

Mountain of Brass:

OR,
A Discourse upon the
DECREES
OF
GOD.

From *Ephes.* 1. 11.

Begun at a Lecture in Devon-Shire-Square,¹ Oct. 29. 1689. And finsh'd in a Congregation at Wapping,² Nov. 5. following.

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¹ The Devonshire-square Church was pastored by William Kiffin who wrote the *Epistle Recommendatory* [Ed.].

² Hercules Collins was Pastor at Wapping.

AN EPISTLE
RECOMMENDATORY.

CHRISTIAN READER,

ALtho God hath been pleased to give unto poor sinful Man, many rich and unspeakable Mercies, which to those who have an Interest in Christ, will for ever be admired; yet hath he reserved to Himself his own Glory, which he will not give to any other, the great End of God in all his Works, being for the Declaration of the same; and his special Grace in Jesus Christ, to such as are made Partakers of it, is, That they may for ever Exalt and Glorifie his Name: For of him, and through him, and to him are all things. That great Truth, which is asserted in the ensuing Subject, doth plainly discover the Fountain from whence all our Mercies flow; namely, The Will Of God. Thou hast Created all things, and for thy pleasure, saith the Apostle, they are and were Created, Rev. 4. 11. And all things relating to the Conversion and Glorification of a Sinner, are but the Effects of his own Eternal Will; He will have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy: And therefore the Foundation and Topstone of all that pardoning Grace and Mercy in Jesus Christ, which poor Sinners are made Partakers of, is laid in his own free Grace; which will greatly appear in this Brief Discourse, which was only at first intended for the Edification of the Hearers where it was Preached; but hoping it may be of more General Benefit, is made Publique. There is no doubt, but the Subject treated of, hath More largely been insisted on by many Learned and Worthy Men; but being Printed with other Subjects, or else so amply handled, that many fearing God, have neither Money to purchase them, nor time to read them; I judge this small Piece may not be Unacceptable, nor without its Use; forasmuch as it comprehends those large Treatises with great clearness, proving from the Scriptures of Truth, That all we have and hope for, is the Fruit of the Counsel of God's own Will, our Calling being a Fruit of Election; and where he effectually calls, doth endow the Soul with all saving Grace, which can never die. I shall not enlarge, but commend the perusal thereof to thy serious consideration, and to the Blessing of God, Thine in the

Service of Christ,

WILLIAM KIFFIN.³

³ Kiffin was Pastor of the Devonshire-square Baptist Church where this work was first presented as a lecture [Ed.].

MOUNTAINS
OF
BRASS:
OR,
A Discourse upon the Decrees
of GOD, &c

Ephes. 1. 11

Who worketh all things after the Counsel of his own Will.

EPHESUS was a great and rich City, but given much to Idolatry: Saint *Paul*, *Apollos* and *Aquila*, Preaching the Gospel among them, many were brought off from their Idolatrous Temples and Worship, for the Word of God grew mightily, and many believed and were Baptized. The Idol-worshippers seeing their Idolatry like to fall before the Gospel, as *Dagon* before the Ark, and their Craft in danger, the great Goddess *Diana* despised, and her Magnificence destroyed, whom all *Asia* and the *V*World worshipped; a great uproar was among them:⁴ which when ceased, *Paul* called the Disciples together, embraced them, so went to *Macedonia*; but left *Timothy* there, to charge some they Preach no other Doctrine then Christ crucified, and not to give heed to Fables and endless Genealogies, which minister Questions rather than Godly-edifying, 1 *Tim.* 1. 3, 4.

The Apostle in the Context treating of Election, Predestination, Redemption, Justification, Adoption, Sanctification, and an eternal Inheritance; he comes in our Text to resolve whence all flowed, which is from no other Fountain, then the Counsel of Gods own *V*Vill: that those who were by Nature Children of *V*Vrath, walked according to the course of this *V*World, and dictates of the Prince of the Power of the Air, fulfilling the delights of the Flesh and of the Mind, were without hope, and God, in the *V*World, as to any saving knowledge of him; that those that were afar off, are made nigh; of Strangers, fellow City-zens with the Saints, and of the Houshold of Faith; that those who were once Idol-worshippers, are now Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, are gracious works in Time flowing from his purposes in Eternity, as the Apostle in our Text affirms.

In the words we consider these parts: First, The Agent, who? God the Father, *verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath chosen us in him.* That is, as he is the Head, and the Church the Body; as he the King, the Church the Kingdom; for Christ, as Man, is Gods Elect;⁵ yea the Head of Election and Predestination: He was fore-appointed to be the Head of a Holy Glorious Mystical Body, the King of a Glorious Kingdom, Captain of a Glorious Company, the Bridegroom of a Glorious Bride; yet if he will have this honour, he must purchase it; if he will make his Soul an Offering for Sin, he shall see his Seed;⁶ he shall be Head of this Body, King of this Kingdom, Captain of this Company, Bridegroom of this Bride. Is it likely that this purchase can be capable of losing? Then he may be a King without a Kingdom, a Bridegroom without a Bride, a Head without a Body: But how is this possible? If he be a Head, he must have a Body; if a King, he must have a Kingdom; if a Captain, he must have a Company; if a Bridegroom, he must have a Bride, because Relatives; he that is a Father, must have a Child; he who is a Husband, must have a *V*Wife; or if Christ be a Bride-groom, he must have a Bride: if so, where is any room for a total and

4 Read 18 19, 20. Chapter 9 [of Acts, *Ed.*]

5 Isa. 40. 1. [This should be Isa. 42:1, *Ed.*]

6 Isa. 43. 10. [This should be Isa. 53:10, *Ed.*]

final fall from true Grace? A Child cannot cease to be a Child, and if once Children, then Heirs;⁷ no fear then of losing the Inheritance.

Mark, when its said, *We are chosen in Christ*, we are not to understand, as if the Death and Merits of Christ were the foundation of Election: no, that's from the Grace and Love of the Father, this is the Fountain from whence Election flows; hence the Elect are called the Fathers,⁸ *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me*. Yet the Death of Christ is the foundation of all Grace in the Church Militant, and Glory in the Church Triumphant.⁹ The Father from free Sovereign Grace chooses a number out of the World in their fallen state when in misery, and makes them Vessels of mercy:¹⁰ but if Christ will have the honour to be their Lord, he must pay a certain sum for them, no less then his Blood; because Justice had said, the Man (if he transgress'd) should dye, either in his Person or in a Surety. So here is *Mercy and Truth met together, Righteousness and Peace kiss each other*;¹¹ here is the Mercy of the Father meets the Righteousness of the Son, the Mercy of the Father, in providing a Surety to pay and satisfy himself; the Justice of Christ, in laying down his life. These sweetly agree in order to the everlasting Peace of a lost Sinner; so that when it's said, *We are chosen in Christ*, it intends as he was to be the Head, and the Church the Body; as he the King, the Church the Kingdom: but not chosen in Christ, as if his Death were to merit our Election; that was from the Fathers Love: Yet his Death is the Fountain of all Grace in Time, and all Glory in Eternity.

Secondly, The Act, *Worketh*; its not said, he *hath wrought*, or *will*, but *Worketh*; signifying, that all the Acts of Divine Providence, past, present and to come, are nothing but the Execution of his Eternal Counsel, Purpose and Will.

Thirdly, The Universality of it, *all Things*; this Word *all Things*, is not limited to the Context; but as if the Apostle should say, All that I have spoken of before concerning Redemption, Justification, Salvation, and all other Acts of Divine Providence, which I have not mentioned, are all according to his Eternal Purpose and Counsel of his own Will.

Fourthly, The manner of the Agents Acts, is *according to the Counsel of his own Will*; not work according to the Counsel of *another's* will, but his own. As God took no Counsel of Mans will in the work of Creation,¹² neither doth he in the work of Salvation; as wrought according to his own Will, and not Mans, in the first Creation; so he works according to his own Will and Counsel, and not Mans, in the new Creation;¹³ of his own Will the Child of Grace is begotten, and the Seed of Grace sown, as the Apostle *James* asserts;¹⁴ if then it be of his own Will, 'tis not of Man's.

Observation.

All the Acts of Divine Providence in Time, whether in the Church or the World, are all the Effects, Products, and Executions of Gods Eternal Pleasure, Purpose, Counsel and Will.

I shall speak to three General Heads. First, The Demonstration. Secondly, Speak to some properties of the Divine Will. Thirdly, Draw some natural Inferences from the Doctrine; with some other Uses in the close.

7 Rom. 8. 17.

8 John 17. 6.

9 1 Thess. 5. 9.

10 Rom. 9. 23.

11 Psal. 85. 10.

12 Isa. 40. 13, 14.

13 Rom. 11. 34.

14 James 1. 18.

I. That this Doctrine is true, appears from the Creation; if God had not first Will'd and Decreed it, it had not been. *Davids Members* were written in the Book of Gods Decrees,¹⁵ when there was none of them in being, but in time had a being by vertue of their being there written. Yea our very Habitations where we dwell, were before time determined and appointed; which Doctrine *Paul* Preached to the *Athenians* ,¹⁶ to bring them off from their Idolatry, to worship the true God who made Heaven and Earth, and all things therein, and made all Nations of one Blood, to dwell upon the face of the Earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their Habitations, that they might seek the Lord; so that the time of our being, and the place of our being, is according to Gods determination aforetime. Moreover *Pontius Pilate* , the Jews and Gentiles Act of Crucifying Christ, was the fulfilling of Gods Counsel, which he determined before to be done.¹⁷ God may be said to be the cause of an Action, when no cause of the Sin of that Action; that ariseth out of the Heart, saith our Lord, *Evil thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, &c.* ¹⁸ Every one will grant, no Man can do any sinful Act, as Swear and Lye with the Tongue, Steal and Murder with the Hand, without the power of God concur to uphold and strengthen those Organs and Members, *For in him we live and move* ;¹⁹ yet they are not upheld and strengthened for that end, but his glory: but Man abuseth his Physical and Natural Strength.

Gods Determination that Christ should die to save Man, laid none under a necessity of sinning; but God foreknew what the malice of the Devil, Jews and Gentiles would be against this Person to put him to Death; and God did determine not to prevent it, but suffer it, because he knew how to bring glory to himself out of it. It was necessary Christ should suffer, God could not be mistaken in his foreknowledge, or come short of his determinate Decree. But this neither took away the liberty of Christs suffering, neither did it take away the liberty of the Jews, and their voluntariness in putting Christ to Death. Gods Decree, Christ should suffer, did infallibly secure the event; but did not annihilate and destroy the liberty of the Act, neither in Christ as aforesaid, who freely suffered himself, nor the Jews, who as freely and voluntary put him to Death, as if there had been no Decree of God at all about his Death;²⁰ The Gardners foreknowledge that such Seeds and Roots will in the Spring produce such Leaves and Flowers, is no cause of their rife and appearance in Spring; but knowing the vertue of such Roots, so concludes. So Gods foreknowledge what wicked works would proceed from the root of a wicked Heart concerning Christ's Death, is no more cause of those evil Acts, then the Gardner is the cause of the Rise of such Flowers in Spring from such Roots, because he foreknew the nature of them. Gods foreknowledge that *Adam* would fall, put him under no necessity of it, but 'twas done voluntarily and freely; yet God foresaw infallibly he would fall, and God determined not to prevent it, knowing how to glorify himself by it. So Gods foreknowledge of the Jews putting Christ to Death, did not necessitate them to it, but done as freely as if it had not been foreknown, nor any determination of God about it. Thus we have proved those Acts of Divine Providence in Time in the World, are the Product of Gods Eternal Purposes.

Now we come to shew and demonstrate, That all the gracious Acts and Providences in the Church, are the Products and Execution of his Eternal Will. As for the Act of effectual Vocation,²¹ it is not according to our Works,²² but according to his own Purpose and Grace, which he purposed in Christ before the World began;²³ that the Gentiles believed in Christ, was because they were ordained to Eternal Life; that the *Ephesians* were Holy, was because chosen to it, not for it, before the

15 Psal. 139. 16.

16 Acts 18. 26. [This should be Acts 17:26, Ed.]

17 Acts 4. 27, 28.

18 Mat. 15. 19.

19 Acts 17. 28.

20 Mr. Charnock, on the Attributes. [*Several discourses upon the existence and attributes of God By that late eminent minister of Christ, Mr. Stephen Charnocke, B.D. and sometimes Fellow of New-Colledge in Oxon, London, 1682. Ed.*]

21 The action on the part of God (or Christ) of calling persons or mankind to a state of salvation or union with Himself; the fact or condition of being so called. *Oxford English Dictionary Online.*

22 Acts 13. 42.

23 2 Tim. 1 9.

Foundation of the World.²⁴ The reason why a People are drawn in time to God, is because *loved with an everlasting Love*.²⁵ The new Creation and good works found in the *Ephesian Church*,²⁶ was the pure effect of what God had before ordained. The hope of Eternal Life in the Saints, is the product of that promise which was made by God that cannot lye before the World began.²⁷ The Sanctification of the Church at *Thessalonica*, and their belief of the chosen Truth,²⁸ was in order to that Salvation they were chosen and appointed unto from the beginning;²⁹ in a Word, our Calling, Justification, and Glorification, are all the effects of Gods Eternal Purpose. This was the Doctrine St. *Paul* taught the Church of the *Romans*,³⁰ *Ephesians*, *Thessalonians*, *Timothy* and *Titus*, &c. Christ's being manifested in time to the Church, was from his fore-ordination to it, before the Foundation of the World;³¹ his being slain in time Actually, was from the Decree in Eternity, hence called the Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World,³² not so actually, but in Gods Decree.

II. To speak to some of the Properties of the Divine Will.

First. *It's an Eternal Will*, his Will is as Himself and Habitation, Eternal. Gods Will is not suspended unto time, to see the Creatures *will* before he Wills concerning them, as if Mans *will* were to determine his; as if God could not determine his own Will untill he saw Mans. His Counsels are called *Counsels of old*,³³ to signifie the Eternity of them. We poor Creatures *will* in time; but there is no Time with him, all is Eternity with him: His Mercy is said, not only to be everlasting, but *from everlasting*;³⁴ his Love is said to be the same; his Covenant is an *everlasting Covenant*,³⁵ as it hath no end, so no beginning. The Acts of Gods Will is all one with his Will, his Will is all one with his Essence, his Essence is one pure simple Act, God is Love Essentially, Wise Essentially; we may have a being, yet be neither good nor wise; but God can as soon cease to be, as cease to be either. If there be no Divine Will, saith one,* the Glass of the Divine Prescience must be broken; because as God knows all Essences in his own Divine Essence, all Possibles in his own Omnipotency, all Congruities³⁶ and Tendencies³⁷ to his own Glory, in his own unsearchable Wisdom, so he knows all Futures in his own Eternal Will: For all things future were in their own nature but Possibles, and could never become future, but by the Divine Will; this future of the Saints Holiness is from the Divine Will, *before the Foundation of the World*.

Secondly, The second property of the Divine Will is Righteousness, hence his Counsel is called by the Prophet *Isaiah*, *Faithfulness and Truth*,³⁸ called Counsels in respect of the Wisdom of them, old in respect of the Eternity of them, true in respect of the performance of them. Men often will what's unjust, as *Ahab Naboth's Vineyard*, the Jews the Death of Christ, though Innocent; *Pharaoh* and *Haman*, the destruction of the Church; but it is incompatible with the Divine Being, to will any thing unrighteous; as *Elihu* said, *Far be it from the Almighty he should commit wickedness*;³⁹ the Judge of all the Earth will do Right; he who takes no pleasure in wickedness, cannot VWill it. The Sanctification of the *Thessalonians* was the VWill of God, and that they *should abstain from*

24 Eph. 1. 3.

25 Jer. 31. 3.

26 Eph. 2. 10.

27 Tit. 1. 2.

28 2 Thess. 2. 13.

29 1 Thess. 5. 9.

30 Rom 8. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

31 1 Pet. 1. 20.

32 Rev. 13. 8.

33 Isa. 25. 1.

34 Psal. 103. 17.

35 2 Sam. 23. 5.

* Polhill upon the Divine Decrees.

36 The quality of being congruous; agreement or correspondence in character or qualities; conformity, accordance, harmony. Const. with, less usually to. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.

37 The fact or quality of tending to something; a constant disposition to move or act in some direction or toward some point, end, or purpose; leaning, inclination, bias, or bent toward some object, effect, or result. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.

38 Isa 25. 1.

39 Job 34. 10.

*Fornication.*⁴⁰ Things may be better said, to be Just and Righteous because God VVills them, then VVill them because Just and Righteous: For Gods VVill is the Rule of Righteousness, *His Work is perfect: saith Moses, for all his Ways are Judgment: a God of Truth and without Iniquity, Just and Right is He.*⁴¹ VVhen the Viols of Gods VVrath are poured out upon his Implacable Enemies, it's said, *Just and True are thy ways, thou King of Saints.* Though the Foundation of Justification be from the free Grace of God the Father; yet in consideration of Christs paying the Sinners debt, God is said to be, *Just in justifying him which believeth in Jesus.* Gods willing Honour and Eternal Life, to those who by patient continuance in well-doing, and Gods willing the wicked to the day of Evil, are all according to the Holy and Righteous will of his Nature; and when you cannot comprehend some Mysterious Providence, still retain *Jeremiah's* principles, conclude, *God is Righteous.*⁴²

A Third Property of the Divine Will is *Graciousness.* The *Ephesians* being predestinated unto the Adoption of Children, as it was according to the good pleasure of his VVill, so also to the praise of the Glory of his Grace; so our Redemption and Justification is according to the Riches of his Grace.⁴³ That a Saviour is proclaimed by the Angels, in order to Mans Eternal Peace, was from the good VVill of God. VVhat had become of the burning Bush in *Egypt*, had not the good VVill of God dwelt in it? This Name God hath commanded to be Proclaim'd, *The Lord, the Lord God, Gracious, and Merciful, long-suffering, abundant in Goodness and Truth, pardoning Iniquity, Transgression and Sin, shewing Mercy unto Thoufands of them who love him, &c.*⁴⁴ There is a great deal of unmercifulness in Sinners will, as the Devil hath a will to destroy all; but blessed be God, who hath the great Red Dragon in a Chain, his power is not absolute; for though he go up and down seeking Souls destruction; yet it is not whom he *will*, but whom he *may* devour.⁴⁵ Gods VVill is a gracious VVill, when he gives his Church himself in Covenantant, and all his Attributes; his Son and all his Offices, and purchased Blessings; his Spirit and all his saving Operations; whence can this flow but from the Fountain of free Grace? Hence 'tis said, *By Grace we are saved, not of our selves, it is the Gift of God.*⁴⁶

A Fourth Property of the Divine Will is *Immutability;* hence his Decrees are compared to *Mountains of Brass*, which are immoveable,⁴⁷ with him is not the least shadow of turning; it is not compatible with him, whose Name is *Jehovah*, to change; if so, the Church had been destroyed ere now; it's not for want of Sin in *Jacob* they are not destroyed, but because he is *Jehovah*, and changeth not;⁴⁸ neither is it possible he should change, because he perfectly foreknows what ever will come to pass. Indeed Men who have not that power, do often will and purpose this and that, and change their mind after, not foreseeing the cause of the change; which if they had, would not have willed that which they must undo again, because its some dishonour to Men to be changeable, but *God is not a Man, he should repent:*⁴⁹ *For the Gifts and Calling of God are without repentance.*⁵⁰ VVhen the Scripture speaks about Gods repenting he made Man, it is not to be understood properly, as if God were capable of repentance, as Man is;⁵¹ but it is spoken to our Capacity: God is said to repent, when he doth such things as Men do when they repent; when God withheld those Judgments and effects of his Anger he had threatned against *Nineveh*, he is said to repent; so when God lets out his Judgement, the effects of his Anger upon the old VVorld, God is said to repent. According to our Capacity, and Mans Practice, who when he doth repent of a thing, doth shew it by some visible Act.

40 1 Thess 4. 3, 4, 5.

41 Deut. 32. 4.

42 Jer. 32. 1.

43 Eph. 6. 7. [This should be Eph. 1:5-7, Ed.]

44 Exod. 34. 7.

45 1 Pet. 5. 8.

46 Eph. 2. 8.

47 Zach. 6. 1, 2. [Zechariah 6:1-2, Ed.]

48 Mal. 3. 6.

49 Num. 23. 19.

50 Rom. 11. 29.

51 Gen. 6. 6.

Its because Gods compassions fail not, but are ever the same, that the Church is not consumed.⁵² Tho Davids House nor Heart was as it should be; yet this was his comfort, God had made with him an everlasting Covenant.⁵³ God foreknew *Israel* would be a Transgressor from the VVomb;⁵⁴ yet for his Name sake would defer his Anger, and for the praise of his Grace would not cut them off. God foreknew *Peters Sin, Pauls Sin*; yet that hundred them not from being chosen Vessels, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God;⁵⁵ so that whom he once loves, he must love to the end, because there can be nothing hid from him, that might make him change his mind, as it is often with Men. So that we may conclude this with the Apostle, *He who hath begun the good Work, will finish it.*⁵⁶

A Fifth Property of the Divine Will is, that it is a Sovereign and Supream VVill; he hath an absolute freedom of VVill;⁵⁷ if he will work, none can let him: *He doth according to his Will in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth: and who can stay his Hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?*⁵⁸ *Who saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?*⁵⁹ Gods Kingdom ruleth over all.⁶⁰ He hath an absolute Power over Men and Devils, hence he will be gracious to whom he will be gracious, and he will shew *Mercy to whom he will shew Mercy, and whom he Will* (after the abuse of much patience) *he hardeneth.*⁶¹ VVhat reason can be given why Christ must take the Human Nature to save Man, and not the Angelical Nature to save Angels? VVe must answer as Christ in another case, *Even so Father, for so it pleased thee, it was thy Will and Pleasure:* So if God will chuse *Abel*, and pass by *Cain*; chuse *Shem*, and pass by *Ham*; chuse *Isaac*, and pass by *Ishmael*; chuse *David* and *Solomon*, and pass by *Saul*; chuse *Peter* and *Paul*, and pass by *Judas*; That some of the Natural Seed of *Abraham* are Elected, and the rest left in their own blindness and hardness:⁶² what shall we say in this case, but as *Moses* and the Apostle, *He Will be Gracious to whom he Will be Gracious?* If God will convert a Profligate Sinner, as the Thief upon the Cross, and take his Soul into Paradise the same Day, who never gave God a Dayes Service, but a Subject of the Black Prince all his Dayes; I say, if God will give him the same happiness he gives another, who hath Served and Suffered for him forty years, who shall fault God? May he not do with his own Grace and Glory what he VVill? VVhen the Apostle said, *God is no Respector of Persons*, the meaning of that is, God doth not Respect the Person of a Jew, because a Jew, more then a Gentile, a Roman; as *Peter* did suppose, before God shewed him otherwise in a Vision: then he saw *Cornelius*, though a *Roman* or *Italian*, and no Jew; yet believing in Christ, and working Righteousness, was accepted as much as the believing Jew:⁶³ Yet effectual Vocation, and saving Faith, must always be concluded to be, not according to our works, but Gods purpose in Election, as the Apostle asserts in *Rom. 9 11.* whether it be a Jew or Gentile, that is called effectually. Gods Will is a Sovereign Supream Will, yet a Righteous Will; Gods Power is suitable to his Will; many will great things against the Church, as the Devil and his Kingdom, wills the destruction of Christs Kingdom; but their power is not suitable and adequate as Gods is to his Will; if he hath a mind to open and change such a Heart, rescue such a one out of the Devils power, he can do it, he can carry his Will through; Gods Will is a Sovereign and Supream Will, *For there is none above him, that he should give any Account unto any of his Matters,*⁶⁴ as *Elihu* saith unto *Job*, when under some discontent about Divine Providence.

52 Rom. 3. 22. [This should be Lam. 3:22, Ed.]

53 2 Sam. 23. 5.

54 Isa. 48. 9. [This should be Isa 48:8, Ed.]

55 1 Pet. 1. 1, 2.

56 Phil. 1. 6.

57 Isa. 41. 13.

58 Dan. 4. 35.

59 Lam. 3. 37.

60 Psal. 103. 19.

61 Rom. 9. 18.

62 Rom. 11. 7, 8.

63 Acts 10.

64 Job 33. 13.

A Sixth *Property of the Divine Will*. It's a Will of perfect VWisdom, hence *Counsel* is joyned with it in the Text; it's not a meer VWill, but a Will with depth of Wisdom. He doth every thing, which may render any wise; if it be wisdom to Act to a right end, so doth God Act all for Himself and his own Glory; *as he made, so he ordered all things for himself*;⁶⁵ moreover he knows and observes all circumstances of Actions, all second causes are before God, how they will Act, and when, and carries all on in an exact Harmony with his Divine Will and Pleasure; this Will is not meer Will, but a Will guided by the reason and Counsel of his own infinite Understanding; we never count a willfull Man a wise Man, but all Gods Acts, are said to be in Judgment and working, all things according to Counsel. The wisest of Men, often miscarry in their Ideas and contrivances, but God never did miscarry for want of Wisdom in any thing, all the wisdom of Men and Angels is from him; the Prophet *Isaiah* speaking of Mans wisdom, in Plowing, Sowing, Treshing; *This Wisdom cometh from the Lord of Hosts, saith the Prophet, who is wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in Working*.⁶⁶ As he made the World in Wisdom, so he governs it, for *he works all after the Counsel of his own Will*.

USE. By way of Information. Doth God work *all things after the Counsel of his own Will*? Then we infer this Agent is an Independant Being and Worker; if he works *all after the Counsel of his own Will*, then he doth not depend upon the will of another; Regeneration is not according to the will of Man, but of God;⁶⁷ that is, of Gods free Grace, and Divine Power: for a Child cannot beget its self; he who is dependant upon anothers will, cannot do his own, because depends upon anothers; God depends upon none for Being, Wisdom, Power, Authority to Act any thing, for *he works all after the Counsel of his own Will*. The work of Sanctification, spoken of in the Context, was the Product and Effect of Gods Eternal Counsel and Will, and not the effects of Mans; Gods Will depends not upon the Creatures will: For when he speaks of a new Heart, he doth not say, If the Creature will be willing he shall have it; but he speaks like a Monarch, *I WILL take away the Heart of Stone, I will give a Heart of Flesh; I will put my Spirit within them: and will cause them to walk in my Statutes*.⁶⁸ I wait not the Creatures motion till he be willing, but I will make him willing, in my working all things after the Counsel of my own Will. If we consider what regeneration is, it will clearly demonstrate Gods Will doth not depend upon the Creatures will in that work at all, because it is a Divine Seed and Principle of Grace put where there was never any before, so that in Regeneration Man is wholly Passive, and can contribute no more to his being a New Creature, then his being a Creature; where ever it is wrought, it is the pure Product of Gods Eternal Will, and not of the Creatures, *Of his own Will begat he us*;⁶⁹ the Creatures will doth not determine Gods, Gods Will doth not wait the motion of the Creatures will, before he determine about him, *but he works all things* (about the Creature) *according to the Counsel of his own Will*. God works in time according to his own Purposes, and not Mens purposes, in a way of Salvation; *For it is not in him that runneth, nor in him that willeth, but in God that sheweth Mercy*;⁷⁰ its from the Merciful Purpose of God, and not the Creatures will, that any are Vessels of Glory, and that all are not Vessels of Wrath; so then Mans will cannot prevent nor determine Gods, because *he works all things after the Counsel of his own Will*, both the Will and the Deed is wrought in the *Philippians*, according to Gods good pleasure,⁷¹ and not according to Mans good pleasure.

II. If God work all things after the Counsel of his own Will, then we infer he is irresistable in his Will, because he actually worketh what he willeth. In this Sence we say with the Apostle, *Who hath resisted his Will?*⁷² That is, his effective and determinative Will; indeed Gods ordinative revealed

65 Prov. 16. 4.

66 Isa. 28. 24, 29.

67 John 1. 13.

68 Ezek. 36. 26, 27.

69 James 1. 17. [This should be James 1:18, Ed.]

70 Rom. 9. 16.

71 Phil. 2. 13.

72 Rom. 9. 19.

commanding Will may be rejected; so the Pharisees rejected the Counsel of God against themselves, in not being baptized with the Baptism of *John*;⁷³ so the Jews resisted the Spirit in the Doctrine of the Prophets;⁷⁴ so the false Prophets in *Jeremiah*'s time, are said, *not to stand in the Counsel of the Lord*;⁷⁵ so we are to understand the Prophet *Isaiah* to the Church, when he saith, *What could God have done more, which he had not done?*⁷⁶ that is, in respect of his revealed Will and External means, but not in respect of Internal Grace; for all must confess in that respect he could have done more, but in respect of his revealed Will and External means, what could have been done more? *He gave his Law to Jacob, and Statutes to Israel, he hath not done so by any other Nation*;⁷⁷ to them was committed the Oracles of God,⁷⁸ no Nation so great in this respect;⁷⁹ but though the ordinative Will of God may be resisted, yet his Will whereby he hath determined to Effect this or that, cannot: for in this Sence *he is of one mind, and who can turn him?*⁸⁰ This Counsel of the Lord shall stand, *what ever Devices may be in a Mans Heart; this Counsel of God shall stand*,⁸¹ saith the Prophet *Isaiah*, *and he will do all his pleasure*.⁸² We can as soon stop the Ebbing and Flowing of the Water, and the Sun from going his course, as supersede and put a stop to God in his determinative Will; how soon did God change the will of the Thief, when this Will of God came to Act? Though many strong Barrs upon his Heart against God, by nature and action; yet if this be the Counsel of his Will, *He will work and none can let him, for he worketh all things according to the Counsel of his own Will*.

III. If God work all things after the Counsel of his own Will, then we infer he must be an Omnipotent and Almighty Operator and Worker: for he works what he hath a will to do; he willed the Creation of the World, but had he not been Omnipotent, could never have made all things out of nothing, with only, *Let it be so*;⁸³ he must be Omnipotent, because he Wills that which none but an Omnipotent Arm can perform; he willed Christs and the Saints Resurrection, which none but Omnipotency can effect; but God can raise the Dead, though none else can. He willed the working of saving Faith in the Souls of the *Ephesians*, and the knowledge of the Riches of the Glory of the Saints Inheritance; but the Apostle saith, *No less Power can effect it, then that which raised Christ from the Dead*,⁸⁴ which the Apostle sets forth by several gradations; he calls it *Power, great Power, mighty Power, exceeding greatness of his Power, in them who believe according to the working of his mighty Power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the Dead*. And as by a mighty Power, Saints are put into a state of Grace, so kept in that state by the mighty Power of God through Faith unto Salvation. This was the Doctrine and the Experience of the Apostle *Peter*;⁸⁵ he is able to keep you from falling, in respect his of Omnipotency; and willing, in respect of his purpose: *For he worketh all things after the Counsel of his own Will*. It's his Purpose and Will to overthrow *Mystical Babylon*;⁸⁶ but it could not be done, if God were not Omnipotent, and reigned over her. Omnipotency, as 'twas required in the first Creation, so also in the second. Omnipotency brought light into a dark World, and the same brings Divine light into a dark Heart. Can less then Omnipotency raise and quicken a dead Body from the Grave? No less Power is required to quicken one dead in Trespasses and Sins; thus the *Ephesians* were quickened according to the Counsel of his own Will.⁸⁷

73 Luke 7. 30.

74 Acts 7. 45.

75 Jer. 23. 22.

76 Isa. 5.

77 Psal. 147. 19, 20.

78 Rom. 3. 1, 2.

79 Deut. 4. 7.

80 Job 23. 13.

81 Prov. 19. 21.

82 Isa. 46. 10.

83 Gen. 1. 3.

84 Eph. 1. 18, 19, 20.

85 1 Pet. 1. 5.

86 Rev. 20. 6.

87 Eph. 1. 1, 2.

IV. If God work all things after the Counsel of his own VWill: From hence we infer Gods prescience and foreknowledge; if what ever comes to pass, cometh to pass because it is the Counsel of his own VWill, then he must needs foreknow all things: *For, known unto God are all his Works from the beginning of the World.*⁸⁸ If there can be nothing come to pass, but what he hath determined, then he must of necessity foreknow what ever comes to pass. This is an incommunicable property of the Divine Being; when *Jehovah* would debase all false Gods, he interrogates their VVorshippers, If they could declare things to come, as he could? *Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know?*⁸⁹ *And before time, that we may say, He is Righteous?* The true God *declares the end from the beginning,*⁹⁰ therefore he must foreknow what ever comes to pass. And albeit God did not Decree Sin to be in the VWorld, because contrary to his Nature; yet he Decreed to permit it, knowing how to bring glory to himself out of it, else would never have permitted it; now if God foreknow all things, then he cannot be disappointed, in any thing, as Man is, who knoweth not what shall be on the Morrow;⁹¹ hence when the Scripture saith, *God looked for Grapes, and behold Wild Grapes,*⁹² it is not to be understood, as if God were disappointed, as a Man is, *who sometimes looks for one thing, but behold another occurs, which he looked not for, nor foreknew any thing of.* But its written thus, to shew what God might justly expect from that People, considering the means and mercies was bestowed on them; but 'tis not compatible with *Jehovah* to be frustrated in his expectations as Man is, *he declares the end from the beginning;*⁹³ he foreknew infallibly who would be saved, and who would miscarry, before he made Man; notwithstanding all the means afforded, God foresaw many thousands would perish. Yet let none say, If so, *Why did God make Man?* Oh have a care of thy thoughts! *Who art thou that replyest against God? Shall the thing say to him which formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter power over the Clay, of the same Lump to make one Vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God willing to shew his Wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering, the Vessels of Wrath fitted unto destruction? And that he might make known the Riches of his Glory on the Vessels of Mercy, which he had afore prepared unto Glory.* God foreknew the defects of the Elect, who are, saith St. Peter, *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God;*⁹⁴ yet that did not hinder them from being Vessel prepared afore to Glory.⁹⁵ If all things in time come to pass according to his Eternal VWill, then he must needs foreknow all things; seeing he could not be ignorant of his own VWill: So he worketh in time *all things after the Counsel of his own Will in Eternity.*

V. If God works in the VWorld, and in the Church, all things after the Counsel of his own VWill; then we may infer Gods Immensity and infinite Presence. He must be in all places, if he works in all places, nothing is more clear then that; he fills Heaven and Earth with his presence:⁹⁶ He is in the VWorld in a way of Providence, in Heaven most glorious, in Hell in his Power and Justice; God is in every place, and totally in every place, not a part of God in one place, and a part in another; neither is God like Earthly Kings, who can be but in one place at a time, in Person, and Act in other Nations by their Representatives; but God is Personally present in every place,⁹⁷ how else could he work all things for the best to them who love God, and *work all things after the Counsel of his own Will?* He who is of an Infinite Being, must be of an Infinite Presence; this must be, because he hath promised his presence to the Church to the end of the VWorld; therefore he must be with them in all places of the VWorld, or else cannot make good his VVord. *Gods Power is every where, therefore Himself:* For Himself and Attributes are all one: It is not enough to say, God knows all things in the VWorld, as one upon a High Mountain must see what is under him; but God is every where Personally

88 Acts 15. 18.

89 Isa. 41. 26.

90 [Isa.] 46. 10.

91 Prov. 27. 1.

92 Isa. 5. 3.

93 Isa. 46. 10.

94 1 Pet. 1. 1, 2.

95 Rom. 9. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.

96 Jer. 23. 23, 24.

97 Psal. 139. 7, 8, 9.

present; as *David* saith, *Whither can we go from thy Presence?* God is every where inclusively, no where exclusively; hence *David* would cry unto God from the ends of the Earth,⁹⁸ believing God would work all things after the Counsel of his own Will, for the answering the Saints Prayers is according to his purpose.

VI. Doth God work all things after the Counsel of his own Will? Then we infer that all those things we call Casual, Fortuitous, Accidental, Chance, are all the product of the Counsel of his Will; if that we call Chance, be *Things*, it must be some of those *all things* in the Text which God worketh; that which we call Casual, Chance, in the way of second causes, are all ordered by the first cause. *A Man cuts down a Tree, the Head slips of the Helve, and gives his Neighbour a mortal Wound*, though done not designedly but accidentally by the Man; yet the Text saith, *God delivered him into his Hand.*⁹⁹ As for the periods of preservation, they are all fixed on the Divine Decree, there the Dayes of Men are determined, their Months numbered, and their unpassable Bounds appointed, as *Job* saith.¹⁰⁰ *Hezekiah* had fifteen years added his dayes, but there was no addition to the Divine Decree. Bloody and deceitful Men shall not live out half their Dayes; yet they live out all the dayes set down in the Divine Decree. The Jews, though they had great malice against Christ, could not kill him, until his time was come; Rain nor Drought, Fruitfulness, Barrenness, Riches nor Poverty, Health nor Sickness, Prosperity nor Adversity, Life nor Death, come not upon us by chance, but according to the Counsel of his own Will. Divine Providence extends it self to all persons, things, places and times; this *Job* knew, he saw God in the loss of his Estate and Children,¹⁰¹ though God made use of the *Sabeans* and *Chaldean* as Instruments; yet he looked beyond the second, to the first cause. *David* was dumb under very severe Providences,¹⁰² from this Principle. Gods Divine Providence extends it self to the Lyon, Unicorn, Whale, Raven, Hail, Snow, as God tells *Job*.¹⁰³ Yea the fall of a Sparrow, nor a Hair, is without it; if our Hairs are all numbered, much more our years; if a Sparrow cannot fall without it, much less a Child, a Man. That which is Casual to us, is all ordered by God in infinite Wisdom; many things fall upon us we never dreamed of, but nothing comes to pass, but what God did foreknow; and what ever second causes God may make use of, it is all to bring about the will of the first cause. *Joseph's* selling into *Egypt*, *Shemei's* cursing *David*, *Ahab's* going up to *Ramoth Gilead*, the Arrow entering between the Harness, though shot at a venture, was disposed of by God, and had its commission to give him his Deaths wound. The change of Government we are under, is God working, according to the Counsel of his own Will: *For Promotion cometh not from the East nor West, North nor South; but God putteth down one, and setteth up another.*¹⁰⁴ The great reason there are so many discontented under general and particular Providences, is, because they overlook the Finger of God in it; always quarrelling with second causes, not considering, *God works all things after the Counsel of his own Will.*

Some Considerations to quiet any under Pressing Tryals, in order to their patient submitting to, and chearful doing of the Divine Will.

First, Consider, who can govern the World better then he which made it? Who can dispose of his Creatures better then he, which gave them a Being? Who can tell how to keep a House, or Watch in order, better then he which made them? Shall Magistrates acquire the name of wise Governours? And shall not the Governour of the World, who is Essentially wise, be so accounted in his *working all things after the Counsel of his own Will?* Who is fitter to Govern the World then he which made

98 Psal. 61. 2.

99 Deut. 19. 5. compared with Exod. 21. 12, 13.

100 Job 14. 5.

101 Job 1. 20, 21.

102 Psal. 39. 9.

103 Job Chap. 38, 39, 40, 41.

104 Psal. 75. 6, 7.

it? This was the very Argument God stilled *Job* withal,¹⁰⁵ *Where wast thou when I laid the Foundations of the Earth? Hadst thou no Hand in making the World; and wouldest thou have a Hand in governing it? Am I not able to govern and dispose of my Creatures by the same Wisdom I made them? Did I take no Counsel of Man in framing it; and shall I come to Man for Wisdom to govern it? Had I no Counsel of Man, when I made my Decrees; and shall I come to Man for Wisdom to execute them? When it's for my own Glory, to work according to the Counsel of my own Will.*

Secondly, Consider, God takes pleasure in all his Purposes and Decrees; as Gods Counsels will stand, because immutable, so his Counsels are called *his Pleasure*;¹⁰⁶ Gods Electing, Redeeming, Adopting, Sanctifying, Saving the *Ephesians*, is called *the good pleasure of his Will*; that wherein he took delight, or was well pleasing to him, *Ephes.* 1. 5. Shall God take pleasure in his Decrees, and the Execution of them; and shall we not be pleased with what God is pleased withal? Shall we cheerfully submit to the just Decrees, Will, and Pleasure of Earthly Governours, and not to him whose *Kingdom rules over all*?¹⁰⁷ All good Men do delight in their own just Decrees and Purposes, and shall not God in his, who cannot go out of Himself or his own Purposes to a greater good, because he is the chief Good? If it do please God to make you his People,¹⁰⁸ and for your profit is pleased to correct you,¹⁰⁹ shall we not say, *Blessed be God* for the one, as for the other?¹¹⁰ Also it is too low for a Christian to say, I must submit, its the Glory of a Christian to choose the Divine Will. Reprobates and Devils must submit. If God will dispossess a poor Sinner of the Devil, he must come out, will he, nill he. *Pharaoh* indeed obeyed Gods Will in letting *Israel* go; but it was sore against his Will. A Believer should submit to the Divine Will out of choice, not force; that's no more then Devils and Reprobates do; herein Christ is out Pattern, though the Human Flesh did sometimes recoil and draw back under the sence of approaching trouble, as good Men sometimes do; yet his Judgement and Will was for complying with the Divine Will, though it was to die;¹¹¹ not only from the Eternal Transaction between the Father and him, about Mans Salvation; but knowing it was best to choose the Will of such a One, who is not only Righteous, Holy, and Good, but can *work all things after the Counsel of his own Will.*

Thirdly, Consider, Divine Content ariseth alone from this Principle; Am I content with this Revolution, this Alteration in the Nation, in my Family, in my Person, in my Estate, because it in my Lords Will? So *Paul* could never be content in every condition, but from this Principle,¹¹² knowing not only that the condition he should be in was best for him, but that it was also according to the purpose of Gods own Will. Some Heathens called Stoicks, laboured after contentment in every condition, from the improvement of Natural Principles; but that was far from Divine Contentment, Gods content and satisfaction ariseth out of himself and his Decrees, knowing himself perfect; now when our content is Divine, it flows from this Principle purely, and abstract from all other considerations, this is the Divine Will, therefore I submit, and therefore am content, and can do no other but choose it, because it is the Will of one who is perfect in Wisdom; Lord if thou should'st refer any case to me, to make my own choice, I would refer it to thee again, and say as the Brethren of *Berea* and *Thessalonica*, concerning *Paul* whom they lov'd dearly, and shed so many Tears for at parting, *The Will of the Lord be done.*

Fourthly, Consider, all in God, and all about God, serves to bring about his Decrees and Counsel.

105 Job Chap. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

106 Isa. 46. 10.

107 Psal. 103. 19.

108 1 Sam. 12. 22.

109 Heb. 12. 10.

110 Job 1. 21.

111 Luke 22. 42.

112 Phil. 4. 11.

First, All in God, if I may so express it, all the Attributes of God are concerned in the accomplishment of his Will; his Will Decrees all, his Wisdom Orders all, his Truth and Power accomplisheth all. Mark, Gods Power Acts not beyond his Purpose, though in point of Power God could do many things more then he doth, and prevent many things come to pass; yet in point of his Decree, cannot; In point of Power God could prevent those Garments rould in Blood in the Nations of the World, and many Family, Relative, Personal Afflictions upon us, and upon the Churches; yet in point of his Decree cannot; the Power of God is active one while to accomplish his Will,¹¹³ and at another time ceaseth to Act, to bring about the Divine Purpose; if God withdraw his Power from a Creature, he quickly ceaseth to move; and if God do send forth his Spirit, we are Created.¹¹⁴ Some may say, I committed my near Relation, Husband, Wife or Child into Gods Hand, with a firm belief God could raise them up, and yet they died. Soul; thou didst well to believe in Gods Power! But would you have God act his Power contrary to, or in the preventing his Decrees? Remember Gods Power Acts not beyond his Decrees, but all in God, either in a way of Action or Cessation from Act, serves to bring about his own Eternal Will.

Secondly, All about God serves to compleat his Divine Purposes and Decrees, I mean the Holy Saints and Angels in Glory, *They do his commands, hearkning unto the voice of his Word.*¹¹⁵ The Spirit of the living Creatures, and the Wheels, went in *Ezekiel's* Vision, where ever the Spirit of God went, for to accomplish his Will; so the four Spirits or Chariots in *Zechariah's* Vision,¹¹⁶ which came out from between the *Mountains of Brass*, the Immutable Decrees of God; these are all employed in the four Quarters of the World, to accomplish those Eternal Decrees; so that what ever Providences they were employed about, whether frowning Providences, toward the Enemies of God and his Church, signified by the Red and Black Horses; or mixt Providences, signified by the Grizled and Bay Horses, some Mercy, and some Affliction; or whether smiling Providences upon the Church, signified by the White Horses in the third Chariot, these all serve to accomplish the Immutable Decrees of God: And seeing none shall enter the Holy Place, *but he which doth the Will of the Father;*¹¹⁷ let it be our dayly cry, *Lord help me to do thy Will on Earth as it is done in Heaven,* to suffer patiently and do chearfully the Will of God upon Earth,¹¹⁸ is a very great resemblance of the Heavenly Life; there is nothing in Heaven, but the Divine Will done and delighted in. The Angels which are in Chains of Darkness, their Hearts did no sooner rise against the Divine Will, but were cast out of Heaven into Hell; and all such as obey not, the Gospel of Christ,¹¹⁹ can expect no less then Flaming Fire. Is it fit a King should entertain a Company of Rebels, which continually oppose his Will? Let such remember as God hath Power and Goodness enough to fix the Godly and Obedient in everlasting Bliss, so he hath Power and Justice enough to fix the disobedient in compleat misery. Remember, O disobedient Soul! *He can work all things according to the Counsel of his own Will. Will you not tremble at his presence, who appointed the Sand for the bound of the Sea?*¹²⁰ Who knows the power of his Anger?¹²¹ VVho ever hardened himself against God and prospered? VVho but one Lunatick, would oppose the just Commands of a General, whose Army is an hundred thousand strong, that can crush him as a Moth? Oh! VVhat Armies in Heaven and Earth can God raise against an impenitent Sinner, an Army of Angels, Stars, Lice, Frogs, Caterpillers, Locusts; yea God can Arm thy own Conscience against thee, which is more then all. Provoke not this Lord to Jealousie; are you greater then he, who can destroy Soul and Body in Hell?¹²² Rather labour to *make Peace with him, and you shall make Peace with. Him.*¹²³

113 Acts 17. 24.

114 Psal. 104. 29, 30.

115 Psal. 103. 20.

116 Zach. 6. 1, 2, 3, 4. [*Zechariah 6:1-4, Ed.*]

117 Mat. 7. 21.

118 Mat. 6. 10.

119 2 Thess. 1. 8.

120 Jer. 5. 22.

121 Psal. 91. 9. [*This should be Psa 90:11, Ed.*]

122 Luke 12. 5.

123 Isa. 27. 5.

Finally, Doth *God work all things after the Counsel of his own Will? Then Blessed is the Nation, whose God is the Lord, and the People whom he hath chosen for his own Inheritance; because the Counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of his Heart to all Generations.*¹²⁴

FINIS

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