposition is not between those who have, and those who do not have this birth; but between the nature-power of procreation, and the Spirit-power of procreation. Adam produces his like, and the Holy Ghost produces *His* like.

⁶⁸⁹ *Sensus carnis. non est subjectus*. *Sensus*, 'the mind in action;' or rather the *result* of that action; 'what it thinks or desires.' It is not so properly the mind, or desire, that is not and *cannot* be subject (as is commonly understood); but the flesh, that is, the unrenewed body itself: φρονημα (*phronema*) according to the analogy of language, should be 'the desire formed,' not the faculty forming it. And therefore, it is not this φρονημα, but the substance that forms it (the flesh — σαρξ, *sarx*), which ought to be subject; but it is not.

fruit." And in Mat 12.34, "How can you, being evil, speak good things?" You see here that we not only speak evil, but we cannot speak good. And in another place, he says that we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children. [Mat 7.11](#) But he still denies that we do good, even in the very act of giving good things. For the creature of God (which we give) is good; but we ourselves are not good, nor do we give our good things well. And when saying this, he speaks to *all*; yes, even to his disciples. So that these twin sentiments of Paul stand good: "The just lives by faith;" and "Whatever is not of faith is sin." In this, the latter flows from the former. For if there is nothing but faith by which we can be justified, then it is evident that those who do not have faith are not yet justified.

436 [\[long note\]](#)

Now, those who are not justified are still sinners; and sinners are corrupt trees, which can do nothing but sin, and bear corrupt fruit. So then, Freewill is nothing but the servant of sin, death, and Satan. It neither does, nor is able to do, or to attempt, anything but evil. ^{xli}

SECT. 23. Grace exemplified in Jews being rejected, Gentiles called.

Add that example in chapter x, taken from Isaiah, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have been made manifest to those who did not inquire after me."

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He says these things about the Gentiles; because it has been given to them to know and hear of Christ, when they could not even think of him before, much less seek after him, or prepare themselves for him, by the power of Freewill. It is abundantly plain from this example, that grace comes so truly gratuitously, that not even a thought about it, much less anything of endeavour or pains, precedes its approach. Paul also, when he was still Saul, what did he do by that most exalted degree of Freewill which he possessed? Assuredly, he was revolving the best and most honest things in his mind, if mere reason is inquired of. But see what endeavour of his it is, by which he finds grace: *he is not seeking it*. No indeed; it by raving like a madman against it, that he receives his portion. On the other hand, speaking of the Jews in the ninth chapter, Paul says that the Gentiles who did not follow after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith; but that Israel which followed after the law of righteousness has not attained to the law of righteousness. [Rom 9.30-31](#) What can any advocate for Freewill mutter against these sayings? The Gentiles, when filled to the full with impiety and all sorts of vices, receive righteousness freely from a pitying God. The Jews, seeking righteousness with the greatest pains and endeavours, are disappointed. Is this not saying that, while endeavouring after the best things, Freewill endeavours in vain; that she rather turns bad into worse; that she stumbles and runs backward? ⁶⁹⁰ No one can say that they have not tried hard, with the utmost power of Freewill. Paul himself bears this testimony of them in his tenth chapter: "They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." [Rom 10.2](#)

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In the Jews, therefore, none of those excellencies are lacking which we ascribe to Freewill. And yet nothing follows; indeed, the contrary result follows. In the Gentiles, none of those excellencies which we ascribe to Freewill are present; but still the righteousness of God

⁶⁹⁰ *Sublapsum referri.* 'Omnia nirsus

'In pejus ruere, ac retro sublapsa referri.' — Virg. G. I, v. 200. 201.

follows. What is this, if not to have it confirmed by the most manifest example of both nations, as well as by the clearest testimony of Paul at the same time, that 'grace is bestowed freely upon the undeserving, indeed, upon the unworthiest of human beings; while it is not obtained by any pains, endeavours, or performances, great or small, even of the best and most respectable of men, though seeking and following after righteousness with a burning zeal.' ⁶⁹¹

SECT. 24. John a devourer.

Let us also come to John, who is of himself an abundant and able devastator of Freewill. In the very beginning of his Gospel, he ascribes such a blindness to Freewill, that she is not able to see the light of truth — that far is she from having power to endeavour after it. For thus he speaks: "The light shines in darkness, but the darkness does not comprehend it." And presently: "He was in the world, and the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own did not receive him." What do you think he means by *the world*? Would you exclude any man from the number included under this term, if he is not created anew by the Holy Ghost?

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Indeed, it is a peculiar use ⁶⁹² which this Apostle makes of the word 'world,' expressing by it the whole race of man, without exception. Whatever he says about the world, therefore, is meant concerning Freewill, as that which is the most excellent thing in man. Now, it is said by this Apostle, 'that the world did not know the true light. The world hates Christ and his people. The world neither knows, nor sees the Holy Ghost. The whole world lies in wickedness, or in the wicked one. All that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. — Do not love the world.' Again, "You are of the world," he says. The world cannot hate you; but me it hates, because I testify of it that its deeds are evil." All these and many like sayings, then, are so many proclamations about Freewill; that is, about the principal constituent part which reigns in the world under the empire of Satan. For John says this even about the world, by way of opposition — meaning whatever of the world is not translated into the Spirit. ⁶⁹³ As Christ says to his Apostles., "I have taken you out of the world, and have constituted you," etc. [Joh 15.9](#)

⁶⁹¹ For some considerations which seem desirable, to mitigate the harshness of this statement, see above, Part iv. Sect. 34. note ^d; also Part iv. Sect. 10; Part iii. Sect. 38. note ¹.

⁶⁹² *Peculiaris*. Luther means peculiar to this Apostle, as contrasted with the other sacred writers: but it is not confined to John. Paul has it also, Eph 2.12; Col 1.6. It may be doubted, too, whether he ever speaks of the world *universally*; that is, of a strict 'all men,' 'all mankind;' though his contrast is varied. Sometimes it is the world at large, as opposed to the Jews; sometimes the multitude of the unregenerate, as opposed to the called people of God, as Luther afterwards distinguishes ("*Nam et ipse Johannes*," etc.). This is a more correct distinction than Christ's people, and the seed of the wicked one. For, until called by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost, the children of the kingdom are often found to be as fierce opponents of the truth, and of its children, as the devil's seed. What was Paul? — Luther does not notice the former of these oppositions, but it is a necessary one to mark. Clearly, it obtains in the words under consideration. "He was in the world (that is, in the material world — on the earth) and *the world* knew him not: he came to his own," etc. The contrast here is between the world at large, and his peculiarly connected ones, the Jews. And so, in John 3.16, "God so loved the world," etc. It is all kindreds and tongues, and languages, etc., contrasted with the natural seed of Abraham. The clear sense here assists in establishing this use of the term, and it serves to confirm the ascription of it to Joh 3.16, etc.

⁶⁹³ *Translatum in spiritum*. We might render it 'made spiritual;' but this would efface the distinction which he means to mark. He opposes Christ to the world; making Christ the Spirit, in contrast with Adam, the flesh. So, by realized union with Christ, we are transferred from the *world* into the *Spirit*.

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Now, if there were any in the world who strove for good by the power of Freewill — as must be the case if Freewill could really do anything — then John should properly have moderated his expression out of respect to these, that he might not involve them by a general expression in the multitude of crimes, of which he accuses the world. Because he did not do so, it is evident that he charges Freewill with all the crimes with which he charges the world. For whatever the world does, it does by the power of Freewill; that is, by the understanding and the will, the most excellent of its constituent parts. It follows:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to those who believe in his name: who were born not of bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." ([Joh 1.12-13](#))

Having made this division, he rejects from the kingdom of Christ 'bloods,' 'the will of the flesh,' and 'the will of man,' By 'bloods' I suppose he means the Jews; that is, those who had a mind to be sons of the kingdom because they were sons of Abraham and of the Fathers — boasting truly of their descent.

I understand 'the will of the flesh' to mean the pains with which that people exercised themselves in law works. For the flesh, here, signifies carnal persons who do not have the Spirit. They have the will and the endeavour; but since there is no Holy Ghost in this will and endeavour, they have them carnally. I understand 'the will of man' to mean the pains which mankind in general takes to find favour with God — *all* men, whether under the law or without the law — the Gentiles, say, or whomever you will. The meaning, therefore, is that they are not made sons of God either by a birth of the flesh, nor by a zeal for the law, nor by any other human means, but only by a divine birth.

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If, then, they are not born of the flesh, nor trained by the law, nor obtained by any human discipline, but are born again of God — it is plain that Freewill is of no avail here. For I think the word 'man' is taken here in the Hebrew sense, as anyone whatsoever; just as 'flesh' is taken, by contrast, for the people of Israel who do not have the Spirit: and 'will' is taken for the highest power in man; that is, the principal ingredient in Freewill.

But grant that we may not understand each word correctly, still the sum and substance of the assertion is most plain. Namely, by this division — in saying that men are not made the sons of God except by being born of God — John rejects whatever is not of divine begetting. This is effected, according to his own interpretation, by *believing in his name*. Now, the will of man, or Freewill, is necessarily included in this rejection, as not being a thing born of God, nor yet of faith. If Freewill availed anything, the will of man would not be rejected by John. Nor would men be withdrawn from it, and sent to faith and new birth only. Otherwise it might be said to him, which was said in Isa 5.20, "Woe to you who call good evil." But now, since he equally rejects 'bloods,' 'the will of the flesh,' and 'the will of man,' it is certain that the will of man has no more power towards making sons of God, than bloods or fleshly nativity. Now, no one considers it doubtful whether fleshly birth makes, or does not make, sons of God. Paul tells us so in Rom 9.8: "Those who are the

children of the flesh, these are not the children of God." He proves this by the examples of Ishmael and Esau. ⁶⁹⁴

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SECT. 25. John the Baptist's testimony.

The same John introduces the Baptist speaking thus; "Of whose fulness have all we received, grace for grace." [Joh 1.16](#)

He speaks of grace received by us out of the fulness of Christ; but for the sake of what merit, or endeavour? For the grace, he says, truly of Christ: ⁶⁹⁵ just as Paul also speaks in Rom 5.15. "The grace of God, and the gift by grace of one man Jesus Christ, has abounded to many." Where now is the endeavour of Freewill, by which grace is procured?

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Here John says, not only that grace is received without any endeavour of ours, but even by another's grace, or another's merit — namely, that of one man, Jesus Christ. Either it is therefore false that we receive our grace for the sake of another's grace; or else it is evident that Freewill is nothing. For these two things cannot stand together: that the grace of God is on the one hand so cheap as to be obtained commonly, and everywhere, by the paltry endeavour of any man you please; and on the other hand, it is so dear as to be freely bestowed upon us only *for* and *by* the grace of one so great a man.

I would at the same time admonish the advocates of Freewill in this place, that in asserting Freewill, they are deniers of Christ. For if I obtain the grace of God through my own endeavour, then what need is there of the grace of Christ for my receiving grace? Or what is lacking to me once I have obtained the grace of God? But Diatribe has said, and all the Sophists also say, that we obtain the grace of God by our own endeavour; and we are prepared for receiving it, not of condignity indeed, but of congruity. ⁶⁹⁶ This absolutely denies Christ; for the Baptist testifies here that we receive grace for the sake of Christ's

⁶⁹⁴ 'The will of the flesh' and 'the will of man' separated and distinguished, and both named, must, upon every conceivable interpretation of those terms, exclude everything belonging to the human will from this generative power; and therefore, they decide the question as to the power of Freewill, in bringing us to the inheritance of God's children. But I would rather understand 'bloods' to express natural birth generally (we do not have it by descent from our parents); 'will of the flesh' for our own personal and individual will, which we have by nature; and 'will of man' for the ordinance and appointment of man generally: it is not a human device. It is what men have chosen and procured for themselves, or what can, in any individual instance, be conferred by man, one or many, willing it to another. A man may leave his estate at death, or confer a liberal gift in his lifetime, but he cannot will or bestow new birth. Luther speaks as if we were begotten by believing ('nascendo ex Deo, quod fit credendo in nomine ejus'); like Erasmus' 'renatus per fidem,' which, as we saw, he does not object to. But the truth is, we must be begotten again before we can believe; and then, believing, we take our place among God's adopted children. So that there is a sense in which we are regenerated by faith, inasmuch as it is by faith we are *manifested* to be of the Lord's children. But the birth, or *generation* more properly, spoken of in verse 13, is prior to faith; so that it cannot in this view be said, 'nascor ex Deo, credendo in nomine Jesu Christi.' (See above, Part iv. Sect. 45. note ^t, also Part v. Sect. 19. note ⁿ.)

⁶⁹⁵ *Pro gratia scilicet Christi*. Luther seems to understand him as saying grace in return for, or on account of, his grace; that is, the grace which Christ has himself shown. So he clearly explains himself afterwards, when he says 'gratiam eis impetrat per suum sanguinem.' In this view, it is parallel with the passage which he cites from Romans 5. It is more commonly interpreted 'grace for grace;' that is, one degree or measure of grace for another. But Luther is more correct: although the grace which we have from Christ is in reality grace given to us by the Father in the same instant in which the grace is given to Christ, by means of which he has done and endured everything personally; it still *comes* to us, and is actually *conferred* upon us, in the way of fruit and consequence of his actings — grace bestowed on *us*, for the sake of grace acted previously by *himself*.

⁶⁹⁶ *Condignity* is the quality of deserving something; *inherent worthiness*. *Congruity* is the quality of being suitable.

grace. As for that figment about condignity and congruity, I have already confuted it, showing that these are empty words which in reality mean *merit of condignity*.⁶⁹⁷ They have more impiety in them than the Pelagian assertions; as I have declared. So that the impious Sophists, with Diatribe at their head, deny the Lord Christ who bought us, more than the Pelagians or *any* heretics have done — so utterly incompatible is grace with any particle or power of Free will.

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However, that the advocates for Freewill deny Christ, is proved not only by this Scripture, but by their own life. Hence, they make Christ to no longer be a sweet Mediator, but a tremendous Judge whom they are endeavouring to appease by the intercessions of his Virgin Mother, and of the Saints. Moreover, they do this by many works, rites, superstitions, and vows of their own invention. The object of all this is to make Christ favourable to them, so that he may give them his grace. On the other hand, they do not believe that he intercedes with God, and obtains grace for them through his blood — grace for grace, as it is said here. And as they believe, so it is done unto them. They truly and deservedly have Christ for their inexorable Judge, so long as they forsake him in his office of most powerful Mediator and Saviour; and so long as they account his blood and grace more worthless than the pains and endeavours of Freewill.

SECT. 26. Nicodemus' case.

Let us also hear an example of Freewill. Nicodemus, I warrant you, is a man in whom nothing was lacking which Freewill can effect. Which is it that this man omits — pains or endeavour? He confesses Christ to be a true witness, and to have come from God; he mentions his miracles; he comes by night to hear and to compare the rest. Does this man not seem to have sought the things which belong to piety and salvation, by the power of Freewill? But see how he founders! When he hears Christ point out to him the true way of salvation by new birth, does he recognise that way, or confess that he has ever sought it? No indeed; he so revolts from it, and is so confounded, that he not only says he does not understand it, but he even turns away from it as impossible. How can these things be, he asks? And this is no wonder indeed. For who ever heard that a man must be born again, of water and of the Spirit, if he would be saved?

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Who ever thought that the Son of God must be lifted up, to the end that all who believe in him might not perish, but have eternal life. Have the acutest and best philosophers ever mentioned this? Have the princes of this world ever learned this science? Has any man's Freewill ever made an attempt at it? Does Paul not confess it to be wisdom hidden in a mystery? It was foretold by the Prophets, it is true. But it was revealed by the Gospel, having been kept secret and unknown to the world, from eternity.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁷ *Meritum condignum*. 'Worthy merit,' i.e., 'merit worthy of the reward which is proposed to be given to it,' 'merit of worth to the uttermost.' See above, Sect. 16.

⁶⁹⁸ It is most true, that the Gospel mystery is strictly a matter of revelation, and not within the discovery of natural reason. But it is also true that it has been the will of God that there should be intimations of this mystery, hereafter to be revealed, and traces of such intimations amidst all nations, from the beginning. The kingdom of God was announced immediately after the fall, in the denunciation upon the serpent. And it has been part of the counsel and work of God, that it should be spoken of, and looked for, and that the eternal separation between the two parts of the human race

What shall I say? Shall we consult experience? Even the whole world, even human reason, even Freewill herself, is compelled to acknowledge that she neither knew nor heard of Christ before the Gospel came into the world. Now, if she did not know, much less has she sought, or been able to seek, or to endeavour after him. But Christ is the way, the truth, the life, and the salvation. She confesses, therefore, whether she would or not, that by her own powers she has neither known, nor been able to seek those things which belong to the way, the truth, and the salvation. Still however, in opposition to this very confession and our own experience, we play the madman. We maintain by a mere war of words, that we have a certain power remaining in us, which both knows and can apply itself to the things that pertain to salvation. This is as good as saying that this power knows and can apply itself to Christ the Son of God, who was lifted up for us; ⁶⁹⁹ whereas no one has *ever* known, or *could* have thought of such a person.

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Still, this ignorance is not ignorance, but knowledge of Christ — that is, of the things which pertain to salvation! Do you not yet see, and almost feel with your hands, that the assertors of Freewill are downright mad when they call it knowledge, which they themselves confess is ignorance. Is this not to call darkness light? (Isa 5.20) — so mightily does God shut the mouth of Freewill, according to her own confession and experience. And yet, with all this, she will not hold her tongue and give glory to God. ⁷⁰⁰

SECT. 27. John 14 forestalled. Way, truth, etc. are exclusive.

Again, when Christ is called the way, the truth, and the life; and that is done by way of comparison — so that whatever is not Christ, is not the way, but out of the way; nor truth, but a lie; nor life, but death — Freewill, being neither Christ, nor in Christ, must have its dwelling place in error, falsehood, and death. Where then is this middle and neutral substance to be found — this averred substance of Freewill? And from where is it to be proved? Not being Christ (that is, the way, the truth, and the life), how does it not necessarily become error, falsehood, and death? For, if what is said about Christ and his grace were not all said by way of comparison, in opposition to their contraries, then what would all the discourses of the Apostles, and all of Scripture, amount to? For example, that outside of Christ there is none but the devil; outside of grace there is nothing but wrath; outside of light there is nothing but darkness; outside of the way, there is nothing but error; outside of the truth, there is nothing but falsehood; outside of life, there is nothing but death. ⁷⁰¹

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All of this would surely be said in vain, since it would not force the conclusion that Christ is necessary to us (which is their great object, however). For some middle substance might

into hell and into heaven, should be made on the ground of it. Still, it is not that Freewill has found this out, but that God has shown it.

⁶⁹⁹ *Pro nobis exaltatum*. *Exalt.* is a word of doubtful meaning, which might refer to his seat at the Father's right hand; but I understand it with allusion to the Lord's words, "And I if am lifted up" (υψωθω, John 12.32), as explained by the comment, "this he said, signifying what death he should die."

⁷⁰⁰ *Nec sic tamen tacere*. A sort of οξυμορον, *exumooron*, like 'stremna inertia,' 'concordia discors;' but there is no real inconsistency: Freewill should be silent for herself, and give glory to God.

⁷⁰¹ The word *extra* is used throughout the whole of this passage, to denote distinctness: there are but two sorts of substances; to be *without* the one, is to be *within* the other.

be discovered which, of itself, is neither evil nor good. It belongs neither to Christ nor to Satan; it is neither true nor false, neither alive nor dead — yes, perhaps it is neither anything nor nothing — yet it is to be called the noblest and most excellent endowment of all that is found in the whole human race.

Choose whichever you will, therefore. If you grant that the Scriptures speak by way of comparison, you can ascribe nothing to Freewill which is not contrary to what is in Christ; you must say of it, that error, death, Satan, and all evil reigns in it. If you do *not* grant that they speak by way of comparison, in that case you enervate the Scriptures to such a degree, that they effect nothing, and do not prove that Christ is necessary. Thus, in establishing Freewill, you make Christ void, and tread all Scripture underfoot. Again, while you pretend in words to be confessing Christ, you *really* and *with your heart* deny him. For, if Freewill is not all error and damnation, but sees and wills things that are honest and good, and also things which pertain to salvation, then she is whole, and has no need of Christ for her doctor; nor has Christ redeemed that part of our nature. For what *need* is there of light and life, where there *is* light and life?

Now, if *this* is not redeemed by Christ, then the best ingredient in the composition of man is not redeemed either; rather, it is good and sound of itself. In this case, God is also unjust in condemning any man, because he condemns that which is best in man, and which is sound; in other words, He condemns the innocent.

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For there is no man who does not have Freewill. And though a bad man abuses his Freewill, still we are taught that the power itself is not extinguished in him — so as neither to strive for good, nor to be able to strive for it. Now, if it is such, then without doubt it is holy, just, and good. And therefore, it should not be condemned, but be separated from the man who is to be condemned. But this cannot be; and if it could be, then in that case the man, no longer having Freewill, would no longer be a man. He would neither merit evil nor good, nor be damned or saved, but must be an absolute brute, and no longer an immortal being. It remains, therefore, that God is unjust who condemns that holy, just, and good power which has no need of Christ, *in* and *with* a bad man. ⁷⁰²

SECT. 28. John 3.18, 36.

But let us go on with John. "He who believes on him," he says, "is not judged. He who does not believe, has been judged already, ⁷⁰³ because he does not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God." [Joh 3.18](#)

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⁷⁰² Luther's argument is that Scripture speaks by way of comparison (See above, Sect. 18. note); therefore Freewill, which confessedly is out of Christ, must be sin, death, Satan, error, etc. If you deny that Scripture speaks by comparison, 1. You make Scripture void. 2. You deny Christ. 3. You make God unjust. His reasoning is subtle, but conclusive. See the same sort of argument pursued, and remarked upon, Part iv. Sect. 44. note ^s.

⁷⁰³ *Jam judicatus est. Already* as opposed to the *judgment day*. He need not wait for that; the preaching of Christ tries him, of what sort he is, whether he is a doer of evil, or a doer of the truth — as it appears from vv. 20, 21. The secret is, a regenerated soul, when Christ is preached, knows, owns, and receives him. He who rejects Christ, thereby proves that he is not regenerated, but is in his nature state; devilish, and possessed by the devil. — It is supposed that the state described here is the abiding, unchanged, indeed dying state of the man. Every deliberate rejection of Christ, when preached, gives ground for an awful apprehension; but it is final rejection which stamps this judgment. Such being his mind towards Christ, he does not need the process of the last judgment to declare whether he is "in God" or not.

Tell me whether Freewill is in the number of the believers, or not? If she is, then again, she has no need of grace, seeing that she believes in Christ of herself. This Christ, however, she neither knows, nor has any conception of. If she is not a believer, she has been judged already: and what is this, if not that she has been condemned before God? Now, God condemns nothing except what is wicked. She is wicked, therefore: and what pious act can an impious thing attempt? Nor can Freewill be excepted here, I suppose, since he speaks of the whole man, which he says is condemned. Besides, unbelief is not a gross affection, but that highest sort of affection which sits and reigns in the citadel of the will and understanding — just as faith does, its contrary. Now, to be unbelieving is to deny God, and to make him a liar. (1Joh 1.10) If we do not believe, we make God a liar.⁷⁰⁴ Now, how can that power which is contrary to God, and which makes Him a liar, strive after good? If this power were not unbelieving and ungodly, he would not have said about the whole man, "he has been judged already." He would have spoken thus: 'the man has been judged already with respect to his gross affections; but with respect to his best and most excellent affection, he is not judged, because it strives after faith, or rather, it is even now believing.'

Thus, as often as the Scripture says, "Every man is a liar," we will say upon the authority of Freewill, 'On the contrary, the Scripture lies, because man is not a liar in his best part, that is, in his understanding and will, but only in his flesh, blood, and marrow; so that all from which man takes his name — that is, understanding and will — is sound and holy.'

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So it would be, in that saying of the Baptist's, "He that believes on the Son, has everlasting life: but he that does not believe the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." We must understand 'upon him' to mean that the wrath of God remains 'upon his gross affections;' but grace and eternal life abide upon that eminent power of Free will — truly, upon his understanding and will. It appears from this example, that to maintain Freewill, you turn and twist by a synecdoche,⁷⁰⁵ what is said in the Scriptures against ungodly men, so as to confine it to the brutish part of man; hereby you keep the rational and truly human part of him safe and sound. In this case, I must render my thanks to the assertors of Freewill, since I will not feel the least concern for my sin. I will be confident that my understanding and will — that is, my Freewill — cannot be condemned (as it is never extinguished), but always remains sound, just, and holy. But if my understanding and will are to be happy, I will rejoice that my filthy and brutish flesh is separated and condemned — this is how far am I from wishing that Christ be its redeemer. Thus you see where the dogma of Freewill carries us: even to denying all divine and human, temporal and eternal realities, and to deluding itself with so many monstrous fictions!

So again, the Baptist says, "a man cannot receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven." Joh 3.27

⁷⁰⁴ Luther refers only to 1Joh 1. But the testimony is equally strong in 1Joh 5.10. "He that does not believe God has made him a liar; because he does not believe the record that God gave of his Son."

⁷⁰⁵ *Per synecdochen. Syn.* 'A figure of speech by which a part is taken for the whole, or the whole for a part.' Here, Diatribe makes it the whole of man, put for his grosser part.

Cease, Diatribe, to display your great fluency here, by enumerating all the things which we receive from heaven! We are not arguing about *nature*, but about *grace*. We are not inquiring what sort of persons we are on earth, but in heaven and before God.

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We know that man is constituted lord of the things beneath him — things over which he has power and Freewill so that they may obey him, and may do what he wills and thinks. But this is our question: whether he has Freewill towards *God*, so that God obeys and does what man wills; or instead, whether God has Freewill over man, so that man wills and does what God wills, and can do nothing except what God has willed and done. Here the Baptist says that he can receive nothing, unless it is given to him from heaven: so that Freewill is nothing. ⁷⁰⁶

So again, "He that is of the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth; he that comes from heaven is above all." ^{Joh 3.31}

Here again, he makes all earthly who are not of Christ (and says that they mind and speak earthly things); he leaves none between the two. But Freewill, surely, is not 'he that comes from heaven.' So that Freewill must be of the earth, and must mind and speak the things of the earth.

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Now, if there were any power in any man, which at any time, in any place, in any work, did not mind earthly things, then the Baptist should have excepted this man, and not said generally, concerning all those who are outside of Christ, that they are earthly, and speak of the earth. ⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁶ *Hic dicit*. That is, according to Luther (who assumes that the things spoken of here are things of God, not of the creature), determines this question; it is God's will that is done, not man's. — I have already objected many times to the distinction which Luther here again resorts to (see above, Part iv. Sect. 46. note ^x); nor can I allow this text to be a direct testimony against Freewill. — John is accounting for the superior honour paid to Jesus above himself. He had just been informed concerning Jesus, "All men come to Him." The principle of the remark therefore is, 'I can have no more of honour than it is the will of God to bestow upon me.' And he goes on to say that he never claimed to be Christ, and consequently never claimed to receive the honour which it had been the Father's good pleasure to appropriate to Him. It is honour and distinction, therefore, not spiritual power and capacity, of which John speaks here. — But it is honour *in* and *of* the kingdom of God, which is preceded by a gift of super-creation power exciting and leading to it. As the honour is, so is the precedent power of God, and according to the measure in which he has ordained to bestow it, and produce it. However, *non tali auxilio*. If Luther understands it as, 'we must have power given to enable us to receive power,' then it is a testimony. But its meaning is far simpler than this. What we have, we have received; if another has more, it is because God has given it.

⁷⁰⁷ This is a testimony borne to Jesus by John, in contrast with himself: though filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb, and having the hand of the Lord with him (Luk 1.15, 66.), he had not been born 'by the Holy Ghost's coming upon a virgin mother, and the power of the Highest overshadowing her;' 'he had not come down from heaven,' he had not 'come from above,' 'come from heaven,' (and, as compared with Him, was earthly in his words (see Luk 1.31; Joh 3.13, 31; 6.38, 41, 42), as well as in his frame and formation.)

I do not refer to 1Cor 15.47, because I consider it as belonging to another subject — Christ the risen head of his risen people, come down the second time from heaven to raise his dead ones. — It is of Christ walking upon this earth that the Baptist testifies here: he *comes* or (what is the same in import here) he *has come* from heaven; and so too in the other passages to which I have referred.

Luther misunderstands the text — he does not see its glory, and he does not elicit its testimony against Freewill correctly. It is, however, a testimony: if John, only so far as he had a gift from heaven, was other than earthly, and had so comparatively little of this gift as to fitly call himself *earthly* — what is 'Freewill,' 'nature man,' 'that which is nothing but earth,' instead of being such a one as John had been made, by the grace of God. It is not 'Christ's people,' and 'the world,' which are opposed to each other here by the names 'earthly' and 'heavenly,' but Christ and John *singly*. John

So afterwards, in chap. 8, Christ also says, "You are of the world; I am not of the world: you are from beneath, I am from above." ^{Joh 8.23}

The persons to whom he spoke had Freewill — that is, understanding and will. And yet he says, "they were of the world." Now, what news would it be if he said they were of the world with respect to their flesh and gross affections? Did not the whole world know this before? Besides, what need is there to say that men are of the world, in that part in which they are brutish, when at this rate, the beasts also are of the world? ⁷⁰⁸

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SECT. 29. John 6.44.

Again, what does Christ's saying in John 6.44 leave to Freewill? "No one comes to me, unless my Father has drawn him." ⁷⁰⁹ He says, it is necessary that a man hear and learn from the Father himself; and afterwards, that all must be taught of God (vv. 44, 45). Here, truly, he teaches that not only are the works and pains of Freewill in vain, but that even the word of the Gospel (which he is treating here) is heard in vain, unless the Father himself speaks, teaches, and draws within. No man *can* come, he says. That power, truly, by which a man is enabled to make any endeavour after Christ — that is, after those things which are pertinent to salvation — is asserted to be nothing. Nor is that saying of Augustine's of any service to Freewill, which Diatribe adduces for the purpose of blurring this most clear and most mighty passage — that God draws just as we draw a sheep, by showing it a bough. She would have this simile prove that there is a power in us to follow the drawing of God. But this simile is of no avail here. For God does not show us one good thing only, but all his good things, even Christ himself — his Son.

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But still, no man follows him unless the Father shows him something else within, and draws him in other ways. No, the whole world persecutes that Son whom He shows. This comparison of Augustine's squares perfectly enough with the case of the godly, who are now sheep, and know their shepherd, God. These who live by the Spirit and are moved by the Spirit, follow wherever God wills, and whatever he has shown them. But the ungodly does not come, even when he has heard the word, unless the Father draws and teaches within — which He does by bestowing the Spirit. There is another drawing within them, distinct from that without; within them, Christ is shown by the illumination of the Spirit, through which the man is married off to Christ by a most delightful ravishment. He *endures* the act of a speaking teacher and a drawing God, rather than *performing* one himself by seeking and running. ^{xlii}

was a man in no way different from other men as to his natural frame; he was truly and solely a son of Adam. But *Christ's* human person, as to its spiritual part, was from heaven.

⁷⁰⁸ Surely the Lord means more by 'from beneath' here, than the Baptist did, who spoke of himself or, according to Luther, 'of himself and all who are Christ's.' The Lord speaks of these Jews as the devil's seed, whose throne and habitation are beneath the earth — while his own origin, as well as his throne, was and is heaven. (See that whole discourse in John 8, especially from v. 21 to the end of the chapter.) Luther's conclusion, however, is correct. He bore this testimony to their best and finer part, not to the grosser part. An objection may indeed be taken to, 'These were expressly and emphatically children of the wicked one; and therefore their case is somewhat different from that of the children of the kingdom.' The answer is, not as it respects nature — Freewill and all natural powers.

⁷⁰⁹ *Venit ad me*. The original text is stronger; "is able to come to me."

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SECT. 30. John 16.9.

I will bring yet one more text from this same John, who in his sixteenth chapter says, "The spirit will reprove the world of sin, because they have not believed in me." (Joh 16.9) Here you see it is sin not to believe in Christ. But this sin, surely, is not fixed in the skin or in the hair, but in the very understanding and will. Now, when he charges the whole world with this sin, and it is ascertained by experience that this sin of theirs is as unknown to the world as Christ himself — seeing that it is revealed by the reproving of the Spirit — it is plain that Freewill, together with its will and understanding, is considered captured, and condemned for this sin, before God. So then, while Freewill is ignorant of Christ and does not believe in him, she cannot will or endeavour after any good thing, but is necessarily the slave of this unknown sin. In short, the Scriptures preach Christ by way of comparison and opposition everywhere, as I have said. They represent everything which does not have the Spirit of Christ, as the subject of Satan, ungodliness, error, darkness, sin, and the wrath of God. However many testimonies there are which speak of Christ, all and every one of them will fight against Freewill. Now, such testimonies are innumerable; indeed, they make up the whole of Scripture.

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So that, if we try this cause at the judgment seat of Scripture, I will conquer in every way.⁷¹⁰ Not a single jot or tittle will remain, that does not condemn the dogma of Freewill.

Now although our great theologians and maintainers of Freewill either do not know, or pretend not to know, that the Scripture thus preaches Christ by way of comparison and opposition, all Christians still know this, and publicly confess it. They know I say that there are two kingdoms in the world, which are most adverse to each other; that Satan reigns in the one, and on this account he is called by Christ the Prince of this world, and by Paul the God of this age; he holds all men captive at his will, who have not been torn from him by the Spirit of Christ, as this same Paul witnesses — not suffering them to be torn from him by any force, save by the Spirit of God, as Christ testifies in his parable of the strong man keeping his palace in peace. In the other kingdom, Christ reigns. His kingdom is continually resisting and fighting with that of Satan. We are translated into this kingdom, not by our own power, but by the grace of God, by which we are delivered from this present wicked age, and snatched out of the hands of the power of darkness. The knowledge and confession of these kingdoms, as perpetually fighting against each other with such might and resolution, would be sufficient of itself to confute the dogma of Freewill — seeing that we are compelled to serve in the kingdom of Satan, unless we are rescued from it by a divine power.

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⁷¹⁰ *Omnibus modis vicero. Omn. mod.* like παντι τροπω (*panti tropoo*), or κατα ταυτα τροπον (*kata tanta propon*) of the Greeks, expresses the manner in which any act is done, or event accomplished: 'By whatever arts and means, or with whatever spirit and turn of mind, the contest is carried on, I will have so conquered as not to leave a single jot or tittle for Freewill.' — The argument is this: Scripture preaches Christ by antithesis; therefore, whatever preaches Christ, excludes Freewill. Christ is preached everywhere: therefore, Freewill is opposed everywhere.

These things, I say, the common believers know, and they abundantly confess them by their proverbs, prayers, efforts and whole life. ⁷¹¹

SECT. 31. Omits to argue from the conflict between flesh and spirit, because no attempt has yet been made to repel what he has said about it.

I omit that truly Achillean argument of mine, which Diatribe in her noble courage has left untouched; namely, that in Romans 7 and Galatians 5, Paul teaches us that the conflict between flesh and spirit is so mighty in the sanctified and godly, that they cannot do the things which they would. I argue from it thus: the nature of man is so wicked, that in those who have been born again of the Spirit, not only does it *not* endeavour after good, but it even fights against and opposes good. So then, how would it endeavour after good in those who, not yet being regenerated, are serving under Satan, in the old man? For Paul does not speak only of the gross affections in that place — the common outlet through which Diatribe is prone to slip like an eel, out of the hands of every Scripture. But he reckons these among the works of the flesh: heresy, idolatry, dissensions, contentions, mischiefs, which reign in those highest powers of the soul — say, the *understanding* and the *will*.

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If, then, the flesh maintains a conflict against the spirit by means of these affections in the *saints*, then much more will it fight against God in the *ungodly*, and their Freewill. On this account, Romans 8 calls it 'enmity' against God. ⁷¹²

I would be glad, I say, if anybody would remove this argument for me, and defend Freewill from it. For my own part, I confess that if it could be in any way, I would be unwilling to have Freewill given to me, or to have anything left in my own hand, which might enable me to endeavour after salvation. This is because, in the midst of so many dangers and adversities on the one hand, and so many assaulting devils on the other, I would not be strong enough to maintain my standing and keep my hold of it. For one devil is mightier than all men put together, and not a single individual of mankind would be saved. But also because, even if there were no dangers, and no adversities, and no devils, I would still be compelled to toil forever uncertainly, and to fight as one who beats the air. ⁷¹³ For even if I lived and worked to eternity, my own conscience would never be sure and secure how much she ought to do, so that God might be satisfied with her. Do what she might, an anxious doubt would still be left whether it pleased God, or whether He required anything

⁷¹¹ How strange that this enlightened and enlightening view of the two kingdoms should be so little realized, substantiated and applied! This needs only to be carried back to the period of the fall, and from there continued downwards to the end of the world, with an understanding that this is not the creation-state of man, and the things of man, but the counsel and scheme of God, as made way for by the creation and the fall, to render all Scripture, history, observation and experience, simple and intelligible! Luther evidently did not comprehend them in the fulness of their origination, design, operations, and results. But the substance is here, and we can scarcely help breathing out the vain wish that he had, for his own comfort, and that of others whom the Lord has not disdained to edify by his writings, been enabled to put the elements, with which he here furnishes us, together, in their beginning and endings, and in the connection of the intermediate parts, in a workmanlike manner. He has the materials; but he neither models, nor lays the foundation, nor builds on it. Still, what grace in his day to have seen so much!

⁷¹² I have already shown that I do not coincide with Luther in his representation of the flesh and the spirit. I consider the flesh and the spirit to be the unrenewed body and the renewed mind, severally, of the Lord's called people. But this difference does not affect the argument here. If the renewed man, who has the Spirit, has this conflict to maintain, then what is the wholly unrenewed man before God, and what is his endeavour after good?

⁷¹³ *Laborare*. The allusion is evidently to 1Cor 9.26; but he does not use the word *currere*. Paul says *τρέχω* (*trechoo* – run).

more. The experience of all self-righteous persons ⁷¹⁴ proves this, and to my own great misery, I have abundantly learned this by so many years of conflict.

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But now, God has taken my salvation out of the hands of my own will, and received it into his own hands. He has promised to save me, not by my own work or running, but by His own grace and mercy. I am therefore at ease and certain, because He is faithful and will not lie to me; and moreover, because He is great and powerful, so that no number of devils, no number of adversities, can either wear *Him* out, or pluck *me* out of his hand. No one, ⁷¹⁵ he says, shall pluck them out of my hand; for my Father who gave them to me, is greater than all. [Joh 10.28-29](#) Thus it comes to pass that if *all* are not saved, *some* however are — indeed, *many* are. Whereas, by the power of Freewill, *none* absolutely would be; but would we all, to a man, be lost? Moreover, we are fearlessly sure that we please God, not by the merit of our own work, but by the favour of his mercy which He has promised us; and if we do less than we should, or do amiss, He does not impute it to us, but with a fatherly mind, He forgives and amends it. Such is the boast of every saint in his God. ⁷¹⁶

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SECT. 32. Difficulty stated and exposed.

But if this disturbs us, that it is difficult to maintain the mercy and equity of God in that he damns the undeserving — namely, ungodly men who are of such a sort that, being born in ungodliness, they cannot by any means help being ungodly; and remaining so, they are damned. Indeed, they are compelled by the necessity of their nature, to sin and perish. As Paul says, "We were all the sons of wrath even as others," [Eph 2.3](#) being created as such by God himself, out of a seed which became corrupted through that sin which was Adam's only.

Difficulty exposed. In this state of things, we must honour and reverence the exceeding great mercy of God in his dealings with those whom he justifies and saves, even though most unworthy of such benefits. And we must at least make some small concession to his divine wisdom, believing him to be just, when to us he seems unjust. For if his justice were indeed pronounced just when it is judged by human apprehension, it would clearly not be *divine* justice, but differ not at all from man's. Now, seeing that God is the one true God, and is moreover totally incomprehensible, and inaccessible to human reason, it is natural

⁷¹⁴ *Justitiorum*. I do not find the word, except as bad Latin for 'a justice!' But the connection determines it to mean here, persons who are going about to establish their own righteousness, in opposition to those who have learned that there is a God-righteousness, and have been led to submit to it. — 'Justicers,' or 'righteousness-mongers.'

⁷¹⁵ Οὐδεὶς (*Oudeis*) implies more than no *man*: no *person*, whether man or devil.

⁷¹⁶ The defects of Luther's theology are apparent in this paragraph. He gives quietness, but not triumph; quietness too, we know not why, when a reason might be assigned. We are to live, *assuredly* to live; yet we do not live: we are to work too, that we may live; and our workings must be forgiven and amended. He did not see Christ's peculiar and peculiarizing headship. He did not see that the efficacy of Christ, is enabling God — by his own dying — to raise up the cursed from their curse after suffering a part of it; that they live, even now, in a risen Christ as though they had risen with him; and that it is eternal life already received and acted, in just such a measure as He is pleased to bestow it, which constitutes the acceptable service that they are now rendering. This service He will reward, as he has appointed, and in just such a measure and manner as he appointed. But all this is upon the basis of Christ's super-creation headship, and their relations to God *in Him*. The merit of their acceptance has been wrought already, to the uttermost, by Him alone; and they have only to enter into and enjoy their portion — which is a mixed one here, but an unmingled one hereafter. See Part iii. Sect. 38. note 1. Joh 3.36; 5.24; 10.28; 17.3; 1Joh 5.10.

— indeed it is necessary — that his justice also be incomprehensible. Paul cries this: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how incomprehensible are his judgments and his ways unsearchable." (Rom 11.33)

Now they would not be incomprehensible if we could, throughout the whole of them, conceive why they are just.

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What is man compared with God? What is our power capable of, as compared with his? What is our strength compared with his might? What is our knowledge compared with his wisdom? What is our substance compared with his substance? In short, what is everything of ours, as compared with everything of his? ⁷¹⁷

SECT. 33. Difficulty Reproved and palliated by example.

Now, using no other precept than nature, say we confess that man's power, strength, wisdom, knowledge, substance, and everything of ours, is absolutely nothing when compared with God's power, strength, wisdom, knowledge, and substance. What is this perverseness of ours, that we pull at and hale ⁷¹⁸ God's justice and judgment, ⁷¹⁹ arrogating ⁷²⁰ so much to our own judgment, as to test whether we can comprehend, judge, and estimate the judgment of God? Why do we not, in like manner, say that our judgment is nothing if compared with the divine judgment? Ask reason herself, whether she is not compelled by conviction, to acknowledge that she is foolish and rash in not allowing the judgment of God to be incomprehensible, when she confesses all the other properties of God to be incomprehensible? What! In all other things we concede a divine majesty to God; it is only in his judgment that we are prepared to deny it to him, and cannot, even for this little while, give him credit for being just. Yet he has promised us that, after he has revealed his glory, it will come to pass that all of us will then both see and feel, that he *has been*, and is just.

I will give an example to confirm this belief, and to console that evil eye ⁷²¹ which suspects God of injustice.

462-463 [\[long note\]](#)

Behold, God so governs this material world in outward things, that if you observe and follow the judgment of human reason, you are compelled to say either there is *no* God, or there is an *unjust* God. As that poet says, "I am often solicited to think that there are no Gods." For see how true it is that the wicked are most prosperous, and the good, on the other hand, are most unfortunate. Even proverbs, and experience, which is the mother of proverbs, testify that the more wicked men are, the more fortunate.' "The tabernacles of the wicked abound," says Job 12.6. And the 73d Psalm complains that sinners abound

⁷¹⁷ *Ad illius omnia*. I do not venture to render it, 'as compared with its like of His;' but Luther means so, presuming that our image-ship extends to every divine property.

⁷¹⁸ *Hale*: cause through pressure or necessity, by physical, moral, or intellectual means.

⁷¹⁹ *Justitiam et judicium*. *Just*. The principle of justice; the faculty of judgment.

⁷²⁰ *Arrogate*: to demand as being one's due or property; to assert one's right or title to something.

⁷²¹ *Ad consolandum*. An odd expression in this connection; but he means, to console the spirit which is tempted to see with evil eye: 'an evil eye is one which is either unsound *generally*, or is infected with the particular disease of envy, malice and blasphemy.' See Mat 6.23; 20.15; Mar 7.22.

with riches in this world. ⁷²² Is it not most unjust in the judgment of all men, I ask, that the wicked should be prospered, and the good afflicted? ^{xliii}

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Yet, such is the course of the world. It is here that even the greatest wits have fallen to the depth of denying that there is a God, and of feigning that Fortune turns and twists everything as the whim takes her: such were the Epicureans and Pliny. Following close upon these, Aristotle, to deliver that first Being of his from misery, is of the opinion that he does not see any of the things that exist, except himself; because he considers that it would be most painful for him to see so much of evil, and so much of injustice. ⁷²³

The Prophets, on the other hand, who believed that there *is* a God, are more tempted with the suggestion of God's injustice: such as Jeremiah, Job, David, Asaph and others. What do you imagine Demosthenes and Cicero thought, when after having done all they could, they received the wages they did, in a wretched death? ⁷²⁴ Yet this injustice of God — which is exceedingly probable, and inferred by such arguments, that no power of reason or light of nature can resist — is most easily removed by the light of the Gospel and the knowledge of grace. These teach us that the wicked flourish in their body, it is true, but they perish in their souls.

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Thus, we have the brief solution to this insolvable question in a single short sentence. 'There is a life after this life, in which whatever has not been punished and rewarded here, will hereafter be punished and rewarded; seeing that this life is nothing but the precursor, or rather the beginning, of the life to come.' The light of the Gospel, then, which owes all its power to the word and faith, is so efficacious, that this question — handled as it had been in all ages, but never answered — has thoroughly made an end of it and laid it to rest. What then do you think will happen when the light of the word and of faith has ceased, and when the reality, even the divine Majesty itself, is revealed as it is? Do you not think that the light of *glory* will then be able to solve, with the greatest ease, that question which is insolvable in the light of the word, or of *grace* — seeing that the light of grace has so readily solved a question which could not be solved by the light of *nature*?

Let it be conceded, then, that there are three great lights — the light of nature, the light of grace, and the light of glory — according to the common distinction (which is a good one). In the light of *nature*, it cannot be explained that it is just for the good man to be afflicted, and for the bad man to prosper. But the light of *grace* resolves this question. In the light of grace, it is inexplicable how God condemns the man who cannot, by any power of his

⁷²² Job 12.6; Psa 73.12. Our version says, "The tabernacles of robbers prosper." "Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches."

⁷²³ Luther's mention makes it doubtful which of the two Plinies he refers to; whether to the great naturalist or his nephew. Neither of them, however, saw in the works of nature, anything more than matter. Both were amiable, as natural men, and the former was a monument of philosophy and industry, called by some the martyr of nature, but more fitly called the martyr of curiosity and self-will. The latter was a well-bred, lettered persecutor of Christians; but he was too proud to inquire into their doctrines, and was not afraid, though reluctant, to shed their blood. For some excellent remarks on his character, see Miln. *Eccl. Hist.* vol. i. pp. 166-172. For a hint at the Epicureans, who were like their master — 'Epicuri de grege porcus' — See above, Part i. Sect. 5. note ¹. For a confirmation of what is said here about Aristotle, see above, Part iv. Sect. 8. note ^r.

⁷²⁴ Demosthenes, abandoned in fact by his countrymen after having fled to the temple of Neptune in Calauria, sucked his poisoned quill. Cicero was delivered up to his philippicized Antony.

own, do other than sin, and to be guilty. In this case, the light of *nature*, as well as the light of *grace*, declares that the fault is not in wretched man, but in an unjust God. For how can they judge otherwise about God? For he crowns a wicked man gratuitously, without any merits; and He does *not* crown another, but condemns him who is perhaps less wicked, or at least he is not more wicked.

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But the light of *glory* proclaims something else. And when it arrives, it will show that God — whose judgment, for the present, is incomprehensible justice — is most just, and this is most manifest justice. In the meantime, it teaches us to believe the certainty of this coming event. By the example of the light of *grace*, we are admonished and confirmed in the expectation of it; this produces a like portent with respect to the light of *nature*.⁷²⁵

SECT. 34. Sum of the argument.

Here I will put an end to this treatise. I am prepared, if needed, to plead the cause yet further. Although, I consider that I have said enough to satisfy the pious mind, which is willing to yield to the force of truth without pertinacity.⁷²⁶ For, if we believe it to be true, that God foreknows and predestines everything; and moreover, that he can neither be mistaken nor hindered in his foreknowledge and predestination; and once more, that nothing is done outside his will (a truth which reason herself is compelled to yield) — then it follows from the testimony of this same reasoning, that there can be no such thing as Freewill in man or angel, nor in *any* creature.

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So again, if we believe Satan to be the Prince of this world, who is perpetually plotting and fighting with all his might against the kingdom of Christ, so that he does not let his captives of humankind go, unless he is driven out by a divine power — then again, it is manifest that there can be no such thing as Freewill.

So again, if we believe that original sin⁷²⁷ has so ruined us, as to make it most troublesome work even for those who are led by the Spirit, through striving against the good in them (as it does) — then it is clear that nothing is left in man, devoid of the Spirit, which can turn itself to good; but only what turns itself to evil.

Again, if the Jews, who followed after righteousness with all their might, have rather fallen headlong into unrighteousness; and if the Gentiles, who followed after unrighteousness,

⁷²⁵ If the observations of the preceding note are correct, we do not want Luther's illustration, with its distinctions. We need not wait for the decision and discoveries of the great day, to see God just. Nor are his assumptions admissible. God has never left the eternity of man and the future judgment without witness. If these things have been obscured, it is not by God's having put them into the dark, but because men have wilfully shut their eyes to them. The new creation kingdom was announced at the fall — and it has been variously preached ever since, to the whole earth. The kingdom of grace does not leave God under the suspicion of injustice. Man has made himself that damned thing which he is. The elect are not crowned sinners. The union of the elect with Christ, and the lack of this union in the reprobate, with its consequent self-left state, explains both dooms, in perfect consistency with divine equity. The illustration, therefore, is both unneeded and untrue. It is *unneeded*, inasmuch as the spiritual man even now sees the inflexible justice of God to be without spot — what it assuredly is; and it is *untrue*, inasmuch as Luther's insolvable questions are resolved under those lights which he declares to be severally inadequate.

⁷²⁶ *Pertinacity*: persistent determination; that is, if the listener does not doggedly refuse to hear the truth.

⁷²⁷ A still inferior view to what he has given us before of original sin, but a very common one: here he takes it for that vitiation of nature, which is the *consequence* of it — instead of that *first* sin, which gave *origin* to the vitiation. But the argument against Freewill is not affected; the consequent vitiation is in no way less than he represents it to be.

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have freely and unhopedly attained to righteousness — then it is manifest here (as in the former instances), by deed and experience, that *without grace* man can will nothing but evil. In fine, if we believe that Christ redeemed man by His blood, then we are obliged to confess that the *whole* man was undone. Otherwise we either make Christ superfluous, or else we make him the redeemer of only the vilest *part* in man. This would be blasphemous and sacrilegious. ⁷²⁸

⁷²⁸ He briefly recites certain additional considerations which must, each of them, be conclusive upon this subject. 1. God's foreknowledge and predestination. 2. Satan's lordship over the world. 3. Original sin. 4. The case of the apostate and rejected Jews, as contrasted with the conversion of the Gentiles. 5. Christ the Redeemer as unnecessary, or his benefit vilified.

CONCLUSION.

Luther admonishes, thanks, counsels, prays.

Now therefore I beseech you in the name of Christ, my Erasmus, that you would at length perform what you have promised. You promised that you would be willing to submit yourself to the man who could teach you better things. Be done with respect to persons. I confess, you are a great man, adorned with many of the noblest gifts by God; not to mention others — with genius, and learning, and eloquence, even to the miraculous. On the other hand, *I* have nothing, and *am* nothing, except that I could almost glory in being a Christian. Again, I greatly commend and extol you for this thing also: that you are the only man of all my antagonists, who has attacked the heart of the subject, the head of the cause — instead of wearing me out with extraneous points such as the Papacy, Purgatory, Indulgences, and a number of like topics. These may more fitly be called trifles, than matters of debate: a sort of chase in which nearly all my opponents have been hunting me up to here in vain. You are that single and solitary individual who has seen the hinge of the matters in dispute, and has aimed at the neck. I thank you for this from my heart — it is far more to my taste to be occupied in debating this question, so far as time and leisure are accorded me.

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If those who have previously attacked me had done the same; if those would do so who are currently boasting of new spirits, and new revelations — then we would have less of sedition and divisions, and more of peace and concord. But God thus stirs up Satan to punish our ingratitude.⁷²⁹

However, unless you can plead this cause in a somewhat different style from your Diatribe, I could earnestly wish that you would be content with your own proper good; and that you would cultivate, adorn, and advance the cause of literature and the languages, as you have done up till now, with great profit and praise. By this pursuit of yours, you have even served *me* not a little; insomuch that I confess myself to be greatly in your debt, even as I most assuredly venerate you, and sincerely look up to you as my superior in that particular. But God has not yet willed, nor given, that you should be equal to this cause! Pray, do not think that I say this with any arrogance.

And yet, I implore the Lord to speedily make you as much my superior in this particular, as you already are in all others. Nor is it anything new that God should instruct a Moses by Jethro, or a Paul by Ananias. If you do not know Christ, then you have failed in your aim, as to what you say, and you have done that miserably indeed — I think you must be aware yourself, what sort of a statement this is.

⁷²⁹ *Ita per Satanam.* Very true as to instrumentality. But from where, then, does this ingratitude come? Could not God cure it? Could not he drive out the Canaanite altogether from the land? Regenerate man, and a revived church, is still Adam; and it is the glory of God to save and glorify an Adam. He must be shown therefore, or rather he must show himself, what he is. His Canaan is not yet the Lord's world, nor is he yet the risen God-man. The time of ingratitude is yet; and it is yet, because the Lord's real and designed glory requires that it should be so. There is something satisfying, and cheering, and enlightening, in this view of the Lord's present dealings with his church and people, which reconciles us to what must otherwise be a constant burden and distress, and which leaves no more questions to be asked. Luther did not have distinct perceptions of the origin, nature, and design of evil; and while he talked much about Satan, he did not understand him well enough to put him in his place.

All will not *therefore* be in the wrong because you or I are in the wrong (if it is so). God is declared to be a God who is wonderful in his saints — so that we *may* count them saints, who are the furthest from saintship. Nor is it hard to suppose that you, being a man, may neither rightly understand, nor observe with sufficient diligence, either the Scriptures or the sayings of the Fathers, by whose guidance you imagine that you have obtained your aim. We have a pretty good hint to this effect, when you write that you do not assert at all, but only confer.⁷³⁰ The man who sees clearly through the whole of his subject, and understands it correctly, does not write this way. For my part, I have not conferred, but have asserted in this book; indeed, and I *do* assert. Nor is it my desire to appoint any man to be judge in this cause. I persuade all to receive my decree. May the Lord, whose cause this is, shine upon you — and make you a vessel unto honour and glory! Amen.

⁷³⁰ That is, Erasmus was merely "talking about" these things, rather than asserting they are categorically true.

Endnotes

ⁱ Take an instance of the toil and sweat of his argumentation; take an instance, or two, of the calumnious fierceness with which he pursued these fraternal adversaries:

'But it is absurd to suppose the body of Christ to be in more than a hundred thousand places at once. This is not more absurd than the diffusion of the soul through every part of the body. Touch any part of the body with the point of a needle, and the whole man, the whole soul, is sensible of the injury. If, then, the soul is equally in every part of the body, and you can give no reason for it, why may not Christ be everywhere, and everywhere equally, in the sacrament? Tell me, if you can, why a grain of wheat produces so many grains of the same species; or why a single eye can fix itself at once on a thousand objects, or a thousand eyes can be fixed at once on a single minute object.

— Take another example. What a feeble, poor, miserable, vanishing thing is the voice of a man! Yet what wonders it can perform — how it penetrates the hearts of multitudes of men! And yet, not so as each person acquires merely a portion of it, but rather as if every individual ear became possessed of the whole. If this were not a matter of experience, there would not be a greater miracle in the whole world. If, then, the corporeal voice of man can effect such wonders, why may not the glorified body of Christ be much more powerful and efficacious in its operations?

— Further, when the Gospel is preached through the exertion of the human voice, does not every true believer, by the instrumentality of the word, become actually possessed of Christ in his heart? Not that Christ sits in the heart, as a man sits upon a chair, but rather as he sits at the right hand of the Father. How this is, no man can tell; yet the Christian knows, by experience, that Christ is present in his heart. Again, every individual heart possesses the whole of Christ; and yet a thousand hearts in the aggregate possess no more than one Christ. The sacrament is not a greater miracle than this.'

'The Sacramentarian pestilence makes havoc, and acquires strength in its progress. Pray for me, I beseech you, for I am cold and torpid. A most unaccountable lassitude (if not Satan himself) possesses me, so that I am able to do very little. Our ingratitude, or perhaps some other sin, is the cause of the divine displeasure. Certainly our notorious contempt of the word of God will account for the present penal delusion, or even a greater one. I was too true a prophet when I predicted that something of this kind would happen.

— If I had not known from experience, that God in his anger allowed men to be carried away with delusions, I could not have believed that so many, and such great men, would have been seduced by such trifling and childish reasonings, so as to support this pestilential, this sacrilegious heresy.... I am all on fire to profess openly, for once, my faith in the sacrament, and to expose the tenets of our adversaries to derision in a few words; for they will not attend to an elaborate argument. I would have published my sentiments long ago, if I had had leisure, and Satan had not thrown impediments in my way.... Factious spirits always act in this way. They first form to themselves an opinion which is purely imaginary; and then they torture Scripture to support that opinion.... He gave himself seriously to the work, and produced, in the month of February or March, a most elaborate treatise in the German language, on the words 'Take, eat, this is my body,' AGAINST THE FANATICAL SPIRITS OF THE SACRAMENTARIANS.... They lay no stress on anything except their Sacramentarian tenet. Devoid of every Christian grace, they pretend to the sanctity of martyrs, on account of this single opinion.... They would persuade one that this was the great, the only concern of the Holy Ghost; when in reality, it is a delusion of Satan who, under the pretence of love and concord, is raising dissensions and mischiefs of every kind.'

— In the celebrated conference at Marburg, proposed and accomplished by the landgrave of Hesse in 1529, for the purpose of mutual conciliation and peace, though the Sacramentarians begged hard to be acknowledged as brethren, and even went so far as to own repeatedly, that the body of Christ was verily present in the Lord's Supper, though in a spiritual manner. And Zuingle himself, in pressing for mutual fraternity, declared with tears, that there was no man in the world with whom he more earnestly wished to agree, than with the Wittemberg divines — the spirit of Luther proved perfectly untractable and intolerant. It seems he had come with a mind determined not to budge one inch upon this point. Accordingly, nothing more could be gained from him than that each side should show Christian charity to the other as far as they could conscientiously; and that both should diligently ask God to lead them into the truth. To go further, Luther maintained, was impossible; and he expressed astonishment that the Swiss divines could look upon him as a Christian brother, when they did not believe his doctrine to be true. In such circumstances, however, though there could be no such thing as fraternal union, the parties, he allowed, might preserve a friendly sort of peace and concord; they might do good turns to each other, and abstain from harsh and acrimonious language. The vehemence, in fact, was not confined to one side, though the Swiss had learned more of modern manners than the Lutherans, and could cut deep without appearing to carry a sword — whereas the Lutherans growled more than they bit, in this fight. Still our business is with the wrong of Luther. He provoked first, he spoke worst; their acrimony was no excuse for his. His was the fury of a great man brought to the level of his equals, or even below those whom he would gladly consider his inferiors, and treat as his vassals.

ⁱⁱ *Velut ille ad Rhombum*. If you are indeed speaking of such assertions here, you are either a ridiculous orator, or a mad writer: a ridiculous orator if it is not true genuine Freewill which you are discussing; a mad writer if it is so. Oratory was out of place on such a subject, however sincere and disinterested the speaker might be; but orators were for the most

part a venal and frivolous tribe, and some exercised their art unskilfully, while others were hired only to amuse and make sport. It is not without meaning, therefore, that Luther compares the orator and the writer; and if Erasmus is to fill the weightier place of the writer, then it is that of one who is frenzied and blasphemous.

I am indebted to the kindness of a learned friend for the reference, *velut ille ad Rhombum*, which had perplexed me. I can have no doubt that it refers to the fourth Satire of Juvenal, where Doraitian is represented as having called a council of his senators to deliberate what should be done with an immense Rhombus, or Turbot; with which a fisherman out of fear had presented him. Among other counsellors was a blind man, of very infamous character, as an informer, but high in the favour of the Emperor, named Catullus; 'cum mortifero Catullo.'

"Grande et conspicuum nostro quoque tempore monstrum
"Caecus adulator."

This man extolled the Rhombus exceedingly, pointing to its various beauties with his hand, as if he really saw them. But unfortunately, while he pointed to the fish lying on his left hand, it lay all the while on his right.

"Nemo magis Rhombum stupuit: nam plurima dixit
"In laevum conversus: at illi dextra jacebat
"Bellua:

This was not the only occasion on which he had given scope to his imagination, and praised as though he had eyes:

..."sic pugnas Cilicis laudabat et ictus,
"Et pegma, et pueros inde ad velaria raptos." — Juv. iv. 113-121.

The force of the comparison, therefore, lies in Erasmus being supposed to discuss the phantom of his own imagination, instead of the real Rhombus. This phantom he might call dubious or unnecessary, without being himself impious; it was the coinage of his own brain. But if he called the real Rhombus (the Church's confession of Freewill) dubious or useless, he wrote gravely, but he wrote sacrilegiously. He has only the alternative, therefore, of being a fool or a madman, if he places Luther's assertion on Freewill among the barren and vain. The word *praesumere* is used in a rather peculiar but not unauthorized sense corresponding to our English word 'presume,' and with its own etymology: 'preconceive,' 'anticipate,' 'conjecture,' 'imagine,' — *opinari, credere, conjicere, imaginari*. — I would have preferred understanding *praesumere* in the sense of 'anticipating,' meaning that he spoke of one subject here in his Preface, and of another in the body of his work. But the illustration does not coincide with this view. Catullus did not make two speeches, nor do I find any authority for such use of *praesumere*. It has a peculiar rhetorical sense of preoccupying; that is, occupying the adversary's ground before him, by anticipating and obviating his objections. — But this will not apply here.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Arrianorum seculum*. Arianism arose early in the fourth century; about three hundred years before the rise of the Poppedom; and though condemned by Councils, it was adopted by several of Constantine's successors, and became a source of grievous persecution to those who were sound in the faith. For an account of its origin and real nature, see Milner's *Eccle. Hist.* vol. ii. pp. 51-54. It was, in substance, a denial of the co-eternity, co-equality, and co-essentiality of the Lord Jesus Christ with the Father. Already some secret and ambiguous attempts had been made to lessen the idea of the divinity of the Son of God. While his eternity was admitted by Eusebius the historian, he yet was not willing to own him co-equal with the Father. Arius went greater lengths: he said that, 'the Son proceeded out of a state of non-existence; that he was not before he was made; that he, who is without beginning, has set his Son as the beginning of things that are made; and that God made one, whom he called Word, Son, and Wisdom, by whom he did create us.' (Miln. *in loc.*) Like all the rest of heresy, it is truth corrupted; and the only solid and satisfactory answer will be given to it, not by boldly asserting and proving the real and proper divinity of the Lord Jesus, but by showing forth his whole person in its complexity; made up, as it is, of two persons, a divine person and a human person, held together by an indissoluble union: the secret being that God does all his works by this complex person's agency, who acts in his human person as plenarily inspired by the Holy Ghost. This person who thus does that will of God — of God, even the Trinity — which is referred to the Father personally, does hereby, among other subjects of manifestation, especially manifest that which we may well suppose to be the preeminent object of display in the TRI-UNE Jehovah, the threefold personality of his one undivided essence. I am aware that the term 'union of persons,' as substituted for 'union of natures,' will be deemed objectionable, till it is well-considered. But I have the authority of one of the best philosophers I know, for thus entitling the human part of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"That which can contrive, which can design, must be a *person*. These capacities constitute personality, for they imply consciousness and thought. They require that which can perceive an end or purpose; as well as the power of providing means, and of directing them to their end. They require a centre in which perceptions unite, and from which volitions flow; which is *mind*. The *acts* of a mind prove the *existence* of a mind; and whatever a mind resides in, is a person. The seat of intellect is a person.' (Paley's *Nat. Theol.* pp. 439, 440, 14th Edn.)

Now, is it not plain from Scripture, and the admission of all Christians, with a very few heretical exceptions, that the Lord Jesus had this human mind, distinct from his godhead? He had, therefore, according to this description, a person distinct from his divine person. — And what is to hinder that divine person, if the will of God is so, from taking up a human person into union with himself, and acting in that person, from *there*, and not in his divine person? Is not that union *real*, which subsists between this divine person and this human person, when this human person, having been first generated, is afterwards inhabited by his co-equal, co-essential, in the unity of God? Does it not also subsist without forfeiture of distinctness? Is it not also constant and unbroken, when that divine person evermore acts *in* and *by* that

human person, putting his godhead as it were into abeyance? Yet, are not his acts and his sufferings the acts and sufferings of the co-equal of the Father, and of the Holy Ghost? There is no diminution, it is plain, of his essential godhead, in his voluntarily, and to a great end, submitting to act *by* and *in* this creature person; this constitutes him at the same time both creature and Creator: very man does the works of God, and very God does the works of man.

And if this complexity of person is thus to be realized in time, what is to hinder that person in God, in whom it is to be realized, from transacting as though he actually were this complex person, *from* and *in* the beginning? Is not Jehovah's will both immutable and irresistible? Is it not his propriety to call things which are not as though they were, and to give realized being to substances which, as yet, exist in predestination? And must he not have acted thus in this particular instance, when he chose a people of mankind to be in this complex person as a head, and gave grace to that people so chosen, before the world began?

Now, therefore, we can meet Arius upon his own ground, and confound him even there. Admitting all that he says, and says from the plain text of Scripture, about 'begotten,' 'non-existence,' 'was not before he was made,' 'God has made one whom he calls Word, Son, and Wisdom, by whom he did create us;' — this in no way impugns the co-eternity, co-equality, and co-essentiality of the Lord Jesus Christ with the Father: his human person, *by* and *in* which he has thus been doing all things, is the creature which Arius would describe; but he who assumed this person into union with himself is *very God*; which implies that he is all that God is.

^{iv} *Reus agebatur. Re. ag.* 'He was arraigned;' *eá quaestione*, 'on this indictment;' this was the law-crime charged: *status causae*, 'the question of fact to be tried.' — Luther intimates that his address to the council is resolvable into this main subject: 'a defence against the charge of having blasphemed the Temple.' Such being the charge preferred against him, he repelled it by maintaining that it was not at all criminal to speak against the Temple; for *that* was not God's ordinance. Probably, he had been led by the Holy Ghost to aim at beating down the idolatrous attachment which the Jews showed to their Temple, in his reasonings with those who arose and disputed with him. But it is expressly said, "they suborned men who said, We have heard him Speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God." (Act 6.11) And afterwards; "And set up false witnesses who said, This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law." (Act 6.13.) It should seem, therefore, that more was charged against him, with respect to this blasphemy, than he had really spoken. Perhaps his defence — or, as I would rather call it, his address — may be correctly said to have had a broader basis than that of merely repelling a charge of having blasphemed the Temple; viz. that of proving, that the great body of their nation had always been "resisters" of the Holy Ghost; and by inference, therefore, that they were such now, in what they had done to Jesus. From the Patriarchs downwards, their plans and efforts had always been in direct opposition to the counsel and purpose of God, as declared to them by those in whom the Holy Ghost spoke. (See Heb 1.1-2. Gr.) Whatever was the accusation, and however he might design to repel it, the clue to his discourse seems to be found in vv. 51-53. "you stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost" — (not as striving *in their own souls*, but as testifying in those whom God sent to be his instruments for drawing out the enmity of their carnal mind) — "as your fathers did, so do you." — On this broader basis, however, he contrives to build an answer to his own peculiar charge respecting the Temple; by showing that this very Temple furnished one proof of their resistance to the Holy Ghost — their idolized Temple had not originated from God, but was man's device. It was, in fact, David's own suggestion, which he was forbidden to execute; and rather acquiesced in, than appointed by God (just as in the former case of appointing a king, 1Sam 8-12); when the honour of building it was appropriated to Solomon. (2Sam 7; 1Chr 17) God's Temple (not only the spiritual one, but the material fabric also) was deferred till the latter times (Eze 40-48); and Solomon's was but an abortive birth, arising from the precocity of man. The Lord gave way, as it were, to man's device, that he might show him its instability and vanity. God instituted a tabernacle ("Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking to Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen." Acts 7.44, etc.) — a fabric more suited to the then state of his Church and nation — but the well-meaning vanity of his aspiring worshippers, would have a stately temple, as if walls and roofs could contain him! "However, the Most High," etc.

^v I admit Luther's principle, but I demur to the application of it, both here and in the parallel to which he refers, Gen 3.16. The original passage is one of great difficulty. I incline to the interpretation which our authorized version gives to it; and refer the words which are immediately under remark, as that appears to do, not to *sin*, but to *Abel*. "If you do well, shall you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And his desire shall be to you, and you shall rule over him." Well, and not well, relate to the then-known will of God. Was Cain ignorant, with what sort of offering God was to be approached? — Whatever might be said of later times, Cain must have heard all about Eden, the serpent and the woman, the serpent's seed and the woman's seed; and must have seen the coats of skins. Cain despised "the way;" he would have none of Christ. — Then, God's words are adapted to quiet and to instruct him. We know that a man can no more come by Christ, unless it is given to him from above, than he can come by the law. But this was not the thing to be shown him; he was to be reminded of the sole way of access, that he might make the fullest developement of himself, if he should continue to neglect and despise it. And since jealous and angry fears were now arising in his mind with respect to his brother — chiefly, lest he lose the earthly superiority attached to his primogeniture — he is pacified with an assurance (doubtless connected with the fore-mentioned condition) that sin's dominion would remain in his hands; an assurance conveyed in words very nearly resembling those by which Eve was warned of her subjection to Adam. The Septuagint gives another turn to the former part of the verse, but clearly refers the latter as I do; and so in Gen. 3.16. According to this view, the words of this text have nothing to do with Freewill, though it seems the Hebrew Rabbins, as well as Luther and Erasmus, thought they had. (See Pole's Synops. *in loc.*) If they must be referred to sin,

not Abel, then Luther's interpretation is correct, and his answer is unanswerable. If the words are taken indicatively, then they are a promise of God, which was broken as soon as it was made.

^{vi} Luther's distinction between law words and gospel words, as applied by him in these two sections, severally and comparedly, is arbitrary, indefinite, and unavailing. *Arbitrary* inasmuch as he pretends not to have any recognised authority for it, and he applies it inconsistently; sometimes calling words of exhortation or command 'gospel words;' and sometimes confining that term to words of promise, as opposed to them. 'Turn to me' is a law word; 'I will turn to you' is a gospel word. *Indefinite* because he gives no fixed rule by which to determine what is one, and what is the other; but, according to his own account, he leaves it to the discerning reader. *Unavailing* because a gospel precept is not less impracticable than a law precept to the free will. — In my view, he confounds matters; for 'return,' or 'repent,' is surely not a law precept, but a gospel one: the law knows nothing of repentance. — The truth is, he has given his answer to all these testimonies already. They are requirements; call them law requirements, if you will, or gospel requirements; they are something for man to do; and as he very properly argues, they are meant to show him what he *ought* to do, but they do not imply any power either towards Law, or towards Gospel. Properly, the law is 'the law of the Ten Commandments,' under which, speaking less precisely, may be comprehended all those precepts which fall in with the nature and design of that 'transcript of the creation law of man,' but nothing which regards his relations as a fallen, or as a restored creature. Luther speaks confusedly on this subject, as other writers do, not discerning the origin, design, and nature of that institution. The law did not speak till Moses; it spoke only to the Jews, or the then visible church of God; it was a preparation for, and it was a fore-preached Gospel. A law word, therefore, *rightly understood*, is also a gospel word: a word which prepares by compelling a sense of need; and which — while it "shuts up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed," and which now has been revealed — *impliedly* promises and *exhibits* Him who was to be, and who now has been and is, its fulfiller and perfecter.

^{vii} Luther's answer to Erasmus' argument from Ezek. 18.23 is threefold. 1. It proves too much. 2. It proves no more than other gospel words; that is, words of promise and mercy. 3. Such words prove against Freewill by implying that, without them, man could only despair.

See above, note ⁱ, where I have objected to this distinction between law words and gospel words, and to the statements generally made respecting the Law, as though it were opposed to the Gospel. Luther is chargeable here with arguing *per sequelam*, for which he so much blames Erasmus. 'God's word of promise proves that man could only despair without it.' — The true answer to Erasmus' argument from this text (which, according to Luther's distinction, is a gospel word — but then there is quite as much supernatural help necessary to make a gospel word availing, as to fulfil a law word —) is that it proves nothing on either side. Inferences may be drawn both ways; against as well as for, and for as well as against: but the affirmation respects only *the mind of God*. He declares that he does not will death. What does this assert concerning the natural powers of man? For a fuller view of the doctrine set forth in this and like texts, and of their place in the great scheme of God-manifestation, see the next Section and its notes.

^{viii} Luther has given what he considers the true answer to Erasmus' objection drawn from this text; it is a gospel word, for the consolation of the law-stricken; and it declares that we have no right to ask any more questions. I do not approve the exact point to which he brings the debate, nor can I agree with him that it ought to just end here. Luther speaks, and many others like him, as if only the law (meaning the law of the Ten Commandments) could do the office of abasing and prostrating man. In effect, this assumes that the law was given to man from the beginning, and that Moses' giving of it was but a republication: otherwise how were those saints emptied of self and prostrated, who lived before Moses, such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, and the rest? But what proof is there of the law having been given from the beginning? Express proof is afforded in Romans 5 that the law was not till Moses. "For until the law, sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, " etc. (vv. 13, 14.) The truth is, it is not the law, but the Holy Ghost (using the law, it is true, as his instrument more generally, where it has been given, but by no means universally using it so) — who does not need the law, but has enough proofs to supply about man's sin; of his "earthly, sensual, devilish" mind; without having recourse to that summary of creation duty — that humbles, empties, and makes ready for the manifold Scripture-declarations of God's entire readiness to receive the penitent *freely*. These are indeed made such by God, and they can *only* be made such by him; though it is not his plan usually to tell us how we have come, and alone can come, to this mind, when he testifies of his love and good-will towards it. So that the question arising from this admitted state of things: 'some receive, others do not receive, this and like gospel words,' is not properly why some are lawstricken; or more correctly, why some are prostrated, and self-emptied, and self-despairing; but why some have the Holy Ghost, and others do not have it; in other words, this is why there is an election of grace. I cannot agree with Luther that we have no right to ask this question; or in other words, that the Scripture does not afford an answer to it; for *here* is the secret of God.

If it is asked why such a man is elect, and such a man is not elect, it is most true that we have no answer; this is God's secret; we have nothing to do with it. But if the question is, why are there elect and non-elect, we have to deal with it and we *can* give an answer: it is *to the manifestation of God*. This is the end of all his counsels, and of all his operations. For some observations on Luther's accepted aphorism 'Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos,' and upon 'his *apparent* setting out of two Gods,' one of which we have nothing to do with; and for the correct answer to Erasmus' insidious question, 'Does God deplore,' etc., see notes ^t, ^v, and ^x, which follow.

^{ix} *Super omnem Deum praedicatum et cultum*. Literally, 'above all the proclaimed and worshipped God.' I question the soundness of Luther's interpretation of this text, and consequently of the argument which he draws from it — although

the distinction which he labours to establish is, with some modification and amplification, the root of the answer to the objection. "Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is *called* God, or *that is an object of worship*," is the more correct rendering of the original text. The meaning seems to be that this Antichrist would both oppose himself to, and exalt himself above, every object of worship, both true and false — 'every being that is *called* God, and every substance which is worshipped.' It therefore has nothing to do with distinct views and considerations respecting the true God, but only marks the extravagant claims which this Antichrist would make, and which would be allowed by his votaries, as compared with the several objects of worship received in the world. — The word of God, however, does clearly recognise a distinction between God, regarded as the legislator, governor, and judge of his moral creation — or in any other relations which he may have been pleased to assume towards the whole, or certain parts, of that creation; and God, regarded as he is in himself, and as separated from such relations — also, between that will of His which he has revealed for our obedience (what may therefore be called his legislative will), and that free, infinite, and eternal will of His, from which this legislative will has emanated, and by which, in perfect consistency with all his assumed relations, and with that of legislator among the rest, he regulates his own conduct (what may therefore be called, by way of distinction, his *personal* will): in other words, between his commands and his mind. — God, who made the worlds, the sole Being, subsisted in his trinity of co-equal persons, infinite, and all-blessed, before he made them. Is it presumptuous to say why he made them? Has he not unequivocally told us? His end is, as it must be, seated in himself. (See Vaughan's Calvinistic Clergy defended., p. 64 73. 2d Ed.)

He will show himself — WHAT HE IS — so far as infinite can be shown to finite, to certain moral and intelligent creatures, whom he will make capable of apprehending, adoring, and enjoying him, in their measure. Hence, the whole counsel, process, series, and results of creation, in which I include all that belongs to Creator and creature-ship. Hence the true distinction between the hidden and revealed God — which properly is no other than God the revealer and God the revealed. Creation in this wide extent is only God's revealer; and having revealed much of him in reality, there is yet much at last in God which is not, and cannot be revealed. Thus, we see that this hidden God, or rather this absolute God (so-called because He is not circumscribed by relations, which relations, however, can only be such as He has seen fit to assume; and which he has seen fit to assume for the one great end of self-manifestation), is the same God with the revealed and circumscribed God; and that, so far from being an unknown God in this regard, he has revealed himself in his relative and circumscribed capacity, for the very purpose of making himself known (so far as the incomprehensible *can* be made known) in this absolute and uncircumscribed capacity.

So, again, with respect to his secret and his revealed will; or, as I have more correctly distinguished them, his *personal* and his *legislative* will; while these are distinct, they are neither opposed to each other, nor unconnected with each other — his legislative will subserves his personal will, and it is his ordained and specially-devised instrument for accomplishing it. By this accomplishment, his great purpose is achieved, in submitting himself to his various creator relationships (to wit, self-manifestation).

In the observations which follow, I do not confine myself to the words immediately under review, but I comprehend the whole of Luther's expressions and reasonings in this and the three succeeding paragraphs.

Luther does not seem to have apprehended the union and concordance of these two distinct views, in which both God and his will are set forth to us, while he so strongly marks their distinctness; and thus, his answer (not being *the whole truth*; that is, not being THE TRUTH; which consists in a harmonious combination of many parts) has an air of evasion and sophistry (to which he does not seem to have been insensible himself), and is, in reality, unsatisfying and repulsive. Is it true, that the proverb, 'What is above us, is nothing to us,' has its rightful application here? Is it true that we have nothing to do with this God of majesty, as Luther calls him; the absolute God? What is the knowledge of God — that last, highest, best gift of promise — if not the knowledge of *this* God? the communication of which is, as we have seen, the very end of creation and of revelation. Again, is it true that the revealed God, or relative God, wills only life? or according to Luther's own way of stating it, that God has revealed himself in his word only as that God who offers himself to all men, and would draw all men to himself? — Why then does he tell us in that self-same word, that indeed for this very cause he had raised Pharaoh up, to show in him His power; and that His name might be declared throughout all the earth? That it was of the Lord to harden the hearts of the Canaanites, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses? — That Hophni and Phinehas did not hearken to the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them? — That he smells a sweet savour of Christ in those who perish? — That whom he will he hardens? — That there are those ordained of old to condemnation? Those appointed to stumble at the stone? — Those whom he has commanded to fill up the measure of their iniquities? — That He is, in short, a potter having power over the clay, and using that power? — Has he proclaimed all this concerning himself in his word? Does he, moreover, make that word his great instrument of bringing these things to pass; and is it true nevertheless, that his word stands in contrast, no, in direct opposition to himself, so that we are wisely counselled to attend to his word in contrast, and even in opposition, to God who gave it? Had Luther discerned the simple end of creation and revelation, God manifesting himself as what he really is in his essence (in which essence, hatred of that which is contrary to himself is as much a part as love of that which is like himself); and seen that by means of creation and revelation, God is actually effecting this end he would not have talked of salvation being the revealed God's alone work; nor have said that we have to do with his word, but not with himself; nor have warned us that we have nothing to do with His inscrutable will (including in this all that Luther includes in it) — when that inscrutable will is made a matter of instruction in his word, and is declared to be what he is continually fulfilling in us; what the Lord Jesus thanks his Father for; and what his people

find to be their great source of light, and strength, and joy. How remarkable it is, that Luther should here silence his opponent with "No, but O man, who are you that replies against God?" when, with the interval of only a single verse, the Holy Ghost had furnished him with a clue to the whole counsel of God, and with an answer to those very questions which he says it is not lawful to ask, or possible to get resolved. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction; And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory, even us, whom he has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" Luther both speaks and means incorrectly here — but he says rather more than he means. It is not against the sober, hallowed use of the knowledge of this inscrutable will (for though there is that which is inscrutable in it, there is also that in it which may be known, for he has told it to us), but against those who denied, or confounded, or impugned, or reviled these distinctions, and would hear nothing of God's sovereign majesty, and of his secret counsel, that he is aiming his dart here.

^x Yes — and works life and death, and all things in all things, through the agency of that proclaimed, or relative God; and in perfect consistency with — indeed, by means of — that *legislative* will which regulates man's duty as his moral creature. By 'legislative,' I mean all which can be called 'enactment,' as given by God, of whatever kind; whether to one nation or to the whole world; whether Law or Gospel. See note above.

It is as the proclaimed or relative God, not as the hidden or absolute God, that he both saves and destroys; and He does this by means of his legislative enactments, not in contradiction to them. The power which he gives to his elect and saved, and which he withholds from the reprobate and damned, is distinct from these legislative enactments; and while it proceeds from the relative God, it does not proceed from him in his legislative relation, but in another which is distinct from and not commensurate with it, although its subjects are also subject to that relation and to its requirements. It is no part of the legislator's office to give power, or to withhold it. He may do either. He may work anything, everything, upon, around, above, or beneath him, but He leaves the subject of his enactments a free agent: and this God does, and ever has done.

Thus it was in creation strictly so-called; God, having assumed the relation of Creator to man, gave him a law (Gen 2.17) "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it; for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." It was no part of his relation, as Creator, either to withhold temptation from his creature, whom he had "made upright," "in his own image," "good," "very good" (but as we noted before, Sec xviii, not having the Holy Ghost, and therefore not held to God as though by a chain, but subsisting in a state of severance from him); nor yet to sustain him by new powers (additional to those which he had received at his creation), in a crisis of temptation. The result was that he fell; and the whole human race (which had been created in him, and of which the several individuals had a distinct personal subsistence in him, and were parts of his substance when, having first apostatized in heart, he afterwards put out his hand, and took, and ate) shared in his ruin. It is by the instrumentality of this law, then, that God both saves whom he personally wills to save, and destroys whom he personally wills to destroy: saving those to whom, by a super-creation relation which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began, he grants his special grace; and destroying those from whom he withholds the same, in perfect consistency with all creation dues and obligations.

Thus it was in God's dealings with the nation of Israel, and with his visible church, as for a season co-extensive with that nation. Once he had formed the seed of Abraham into a nation, and had assumed the relation of king to that people, he gave them a law by which, instrumentally, he kept them for his own, so long as it was his personal will to keep them, and scattered them when it was the counsel of his personal will to scatter them.

Israel, like Adam in Paradise, broke the law nearly as soon as it was given him; but, by so doing, he prepared the way for all God's future dealings with him.

By the same law instrumentally, He, in their ecclesiastical relation, saved whom he would save, through the bestowal of a grace which was not of their covenant; while he at the same time destroyed whom he would destroy, through the withholding of that grace, in perfect consistency with the provisions of the same.

Thus it is also in the Gospel Church, and in the commanded preaching of the Gospel to all nations, and tongues, and people. God, in the relation of the offended sovereign of the human race, commandeth all men every where to repent; giving them what may be called the law of repentance and faith, and demanding of them a state of mind which is suited to their condition as fallen and guilty creatures. 'Repent, and believe the Gospel.'

Implicitly, but not explicitly, this is the demand, and the alone demand, which God has made upon man, even the whole human race, since the Fall; and shall continue to be so, till his mystery be finished by the Lord's second coming. The form of this demand has been varied, the knowledge of it has been varied; the law, eminently so called, has been interposed to the church, God has "winked at times of ignorance;" but a Manasseh's humbledness of mind, with a peradventure of mercy the only demand which, in consistency with the recognition of those primary transactions in the Garden, and with the realities of the case, could be made is in truth the only demand which has been made upon the sons and daughters of fallen Adam, from the period of the ejection out of Paradise until now: a demand which has served to mark the only difference that can ever be found to subsist between the several apostate members of an apostate head; viz, continued apostasy in some, and restoration in others.

By this legislative will of his, instrumentally, he fulfils the counsels of his personal will; saving whom he has predestined to save, and destroying whom he has predestined to destroy.

^{xi} Luther has in substance given the right answer to this cavil from Ezekiel, but has given it, as we have seen, in an exceptionable form; exceptionable, as it respects the distinction he institutes, 'hidden God and revealed God;' and exceptionable, in that he does not show the sameness of this God, which is thus distinguishingly regarded. It is to be remembered, that the words bear only by inference and consequence upon the question of Freewill (which is the question in debate), whatever may be the correct interpretation of them; neither does Erasmus represent them fairly. Erasmus speaks of wailing and working; but where does Ezekiel say that God "wails?" He says only, I would not. Erasmus argues, 'God deplores; therefore, it is not his doing that they die; therefore, it is their own doing; therefore, there is Freewill.' It is inference two deep; each of which requires proof. What if their death is self-wrought? Why may they not have previously forfeited their Freewill, and therefore die under bondwill? We might hold ourselves excused, therefore, from entering at all into this cavil; it is truly *nihil ad nos* [nothing to us].

But there are reasons why we should rather meet it in the face; and the answer has, by implication, been given to it already. Some would say, why not at once knock it down with "Secret things belong to the Lord?" (Deu 29.29) a convenient text for a perplexed disputant! My answer is, *that* text does not apply here. The Prophet is not speaking of the *principles* of divine conduct, but of those providential events and arrangements by which God realizes and fulfils them. It was in the counsels of God to bring the nation of Israel to obedience at the last, through a long course of abandonment and punishment. But at that time, they had the word given to them ("the word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach." Compare Romans 10.5-10 with Deu. 30.11-14), which they would at length obey. Now, they had nothing to do with these intermediate events which God would bring about; it was theirs to use that commandment (or rather that Gospel which the commandment fore-preached) looking through the type to the reality which he commanded them that day. Besides, if we were at liberty to use this text here, we must learn from it that we have nothing to do with election and reprobation at all: as some are fond enough of admonishing us. For it is not a question, who is individually of the one class, and who is of the other, that is to be answered here; but whether there really are such distinctions, and *why* there are such. (See above, note ^r.) Then, meeting the question fairly, though not fairly attached to the question of Freewill, how does this assertion in Ezekiel comport with the God-willed death of a sinner?

Not to insist upon the peculiarities of the case to which this solemn declaration of God is annexed (the house of Israel was brought into peculiar relations to God, and the case of an Israelite was therefore considerably different from that of uncovenanted transgressors). This is not to notice the ambiguity of Erasmus' expression 'his people' (God works no death in his people properly so-called, though he works death in many who have a *name* to be his people, and are *not*) without insisting that the original words יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵין לִּי חֵן as well as the θελω, not Βουλομαι, of the Septuagint, express inclination rather than determination — and so the sentiment conveyed may be no more than what our translators have assigned to them, 'have I any pleasure at all,' 'for I have no pleasure;' implying only such a reluctance as is not inconsistent with a contrary decision though Luther, as well as Erasmus, makes it 'nolo;' waving all such objections, which do not shield the vitals of the truth, though they may serve to parry off a blow from its extremities (for clearly here is God at least declaring his dislike of that death which he nevertheless inflicts, and which we affirm that he wills); the true account of the matter, and that which comprehends all possible cases, has been furnished in the two preceding notes; asserted in note ^l, and illustrated by examples in note ^u.

The relative God, in his character of Israel's legislator and sovereign, declares in this chapter that he will deal henceforth both nationally and spiritually with that people, each man according to his own ways; and, in effect, preaches the Gospel to each individual of them, saying, 'Repent, and live.' At the twenty-third verse [where Erasmus quotes the text unfairly by joining the oath of v. 3 with v. 23; but it is no part of it], he signifies that he has no pleasure in the death of him that dies: in the three last verses, he exhorts and remonstrates, and repeats his gracious assurances. But it does not belong to these and like relations, to give grace and power; and, without such grace and power, exhortations promises and threatenings are all, and alike, vain. But is God therefore to withhold them? Man, without this superadded grace, ought to obey them; ought, though he cannot — cannot through a self-wrought impotency. And are there no reasons, no satisfying reasons, why God should give them? Are these not among his choicest instruments by which he effects the manifestation of himself — manifestation of himself, through the manifestation of what is in man; "that you might be justified when you speak, and clear when you judge." — His elect obey; his non-elect harden themselves still more under his outward calls. Thus, whether the case set forth in Ezekiel, is considered as the peculiar case of the national Israel, or the general case of the visible church having the Gospel preached to it (that Gospel which is in one view a statute, enactment, or commandment; while, in another view, it is the Jubilee trumpet, by which the Holy Ghost proclaims liberty to the Lord's captives); we see in it, at last, only a further exemplification of what has been shown already: the relative God revealing the absolute, and his legislative fulfilling his personal will. — Luther meant nothing contrary to this statement, though his language might seem to imply it.

^{xii} Luther gives two answers to this cavil from Matthew 13 — 1. It is equally inconsistent with Diatribe's statement. And 2. It is the incarnate God, not the God of Majesty, who speaks here. I must strongly object to this latter solution. It implies a difference, indeed a contrariety, between the mind of God and the mind of Christ; and thus it destroys the very end for which Christ came: the manifestation of God as His express image. It does this by not only negating the fulfilment of that design, but absolutely intimating that he has given us false views of God by showing a mind which is the reverse of His, as though Christ willed salvation where God wills destruction. Yet he tells us, "I did not come to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me." [Joh 6.38](#) "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work." [Joh 4.34](#) "I do nothing of my self, but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things." [Joh 8.28](#) "I have manifested

your name to the men that you gave me out of the world." [Joh 17.6](#) And truly, though we will know far more of God hereafter, than we can know here — so that "Where there is knowledge, it will vanish away" — our knowledge of God will be derived to us through Christ ("the lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters"), and we will never know anything of God contrary to that which Jesus has exhibited of Him.

The true answer to this cavil in substance, however, has already been given. (See Sect. 28. notes ^{t v x}.) Standing in peculiar relations to Israel as his typical nation and his visible church, God had been calling that people to repentance from the beginning. Their history, their institutions, their lively oracles, their ordinary and extraordinary ministers, had caused them to be peculiarly, and above the rest of mankind, without excuse, even before Christ came. These were so many '*I woulds*, and *you would nots*' — not Christ saying and willing one thing, and the Father another; but Christ calling to them by the Father's commandment, and they refusing. But now he had come personally and visibly among them, and could say, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sinned, but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hates me, hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they would not have sinned; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." (Joh 15.22-24.) And what is all this, but God in certain assumed relations uttering his voice to those connected with him by these relations (in other words, declaring his legislative will), which those to whom it is uttered, should without doubt obey; and if they did obey, they would live according to his promise. But 'ought to obey' is not therefore 'having the power to obey;' and 'not having the power to obey,' is not 'therefore the command is given in vain.' Herein man is manifested; and God is manifested by his dealings with man. If Israel 'would,' then he would have been gathered; if Jerusalem 'would,' she would have remained to this day. But it was only by a grace not belonging to those relations by which God had connected himself with Israel during that period, that Israel could then have been made willing. Israel had all given to him which belonged to those relations. To withhold trial, or to administer super-creation and super-covenant grace, that he might stand, was no part of the dues which God had made himself a debtor to him to perform. And therefore Israel — justly tried, and no more than justly tried — having manifested what was in him with such aggravations of guilt, incurred a sentence which is declared to have been the requital of all the righteous blood that had been shed upon the earth from Abel to Zechariah. (vv. 35, 36.) The guilt of that generation was indeed extreme. But who would say that it was not the concentrated guilt of the intermediate ages and generations of that people, together with their own, which was so shortly to be visited upon them? Carnal reason will not hear of the children being visited for their fathers' sins; but both Scripture and experience testify of this reality to the spiritual mind. The incarnate God, then, has no will contrary to the God of Majesty; or more intelligibly, Christ's will and the Father's will are one; Christ's tears (see above, note ^m) do not imply any repugnance to the divine counsel. Here, the *legislative* is, as in the former instances, the executor of the *personal* will. With respect to the tears which he shed over that woe which he was shortly to inflict, and of which he well knew the length and breadth, the depth and height — it may be remarked that the Lord Jesus had a human soul, as part of his complete human person, distinct from his divine person (See Part ii. Sect. 8. note ^r) — and that such expressions might, without impropriety, be referred to that part of his complex frame. "We do not have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Heb 4.15 He had all the sinless feelings of a man, and therefore might not incongruously weep at such a woe. But where is the contradiction to Scripture and right reason, in understanding that God himself is moved with compassion at the very grief and pain which He inflicts in just judgment? "Therefore my bowels are troubled for him." [Jer 31.20](#) "Have I any pleasure at all in the death of him that dies?" [Eze 18.32](#) "For he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." [Lam 3.33](#)

It is pleasing to notice how nearly Luther approximates the truth — viz., "That Christ was eternally foreordained as *Christ*, and by a covenant subsistence, he assumed his person and personal relations as the risen God-man, before the foundation of the world" — in the defence which he makes against the cavil that 'Christ had not yet come.' He declares that everything was done by the Prophets in Christ's name, and that all expressions of mercy from the beginning may be rightly called the will of Christ. This will of Christ, according to Luther's representation of it, is perfectly distinct from that of the Father (his language implies that it is *contrary to it*), so that there must have been a distinct *agency* of Christ from the beginning. Truly, this is so — though not exactly as Luther understood and would have it represented. I have often been surprised that, while most of those who know anything of Christ are ready enough to acknowledge that regard was had to his *sacrifice* from the beginning (for how else could any soul of man, such as Abel, Enoch, Abraham, David, etc., have been pardoned and accepted), so few distinctly recognise his personal subsistence and agency, as *Christ*, from the same period. Although it is in this regard that he is called "the Word," "the Word of life," "the life," "that eternal life," etc. And although he is a distinct personal agent, to use the blessed materials of his future coming and dying in the flesh — as a *Priest-king* — was not less necessary to the salvation and glorification of every individual of the saved who lived and died before those events had been realized, than was the article of his death. In what Luther says about abstaining from what he calls 'the secret will of majesty,' he speaks indistinctly, injuriously, and contradictorily: *indistinctly*, because there is a use as well as an abuse of such inquiries, which he ought to have distinguished; *injuriously*, because his observations would go the length of deterring men from even recognizing such a will, and so they would mar the joy and fear and gratitude and love of the Lord's people; *contradictorily*, because he afterwards recognises and makes assertions about it. Christ truly impinges on some of God's reprobates! — Still, a hint or two may be borrowed with advantage from Luther's statement. God, in addressing himself to the world as He does by the Gospel to be preached everywhere, clearly sets himself forth to as many as have a heart that is in any degree

softened and turned towards him. This is done in the form and character of the Father of mercies who is not willing that any should perish. Such should not be deterred and frightened by the knowledge that He has his reprobates. The melting heart is not the heart of a reprobate. But is he to shut his eyes to the fact that God has his reprobates? No; that fact combined with the consciousness of his own personal impotency, turns to him for a testimony. Nor without that testimony can he regard God as he should now, or in any future stage of his experience; for without it, the God whom he serves is not the true God.

^{xiii} See here a confirmation of my remark in Sect. 28. note ^t, that Luther is protesting against the impugnors and deniers of that will which is distinct from God's *legislative* will, not against its sober investigators and maintainers! His answer to the cavil from Matthew 23 and like passages is, 'Yes, but there is another will behind this, which is contrary to this, and which we must be content to leave with asserting it. God as revealed, or as he afterwards describes him, Christ the incarnate God, wills only *life*; but there is another will of God, a will not expressed by this incarnate God, which wills *death*; and therefore these things which appear to prove Freewill (by inference) may still be said, and yet man be in bondage. This is because, while He deplores, he does also *not* deplore. This latter will is not to be searched into or acted upon; it is only to be asserted and believed. Deny it if you dare; you will only be running your head against the wall, making war against God. For objections to this statement, and for a more consistent answer to the cavil, etc. see note ^s in the last Section. — Luther says worse than he means, but he means ignorantly. It had not been given to him to know the mystery of God and the Father, and of Christ. He did not understand how God is not *hiding* himself behind Christ, but making himself *seen* in Christ; so that it may be truly said, "He that has seen me has seen the Father: if you had known me, you would have known my Father also; and from now on you know him, and have seen him." (Joh 14.9, 7)

^{xiv} Such is Luther's representation of the New Testament as contrasted with the Old, and of the Gospel. The New is 'promises and exhortations;' the Old is 'law and threatenings.' The Gospel is 'the Spirit, and grace unto salvation, offered to all men through Christ, who died for all.' Note that he *distinguishes* between the Spirit and grace, though not very correctly; it is the Spirit as given to the justified, of which he speaks: but this is part of the grace of God; that is, "of the things which are freely given to us of God."

For some objections to this statement, as it respects offers of grace, see above, Sect. 23. note ^a; as it respects the opposition between the Law and the Gospel, see above, Sect. 24. note ^l. The Gospel is certainly to be preached to all — to the reprobate as well as to the elect; but with what propriety this can be called an *offer* of grace to all, or to any, may be fairly questioned: much more, with what consistency such language can be used by one who so stoutly maintained, as Luther did, both the impotency of the natural man, and the God-made difference between the elect and the reprobate. With such views as Luther had of the atonement, as though Christ had shed his blood for those from whom it was the Father's good pleasure to hide the mysteries of his kingdom; and with such a lack of insight into the first principle of divine counsel, operation, and revelation — even God's design of manifesting himself; in short, with such a lack of insight into God, it was impossible that he would not speak inconsistently. Indeed it would be little if inconsistency were all. Such language is illusive, perplexing, and subversive to man; and while it aims to beautify God, it defames him! He is correct, however, to some considerable extent: he nobly asserts, that salvation is altogether gratuitous, the produce of the Father's mercy, conferred upon the hell-deserving through the alone merit of Christ's death. He nobly asserts, that the preceptive parts of the New Testament are for the called and justified only. But why is the Old Testament to be thus set in array against the New? Where is the law and threatenings in the book of Genesis? What more truly Evangelical words are to be found in the New Testament, than in Isaiah and the other Prophets; in the Psalms, and in Luther's favourite book of Deuteronomy? The Old Testament, as our 7th Article wisely speaks, is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and New Testament, everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man, being both God and man. The truth is, even the Law itself, as I have already remarked, is Gospel in enigma; and the scribe that is instructed in the New Testament finds the Old its best commentator and confirmer — what has instructed the same family in its tenderer years, and now makes the "young men" perfect. — I should speak rather differently of the Apostles. They *were to be* what he describes, with the exception of one of them; but they *were not* this yet. If they could be truly said to know Christ at all, till the day of Pentecost had fully come, they knew him "after the flesh." (2Cor 5.16) But it is not to the Twelve exclusively that the Lord addresses these words (Mat 5.12), nor of them exclusively that he speaks. His precepts were for the regulation of their conduct, and of the conduct of all his converted people (while walking through the wilderness of this world, in his kingdom), as they would hereafter be called, one by one, into vital union with him. His elect have the *sacrament* of that union in their baptism. But they have the *reality* of it when, either before or after receiving that sacrament, the Spirit has been given to convert and to dwell in them. — Luther's argument, however, is not shaken by this distinction. The Lord speaks as to real members of his kingdom; to persons who are therefore above and beyond that state of Freewill which is the matter in dispute. — Already Luther has shown Erasmus to be inconsistent with himself in arguing from this text (see Sect. 35). His second answer is: 'this text (to which all other New Testament precepts might be added) does not apply.'

^{xv} Erasmus objects, that 'so much mention of good works and reward, in Scripture, is inconsistent with mere necessity, which can have no merit.'

Luther answers, though not exactly in this order: 1. Merit and reward are as inconsistent with your Freewill (which can will nothing good) as with mine. 2. Reward is a matter of promise; which implies nothing about power, the sole thing in question. 3. Merit and reward are not inconsistent with a necessity of immutability, though they are inconsistent with a necessity of compulsion. (See above, note ^h.) Merit is not necessarily merit of worth; reward may be a

consequence of actions, in which there is no merit of worth. 4. The kingdoms of heaven and hell earn their children severally; their children do not earn them.

The two first of these answers are valid; and if it were merely so many rounds of the boxer, or so many grapplements of the wrestler, which we are watching the result of, we must give the palm to Luther: he has supplanted, he has *knocked down* his antagonist. But we want to hear something against merit and reward: and here, Luther is evasive and subtle in his reasoning, though correct in his conclusion. Necessity of immutability does not necessarily imply absence of merit, because that which the will cannot do for itself, it may be changed by another to do. Luther has supplied the basis of a solid and satisfactory answer in his fourth reply, while he has neither opened it, nor appears to be sensible of its force and marrow. "The kingdoms earn their children severally, their children do not earn them."

Upon Luther's principles, it is impossible to give a solid answer to the objection of merit. For, if Christ has died alike for all — if he has done and suffered the same both for the elect and for the reprobate, so that there is no difference between them as far as it respects his merit (which is the essence of the doctrine of Universal Redemption) — then *either* there must be merit in the individuals of the elect, *or* there is respect of persons with God. He makes a different award to some, than what he awards to others — meritorious or unmeritorious alike — through partiality. Nor will it suffice to say (as Luther does), that this reward is mere matter of consequence, like the man swimming out of water, etc. God sees *somewhere*, that which demands His justice should differentiate: and since this difference is not *in Christ*, it must be in the individuals themselves. The true answer is that God has assumed distinct, super-creation relations to his elect, in Christ, which renders it imperative upon him to give them grace and glory, each in its season. This is the true meaning of the kingdom of heaven earning her sons: there are relations of and belonging to that kingdom, which communicate the power that is necessary to inheriting that kingdom, consistent with all that God is, and to the manifestation of him as that God which he is. So again, with respect to the kingdom of hell, that kingdom has relations which have procured its inhabitants and inheritors. The devil has had a power given to him, by which he has drawn legions into his service, and is bringing those legions to be his companion in torments. These are legions, not of devils only, but of reprobate and accursed men. From this number, equally ruined by the devil and self-destroyed with the rest, are rescued the elect people of God, through their super-creation relations to God in Christ — or as it has just now been expressed, through the relations of the kingdom of God. God, of his distinguishing favour, has granted them membership in this kingdom. Merit and reward are made nearly as much a stumbling-block to the maintainers of free grace, as the sin and impotency of the natural man are to the merit-mongers, with this difference: that the stumbling-blocks which may be thrown on the path of truth are capable of being overcome and removed; while falsehood may pass by, and cover over, but she cannot expose and expel her stumbling-blocks. Too often, however, the sincere and strenuous advocates of truth defend her cause weakly, and even dangerously. Who will be satisfied, for instance, with that answer to an objection brought against the truth, which assumes that there is no such thing as "recompense of reward" in the Bible; no soldier's crown; no servant's wages; no agonistic palm; no 'for' to the call of the blessed of my Father; or that all these things and sayings are resolvable into what Christ personally has done; and might, if he saw fit to do so, according to that will of his and of the Father's which is represented as no other than perfectly arbitrary, be bestowed upon his enemies and blasphemers, just as righteously as upon his servant-friends? (See John. 15.15).

The true objection to merit and reward is, that, as generally understood and represented, they suppose something of good *in the natural man*; in that self-ruined, self-damned, and self-made-impotent thing which has merited Hell before he was born into the world, and can merit nothing but Hell.

But, what now if it pleases God to give to this self-ruined, self-made-impotent thing new powers, under a new relation, and by a new title? Is there anything to prevent God from accepting an equivalent, if such can be found, for that punishment which is the just reward of this his moral creature's sin — and of his own free, sovereign, and distinguishing favour (as it respects the subject of his infinite, everlasting, and inestimable bounty), placing him in new relations, and endowing him with new capacities as the fruit of those relations? And why may this new-made creature, so related, so capacitated, and so connected, not act in a manner worthy of those relations, and so entitle himself to those results which the God of all grace has seen fit to attach to the maintenance and fulfilment of those relations?

This is just the state and case of the eternally foreknown, elect, predestined, given and received people of God, in Christ Jesus, their grace and glory Head. Contemplated as now already self-destroyed and fallen in Adam, under express sentence of death — with all that awful hereafter which was implied though not expressed in that sentence — the Lord Jesus, by making himself sin for them, and dying with them, renders it consistent in God to raise them up from the dead, and to bring them out into a new state of being, with new relations, capacities, enjoyments and privileges, *in him*. In a figure, they are said to have risen with Christ; in reality, the indubitability of their future rising was *publicly* sealed and manifested to the whole world by his rising. I say publicly, because it had been secretly sealed in the eternal covenant transactions of the Three in Jehovah, before the worlds. "This is that grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2Tim 1.9) Regeneration, in its most correct view, is a partial fulfilment of the personal resurrection of the Lord's elect: it is the resurrection of the soul or spirit. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall live." (John 5.25) By it, they are brought into a resurrection state; they are shown to be of those who shall hereafter rise with a body like *His*, and are now called to serve him in an intermediate state, as "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph 2.10)

When we speak of good works, people are apt to run immediately into the idea of *law* works, as if the Ten Commandments were to be brought back again: not considering that 'good' is a relative term; and that good works must therefore be those which are consistent with the relations under which we stand when performing them. If it were possible for renewed man, *in the days of his flesh*, to keep the whole law, he would not thereby do good works. The law is for *creation* man; the Gospel is for *super-creation* man. It is the obedience of a redeemed sinner, to which he is called in Christ Jesus. It is an obedience analogous to that fuller and more distinct manifestation of God, which he has made of himself in his new, after-creation kingdom. To this obedience, as many as have been created, or *built*, in Christ Jesus from the very first — as Abel, etc., have been called and brought, according to their measure of faith.

Thus they are, essentially, grace receivers of grace powers, called and enabled to act in a manner worthy of a grace reward. Here is a reward then, not of mere consequence, but of merit: of merit, which has worth or dignity in it, yet all the while is grace — free, distinguishing, sovereign grace. Thus grace reigns; but it is through righteousness: which means, if the connection of those words are duly observed, not merely through Christ's being personally righteous; but through and by way of righteousness as it respects the persons of his people (compare Rom 5.20-21 with the whole of Rom 6 which follows, especially ver. 14-23).

Many, doubtless, will cavil at this statement; but it is for lack of distinguishing things which essentially differ; it is for lack of understanding the true nature, origin, design, constituent subjects, and provisions of the kingdom of God; it is for lack of understanding that the members of that kingdom are persons *already* saved ("Who *has* saved us, and called us with a holy calling;" "for by grace you *are* saved;" "unto us who *are* saved, it is the power of God"); not men striving *for* life to *get* life, but *already*-living men; not natural men, but men joined to the Lord, and who are one spirit with him, who constitute the reward-earning community. Concerning them, it is God's glory that, being brought out as they are in the face and heart of the world — a world made up of hypocrites, or false professors of his name on the one hand; and of declared enemies and persecutors on the other — *they* "should walk worthy of the vocation with which they are called;" they should walk worthy of God, who has called them to his kingdom and glory;" they "should be counted worthy of his kingdom," and should manifest him to be the righteous God in recompensing *rest* to them (their consummation and bliss), when he recompenses tribulation to those who have troubled them."

If this statement is duly apprehended, it will give their legitimate force and meaning to countless passages of Scripture which some bring forward to contradict the truth of God, and others pare down and mutilate to maintain it. — The essence of the distinction, too, that the grace which earns reward is truly super-creation grace, furnishes a sure test by which to try and convict hypocrites. How common is the language, 'O, I know I have nothing that I have not received.' Yes, but how have you received it? Grace is that principle in the divine mind which makes distinctions: grace is not only favour, but free favour; not only free favour, but separating favour. In the case we are considering, separating favour is shown in a way of mercy; that is, it is shown to those who have deserved a contrary sort of treatment. Have you received, then, by a new and super-creation title which differentiates between Adam's self-destroyed and wholly-destroyed sons alike? Or is it that you have cultivated your natural powers — or if it rather pleases you, that you have improved that gospel-grace which is bestowed on all, and put all into a capacity of working out their own salvation? The answer will unmask the man: grace knows itself, and knows its origin.

In asserting that the kingdom of hell *has* earned, and *is* earning, its subjects through a power which God has given to the devil, I would be understood to intimate that the devil could neither be, nor continue to be, without the will of God; and that hell is filled through his agency: by which, in perfect consistency with all creation relations and obligations, ruin was originally brought upon man; and by which he secures and retains for himself that spoil which it is the Father's good pleasure that he should carry off to his glory.

^{xvi} *Quae sanè agnosco. Fateor enim. Qu. sa. ag.* expresses the perfect self-possession and consciousness with which he acknowledges the words as his. *Sanè*. 'Sana mente aut sensu, ubi nihil fuci aut fraudis est.' But it is not honesty and simplicity, so much as calmness, sobriety, and steadfastness of judgment, that he claims for himself, in the recognition and restatement of what he had advanced. *Fateor enim* implies an avowal made under circumstances which might tempt to the suppression of it. His adversaries were the persons to make confession of the evil at Constance, not *he*: on his part, it was the proclamation of an accordant sentiment, not an antagonistic one; but still, it was testimony borne in adversity — borne, as with a halter round his neck.

"Mors sola fatetur

"Quantula sint hominum corpuscula." Juv. x. 171, 2

Death testifies; but it is, as an unwilling and compelled witness: she would rather boast of her prey, than proclaim its littleness.

^{xvii} This splendid paradox of Wickliff's has been brought into discussion already (see Part ii, Sect. 22.), and is the very essence of divine truth, though so offensive to the enemies of truth, and of many who account themselves its advocates. Wickliff, with all his blemishes, was a truly great man; enlightened to see and teach much of the mystery of God; more, I am ready to say, than many who came after him and carried off his palm. Most of these acknowledged his worth indeed: for more than a century, those who had light did not disdain to acknowledge that they walked in his light; such as the Lollards, Huss, Jerome, and others. Erasmus gives him to Luther; and Luther is not ashamed to receive and confess him. Certainly, my friend the Dean has not done him justice; yet he tried, I admit, and meant to do justice to him. But this necessity, was what the Dean did not thoroughly relish, though he tolerated it: and so he apologized where

Wickliff himself would have gloried; and when he professes to give a brief sketch of his doctrines as extracted from his writings and other authentic documents, while he admits that his distinguishing tenet was, undoubtedly, the election of grace, he does not tell us what he held about it, nor even mention this paradox, which seems to have been considered as the centre and heart's core of his creed. The Dean appears to have attached too much importance to Melancthon's judgment, who was so warped by the Sacramentarian Controversy, in which Wickliff's name was drawn out against the Lutherans, that he went to a great extreme in denying Wickliff's light; declaring that he had found in him, also, many other errors (beside this on the sacrament), and that he neither understood nor believed the righteousness of faith. I admit that he had much darkness mingled with his light; confusion with his clearness; pusillanimity with his boldness; sophistry with his plainness; rashness with his honest zeal for reform. But I am rather inclined to measure a man by what he has of good, than by what he has also of evil. And when I see Wickliff acknowledged as the first open champion and declarer against the abominations of Antichrist; when I read such profound and luminous testimonies to the "hidden wisdom" in his writings; when I hear martyrs calling him their apostle, and a Cobham 'solemnly professing before God and man that he never abstained from sin till he knew Wickliff — but that after he became acquainted with that virtuous man and his despised doctrines, it had been otherwise with him;' when I recollect, that he was the first who gave the Bible to our nation in English, and vindicated the right of the common people to read it; when I find the more determined of the reformers of the sixteenth century owning him as their forerunner, and their revilers casting him in their teeth — then I am ashamed to ask what doctrine he held about tithes; to doubt his sincerity, because his circumstances drew him into an undesirable degree of mixture with carnal statesmen; to weigh the words which he dropped, in the hour of the power of darkness, in a pair of scales; and to rejoice in finding evidence, as the result of much pious search, that this celebrated champion *did belong* to the church of Christ. Huss in the flames, and the Swift receiving his uninterred ashes, my witnesses shall be that he spoke by the Holy Ghost.

xviii Origen of Alexandria, the great father of mystical and allegorical interpretation, suffered martyrdom in the 69th year of his age, A. D. 254. There was much, no doubt, to condemn in him, but something also to commend. While strangely defective in his perceptions of divine truth, he was learned, upright, disinterested, and laborious: a man of conscience and of magnanimity. Philosophy and literature were his bane. He did much mischief to the church by his style of interpreting Scripture, not only in rendering human fancies for a season fashionable, to the exclusion of plain truth, but, as a remote consequence, by bringing even the sober use of types and figures — that pregnant source of lively and particularizing instruction — into the contempt with which it has now for some ages been loaded. Two sentences of his are worthy to be preserved. On the words, "We conclude that a man is justified by faith" (Rom 3.28) he says, The justification by faith alone is sufficient; so that, if any person only believes, he may be justified, though no good work has been fulfilled by him. On the case of the penitent thief, he writes, He was justified by faith, without the works of the law, because, concerning these, the Lord did not inquire what he had done before; nor did he stay to ask what work he was purposing to perform after he believed; but the man being justified by his confession only, Jesus who was going to Paradise, took him as a companion and carried him there. — His Hexapla furnished the first specimen of a Polyglot.

xix Porphyry, a Platonic philosopher who lived in the same century with Origen, made great use of his fanciful interpretations, in reviling Christianity. From the serious pains taken by the ancient Christians to confute him, it may be presumed that his works (which are now chiefly lost) were subtle and ingenious; but his testimony, like that of most other infidels, has been made to redound to the establishment, instead of the subversion, of the Gospel. (See Chap. xxi. Cent. iii. of Milner's *Ecc. Hist.*, where a remarkable assemblage of testimonies to this conclusion is skilfully adduced: and see, especially, vol. ii. of Fry's *Second Advent*, where Gibbon is made the same sort of unintentional witness.) Porphyry censures Origen for '*leaving Gentilism*, and embracing the barbarian temerity.' Whereas Origen was, in fact, brought up under Christian parents, and a man of Christian habits from his youth. He compliments Origen on his skill in philosophy, but ridicules his introduction of it into the Scriptures; which, as this enemy justly teaches, abhor such an associate.

xx Jerome, the renowned monk of Stridon, in Pannonia, had a good deal of the spirit of Origen. Luther says *even* Jerome was a man of prodigious learning, lively eloquence, and vigorous mind, but of small discernment in the truth — one taught of man, more than of God. He was born under Constantine, A. D. 331. He was the contemporary of Augustine, and his opponent; he was ever, and all his days, a controversialist — peevish and vain; self-righteous and superstitious; but sincere and devout. To him, the Romish church owes her Vulgate. In his very voluminous expositions, he speaks at random. He is allegorical beyond all bounds, and almost always without accuracy and precision; he lowers the doctrine of illumination in 1Cor 2 to things that are moral and practical; he hints at something like a first and second justification before God; he asserts predestination and then retracts it, as it were; he owns a good will as from God in one place, in another supposes a power to choose to be the whole of divine grace; he never opposes fundamental truths deliberately, but though he owns them everywhere, he always does so defectively, and often inconsistently. It must be confessed, the reputation of this Father's knowledge and abilities has been much overrated. There is a splendour in a profusion of ill-digested learning, coloured by a lively imagination which is often mistaken for sublimity of genius. This was Jerome's case; but this was not the greatest part of the evil. His learned that ignorance availed more than any other cause, to give a celebrity to superstition in the Christian world, and to darken the light of the Gospel. Yet, while he was unruffled by contradiction, and engaged in meditations unconnected with superstition, he could speak with Christian affection concerning the characters and offices of the Son of God. (See Miln. *Eccl. Hist.*, vol ii. p. 481.)

^{xxi} Luther, as we all know, is not very sound here. His *consubstantiation* of the sacramental elements avoids a trope; but the trope here falls in with his admitted exception, 'Scripture herself compels us to receive it.' The same portion of matter cannot be extended in two places at the same moment. The bread, therefore, which the Lord held in his hand while instituting the ordinance, could not at the same instant be bread and hand; or bread and body. The same is true of the cup: it must have been a distinct substance from the hand which held it; and therefore it could not be really the Lord's blood; which could indeed only be drunk *as poured out*, and at the instant when He spoke, was still in his veins. Add to this the simple but decisive illustration which was suggested to Zwingli's mind in a dream, and which was so greatly blessed in the use he was afterwards led to make of it. 'You stupid man, why do not you answer him from the twelfth of Exodus, as it is there written, "It is the Lord's passover." — Luther calls the Sacramentists promiscuously the new prophets, and not very ingenuously. For even Carolstadt disclaimed all connection with the Celestial Prophets, as they were called — while Zwingli and OEcolumpadius, in whom were the sinews of the contest, afforded no pretence for such imputation. Miln. Eccles. Hist. vol. iv. chaps. vi. ix. pp. 772-810, 990, etc. 1127, 8.

^{xxii} Aristotle, the disciple and opponent of Plato, the tutor of Alexander, the great master of rhetoric, belles lettres, logic, physics, metaphysics, and heathen ethics, was little better in theology than an Epicurean; one of those who have learned that the Gods spend a life without care. (Hor. 1. Sat. v. 101.) It is said in excuse for the less explicit parts of his system, that he attached himself to the principles of natural philosophy, rather than those of theology. He maintained the existence of a God as the great mover of all things which have been put into motion *from* eternity, and will continue in motion *to* eternity. Thus he maintained the eternity of matter as well as of God. He *painted* this God finely: — 'the necessary being;' 'the first, and the most excellent of beings;' 'immutable, intelligent, indivisible, without extension;' 'He resides above the enclosure of the world;' 'There He finds his happiness in the contemplation of himself.' — How apt is the expression by which Luther describes him as *painting* God! (*pinxit*) a rhetorical term applied to that sort of discourse 'which is embellished with tropes and figures, which display much genius, but charm by their sweetness, rather than edify by their intelligence.' \ Aristotle's God, then, is one who keeps order in the heavens, but interferes in a very limited degree with earth.

'All the movements of nature are *in some sort* subordinated to him; He *appears* to be the cause and principle of every thing; He *appears* to take some care of human affairs. But, in all the universe, He can look upon nothing but Himself; the sight of crime and of disorder would defile his eyes. He could not know how to be the author either of the prosperity of the wicked, or of the misery of the good. His superintendence is like that of the master of a family, who has established a certain order of things in his household, and takes care that the end which he has in view be accomplished, but shuts his eyes to their divisions and their vices, and only takes care to obviate the consequences of them. He stamped the impress of his will upon the universe when first he projected it like a ball from his hand; and it is by a general, not minute, superintendence, that he sustains it. The perpetuation of the several species of beings is his grand object: which he secured by his one first impulse.' (I am indebted to the Abbé Barthelemi's Anacharsis for this concise but eloquent view of Aristotle's Theology, vol. v. chap. Ixiv.)

Has Luther calumniated this philosopher? Yet this heathen teacher was made the great model for instruction to the Christian church, both as to form and substance, for many ages. During the second period of the reign of the schoolmen, which began early in the thirteenth century, his reputation was at its height: the most renowned doctors wrote elaborate commentaries upon his works. The predominance of his philosophy — 'a philosophy, which knew nothing of original sin and native depravity; which allowed nothing to be criminal except certain external flagitious actions; and which was unacquainted with any righteousness of grace, imputed to a sinner' — was itself a corruption, and the fruitful source of other corruptions which cried aloud for reformation, and which THE REFORMERS of the sixteenth century exposed and suppressed. (See Miln. Eccles. Hist. vol. iv. p. 283.)

^{xxiii} The Manichees, so-called from Manes their founder, arose in the reign of the Emperor Probus, A. D. 277.

'Like most of the ancient heretics, they abounded in senseless whims, not worthy of any solicitous explanation. This they had in common with the Pagan philosophers, that they supposed the Supreme Being to be material, and to penetrate all nature. Their grand peculiarity was to admit two independent principles, a good and an evil one, in order to solve the arduous question concerning the origin of evil.'

'Like all heretics, they made a great parade of seeking truth with liberal impartiality, and were thus qualified to deceive unwary spirits who, far from suspecting their own imbecility of judgment, and regardless of the word of God and hearty prayer, have no idea of attaining religious knowledge by any other method than by natural reason. Like all other heretics, they could not stand before the Scriptures. They professedly rejected the Old Testament as belonging to the malignant principle; and when they were pressed with the authority of the New, as corroborating the Old, they pretended the New was adulterated. — Is there any new thing under the sun? Did not Lord Bolingbroke set up the authority of St. John against St. Paul? Have we not heard of some parts of the Gospel as not genuine because they do not suit Socinian views? Genuine Christian principles alone will bear the test, and not fear the scrutiny of the whole word of God.'

Augustine, who lived about a century after they had first arisen, describes them to the life, after having himself smarted under the poison of their arrows for about twelve years — seduced partly by their subtle and captious questions concerning the origin of evil, partly by their blasphemies against the Old Testament saints. With respect to the person of Christ, their heresy was like that of the Gnostics, or Docetae: worthy children of Simon Magus! They held that the

Lord Jesus Christ had no proper humanity; the mere phantasm of a man having glided, as Luther here describes it, through the virgin's womb, and afterwards expired on the cross.

'Yet though my ideas were material,' says Augustine, 'I could not bear to think of God being flesh. That was too gross and low in my apprehensions. Your only begotten son appeared to me as the most lucid part of you, afforded for our salvation. I concluded that such a nature could not be born of the Virgin Mary without partaking of human flesh, which I thought must pollute it. Hence arose my fantastic ideas of Jesus, so destructive of all piety. Your spiritual children may smile at me with charitable sympathy, if they read these confessions of mine; such, however, were my views.' — Milner in Augustine's Confessions, Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. pp. 314-327.

^{xxiv} Luther has not exactly hit the nail on the head here. He declares that God makes 'wicked man;' and that he so makes him, through the faultiness of the materials which he has to work with, being fitly compared to a carpenter who makes statues of rotten wood. Moreover, this faultiness of the materials arose from the sin of the first man, who was created having the Spirit — what he elsewhere calls 'the firstfruits of the Spirit' (Part iii. Sect. 18.), which he lost by his sin and fall, thereafter being deserted by God, and left to himself. I deem both these propositions objectionable and false. God neither makes sinners; nor did he withdraw the Spirit from Adam by reason of his sin, and so, through him, from the race which has sprung from him; for Adam never had the Spirit.

When God created man in his own image, he created *every* man. The substance of every individual man and woman which exists, has existed, and shall exist till the trumpet sounds and the dead are raised, was enclosed in the first man, Adam. No new matter of human kind has been brought into existence since that moment; no human being has been *created*, therefore, posterior to it. (See Locke's Essay, book ii. chap. xxvi. sect. 2.)

Nor was this creation the mere production of a mass of human substance, like so much clay in the hands of a potter which was afterwards to be moulded into distinct vessels. Distinctness and individuality of subsistence was given to the several individuals of the human race in that instant. This appears from other considerations which might be stated, as well as from these eminently: 1. Man is spoken *of*, and spoken *to*, as plural. ("Let them have dominion." "Male and female he created *them*" "God blessed *them*, and God said *to them*, Be fruitful and multiply." "And He called *their* name Adam, in the day when they were created.") 2. God is declared to have created them male and female: a fact which the Lord Jesus refers to (Mat 19.4, 5; Mar 10.6), as indicative of his Father's will concerning marriage. (It is clearly not the formation of Eve to which he refers, but that act of creation which distinctly preceded the making of the helpmate) 3. God is said to have *chosen* his people to be in Christ before the foundation of the world; which implies that the whole race was contemplated as personally and individually subsistent, in a state prior to the exercise of that choice.

Having thus given a distinct personal subsistence to every individual of the human race in Adam, when the Lord God added the procreative power, and gave command to exercise it, he did *essentially* make every individual: the substance about to come forth in the Lord's time, into manifest existence and distinct personal agency, was already formed; the power and the authority which would be necessary to its production, were superadded. Then, if this was God's 'condidit' (Luther's term, 'made,' 'formed,' 'built'), has *He* made wicked man? Is that saying of the Preacher hereby, and hereby only, not shown to be true, "God has made man upright?" (Ecc 7.29) The only consideration which can have any show of involving God in the propagation of the wicked, is that he did not at once destroy the offender and those who had offended *in him*. But, without suggesting counsel and design here (we are dealing with facts), the living substances were formed; the power and the authority for production had been given; a curse was upon them, which they must be brought out into manifest existence so that they might be seen and known to bear. — I can only remark that these, or some such reasons, which arise out of the reality of their previous distinct subsistence, seem absolutely necessary to the vindication of God from the charge of propagating sin. — If it is asked, then, but how could those who had no eye to see, no ear to hear, no hand to put forth, commit an act of disobedience? The answer is, Adam was the sole personal agent ("By one man sin entered into the world;" "by one man's offence, death reigned by one;" "by the offence of one judgment condemnation came upon all men to "); but every individual of the race was enclosed in, and was part of his substance, so that he could not do anything in which any one of them was not one with him.

My head offends; but where is my hand and my foot, in the transgression and in its punishment? — This is the Scripture view of the fall — 'one personal agent, but every human being partaker with him in the offence' — is decisively shown from Rom 5.12. Whether εφ ω is rendered *in whom* ("through him *in whom* all sinned" — which I greatly prefer), or *for that*: the words which follow make it plain that all men are dealt with or rather, all men, from Adam to Moses, were dealt with on the ground of the first transgression. I have no other clue to my own character; I have no other clue to my own state. Nor can I otherwise explain what is thus made clear in the spirit and behaviour of other men. And does not the church of England recognise this account of the matter in her baptismal service, when she prays that the infant may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration; and afterwards instructs the priest to speak to the god-fathers and god-mothers in this way: you have prayed that our Lord Jesus Christ would grant to release him from *his sins*. *What sins?* — This is the reality of 'original sin' from which flowed 'original guilt,' from which flowed 'depravation of nature,' so commonly mistaken for it. This alone constitutes every son and daughter of fallen Adam a fallen creature; not merely a child of the fallen, but *themselves*, individually and personally, fallen from their own original uprightness, *in him*. — I hinted that this is not the place to speak of the counsel and design with which all of this was done. But it is obvious that hereby a way was made for that further and more complete development of God (by the assumption of new relations), which could not be made by simple creation, but to which creation was the stepping-stone. (See Part iii. Sect. 28. notes ¹ and ^v.)

Luther is again mistaken (see Part iii. Sect. 18. note ^t) about the creation state of man; speaking as though the possession of the Spirit were a part of his endowments. — 'Desertus a Deo ac sibi relictus... naturam peccato, subtracto *spiritu, vitiatam*.' — The Lord God having formed his animal structure out of the dust of the ground— a compound mass — breathed into his nostrils breath of "lives" and man became a living soul. This continuity of soul and body — simple soul, and compounded body — soul, which was an image of Him that is a Spirit; and body, in which he resembled and was partaker with the brutes — constituted his essential nature; the solution of which continuity constitutes death. So constituted, he had capacities with which to learn, and sources of instruction from which to derive much knowledge of God. The Lord God conversed with him face to face, and he dwelt among the teaching creatures of His hand; even as he was himself the most teaching of all creatures.

But where is the Spirit, meaning the Holy Ghost? Had Adam possessed this, had the Spirit dwelt and walked in Him — that is, been continually present with Him, acting *in* Him and *by* Him — he would have possessed union with God: a privilege which was not essential to his condition and relation as the moral creature of God, but which might, or might not, be added to it. It is plain from this, as from other considerations, that it was not added: for if it was added, then it was either conquered in the temptation, or it was withdrawn prior to it. I do not know what a conquered Holy Ghost can mean; and if it was withdrawn prior to the temptation, then its withdrawal would constitute him a different creature from that to which the temptation law had been given.

Luther's misapprehension has much to do with a mistake about the Spirit's actings. He seems to have thought, as many now do, that there might be a sort of fast and loose playing of the Spirit. The Spirit, when given, acts in earnest and efficaciously. — If Luther were to ask, Does he always act efficaciously in the Lord's called people, *now*? I would answer that the cases are not parallel. We have the Spirit not as our own, and in our Adam-selves, but in Christ. When *we* fall, it is not 'the Spirit conquered,' but the Spirit not energizing: which could not have happened to Adam. Luther's expressions are ambiguous as to the period when the Spirit was withdrawn, whether before, or after the temptation. In a former note (Part iii. Sect. 18. note ^t) I have dealt with him as representing it to have been withdrawn *before* the temptation. A careful comparison of the several passages in which he refers to it leads me to conclude that he supposed it was not withdrawn till after the sin had been committed.

But now, being simply a creature, and therefore mutable, he was liable to fall by temptation. Accountability implies account to be rendered; account implies trial; trial implies the presence of that in the tried substance which may be turned to evil. Was this not precisely Adam's state and constitution? 'Good,' 'very good,' as he came out of the hands of his Creator, his good might be made evil. Those appetites and passions the appendages of his will, which in his creation and until evil was suggested from without, were pure. They were fixed on fit objects, and acted in purity; but they were liable to be turned to other objects, and thus to become evil. Desire for knowledge, desire for pleasant food, taking pleasure in what is beautiful to the eye — all of which were sound and pure in creation — might thus, *by suggestions thrown in*, become evil, just as infectious fever, or the serpent's bite, poisons healthful blood. If no evil were suggested, there would continue only good. The suggestion, by being entertained, mars them.

Then, God was debtor to Adam, to withhold temptation from him; or to minister super-creation aid, fortified as he was by creation endowments, to keep him from falling; or to heal his wounds, and restore soundness and peace to him, when he had *freely* fallen?

^{xxv} What Luther's explanation amounts to, about the mystery of God's agency in the wicked, as given in his *folly*, is that, 1. They are still real existences. 2. They are still God's creatures. 3. He works all things in them, even as he does in all his creatures. 4. He works in them according to their nature: that hence he does all their evil in them, but does no evil himself. All this is true; but it is baldly told, and lacks opening, confirmation, and some additions. He ought to show us how man came to be what he is, consistent with God's voluntarily contracted obligations to him; he ought to show us the nature and manner of his agency in the wicked; he ought to show us how God, consistent with himself, ordained and wrought the fall, and continues wicked man in being — indeed, works wickedness by him, instead of destroying him and putting an end to the reign of evil. — I say he should have shown these things because, though he talks of 'silliness' and 'foolishness,' and 'babbling' (*Libet ineptire, stultescere, et balbutiendo tentare*), it is plain that he means a serious and sober solution to the difficulty.

Then, with respect to the FIRST of these showings, man, as we have seen in a former note (Sect. 10. note ^z) had a constitution imparted, and a state assigned to him, in which trial was implied, and in which he ought to have overcome temptation. There was no dereliction of the Creator's engagements, no withdrawal of any possession or privilege, no gainsaying discession or addition, with respect to God's previous announcements, either in the operation of the fall, or in the inflictions which followed it. The mutability of the creature, as simple creature — the accountability of moral creature — and the distinct source (not creation, but super-creation) of the Spirit's internal energizings — unveil a just God; that is, one who leaves nothing undone which he had freely bound himself to do, and does nothing which he should not do.

Then, with respect to the SECOND of these showings, Luther compares God's agency in the wicked to a drover driving on a lame horse (he does not mean it irreverently); this excites the idea of physical rather than moral influence: but the truth is, God acts in the wicked as in the righteous, by setting, or causing to be set, such considerations before the will, as constrain it to choose his will. This is moral necessity; such a will so addressed cannot choose differently.

Then, with respect to the THIRD of these showings, God's most gracious and everlasting design of making himself known *to*, and enjoyed *by*, certain creatures of his hands, according to what He really is, affords the ample and adequate reason

for all that complex yet simple system of operation by which he has been dealing with man from the creation to this hour, and will continue to deal with him *to* and *throughout* eternity: — with man, his great manifester, not only in the blessed human person of the Lord Jesus Christ (see Part ii. Sect. 8. note ^r), but also in every individual substance of the whole human race; which is made to manifest *itself*, so that he may manifest *himself* by his dealings with it.

A sight like this justifies wisdom to her children: and, although these considerations may seem to apply themselves exclusively to God's dealings with the wicked; or at farthest, with men; they will require but little extension, to comprehend all creatures. Evil has been introduced into the creation of God, and is not destroyed, but continues therein, and shall so continue, unto God's glory: because without it he could not be manifested as what he is — the union and concentration of all moral excellency — the truth, the love, the power, the wisdom — the good one. And what is this 'evil,' which has thus come into, and thus abides in God's world? A person as we are apt to account it, having scriptural authority for so speaking of it; but thinking so of it, too often to our hurt? Hear what a venerable confessor of the Church has to say about it:

'I now began to understand, that every creature of your hand is in its nature good, and that universal nature is justly called on to praise the Lord for his goodness. (Psa 148) The evil which I sought after has no positive existence; were it a substance, it would be good, because every thing individually, as well as all things collectively, is good. Evil appeared to be a lack of agreement in some parts to others. My opinion of the two independent principles, in order to account for the origin of evil, was without foundation (see above, Sect. 9. note ^v). Evil is not a thing to be created; let good things only forsake their just place, office and order, and then, though till be good in their nature, evil, which is only a privative, abounds and produces positive misery. I asked what was iniquity, and I found it to be no substance, but a perversity of the will, Avhich de clines from you, the supreme substance, to lower things, and casts away its internal excellencies, and swells with pride externally.' (Augustine's *Confessions*, in Miln. Eccl. Hist. vol. ii. p. 342)

If it is true, then, that the creature, *as* creature, is essentially mutable (what Augustine, and the schoolmen after him, applies to the now corrupted state of the human will being equally applicable to the will of man [see Part iii. Sect. 1] — to the will of every moral *creature* — in its essence; viz. that it is vertible); if there subsists what may be fitly compared to a chord in every moral creature, which may be so touched as to yield a jarring note, and by its vibration to produce discord throughout the whole instrument; if this chord, which is not in itself evil, may be so touched by that which is not evil neither, but good (is not self-love such a chord, and is not the sense of God's incomparable excellency, or the intimation of superiority in some other like creature of God's, or the suggestion of some flaw, blemish, or deficiency in the creature itself — each of which should only excite humility, submission, and gratitude — such a touch?). Can we have any difficulty in conceiving how Satan was with drawn from his uprightness, when as he was yet only good, and nothing but good was to be heard and seen around him? I am not ignorant that some would divert us altogether from contemplations of this kind: but why are we told so much about the devil, if we are to have no thoughts about his history and origin? We are taught that pride was his condemnation (1Tim 3.6); "that he was a murderer from the beginning, and did not abide in the truth" (Joh 8.44); "that he did not keep his first estate, but left his own habitation" (Jude 6); "that there was war in heaven." (Rev 12.7) — I am aware, that these words, in their connection, are to be understood prophetically; but there was a foundation for the allusion. Who would be ashamed to meditate and explore what God has revealed to his own justification (Rom 3.4) and to our furtherance and joy of faith? (Phi 1.25)

^{xxvi} Luther's account of 'hardening' is, 1. God actuates the wicked as well as the rest of his creatures, according to their nature. 2. Satan is unresisted and undisturbed in them. 3. They can only will evil. 4. God thwarts them by word, or deed, or both. All this is correct; but it is not the whole of the matter; neither does he put the several parts of the machinery together, cleverly; neither does he show an end. (See Sect. 11. note ^h). All these things are of God, *through* God, and *to* God. (Rom 11.36) The natural man has been brought into the state in which he is, *of*, *through*, and *to* him. And what is that state? An earthly, sensual, devilish soul (Jas 3.16), possessed by the devil; to whom it was given up, as a prey, in the day of apostasy. Luther distinguishes the moving and driving, or seizing and moving of God, from his word and work. It is a fine image which he draws of God giving motion to 'all creatures.' But if this idea is examined, it will be found to amount to no more than that God keeps all his creatures in a state of being which is according to their nature; and that the wicked are therefore, by the necessity of their nature, kept by him in a state of activity, and not allowed to be torpid, or as Luther facetiously expresses it, to have a holiday. Particular actings of God, then, upon this substance of the human soul, such and so related, are what he expresses by God's thwarting word and work. But this thwarting word and work extends only to the outside of the man; *foris offert* — *foris objicit*. All this while, Satan's is an agency with which, as it respects others, God does not interfere: he is no agent, no minister of His. You might almost judge from his language in some places (contradicted, it is true, by others), that he accounted Satan a sort of independent chief.

Now, the root of the matter lies here, if I am not mistaken. Satan is an agent and minister of God. (See Job 1.11; 1Kng 22.19-23; 1Chr 21.1. Compare 2Sam 24.1; Zec 3.1-3.) Nor can I understand the expressions so repeatedly applied to the case of Pharaoh, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart;" nor "Whom he will, he hardens;" nor "God has given them the spirit of slumber," nor "You have hid these things from the wise and prudent," and the like — without recurring to this agency. This obviously meets their full and express import, while nothing else, or nothing less, does. And what is the effect of this agency but such as has been already ascribed to the operation of God? (See note ^h, as before) Hereby 'He sets, or causes to be set, such considerations before the mind of His free-agent, as morally constrain him to choose what He has willed. It might be added that he causes such to be withheld — for Satan throws dust into men's eyes; hinders them

from seeing, as well as causes them to see wrongly. What is there that can give peace under the realizing consciousness of his being and agency, but the assurance that he is in truth only this agent of God for good, and nothing but good, for his chosen?

God's hardening, therefore, I define *generally* to be 'that special operation of God upon the reprobate soul, by which, through the agency of Satan (whose Lord and rider he is), combined with his own outward dispensations of word and work, he shuts and seals it up in its own native blindness, aversion and enmity towards himself. There have been however, and doubtless are, certain *special* and splendid examples of this operation, each having its minuter peculiarities, while the same essential nature pervades all. — Pharaoh is one of these. — Indeed the whole history of the Exodus is one of the most luminous displays which the Lord God has ever made, of the design he is pursuing and accomplishing in having and dealing with creatures — second only to the marvellous and complicated history of the Lord's death: for which it was also appointed; for which it has also been recorded.

xxvii Luther blunders a good deal here, while he says many excellent things. In dealing with this cavil, the fault then is in the potter, he first sets forth its audacity, next repels Erasmus' gloss by it, then maintains that it is an interested judgment, not a judgment of equity, by which God is condemned. — Much of the difficulty is, no doubt, resolvable into the sovereignty of God; that sovereignty which is so bitterly offensive to the carnal mind, while without the light of it we cannot stir a step in God. Whence came creation in all and every part of its wide range; whence come blessing and cursing, either as foreordained or as fulfilled; whence come heaven and hell, and inhabitants for each; whence comes the devil, whence comes the fall of man; whence comes sealed ruin on the one hand, and whence comes free restoration and glorification on the other; but from Him who makes no appeal to the creature for his vindication, but says 'I have lifted up my hand that it shall be so?' — But there is a worthy end for all this; which Luther did not see, and therefore did not assign: the sight of which, however, makes the difference between a cruel God and a wise one. (See Part iii. Sect. 28. notes ^{t v x}.) — It is not true that God condemns the undeserving, or that he crowns the unworthy. Luther did not discern the mystery of the creation and fall of every individual man in Adam (see Part iii. Sect. 38. note ¹, Part iv. Sect. 10. note ²). Nor did he understand the mystery of the predestinative counsel. Every individual of the human race became a hell-deserving sinner in Adam; every individual of the saved, is saved by virtue of new relations assumed by God, and given to him in Christ — as one previously self-ruined, whom Christ has rendered worthy to be taken up from his ruin, by having shared it with him. Predestination is fulfilment forearranged; as is the execution, such was the covenanted design. It is self-destroyed ones, therefore, who are predestined to hell; even as it is Christ-made worthy ones who are predestined to life. Luther knew nothing about God's assuming relations, much less about his assuming *distinct* relations. And this shows once more how impossible it is to give any consistent account of the salvation of the righteous, on the basis of universal redemption: such a redemption must leave either partiality in God, or merit in man. Luther would have it *indignos* to avoid merit, and therefore he leaves God 'a respecter of persons.' — He does not say a word too much about sovereignty, but he puts it in its wrong place, and omits what ought to be added to it — the end for which it is exercised. The place is, 'God determining to make creatures with opposite destinies some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt — vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy.' And that we may not even in heart murmur here, we must have an adequate end shown to us. It is shown to as many as have an eye to see it: he determines to make them, and he *does* make them, to His own glory — the manifesting of himself, according to what he really is. "What if God, willing," etc. (Rom 9.22-24.) In the fulfilment of this design, sovereignty is not the hinge; there is nothing from first to last, in the varieties of the way or of the end, except what approves itself to right reason. — Luther seems to think that the salvation of the righteous escapes animadversion [harsh criticism or disapproval]. The fact that there is such a state may. But if the true *nature* of that state, and the true *way* to it, are faithfully opened, they are scarcely less offensive to the carnal mind than the damnation of the lost.

xxviii I am disposed to give rather a different turn to the declaration, though in no way affecting Luther's argument. All he wants to show is that they are words of anger, not of pity and palliation. But since the word which we render "strive" and which Luther renders "judge" properly signifies debate or judgment given after discussion; why might not the sentiment be, "My Spirit shall not always be proving that man is flesh;" or "shall not always be reproving him for *being* flesh?" The great reason for continuing man in existence after the original and damning transgression was that he might show himself what he is, as he has made himself — so different from what God made him. The Lord here says that he will carry on this work of manifestation — this controversy, as it may be called — for no longer than one hundred and twenty years. There seems to be no great importance in the annunciation that he would not strive *because* he is flesh. He was so from the first moment of transgression; and not more so now, than from that moment. But the manifestation having been carried far enough, there was now a reason why it should cease. This trial, or controversy, or judgment, or proof, or reproof, was effected by the divine Spirit both mediately and immediately acting upon their spirit. Luther confines it to the effect of their intercourse with others — such as Noah, and those of the Lord's people who had lived and were living with those generations of men in whom was the Spirit of God. But did not that Spirit also act upon these disobedient ones, without their intervention? that Spirit which, according to Luther, moves and drives all God's creatures. — רִיחַ (ruach), appendere — litem vel causam agere — quomodo 'disceptare' signifi; et 'judicare'; fut ruach disceptabit; Gen 6.3. (Sim. Lex. Hebr. in loc.) ruach Contendit. prop, appendit. 2. Judicavit, i.e., appendit balance judicii. 3. In judicio contendit. 'To judge, to strive, to litigate' (Robertson's Clavis Pentateuch in loco.) גַּם בָּסָר (gam basar) 'Inasmuch as,' 'for that.' Robertson. Simon derives it rather differently, and explains by 'εν τω' seducere eos; i.e., dum seducit eos ipsa caro.

Luther seems to lose the particular point of the preceding verses, when he speaks of the 'sons of *men*' marrying wives; it is the *sons of God* seeing the *daughters of men*, etc. meaning surely those who practised and made profession of his worship, in opposition to those who had thrown it off. The great offence and provocation seems to have been given by that hypocritical remnant, to and concerning which Enoch had previously prophesied (as it appears from Jude 1.15).

^{xxix} It is impossible to understand this text in such a way that it will not be a decisive testimony against Freewill. Whether it is that 'God would cease to prove man, what he is,' or 'cease to judge him, because he is such a one;' what he is, remains the same; and that is something so vile that God cannot any longer tolerate it.

I confess that I greatly prefer understanding the flesh in Romans 7 and 8 as the bodily part of the saint, which is unrenewed while he remains in this world. But what difference does this make as to the question of Freewill? Every individual man is by natural constitution "enmity against God;" so far as that natural constitution remains in the saint, he also is enmity. The passage under consideration either says, or implies, being that he is flesh, he is contrary to the Spirit and offensive to God. What is the state of his will then?

I would understand the word flesh here, of his whole substance or constitution, rather than 'an affection' of it, as Luther and most other divines do. Indeed, I consider that much jargon has been introduced into theology by this distinction. It has led to what is called the doctrine of two principles (the term 'principle' being a very indefinite one, and a shelter for almost everything that is unknown or wishes to be obscure). Whereas, I believe there are few if any places in Scripture, in which it may not be understood of the human substance, either in its complexity as soul and body, or in its dividuality, as body only.

I by no means subscribe to the interpretation which Luther assigns to some of the texts he adduces. "The *flesh* profits nothing "is not 'evil affection,' but the natural substance of man as contrasted with the Spirit. "The word was made flesh," does not declare *body* in opposition to *soul*, but it declares that whole human person which the second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity truly and actually assumed into union with himself when the fulness of the time had come. So "my *flesh* is food indeed" does not exclude his soul as made an offering for sin. Neither does the "one *flesh*" which the church is made to be with Christ, exclude someone who is joined to the Lord, from being one Spirit. If Luther's interpretation and distinction with respect to the term 'flesh' is admitted, a third must at least be added — viz. this sense which comprehends the whole human substance, and so constitutes a title which distinguishes man from all other creatures. As a hint to show this, I would mention Psalm 145.21; Luk 3.6; Isa 40.5,6; Joh 17.2; 1Cor 1.29; to which countless others might be added. Luther speaks with sufficient exactness about the presence and withdrawal of the Spirit to make it clear that he did not understand Him to have *dwelt* in the ungodly — while he omits a very important part of the Spirit's agency. (See above, note ^m.)

^{xxx} Luther speaks as the oracles of God, when he says, 'all *things*' — meaning all *persons* — all human beings — are flesh. I have hinted already (see the last note) that I do not agree with Luther in his interpretation of this most authoritative text (Joh 3.6) on which he bottoms his whole argument here, as he did before. He says "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," means that which is born of the flesh is sinful or ungodly affection; in short, it is wicked, or wickedness. I say flesh means the same in the subject and in the predicate; 'that which is born of man is man.' What this is, as to its nature, properties, and qualities, must be sought elsewhere. But the next clause gives us a pretty good hint at these, by implying that it is of a nature directly contrary to that of the Holy Ghost; "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." The Scripture is, moreover, abundantly explicit in its testimony to what this nature is, by giving us a full and complete history of its creation and depravation, and by asserting in the clearest and strongest terms, its total, universal, complicated, and pervasive villainy. Take but these four passages, to which scores might be added, and let them teach us what that flesh is which flesh begets, and brings forth. "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he puts no trust in his saints, and the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinks iniquity like water?" (Job 15.14-16) "Behold I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." (Psa 51.5) "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it." (Jer 17.9) "For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man." (Mar 7.21-23.) It is not, therefore, that I draw a different testimony from Joh 3.6; but I make it a *step* to explicit proof, rather than explicit proof itself; and by so doing, cut the sinews of objection here, while I also preserve simplicity and uniformity in the interpretation of Scripture terms.

For a fuller consideration of the terms flesh and spirit, I venture to refer the reader to 'Vaughan's Clergyman's Appeal,' chap. iii. sect. iii. and chap. v. sect. ii. iv., where some account is given of the nature state of man, and of the sanctification of the Lord's people, which I deem satisfactory.

^{xxxi} There is an ambiguity in the expression 'renatus per fidem.' Faith is the fruit and effect of regeneration strictly and properly so called; that is, 'of that act of God by his Spirit, whereby he begets the soul anew, and so makes it capable of spiritual perceptions, actings, and sufferings.' But in the more enlarged sense of regeneration, which includes *state* as well as *character* (what is more properly called new *birth*, *born* again) regeneration may be said to be the fruit of faith: "you are all the children of God in Christ Jesus by faith;" that is, manifested to be such visibly and acknowledgedly adopted into his family. The child as begotten differs from the child as born into the world. Regeneration, strictly speaking, is the begetting of the child; speaking more widely, it is the birth of it; and Baptism is the sign and seal of this regenerate state — the sign *of*, and the seal that we are *in* it. In its most correct view, it is the sacrament of the

Resurrection; of our having died and risen again with Christ — into whom we have been baptized — in a figure, the reality of which is our being in the number of those for whom and with whom he has died, in order that they might be raised up again from the dead with him, and for his sake — at an appointed time. By baptism, therefore, the Lord's people are sealed to be in the state of those who have risen from the dead; who *already have* that which is to be had in this life of the resurrection from the dead, in possessing, acting, and enjoying a risen Spirit — and who have the pledge of God, which cannot lie, that they *shall have* the superabundant residue both in their person (a raised body) and in their state (partakers of the glory which shall be revealed.) In whatever form the ordinance is administered, whether by immersion, affusion, or aspersion, it is in effect the same teaching sign: the laver of regeneration being the Lord's blood, and its application to our person denoting our union with him in his death and resurrection. It is this signing, sealing ordinance, I say, to God's elect, and to none else. When they have been called by the Spirit (which may be before or after — if one part of the sign must be future, why may not both be?), they are led and enabled either to wait upon the Lord in receiving it, or to look back to it as a benefit already received. — Hosts of objections will rise up, no doubt, against this testimony. Why then are infants baptized? Why is baptism administered to the non-elect? — I am not hesitant to answer these questions about the natural man. Infant baptism I remark, however, must stand on its own grounds of vindication; and for my own part, I am content with God's having commanded every male Israelite to be circumcised on the eighth day— administered to non-elect! Why it has been the mystery of God from the beginning to bring out and draw to himself his elect, amidst a multitude of professing hypocrites, Enoch lived among such: Judas was one of the twelve. The meaning of the ordinance is not impaired by these mysterious arrangements; and it is just so much of shame, grief, and weakness to the spiritual man, if he does not use and enjoy the pregnant sign. — I have mixed this reference to *baptism* with the subject of *regeneration*, not only because it is so mixed by the Fathers and by the Apostles, but because I cannot doubt that the Lord had a reference to it in Joh 3.5. (Unless a man is begotten by the Spirit out of water — *i.e.*, begotten by the Spirit in and through that water which is the sacramental emblem of my blood — he can have no part or lot in the kingdom of God); and because I consider it as so illustrative of the real nature of regeneration, which I cannot grant to be either character or state only, but I must regard it in its more enlarged sense, as comprehending *both*. How simple and how sweet is the view thus opened to us, of the Lord's sacraments! Baptism, the sacramental introduction of the Lord's people into the resurrection state; and the communion of the body and blood, the sacrament of their continual life in it. — The phrase 'renatus per fidem,' then, which both Erasmus and Luther adopt, is allowable as expressive of that state into which the eternally foreknown of God are brought when, having already been regenerated in Spirit, by faith and calling upon God, they are regenerated in *state*. In this state, they live and walk *by* and *in* the Spirit. — Then, what has this state of theirs to do with the question of Freewill; or rather, with all that has just been argued about man's being 'flesh'? —whatever is meant by that word. He that has been begotten, or born, of the Spirit is Spirit, and he has the Spirit dwelling and walking in him, and he serves God therein.

^{xxxii} Luther's account of this text is, 1. The words are a testimony. 2. This testimony is confirmed by (1.) the preceding context (2.) fact and experience. — I deem him mistaken in his view, both of the text and context. (See above, note ^c.) The text does not refer to the truth as preached by the Gospel, nor does it make any division or exception. It is the nature state of 'all men' that is described here, and it is described as a reason for Paul's willingness to preach the Gospel at Rome, or anywhere. Luther was misled, possibly, by the word 'truth;' "who hold the truth in unrighteousness;" as if it must necessarily mean the Gospel. What, is there no teacher of truth but the Gospel? and is the truth identical with the Gospel? "The truth" is either 'the substance of God,' or 'the doctrine of that substance what states it,' and consequently, what states or displays any part of this — so far as it does state this — may in this inferior sense (I call doctrine *of* or *about* the reality inferior to the reality itself) be called 'the truth.'

I do not forget that the Lord Jesus Christ is both personally and mystically called the truth; but if this title is examined, it will be found that He has it in both these regards, subordinately — as the grand Displayer, Declarer, Word, and Glory of God the Father, the created image of the Uncreated Reality.

Now some of the invisible things of God were thus shown, or stated out, in creation; and are shown by what we call the works of nature (that is, works of God in creation as distinguished from those of super-creation or redemption). So that, those who did not have the Gospel might still be charged with holding the truth in unrighteousness: they had it, and did not act on it. — That this is Paul's reference and meaning here, appears from what follows. He goes on to say, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has shown it to them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead: so that they are without excuse." He then sets out the conduct of the Gentiles under this knowledge, having thus previously shown that if they sinned, it was without excuse. Luther is guilty here of the very error which he charges against Erasmus in Part. iv. Sect. 30, that of assuming parallelisms without proof. Because Jew and Greek are opposed in 1Cor 1, and also here, he assumes that it must be with just the same reference and scope in each. Whereas *there* it is the rejecting infidel, and here the un-evangelized neglecter and contemner of God, that is the subject of remark. Still, the testimony against Freewill is entire. Even the conclusion from the sixteenth verse, and from the seventeenth verse, is not abated: "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Therefore, both Jew and Greek need salvation; therefore, they neither have, nor know it, by Freewill. "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith;" therefore, righteousness is not known without it — it is not known by Freewill; it is by faith — and that faith is not of Freewill, but opposed to it. But what does the text itself say in its grammatical sense, as led to and supported by a just view of the context? "The wrath of God is revealed against all men in their nature state, for they hold the truth in unrighteousness: they manifest themselves to

be what they are — children of wrath and curse, through original sin and guilt — by blinding themselves to that display of God which is made by the visible, and otherwise sensible, things of his hand.

xxxiii That I deny: *here* he speaks of Jews only; *there*, by the combination of the two names, he comprehended all men. The very force of the argument consists in its exclusiveness. The Jews would say, those Scriptures do not belong to us, but to the heathens. No, he says, they are addressed to you: "Whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Do not excuse *yourselves*; it is meant for *you* chiefly. Why should that be spoken to you, which belongs to *others*, but not to *you*? Your excuse therefore cannot be admitted. — It is a common and current mistake that the law was given to everybody: given to Adam in creation, and through him to the whole race. But this is *apocryphal*, and not *canonical* Scripture. It was never given except to the Jews, that is, to the church; the elect and covenanted nation of Israel: which was for its hour (a space of fifteen hundred years) the visible church (even as the whole community of professed Christians is that church now); which was the type of the church of the first-born — the true church — and in which the several and individual members of that same church — the people of God during that period existent in the flesh — were *chiefly*, if not *exclusively*, gathered into realized union with Christ. — Here at least, it is plain that the Apostle distinguishes between the two parts of mankind — Jews and heathens — by means of this badge. If the rest of mankind is supposed to be dealt with according to this law, and as though they were under it; this must be by a tacit reference to it in the divine mind, not on the ground of any positive and express enactment which had given it to them, and in which they are plainly differenced from the Jews, who are the subjects of remark here.

xxxiv My objection with respect to the law does not affect the universality of the charge. Paul is dealing with a Jewish objector; no question is entertained with respect to the guilt of the heathens. The Scriptures which he quotes have established the guilt of the Jews also. He has therefore made good his charge, that 'all men' hold the truth in unrighteousness.

xxxv The cavil is this: Paul speaks of ceremonial works exclusively. Luther's answer is, 1. Paul's argument would be defective. 2. Grace would be a mere trifle. 3. These works have not become deathly. 4. They were a part of the law requirements meaning as much as the decalogue, and have never been abrogated. 5 "When treating the same subject in Galatians 3, he expressly says, 'All things which are written in the book of the law.'

The true and short answer to this cavil is that the whole law, ceremonial and moral, is one institution, and Paul makes no exceptions or distinctions. Luther goes wide and says many exceptionable things. What he says about 'not abrogated,' is ambiguous, inconclusive, and unnecessary. Does he mean that the law in both its parts is still standing, just as it was? Was it the Apostle's place here to *say* 'not abrogated,' if he considered it so — as he does explicitly in Romans 6, 7; 2Cor 3; Eph 2; Col 2; Gal 4; and 1Tim 1? Is it true that what has been the law is not to be spoken of under the name of the law, unless it be still in force and reigning? Did the Jews, to whom this argument is addressed — I say 'only,' he says 'firstly' (see last note) — require any assertion of its authority? What he says to reconcile the apparent discrepancy between Paul and Moses, which forms the basis of his interpretation and position here, he says under a misapprehension of both Paul's and Moses' meaning, and says unwisely and untruly. (Compare Deut 27.1-26, with Gal 3.10.) Paul does not have it for his object, to condemn as many as are doers of the law, but "as many as are of the works of the law;" that is, all those who are looking for justification, in whole or in part, from their obedience to the law. What inconsistency is there between this interdict of Paul's, and Moses' curse, pronounced upon everyone who does not continue in all things? etc. — Paul neither takes away this curse, nor condemns the fulfiller. He condemns the attempt to fulfil, not because it *succeeds*, but because it *fails*, and must ever fail. — 'They both require the Spirit in their performer: Moses' cursed does not continue, because he does not have the Spirit; Paul's cursed is not justified, because he does the works without the Spirit.' Now, there is no consideration about either *power* or *motive*, in either. Moses in effect says, fulfil; without inquiring or teaching *how*. And Paul says, 'aiming to be justified by the law, curses, because man cannot fulfil it, and there is a curse upon him who does not do it.' But the Spirit is so far from being the law fulfiller (*legis consummator*), as Luther entitles him, that he who has the Spirit, *after justification*, does not "continue in all things," and would be condemned still, if that were required of him; nor is it in any way his aim to do so. His aim is to do the whole will of God, in that relation into which he has now manifestly and consciously been brought by Him in Christ, as God is pleased to make known that will to him, and to enable him, by his Spirit which dwells and walks in him: a rule, if it can be called a rule, far more extensive and copious than the law, and of a totally different character; the law of an eternally saved and glorified sinner, walking in Christ with God — his Father, his Friend, his Portion, his exceeding Joy. — What he says here, and in other places, about the justification of the Spirit, is fallacious. His language implies that, if the obedience of those who are "of the works of the law" were yielded in the Spirit, it would justify; and that it was for lack of this gift, that Moses' worshippers did not escape their curse by "continuing in all things." Now, though it is true that the Spirit justifies the Lord's called people (1Cor 6.11), as it "manifested God in the flesh" (1Tim 3.16), by proving whose, and who, and what they are — this is perfectly distinct from any act of obedience which removes the curse, or earns acceptance. However, all he wants from Galatians he has: 'Paul, treating the same subject there, expressly comprehends the whole law.'

xxxvi I object to Luther's interpretations and conclusions in this section. He infers a division of law workers from the words *no flesh*; by which Paul does not express division, but universality. *No flesh* (see above, Part iv. Sect. 37. note ^k) is no human being. The argument drawn from this supposed division therefore — that it is the deeds of the law done without the Spirit, which fail to justify, and do absolutely condemn — falls to the ground. In the several passages which

he quotes, the opposition is not between the Spirit and the deeds of the law, but between the Law and the Gospel. (Gal 3; Rom 3) Nor do I allow the parallel between this text and John 3.6, any further than that the word 'flesh' is used in the same sense in both; but that is not Luther's sense. I must object to the assertion that it is the absence of the Spirit which makes the deeds of the law damnable, which would not be damnable, if He were present in them — as if any works of man in the flesh, performed with or without the Spirit, could endure the severity of God's judgment! All I can allow to Luther in this section, therefore, is that 'By the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight.' Therefore, Freewill, even with the help of the law, is still condemned; for even with that help she cannot justify. Then what is she without it? — *And is this not enough?*

Luther misapprehends the scope of the Apostle's argument. He is not reasoning and declaring about man as *with*, and as *without*, the Spirit: but having shown what man is, both Jew and Gentile, from Scripture, he is arguing how impossible it is that he should be justified by the law. The argument is against justification by the law, as preparatory to his opening of justification by the Gospel; not against man's natural impotency and imbecility, while without the Spirit. — Luther makes 'not justified' to mean the same as 'damned.' It implies damnation, certainly; but Luther's expressions and argument intimate that damnation is brought and incurred by doing these deeds without the Spirit; whereas, in fact, that damnation had already been incurred before the law came; and it was only *continued* and *manifested* by it, instead of being removed.

^{xxxvii} Luther does not see quite the whole of this great text, though he sees much of it. To understand it, we must connect what has gone before with it; beginning with verse 12. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: even so death passed upon all men through him in whom all sinned. For until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law." Man — the whole race — sinned *in* and *with* the first man; each individual, distinctly and personally, having been created with, and being inseparable from him, when he personally committed the one transgression. Though sins were committed afterwards by the several individuals of the race, as brought out, one after another, into manifest existence, these were not imputed, but they were dealt with on the ground of the first transgression, in which they were distinctly, individually, and personally, parties by means of their union and unity with Adam. The law afterwards "stole in," that *the offence might be multiplied*; or as in Galatians, *because of offences*;* that is, that there might be more than one offence; that many offences might be added to the first.

With whatever little variety this text maybe read and understood — whether *added because of*, or *put into the hand of a Mediator* because of — it must imply, if it does not express, the same broad truth that the law had no other effect and design than to multiply transgressions. Again, the application of Rom. 7.7 is equally just when that text is understood in its fulness — the provocation which the law gives to sin — as in its inferior and more common interpretation, of mere teaching.

It is not, therefore, merely the communication of the knowledge of sin, that was sought and conveyed by that institution, but multiplication of transgression; that, with regard to the Lord's people, who are the displayers of God, specially as that God which is love — love to the uttermost — love in the way of grace and mercy — the God of all grace might be shown as what He is, in the much more abounding of grace, where sin has abounded. Sin has never been imputed by God to man, any more than by man to himself, without express and absolute enactment. The command, or prohibition, in the garden was of this sort; and there has been none given since, save the law which was confined to one family, the seed of Abraham, for a while the visible church — and a second, declaredly a universal one, "Repent and believe the Gospel." On the former of these universal commands, death was suspended; on the latter, life was suspended. He that believes (which implies repentance) shall be saved; he that does not believe — which implies impenitence — shall perish.

^{xxxviii} Luther's bolts are five; 1. The righteousness of God is here declared to be perfectly distinct from the righteousness of the law. 2. Whatever is not of faith is sin. 3. All have sinned. 4. All have come short of the glory of God. 5. The justified are all justified freely. — I would rather consider this magnificent and comprehensive passage as one vast bolt; the very emission of which lays Freewill prostrate, because it declares what her state was, to give occasion to such an emission. This vast bolt, however, may be considered as expanding itself into several smaller bolts, each of which contuses Freewill.

Luther breaks the shock of this bolt, in some measure, by not exactly discerning the order of the Apostle's argument. He considers Paul as speaking of the preached Gospel in its reception and effects, from Rom 1.16; whereas from 1.18 to 3.20 he is setting out the condemnation of all men, first of the Greek, and secondly of the Jew, as being without the Gospel. And then, having previously shown that there is nothing but condemnation without it, both without and with the law, he proceeds to open the Gospel as the revelation of the counsel and performances of God's free favour, with which Freewill neither has, nor can have, any thing to do, and which her necessities have rendered necessary, if every individual of mankind — already shown to be in a damned state — were not to be continued in that damned state forever and ever. — I also consider Luther as interpreting some of his bolts erroneously; while each, *truly* interpreted, is a bolt indeed!

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the Prophets." The righteousness of God is that righteousness which God freely bestows — which, on many accounts, might specially be called His; but which is specially so-called in opposition to man's own righteousness — a law righteousness — the result of a man's own personal obedience. "Not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Phi 3.9) Luther speaks much of distinctness and opposition, but he did not discern the extent of this, and he was for bringing the law in again, after having cast it out.

But the words *χωρίς νομῆ* banish all connection with the law forever; just as *χωρίς χρίστε* (Eph 2.12) and *χωρίς ἡμῆ* (Joh 15.5) declare entire severance from Christ. Indeed, what is severance, unless it is perfect? — "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all those who believe."

I say, by *the* faith of Jesus Christ, meaning the Gospel, as strictly opposed to the Law, and so preserving a distinctness from that which follows, "those who believe" — the distinguishing character of those to whom the Gospel is made the power of God unto salvation. It is *unto* these — preached especially for their benefit — they are, as it were, its point of rest; and *upon* these — they are efficaciously, consciously, and manifestatively invested with it, even as they have possessed it from all eternity, covenantally, secretly, and to the eye of God and his Christ. "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" "According to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (Mat 25.34; 2Tim 1.9) "For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." The Jew and the Greek are invested with this righteousness alike, through the instrumentality of this preached Gospel. He is hereby shown and declared to be the God of the Gentile as well as of the Jew, and to be no respecter of persons; even as all — that is, both Jew and Gentile alike — have manifested themselves to be sinners, and nothing but sinners (for those who had the law, transgressed it, as well as those who did not have it), so proving that there was no possibility of acceptance with God — that is, of being made righteous in any other way.

I consider the sin spoken of here, to be the sin committed by every individual man while living and acting in this world, which rendered it impossible for him to obtain the glory of God on a law ground, even if his original sin and guilt were remitted. It was the special design of the law covenant and dispensation to make this manifest. The word *hmarton* denotes a time prior to this manifestation of God's righteousness: it is not *are sinning*, or *have sinned*, but *have in time past been sinning* — as the Apostle has shown distinctly of both these parties, which together constitute the whole human race — and are now, therefore, "left behind in the race" by the glory of God. This is the proper import of the word *usterantai*, which applies specially to the Jews who had the covenant of eternal life — that is, "of the glory of God" — proposed to them on the ground of their own personal obedience. This could not be so properly said of the Gentiles, while their conduct had been such as to make it manifest that they could have no claim under such a covenant, if they had been allowed to be candidates and competitors for its prize.

I do not accord with Luther in his idea of this glory. It is the same thing which is spoken of in Rom 5.2 ("rejoice in hope of the glory of God"), and in 1Pet 5.1 ("a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed.") It is that manifested excellency which God has provided for his people; and which is with the greatest fitness called His glory — the glory of God — because the state into which He will in due time introduce his human people will be one of His most glorious manifesters. They will in their measure, both individually and collectively, when thus brought into and displayed in the completeness of their union with the Image of the Invisible One, show Him forth *as He is*. By this glory — which, if it is to be received upon a law ground, requires spotless perfection in him who wins it — they had all been outstripped and overcome, so as to have no part in it. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." These words open the nature of God's righteousness, as well as the origin and ground of its bestowal.

Justified is from the same root as *righteousness*, and it expresses properly making the unjust, just. It is God's method of absolving a sinner from his offences by taking them clean away. The origin of this removal is free favour, and the way of it is Christ's blood-shedding. It is a cleansing which we receive without money and without price, *from*, and *unto* the display of, that portion of God which we distinguish by the name of grace. But it is a cleansing which he has rendered himself just, in freely bestowing — that is, which he freely bestows in perfect consistency with his justice — through the price which Christ paid, by joining himself to them in their damned state, living with them as The Righteous One *in* and *under* their curse, and at length dying *with* them, and *for* them, a death of shame, agony, and complicated torments. The expression is peculiar, "The redemption which is in Christ Jesus," marking the peculiar and elect objects of this redemption. It is a deliverance through the payment of a valuable consideration, had and received by means of union with Christ Jesus — sought and obtained therefore, for those only, to whom the Father (as both Covenant and Scripture speak) has granted this most precious of all gifts. This implies and conveys all the rest — union *with*, being *in*, Christ. "According as he has chosen us *in Him*" — that is, to be in Him; that we should be in Him — "before the foundation of the world."

Hereby, as it is afterwards declared, God is shown to be righteous, though the justifier of sinners; who are manifested to have had this covenant union, of His free gift, from everlasting, and therefore to have been of the number of those, for the sake of whom He did so come, live, and die — by having faith given to them in due season, through the regeneration and within agency of the Holy Ghost, and so differencing themselves from others to whom, according to the will of God, the free grace proclamation is made, and the second *universal* commandment (which the more private and peculiar one of the law, had established to be the only practicable method of salvation and glory) — Repent and believe the Gospel — has been delivered in common with them, while it is exclusively obeyed by them.

Thus this ordinance text of Luther's, fires a sort of volley against Freewill, of which every shot is death. 'Righteousness of God' — 'without the law' — 'the faith of Jesus Christ' — 'all those who believe' — 'no difference' — 'all have sinned' — 'all come short of glory' — 'justified freely' — 'by His grace' — 'through the redemption' — 'a propitiation by blood' — 'that the might be just' — 'the justifier of him that believes.' Here are no less than thirteen bolts, thirteen death-blows for Freewill, while the very existence of the Gospel declares the Freewill state of those to whom it is sent.

xxxix *Legi impossibile*. Luther does not explain, as we might have wished him to do, this most difficult text: but the considerations which we have already entertained respecting the flesh and the Spirit will assist us to unravel it. In the

preceding chapter, Paul had been describing a very remarkable temptation, with which, for his own good and that of the church, he had been visited since his conversion. He had been tempted to think that he must still obey the law; and having been put upon trying to do this, had acquired a deep knowledge of his own state: which is also that of every called child of God. He discovered that he had a law in his members (his body) which warred against the law of his mind, and brought him into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members. He sighed for deliverance from that body — fitly called a *dead* body — whose law made him so wretched. He was assured that he would one day possess it through the gift of God in Christ Jesus. At present, however, his state was that of a person serving two laws, in the two distinct parts of his frame. But still, even now, he was not condemned. Why? because he was a man in Christ. (I perfectly approve Griesbach's improved reading, which puts "Who do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit," as read in Rom 8.1, into the interior margin. It breaks the connection of the argument; and it may very naturally be supposed to have been interpolated from Rom 8.4. [Johann Griesbach (1745-1812) was a famed biblical interpreter])

Why, as a man in Christ, did he have no condemnation? Because the Holy Ghost, *had* by him in Christ, had delivered him from the thralldom and bondage of that law which still reigned in his members. Why did he have the Holy Ghost in Christ Jesus? Because God, by sending his own Son in flesh of sin, had condemned sin in the flesh — that is, Christ had executed the sentence of death upon this sinful flesh, and could now, in consideration of that sentence so borne, raise up both Himself and that people *for* whom and *with* whom he had borne that sentence, into a new state of being, in which they would be the subjects of spiritual influences in *both* parts of their frame; in whom, even here, while tabernacling in their flesh of sin, the foretaste and firstfruits of this grace is shown in their being renewed, and dwelt in, by the Holy Ghost.

Here I have stated the *reality*, which is more commonly set forth by the Holy Ghost in *figure* — the dying, quickening, rising, and now sitting of the Lord's elect *in* and *with* Him. (See Rom 6; Eph 1 and 2; Col 2 and 3.) God's eternal, covenanted design of raising them up, *in Christ*, from that death into which they were contemplated as having brought themselves by their fall *in* and *with* Adam, is the basis and element of this reality.

Thus, they have that done for them, which the law could not do, because it was weak through our flesh's being what it is. They are enabled to fulfil the righteousness of the law — or rather to yield to God a service which is far more righteous, because it is more adapted to that full manifestation which He has now made of himself, than law obedience would or could be. — Hereafter, he proceeds to show most triumphantly in the progress of this chapter, that the other part of their frame will also have its triumph: the body which has death in it, and has yet assuredly to die, shall be quickened by the same Spirit which has already quickened and dwelt in their souls, and shall live.

This, which had been glanced at in Rom 8.25, and is so distinctly affirmed in verses 11, 21, and 23 of this chapter, receives its seal and crown in 1Cor 15, where the paean [a formal expression of praise] is sung, and the victory ascribed to its giver and communicator. "But thanks be to God who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." — I have found it impossible to render a consistent account of these two chapters (to which the precedent sixth may be added), verse by verse, and clause by clause, on any other principle than this, which makes 'flesh' the substance of the body, and 'spirit' the renewed mind. (See Part iv. Sect. 37. 41. 42. and much that has elsewhere gone before.) There is much emphasis in verse 1. *Therefore* (that is, although with the flesh, they serve the law of sin) *there is now* (as opposed to 'I thank God,' Rom 7.25, for what shall be) *no condemnation* (all these out-breakings and manifestations of evil are forgiven, and not allowed to abidingly mar the peace of their souls — for "Who shall lay anything," etc. Rom 8.33-39.) *to those who are in Christ Jesus*, Rom 8.1.

The people of God are said to be in Christ Jesus, with reference to two distinct states: *in Him* by covenant and predestinative union from before the worlds ("According as he has chosen us in Him," etc., Eph 1.4; "Grace which was given to us in Him," etc., Rom 12.6); *in Him* by realized, conscious, and efficacious union, through the calling of the Holy Ghost. ("Andronicus and Junia...who also were in Christ before me," Rom 16.7; "I knew a man in Christ," 2Cor 12.2.)

A third state may be distinguished as that of sacramental union (see Part iv. Sect. 45. note ¹), which is distinct and separable from the other two: bring an analogy to that entrance which the Lord had into his kingdom, by baptism. — The blessedness here described belongs to his called, but it is the ordained, earned, and waiting portion of all his elect; who, as they are one by one brought by the Holy Ghost into the knowledge of this grace, toward themselves as those who have virtually died *in* and *with* Christ, and who therefore are dead, and have their life hid with Christ in God. Hence they live and walk after that part of their frame which *lives* — into which it has already been introduced — and not according to that which is virtually *dead*.

It is of the Lord's *called* that he here bears this testimony, as it appears from the context. It is a testimony which, in the Lord's time, is realized for all his elect, and for the same reason — God has condemned their sin which is in their flesh — "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died." Rom 8.34. *He has made me free* (Rom 8.2): a *habitual* deliverance is not incompatible with an occasional *ravished* subjection — such as he described in chap. 7. *The law of sin and death* is clearly the law of evil, which is in the members, or flesh, or body. *The impossibility of the law* — the law gave no power, and therefore it could not possibly get itself to be obeyed by a creature whose substance is such as fallen man's. *Likeness of flesh of sin* does not deny reality any more than in Phi 2.7. *Condemned*, etc. not only passed the sentence but inflicted the judgment.

Compare 1Pet 4.1-6, also 3.18-22. 'Christ's *flesh* condemned and made to suffer or die,' is not only the burden of Scripture, but *the essence of the reality of the foundation of God's new creation-transactions in Him*: even as the

knowledge of this body of ours — what it was in its formation; what it was *in* and became *by* the Fall; what it is to the unregenerate; and especially what it is to the regenerated sons and daughters of Adam — is one of the great keys to the mystery of man, and to Christian experience.

Righteousness of the law is not what is commonly meant by it: 'the act, or ground, of justification;' but 'the enactment' — 'the matter of the statute' — δικαίωμα, *dikaiooma*, not δικαιοσύνη, *dikaiosune*. *Who walk* — denoting habitual conduct, aim, and principle. Their conformity with the law is circuitous, not direct; incidental, not deliberate and designed. They 'walk in the Spirit' (Gal 5.16); that is, 'in or after their renewed mind,' just as it is said here, *Who do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit*. I cannot forbear remarking what a close parallel that whole chapter (Gal 5) is to the seventh and eighth chapters of Romans, and how truly the whole rule or law of the Lord's called ones ("you have been called to liberty") is set out in the four words which I recited above. For what is not only the whole law, but even the whole volume of Scripture to us (to the extent it is apprehended and received by our renewed mind), through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost?

^{xl} I cannot agree with Luther here. Origen is more nearly right than he, if by *soul* may be imderstood 'the *will* with its affections;' and the distinction is surely recognised in Scripture, when Paul prays for the Thessalonians "that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1Th 5.23) According to Luther, 'those who are after the flesh,' and 'the flesh,' are the same substance; whereas, in truth, the distinction of character is made by these constituent parts of their frame according to which they walk (that is, habitually *act*) severally. The natural man Ψυχικός, *psuchikos*) lives after his flesh, and is carnal. The spiritual man (πνευματικός, *pneumatikos*) — he who has a πνεῦμα, *pneuma* — that is, a Holy-Ghost-renewed spirit, lives after his renewed spirit, and is spiritual. Thus the spirit and the man, and the flesh and the man, are distinct substances severally; though the one includes the other. — Still, Luther's conclusion is not affected. He who does not live after the spirit, but after the flesh, does only evil; because that flesh, after which he lives, is only evil; 'defecated' evil: and *unless* and *until* a man is renewed in the spirit of his mind, and thus is made spiritual, he neither does, nor *can do* anything good. Indeed, further, if he is thus renewed, and *when* he has been thus renewed, it is only so far as his renewed spirit is impelled and sustained by the Holy Ghost, that he either resists evil, or works good. There are seasons when, for the fuller manifestation of God to his *real* good, the Holy Ghost, who never *leaves* his temple, but is like the friend who sits by, neither speaking, nor putting out a finger to help. So far as he is left to the endeavour and power of Freewill, therefore, all that is said here by Paul, about not pleasing God, etc. belongs to him.

^{xli} Luther adduces these expressions in Romans 8 as the crown of Paul's testimony against Freewill. The flesh — meaning, as I maintain, the natural, unrenewed substance of man, with all that is in it (and the unrenewed man has nothing else) — is enmity against God. He confirms *this* saying, by two of Christ's, which say that we can do nothing else; not merely that we do evil, but that we *can do* nothing else, from our very composition; being like corrupt trees; "being evil." And in another place: you "being evil," do evil, even while you are giving good gifts (Luk 11.13). Then, by insinuation and implication, Luther proves the same from Paul's twin sayings. If the just man lives by faith, he that does not have faith is not just; and, if he is not just, then he is a sinner. — If whatever is not of faith is *sin*, then whatever is done by mere Freewill is sin, because Freewill has nothing to do with faith, but is by the supposition perfectly distinct from it. Neither does faith have anything to do with Freewill, but it has another origin. Whatever it does, therefore, not being of faith, is sin. So that Freewill is only sin.

I object to the application of these two texts in this connection. It is the eternal state of the already justified person, which is proclaimed by "shall live." (See Hab 2.4; Gal 3.11; Heb 10.38.) Faith, then, is the acceptable principle, without which (it is implied) there will be no acceptance for any man. Freewill has no faith; therefore it does nothing acceptable. — But still, the fair application is, *shall not live*; not *does only sin*. "Whatever is not of faith," etc., if Luther interprets it rightly, proves his point; because Freewill, not acting *in* and *by* faith, can do nothing, therefore, except what is sin. But that text means 'if a man is not satisfied as to the rectitude of his own act, but doubts it,' it is sin. This text, therefore, does not fairly apply because Freewill may have no doubts, and yet still be damned, whether she doubts or not. On the other hand, a person may sin in some particular act, by acting without faith, and yet not be a condemned person: it is of such that Paul speaks. Thus, although the principles which Luther would establish from these two texts are true, these texts, rightly understood, do not prove them.

^{xlii} *Illuminationem Spiritus*. Not 'the enlightening of the man's own soul,' but 'the throwing of light upon Christ.' The blessed Spirit casts his bright beams upon the face, or person, of the Lord Jesus Christ and so wins to him. — This is a most beautiful and accurate description of that Holy Ghost violence with which the soul is converted. One can hardly help saying to Luther, *O si sic omnia!* A single testimony, like this broad and irresistible one, opened as he opens it, is worth a hundred abstruse and obscure ones. It is a question in the first place, of whether they bear *at all* upon the subject — secondly, *how* they exactly bear upon it — and thirdly, with what degree of *effect*. I do not mean to disparage Luther's testimonies which, with a few exceptions, are clear, and strong to the point. But I think the question might be safely rested upon this single text — *considered in its connection* — and that, on such a subject, to bring those which would allow for a doubt, or a possible misconception — in short, to use any other implement than a sledge-hammer is unwise. Even Luther might have made his proofs clearer and stronger; and they would have lost nothing by being fewer. The impression is weakened by being extended; and many small blows, of which one or two beat the air, render the victory doubtful in the sight of the by-standers. (See above, Part iv. Sect. 42. note ⁱ.) But what do we have here? It is not only that the words are so express that it is impossible to evade them, and that to cite them is even more impressive

than to enlarge upon them; but they *must* mean what they say — 'There is no power whatsoever in the natural man to come to Christ' — because otherwise, they have no meaning at all in this context. — The Lord is accounting for their murmurs, in which they muttered a rejection of him. 'You reject me! What wonder? It cannot be otherwise, seeing that you are not drawn to me by God.' — And when he repeats the same sentiment at the 65th verse, it is to account for the same fact, and it is followed by a consequence which would naturally result from such a declaration, and which no other sentiment would account for. "From that time many of his disciples turned back and walked with him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Will you also go away?" The testimony, therefore, is so unequivocal, as well as so decisive, that Freewill does not even have a heel to lift up against it.

^{xliii} Luther feels a difficulty in reconciling the condemnation of the reprobate with God's justice. In fact, he acknowledges that he cannot; begs off, and then makes unwarrantable concessions. This difficulty arises from his imperfect conception of the creation and fall of man. If every individual of the human race had a distinct personal subsistence given to him in the creation of Adam; and consequently, had a distinct personal subsistence in him when he broke his commandment; and as this distinct substance was one with him who by his sole personal agency broke that commandment (the union of these many distinct substances *in* and *with* his one substance in now way contradicting the sole and distinct agency of the one first man, Adam) — then where is the injustice of God's bringing out each of these distinct individuals, one after another, into manifest existence and distinct personal agency, and — having given to them individually, for the most part, the opportunity of showing what they are, according to their own making of themselves, *not* according to his making of them — inflicting upon them the judgment which he had distinctly fore-announced, which by their disobedience as one with Adam they had wilfully incurred, and which for the most part they have by their own subsequent actings in this world, proved to be their due, suitable, and self-made portion? God has been pleased to make provision for the mitigation, removal, and reversal of this sentence, in some of those who have justly incurred it, clearly, those who suffer have justly incurred it; and therefore, God is only just in inflicting it.

Through not discerning the mystery of the creation, Luther accounted God the creator of these wicked ones, as we have several times seen; and in consequence, through not discerning their participation in the fall, he accounted God their debtor, to give them an equivalent for that Freewill, or rather that knowledge of only good, which Adam had possessed, and which Luther did not see how they had forfeited. I say knowledge of only good, because Adam had no more of Freewill, properly so-called, than we have, as has been shown. With respect to the justice of God in this transaction, then, there can be no question — though Luther makes one. Justice is the fulfilment of relations; God had fulfilled all His when man incurred his fore-announced curse.

What does justice then require, but that it be exacted? Again, with respect to God's right of instituting such relations as He did between himself and the human race in Adam, there can be no question. God has a *right* to form any creature that he is pleased and has power to form. To be consistent with himself, he will give them due relations, and will fulfil his own part in those relations. Now, what was lacking in the relations that he gave to Adam? Did He not give him reason and knowledge, by which he ought to have resisted the temptation? And if Adam had enough, what could the distinct substances which were in him complain, if God put their safety upon the issue of his obedience? What difference would there have been, or could they pretend there would have been, in the result, if each of them distinctly and personally had undergone the same trial?

But I do not deem this consideration at all necessary: it is the union and unity of each individual of the human race with Adam, while still retaining his individuality, which constitutes his original *sin* and his original *guilt*, and from which the loss of his creation state and of his creation character was derived. The only question that can be asked in all this mystery, respects the goodness — that is, the lovingkindness of God. It is here that Paul puts the difficulty; it is here that he calls for submission; and it is here that he assigns the principle of the procedure. "Is there not unrighteousness?" For it will come to this: no man has done otherwise than God designed. The answer is, God has exercised his right of the potter, and has exercised it for a great and wise reason. "What if," etc. The man whose eyes the Lord has opened will see and search into these things, and will justify God at his heart. Nor will Paul, with his Isaiah, condemn him. He is using what God has done and has revealed, to the very end for which He has done and revealed it. See Part iii. Sect. 38. note . Part iv. Sect. 10. note ^z, Sect. 11. note ^h, and Sect. 34. note ^d.