

# Analysis of the ninth chapter of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans\*

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TO THAT MOST EMINENT MAN OF GOD, GELLIUS SNECANUS, A FELLOW MINISTER MOST  
BELOVED IN CHRIST, HEALTH AND WELFARE THROUGH CHRIST, — IN THE PRAYER OF

JAMES ARMINIUS

I cannot easily express, most excellent man, what intense joy I felt on reading and seriously considering your Commentary on the Ninth Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. For, when I saw that you had remarked, in the Apostle's scope and treatment of the principle arguments, just what, not so very long before, I had set forth publicly to the people committed to my care, in explaining the same chapter, I was greatly strengthened in that view; as well because I allow very great weight to your judgement, as because I knew that to be correct from the reasons which you had subjoined. I cannot, therefore, but in sheer gratitude transcribe in turn and briefly the steps which I took in the exposition of that chapter, and the causes which impelled me to enter on that particular path: any this not merely to show our mutual agreement, but also to strengthen it as far as I can. I freely confess that that part [of Scripture] always seemed to me enveloped in the densest shade, and most difficult of explanation, until the light shed upon it in this way dispersed the darkness, and gave my understanding a clear view of the place lit up by its brilliance. But I now come to the matter itself.

To begin with the scope: that is the same as of the whole Epistle: that the Gospel, not the law, is the power of God to salvation, not to him that worketh, but to him that believeth; because in the Gospel is made manifest the righteousness of God, by which salvation is obtained through faith exercised on Christ. This chapter, however, does its part in confirmation of that proposition, and in a peculiar way. For it defends that against the objections of the Jews, who were endeavouring with all their might to overthrow it, as hurtful and damaging to themselves: and it so defends it against their attacks as to establish it more and more, and to add, by the refutation of objections, strength and firmness to the foundations already laid, from the Divine word and purpose itself, which the Jews forcibly wrested in their own favour to demolish the Pauline dogma. That this is the scope is proved by the connexion itself; the method of which must be sought partly from this antecedent proposition, that 'most of the Jews were rejected,' which was included in this proposition of the proem, 'I could wish to be anathema from Christ for my brethren,' etc.; partly from the denial of the consequent, 'But it follows not thence

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\*Translated by William Nichols

that the word of God has failed.' Which two propositions, when joined in one utterance, may be advanced distinctly in this manner: 'Although most of the Jews have been rejected, yet the word of God has not failed on that account.' Whence it appears as clear as day that the affirmation opposed to that denial was objected to Paul by the Jews, in order that they might convict of falseness that dogma of his, from which so absurd a consequence would follow, by the interposition of that antecedent (which followed immediately from that dogma of Paul's), and so might refute it as absurd in this way: 'If most of the Jews have been rejected, then the word of God has failed: But it cannot be that the word of God should fail: Therefore most of the Jews have not been rejected.'

But how does this tell against the Apostle? He had propounded a dogma which necessarily inferred the rejection of a great part of the Jews; namely, about justice and salvation being obtainable by faith in Christ, not from the works of the law. From this it was an easy conclusion for the Jews: 'If righteousness and salvation consist in faith in Christ whom Paul preaches, then it follows that a great part of the Jews have been rejected from the covenant.' The reason of the consequence: 'Because most of the Jews do not believe in Christ.' 'But it is false that most of the Jews have been rejected by God; for so the word of God would have failed: Therefore the Apostle Paul's dogma, from which that consequent is drawn, is absurd.' The Apostle thought that he must reject this objection, which threatened downfall and destruction of his dogma; by showing that that undoubted principle, which the Jews laid down as a fulcrum for their objection, not only did not prejudice his case, but even supported it excellently.

However, the state of the question controverted between the Apostle and the Jews must be properly laid down: for that will give great value to the whole discussion. It is not 'Whether most of the Jews were rejected;' nor, 'Whether the word of God can fail.' For the Apostle allows that it is wicked even to think the latter; and the former he will afterwards prove by clear Scripture testimonies. But out of both the question is shaped, 'Whether the word of God will have failed, if most of the Jews have been rejected.' Neither is this enough: for the solving of that question does not settle the whole controversy, nor does it exhaust all difficulties. For, grant that the Apostle gains that by force of arguments, — that it may be that some, nay, most of the Jews have been rejected, and nevertheless the word of God remains firm, — will not this question still remain, 'Whether the word of God does not fail, if those Jews are rejected who with the the highest zeal strive after righteousness from the law?' Certainly: for it will be easy for the Jews to take exception to the solution of that question: 'Even though the word of God may remain firm with regard to the many Jews who have been rejected, yet we cannot be comprehended in that number without the word of God being made of none effect.' Therefore the addition of that qualification will complete the whole statement of the question, in this manner:—

Whether the word of God is not made of none effect, if those of the Jews who seek righteousness, not from faith, but from the law, are rejected by God.

For this question is adapted to the scope: its solution finishes the disputation, and exhausts all the difficulties: this is what the Apostle is treating; as is plain from the argument which he adduces for its solution. For neither must we disjoin from the question that which gave rise to the question, and for the sake of refuting which that principle of the constancy of the word of God was brought forward by the Jews; and which the Apostle endeavoured to uphold, as much as possible, against the Jews. Let special attention, then be paid to this point in the question, 'Whether the word of the covenant entered into with the Jews is not become void, if the Apostle's dogma of obtaining righteousness and salvation from faith alone in Christ, not

from the law or the works of the law, is to find acceptance, and to be held as the foundation of salvation.' But how much difference there is between these two ways of stating that question, and of what weight that difference is, you can easily perceive. For that question, propounded in this manner, 'Whether the word of God is not made of none effect, if most of the Jews are rejected,' may be met by the answer: 'That God, indeed, by the word of promise invites all the Jews, and calls them to participation in the covenant; but yet by His eternal decree and purpose He has determined to make only some from among the Jews actually partakers thereof, the rest being passed by and left in their former state:' which some assert to be the sum of the apostolic answer to the question proposed. But the question, if propounded in this last manner, 'Whether the word of God is not made void, if those of the Jews who seek righteousness, not from faith, but from the law, are rejected by God,' cannot be solved except by this answer: 'That God, by that very word of His and expression of promise, signified that He would reckon as His sons those only of the Jews who should strive to obtain righteousness and salvation from faith; but that He would hold as strangers those who should seek after the same from the law.'

There is, however, a great deal of difference between these two answers. For by the former the decree of predestination is defined according to the sense of Beza and others: by the latter, according to your meaning. Yet far be it from me on that account to propose such a question, in order to confirm any opinion of yours or mine on the decree of predestination with that answer, which appears to me the only one adapted for solving such a question. However, the passage itself, when looked into, will demonstrate that to be the state of the question, which I have so pronounced; if, indeed, a right judgement respecting its state can be obtained from the arguments adduced in treating the question, and from the conclusion: which no one will deny who has entered upon even 'the condition of childhood.' Let me, then consider those things in the Apostle's answer.

In the first place the Apostle denies that the consequence, that is, that of the consequent, 'The word of God fails,' follows in any way from that antecedent which the Jews laid down: in these words: 'Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect;' or 'It cannot be, however, that the word of God hath taken none effect.' He then subjoins the reason of the denial, and the proof implied in the reason given in an allegorical form from the Scripture, both as dictated by God, and as explained by the Apostle. The reason is from the distinction of the Jews, and the twofold kind of them, with regard to this expression and the Divine purpose; or from the twofold seed of Abraham, of which only one is included in that expression and purpose. 'For,' he says, 'they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children' (verses 6, 7): but there are among them some 'children of the flesh,' and others 'children of the promise;' from which the conclusion is: 'If the word of God does not comprehend all the Israelites together, it does not fail, even though some of their number be rejected; and much less, if those are rejected who, it is evident, were never comprehended in the word itself.' Which should by all means have been added, or the question could in no wise have been answered satisfactorily; nay, and was added by the Apostle, as is apparent. For he not only says that not all were comprehended under that expression, but also describes who they are who are accounted by God as children, and those who are not reckoned under that name. For those who are strangers to the covenant are by the Apostle called 'children of the flesh,' and those who are partakers in the covenant are called 'children of the promise.' Whence such a conclusion as this may be drawn in refutation of the Jewish objection:

'If the word of God comprehends only the children of the promise, the children of the flesh being excluded; then it follows that the word of God does not fail, even though the children of the flesh be rejected; nay, that it would fail if they were admitted, who are excluded by

the very description of the condition of the covenant: But the word of God comprehends only the children of the promise, to the exclusion of the children of the flesh: Therefore the word does not fail, even though the children of the flesh are rejected, etc.' And, by consequent, 'the word of God has not failed if most of the Jews have been rejected, provided those very persons are comprehended in the number of the children of the flesh;' which it is clear is so from the description of the children of the flesh.

For, with the Apostle in this place 'the children of the flesh' are those who 'seek righteousness and salvation by the words of the law.' And concerning this class the consequent is in force, deduced from the doctrine of righteousness and salvation to be obtained by faith in Christ. For it does not follow therefrom, that 'some of the Jews have been rejected,' except with this remark, as being those who do not believe in Christ, but 'seek after righteousness' from the law. But 'the children of the promise' are those who seek righteousness and salvation by faith in Christ. Which description of the children of the flesh and of the promise is so plain from the Scriptures as to need no further proof. But the grounds of the proofs may be sought from chap. iv. 9, 10, of this Epistle, also from chapters iii. and iv. of the Epistle to the Galatians, as you have noted, and as I set forth to the people when I was treating of these things.

From this treatment of the question, then, it is evident that it should have been propounded in that second mode, with the quality of the rejected. But now the proof of that reason must be considered, which, indeed, is the assumption, or minor, of the refutatory syllogism. For the consequence of the proposition is of itself clear and manifest. The Apostle therefore proves that the word of promise and of covenant embraces only the children of the promise, to the exclusion of the children of the flesh; and that by a twofold type, — the one taken from the house of Abraham, the other from the family of Isaac. But two things must be presupposed to each of these proofs, — both resting on the apostolical authority, which to use ought to be sacred. That one, that Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, are to be considered not in themselves, but as types, in those passages which he cites. The other that they are to be considered as types of 'the children of the flesh' and 'of the promise.' For the apostle proves neither, but assumes both; and not without reason. For it is as certain as can be from the very passages examined that they are, as the Apostle says in Gal. iv. 24, ἀλληγορούμενα, 'allegorised;' and that the primary sense which God wished to signify in those places is not literal, but allegorical.

These presuppositions being laid down, and the force of the Apostle's argument lies in the fitness of the types and antitypes, which is so great as the immutability and the constancy of Him who willed those to be the types of those antitypes. But it must be observed that that fitness does not exist merely in the third one taken by itself alone, but in the *σχήσις*, and mutual bearing of the one towards the other, the proper difference of the type and the antitype being always preserved. Which intimation I give, lest any one should suppose it to be necessary that he who represents the children of the flesh should himself be a child of the flesh in the mode of the same definition. Now for the particulars.

The proof from the *first type* rests upon these two passages of Scripture: 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called;' and 'At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son' (Verses 7, 9). From which the fittingness presupposed is thus concluded: 'Isaac reckoned in the seed: Isaac is the type of all the children of the promise: Therefore all the children of the promise are reckoned in the seed.' The proposition, or major, is comprehended in these words: 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called:' the assumption, or minor, partly in those words: 'For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son;' partly in the fitness of which we have spoken. But it is not concluded merely that all the children of the promise are reckoned in the seed, but also that they *only* are so reckoned. For those things which are said representing

Isaac tend to the exclusion of Ishmael; which the Apostle signifies by the adversative article 'but,' joined to the member opposed to the former negations: 'But, in Isaac shall they seed be called.' Whence it is thus concluded: 'Ishmael is not reckoned in the seed: Ishmael is the type of all children of the flesh: Therefore none of the children of the flesh are reckoned in the seed.'

I know, indeed, that in that figure no conclusion is drawn except with regard to a particular instance; but the solidity of the conclusion depends on the mutual fitness between the type and that which is foreshadowed in the type by the immutable will of God. And we know that a conclusion is often drawn by necessity of the matter, which cannot be made by syllogistical form. Here many things have been said by us concerning the congruous nature of that mutual affection of relation between Ishmael and the children of the flesh, Isaac and the children of the promise: in what way that which the Apostle affirms to have been prefigured by that type was fittingly signified by the nativity of each. But I do not think there is any need here to repeat those things, because they serve only for explaining the doctrine, not for confirming it; and it has been sufficiently proved to use by apostolical authority; namely, that 'the children of the flesh' are signified by Ishmael, but 'the children of the promise' by Isaac.

Now follows *the second type*, taken from the family of Isaac; in which the Apostle affirms the same to be declared as in the other, when he says: 'And not only these, but Rebecca also,' etc. (Verses 10–13). Therefore the passage adduced to the same end is to be explained in accordance with the same scape. But here three things must be considered in order. First, Certain circumstances peculiar to this type, which add much weight to the Apostle's proof; and by which the Apostle obviates beforehand whatever he foresaw might be advanced by the Jews in opposition to the former type, as being hurtful to their cause. Secondly, The word of the Lord which was to Rebecca, which is included as typical co-proof, illustrated by another passage of a later Prophet. Thirdly, The explanation which Paul, Θεοδίδακτος, 'taught of God,' adduces from the end and scope of the Divine oracle.

As to the First: The Jews could object against the former type, that it was not wonderful if, Ishmael having been rejected, Isaac should be adopted by God as a son; as well because Ishmael was born of a bondmaid, Isaac of a free woman, as because, before God announced the 'word of promise' to Sarah, Ishmael was already born, and possibly had perpetrated those acts which would make him unworthy of that honour and felicity. These are the points which the Apostle meets: and to the first he replies that the matter was different in the case of Esau and Jacob, both of whom were born of the same father and the same mother, nay, and at one and the same birth. To the latter he answers, that that was said to Rebecca when she was still carrying the twins in her womb, and therefore whilst 'the children were not yet born,' and when they could not have 'done any good or evil,' whereby the one could deserve to be rejected, the other to be adopted. So, that is, by these circumstances, the Jews are deprived of whatever exception they might on their own behalf have taken against the former type, — that they, namely, could not possibly be reckoned in the number of the rejected, since they were born of the free woman, and sought their salvation by the law.

Secondly: Now the oracle itself, uttered to Rebecca (verses 12, 13), must be considered: which is briefly this: 'The elder shall serve the younger;' and this is explained by the passage in Malachi: 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated;' and that so as for it to appear that the servitude of the elder was conjoined with God's hatred, but the dominion of the younger with His love. But here we must repeat what has been before laid down generally, — that Esau and Jacob are considered, not in themselves, but as *types*; therefore the things which are attributes to them must be accommodated to the *antitypes*, or rather to the things signified. Wherefore the antitypes also must be considered, before a conclusion similar to the former can be elicited

from these, in refutation of the opinion of the Jews, and in confirmation of that of the Apostle.

But, Thirdly, what those [antitypes] are must be collected from the end and scope, which the Apostle has added for the sake of explanation, in these words: 'That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth.' That is, by those words, 'The elder shall serve the younger,' spoken to Rebecca when the children were not as yet born, and therefore had done neither good nor evil, God meant to signify nothing else than that He had from eternity determined with Himself His purposes respecting the communication of righteousness and salvation; not that it should be 'according to election,' by which He would discern between these and those, considered not simply in their own nature, sound or corrupt, but in respect of the condition by which righteousness and salvation were to be applied: as the Apostle shows in the words which follow: 'That that purpose according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth.' In which words the same description of the antitypes is contained, which before was set forth by 'the children of the flesh' and 'of the promise:' and here, indeed, more clearly. For the children of the flesh and of the promise are each in this place defined by the Apostle according to their own speciality, — that the former are 'of works,' but the latter of the faith by which obedience is rendered to the call of God. The Apostle therefore says that 'the purpose of God' which is 'according to election' is respecting the salvation of those who should have faith in God called them, and should believe in Christ; not respecting those who should seek salvation 'by the works of the law.'

Now from these arguments against the Jews' objection a conclusion may be drawn in favour of the Apostle's doctrine of justification, in this way: 'If the word and purpose of God be according to election, by which, the elder being repudiated, the younger is taken, then it follows that, even though some of the Jews have been rejected, yet the word and purpose is not of no effect: nay rather, if that purpose which is according to election were now said to embrace all without election, it would become of no effect: But this word and purpose is according to election: Therefore, although some of the Jews have been repudiated, yet that word and purpose does not therefore fail, nay rather, is thereby established, because its nature is to exclude some, as being according to election, whereby one is rejected and another is taken.' But indefinite proof of this kind does not suffice for this business: for it remains still further to be proved that those very persons are excluded by this 'purpose according to election,' whom they rightly concluded, from the Apostle's doctrine concerning justification by faith, to be excluded and rejected; namely, those who were desirous of attaining righteousness and salvation, not by faith in Christ, but by the works of the law. The Apostle therefore makes this addition: whence is drawn this conclusion, to the exhaustion of the whole objection: 'If the purpose according to election depends on Him that called, not on works, then it follows that those who are of the works of the law, and seek after righteousness and salvation by the law, are not included in that purpose; but only those who by faith obey God calling and promising: But the purpose according to election depends on Him that calleth, not on works: Therefore those who are of the works of the law are not included in that purpose, but only those who are of faith of Jesus Christ.'

The proposition is of itself plain from the phrase, if rightly understood, which signifies that the firmness of 'the purpose which is according to election' depends on 'Him that calleth,' not on works. Therefore this purpose cannot be firm and sure to those who are of the works of the law, but to those who are of faith. From this meaning I fancy that I get an inkling of the cause why God has put the condition of the covenant of grace, not in the perfect obedience of the law, as before, but in faith in Christ. The assumption rests on upon the expression, 'The elder shall serve the younger,' and on the accordance of the type and antitype; which is this,

that what is presignified by the type agrees with the antitype. But by the type of Esau and Jacob is presignified, first, that the purpose of God is according to election; then, that that purpose depends on Him that calleth, not on works. The former, indeed, because the one is beloved, the other hated, — the one preferred to and set over the other; which is a sign of the purpose according to election: the latter, because the elder, Esau is hated and made subject, but the younger, Jacob, is beloved and set over; which is a sign that the purpose does not depend on works, but on Him that calleth: that is, that God loves those who seek righteousness and salvation by faith in Christ; but hates those who seek for the same from the works of the law. Whence it follows that *they* are not included in that purpose who are ‘of the works of the law,’ but only those who are ‘of faith of Jesus Christ:’ and, by consequence, that those of the Jews were rejected who followed after the righteousness of the law; those were elected and beloved who sought participation in righteousness by faith in Christ. Therefore, so far from the doctrine of righteousness by faith being overturned by the word of the covenant and the Divine purpose, it is established by that alone.

Here also I have explained to the people in what way those Jews who, out of zeal for the law, sought righteousness and life by it, were signified by Esau, the elder; but those who followed after the same things by faith in Christ, by Jacob, the younger. But there is not need to inculcate those things here: the authority of the Apostle is sufficient, who so explains those types and who briefly concludes thus from the correspondence of the type to the antitype, or things signified: ‘Esau, the elder, was condemned by God to bondage under his brother, and was hateful to Him: Esau, the elder, is the type of all those who seek salvation and righteousness from the works of the law: Therefore all those who seek salvation from the works of the law, are condemned to bondage, and are hateful to God.’ And, ‘Jacob, the younger, obtained dominion over this brother, and was beloved by God: Jacob, the younger, is the type of all to who seek salvation, according to the grace of calling, by faith: Therefore those who seek righteousness by faith, according to the grace of calling, obtain dominion, and are beloved by God.’

Both propositions, or majors, are comprehended in these words: ‘The elder shall serve the younger;’ and ‘Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.’ The assumption, or minor, is contained in those words, ‘That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth;’ and rests upon the authority of the Apostle, who so explains those types.

Hence it is apparent that the question was not only about some being rejected, and some accepted, but about the rejected and the accepted being of such a kind, that is, distinguished by certain qualities. And therefore the Apostle here treats not of the Divine decree of purpose by which the one are elected, and the other reprobated, considered simply in their own nature, whether pure or corrupt; but of such a purpose as includes that description of the elect which is here openly remarked by the Apostle in the purpose itself. In which matter consists the controversy between *Beza and his followers*, who defend the former fiercely, and *you*, who inculcate a purpose of salvation of this kind, in which are contained the qualities of them who are to be saved and them who are to be damned. But they will say, that it is indeed true that Ishmael and Esau, Isaac and Jacob, are considered typically; that is, as far as the former bear the image of the children of the flesh, and of those who are the works of the law; the latter, of the children of the promise, and of those who are of faith: but that meanwhile there also, in the same degree, on their own part belong to those whose type they bear; and that according to the eternal purpose of God, by which He decreed ‘to make Isaac and Jacob children of the promise, and to endue them with faith in Christ, but to leave Ishmael and Esau in their natural carnal state.’

For they say that it is necessary to ascend higher, and to inquire why the one in the child of the flesh, the other of the promise; why the one believes in Christ, the other not, but seeks salvation from the works of the law. I answer, That it cannot be proved from this passage that those who bear the types belong to the antitypes themselves; and if perchance Ishmael and Esau belong to ‘the children of the flesh;’ so described, yet it is not taught in this passage that they so belong according to any Divine purpose. For by this ‘purpose’ something is determined concerning the children of the flesh and of the promise; but by that which they mean it is determined concerning men that these shall be the children of the flesh, those of the promise: which cannot therefore be one and same with the other; since the subject of the one is changed into the attribute of the others; respecting the adequate subject of which, the Coryphæi of that doctrine have not as yet agreed among themselves. And because the question, why some believe and others do not, undergoes the same change of subject and attribute, I maintain that it is not handled by the Apostle here, and has nothing whatever to do with his scope. Let them, therefore, consult other places of Scripture, and see whether they can therefrom establish that degree of theirs. It suffices for us that here is described the ‘purpose’ whereby our righteousness and salvation ‘of grace’ are consistent with themselves, and whereby we can be assured of them in ourselves.

But this is the ‘purpose,’ which God ordained — after the former condition attached to the legal covenant had not been performed, and man by the fall had incurred inability to perform it — to enter into the covenant of grace with us by Christ; and, ‘of grace,’ to transfer the condition of the former covenant to faith in Christ; by which covenant, believing on Him, we might obtain the same which before we could not obtain except by ourselves rendering plenary obedience to the law. On this purpose it is that the security of our salvation depends, and at the same time its certainty within ourselves. For from this enthymeme we form that conclusion: ‘I am a believer.’ or, ‘I believe in Christ:’ ‘Therefore I am saved,’ or, ‘Therefore I am elect.’ the confirmation of which lies in this proposition: ‘As many as believe in Christ, them has God determined from eternity immutably to save:’ in which words the sum of that ‘purpose’ is contained.

But if any one ask, why God willed Ishmael and Esau to be types of the children of the flesh, but Isaac and Jacob to be children of the promise; I answer, Because it was fitting, for the sake of the signification and of the agreement between the type and the antitype, in respect of *the former type*, that he who was born of the bondmaid and by carnal power should be the type of the children of the flesh; but he who was born of the free woman and by force of the promise, when the flesh was already effete, should be the type of the children of the promise: but in respect of *the latter type*, that he who had been born first should represent the children of the flesh; and he who had been born later, the children of the promise. The reason will be manifest to any one who considers the agreement between types and antitypes. Yet if any one should ask further, why God willed Ishmael to be born of a bondmaid and by carnal power, and Esau to be the elder; but Isaac to be born of a free woman and by the force of the promise, and Jacob to be the younger; I reply, that the same question might be asked, if Isaac and Jacob were to be placed in the stead of Ishmael and Esau. But in this consists the full liberty of God, circumscribed by no necessity of the Divine properties or of the revealed will; which whether the properties of the Divine nature, and the revealed will, allow to God in forming that purpose which your adversaries insist upon, let them see to it.

Now let us come to the other objection, which is of this kind: ‘What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?’ (Verse 14). What is asked, or objected, is manifest; but it is not equally clear what the antecedent is, from which this objection is deduced. Some put it thus:



‘If God, without respect to works, hates Ishmael and Esau, and excludes them from the number of the children, but loves Isaac and Jacob, and holds them as children, is He not unjust?’ But ‘it seems to have the appearance of injustice not to render like things to like persons.’ Certainly, if the Apostle had considered those persons in themselves, and not as types as such, (as has been said), the occasion of that objection might have been of this description. For it is certain that the occasion of the objection arose from the antecedents: but that was not the Apostle’s antecedent, but this: ‘God, in the word of the covenant and the purpose which is according to election, embraced those only who should be the children of the promise, who should believe on Christ; those being excluded who should be children of the law.’ Wherefrom it followed that ‘those of the Jews who from their desire for legal righteousness did not believe in Christ, were rejected;’ and further, that, ‘those of the Gentiles who by faith in Christ sought participation in righteousness and salvation, were received into the covenant.’ Either one, therefore, is the antecedent to this objection, — to wit, this: ‘If God hates the children of the flesh, and excludes them from the covenant, but loves the children of the promise, reckons them among the seed comprehended in the covenant, and, indeed, according to His own pure purpose, without any reference to works; then it follows that He is unjust:’ or that: ‘If God rejects the Jews, and takes the Gentiles in their stead, then he is unjust.’ But these two amount to nearly the same thing. Yet I think that the former is here more especially referred to. This, indeed, seemed a sufficient ground for accusing God of injustice on account of that purpose, — because He had determined on a decree of this kind from the mere good-pleasure of His will, without any regard to merit.

But let us look into the Apostle’s answer (Verses 14, *et seq.*). First, he denies the consequence: then he renders a reason for that denial. He *denies the consequence* when he says, ‘God forbid.’<sup>1</sup> That is, it ought by no means to enter into our thoughts that there is any injustice in God, who, just in Himself, nay, existing as Justice itself, does nothing, and, indeed, can do nothing, expect what is more thoroughly in agreement with that nature of His.

*The reason for the denial of the consequence* is twofold. The one is taken from the freedom of the Divine mercy; the other, from the illustration of the Divine power and glory. That which is drawn from the freedom of mercy is comprehended in these words: ‘He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have had mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have had compassion’ (Verse 15). Which words, by a Hebrew idiom, contain the sentiment, ‘It has been put in the power and freedom of My will to have mercy on whom I will:’ as also the conclusion indicates: ‘Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy.’ But in what way this answer tends to the destruction of that consequence the word ‘mercy’ declares, which embraces in itself the whole force of the refutation. For this was the only sufficient ground for changing God with injustice with regard to that purpose, — That God could not, without injustice, make void the ‘purpose’ of creation, by which He had connected righteousness and life with obedience to the law, but death and condemnation with transgression of the same law; especially so far as to make another purpose, by which He should exclude from righteousness and life those who might endeavour to attain righteousness and life by the law, but should make others, who might not do that, but only ‘believe in Christ.’ partakers of righteousness and life. This charge of injustice is removed from God merely by the word ‘mercy’ here employed; which, since it presupposes *misery*, and therefore sin, by that very thing indicates that the change of purpose was not made by any fault of God, but because its condition had been violated by

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<sup>1</sup>This is the rendering of our English Version, and consequently is familiar to us. But Arminius’ *Absit*, ‘Be it far from us,’ is a more accurate and more reverent representative of the original phrase, Μὴ γένοιτο. — W.N.

transgression of the law, and man by this had brought on himself inability to fulfil the law. Hence we see that the covenant entered into at the creation was rendered void by the fault of man himself, and that God, being thereby freed from obligation, could either have punished man according to his deserts, or have entered into another ‘purpose’ in His own mind. And in order that this might be for the good of man, it was necessary for mercy to intervene, which should remit sin, and should moreover require such a condition as man could fulfil through the beneficent help of mercy itself. God, says the Apostle, made within himself a purpose of this sort, and indeed out of pure mercy; it being free for Him to determine (justice, however, regulating his determination) on whom He will have mercy, and on whom He will not; whom He wills to become partakers of righteousness and life, and whom He wills to be excluded from the same. Whence it follows that God cannot be accused of injustice on account of that kind of decree and ‘purpose according to election,’ by which He determined to adopt ‘the children of the promise,’ ‘the children of the flesh’ being excluded, and which He willed to stand firm, ‘of Him that calleth, not of works;’ because it was under the influence of mercy alone that He made within Himself a decree of this kind.

God, then, would be unjust if He took away of bestowed righteousness and life on any one against the condition of the covenant entered into in creation; but since, on account of the violation of the condition and inability to fulfil it, it would have belonged either to *mercy*, to conclude a covenant of mercy with man, or to *rigour*, to punish man without hope of pardon, it is clear that God was no less, nay, much more, at liberty to fix in that covenant whatever conditions He might have thought fit, than in the covenant of creation; and, consequently, that He can no more be accused of injustice in this case than in the other. But the whole affair may be comprised in this syllogism:

- If the purpose of God according to election — about rejecting the children of the flesh, but reckoning in the seed the children of the promise — has for its sole cause the mercy and compassion of God; then it follows that God can in no way be convicted of injustice on that score:
- But the cause of that purpose is solely the mercy of God:
- Therefore God cannot be convicted of injustice on that account.

That this is the sense of the Apostle’s reply is evident from the corollary annexed to it (verse 16): ‘So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy;’ — understand, the ‘purpose according to election:’ which is exactly to the same effect as what he said before, ‘The purpose according to election stands, of Him that calleth, not of works:’ and ‘the children of the promise are counted in the seed,’ ‘the children of the flesh’ being excluded. For, when man’s will and running are opposed to God’s mercy, it is certain that he means that endeavour and running by which man hopes that he will obtain righteousness and salvation without the mercy of God. But such is the attempts and running of those who strive after righteousness and salvation by the works of the law. And when ‘mercy’ is opposed by turns to ‘willing’ and ‘running,’ it is plain that *that* means of attaining righteousness and life is marked out by those opposites to mercy, *which* has the greatest affinity to mercy; namely, faith in Christ the Mediator.

Another reason of the denial of the consequence is drawn from the just illustration of the Divine power and glory, by those on whom it was seen fit not to have mercy: which indeed was set forth in the particular example of Pharoah, but is in itself most constant in its nature

and always alike. It is comprehended in these words: 'For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power to thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth' (Verse 17). From which passage the Apostle thus replies to that part of the objection whereby God was charged with injustice, because of his rejecting 'the children of the flesh' from His 'purpose according to election,' and holding them in hatred: 'If it is allowable for God in order to the just declaration of His power and the illustration of His name, to excite, harden, punish Pharaoh; then injustice cannot be attributed to Him because He chooses to illustrate His power and glory in the just hardening and punishment of the children of the flesh: But that is allowable for God as appears from that passage; Therefore, and lastly, He cannot on that account be accused of injustice.'

The connexion of the proposition certainly is firm. For either it will never be free for God to illustrate His power and the glory of His name in the just punishment of any one, or it will be free for Him to decree by some purpose, in whose just condemnation He will declare His power and the glory of His name. And truly, to take away from God the right and power of making a decree which is 'according to election,' is nothing else than to be unwilling that He should display His power and the glory of His name in the just hardening and punishment of certain persons. For these are joined together, — to punish any one, and to decree the same person liable to punishment. For on no one can punishment be justly inflicted, except on him for whom it has been justly destined by a just purpose and decree; and if punishment can be justly inflicted on any one, like punishment may be justly marked out for the same person by any purpose and decree. But how God would have been free to excite, harden Pharaoh, &c., will hereafter be shown generally in the refutation of the following objection.

That this is the sense of the whole of the Apostle's answer, is apparent from the conclusion appended to the entire answer: 'Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.' (Verse 18.) For by that conclusion the whole objection of the Jews is most solidly refuted, in this manner: 'If God can have mercy on whom He will, and can harden whom He will, then also it is free for Him to make a purpose according to election, by which He may ordain to have mercy on the children of the promise, but to harden and punish the children of the flesh: But God can have mercy on whom He will, and can harden whom He will: Therefore it is free to Him to make a decree according to election, by which He may ordain to have mercy on the children of the promise, but to harden and punish the children of the flesh.' And by consequence, — 'If He can do this, which is free to Him, He cannot be accused of injustice by any desert of His own.'

Thus God's justice in that 'purpose to election' is asserted and proved by the Apostle from the firmest testimony of the Mosaic Scripture itself.

Now follows another objection of the Jews, sprung from the latter part of the conclusion immediately preceding; in the refutation of which those who urge that 'absolute decree' of God for simply saving some and damning others, think that they have a great support for their cause. On which account both the objection and the refutation shall be diligently examined by us also, lest by chance through negligence we pass by, as unseen, what is to them their Hercules' club, to subdue all monsters of objections; or rather, the sword of Alexander the Great, to cut asunder any unloosenable knot. The objection is of this kind: 'Why, then, doth He yet find fault?' The reason is added: 'For who hath resisted His will.' (Verse 19.) Which points, propounded in the form of interrogation, will be then solved: 'Therefore He cannot with good reason find fault, because no one can resist His will.' The objection will be completed with the addition of the antecedent from which that consequent is deduced: 'God hardens whom He will: Therefore He cannot with good reason find fault with those whom He has hardened.'

The *ratio* of connexion is this: ‘Because no one can resist His will,’ Hence a connexion of this sort exists: ‘If no one can resist God’s will, then He cannot rightfully find fault with those whom He hardens by that will.’ Let us alter this connexion into a simple and categorical declaration: ‘God cannot rightfully find fault with those who have been hardened by His omnipotent will.’ This, then, is the objection: now let us examine what strength it has; in order that we may by that examination ascertain by what method it can be refuted, and so may devise a way to its proper refutation. These two things, then, are to be considered: one, — ‘God cannot rightfully find fault with those who are hardened:’ the other, — ‘Because He hardened them by His omnipotent will, which cannot be resisted.’ The examination of the former consists in the treatment of this question: ‘Who are they with whom God cannot rightfully be angry?’ The examination of the second, in the treatment of this: ‘Whether, and how, those who are hardened by God’s almighty will are exempted from the number of those with whom God can rightly find fault?’

The *first question* will be solved if it be explained what that is, on account of which God can with good reason be angry; that is, what is the proper cause of the Divine anger. But the proper cause of the Divine anger, and that for which God can rightfully be angry with any one, is sin. But ‘sin is the transgression of the Law,’ understand, of a just law; for unless the law be just, it is not law, not therefore can its transgression be sin. But, in order to a law being just, it necessarily demands these two conditions, — that it be enacted by him who has the power of commanding, — that it be enacted for him who has the power or rather the ability to perform it, not only δυνάμει but also ἐνεργείᾳ: that is, who has power of such a kind as may be impeded by no intervening decree from performing, by its own act, what it can. Whence it appears that sin is a voluntary transgression of the law, which the sinner has committed by his own fault, because he could have avoided it: — I am speaking of the act itself. On account of a sin of this class, and with a sinner of this kind, God may rightfully be angry. But if this condition be taken away, God cannot rightfully be angry with a man for sin; nay, nor can the man commit sin. I say this for the sake of those who suppose that God can with good reason be angry with transgressors of the law, even though they could not have obeyed it by the act itself, on account of the decree intervening: but they are much mistaken. For an action of this sort, which is unavoidable on account of the determination of some decree, does not deserve the name of ‘sin.’ As to the certainty of these points, I have no doubt; and when there is need, they shall be proved.

Hence, then, it is apparent with whom God can rightfully be angry. Now let us see whether, and how, those who are hardened by the omnipotent will of God are exempted from the number of those: that is, whether the almighty will of God, when hardening, takes away cause for just accusation, complaint and anger. But let us premise what that is, ‘Who hath resisted God’s will?’ To the will of God is here attributed omnipotence able to subject all things universally to itself, and in fact so subjecting them whenever the will accompanies it, and it the will. But omnipotence does not always accompany God’s will in whatever way considered. For God wills that His law should be performed by all; which is not done. But it does not thence follow that there are two wills in God, contrary to each other; the one willing that His law be performed by all; the other, that it be not performed; for as it would not be wonderful that the law is not performed by many, when this will armed with omnipotence hinders the other from being done.

But when some men endeavour to explain how it can be that those wills are not contrary to each other, they say that God’s will may be considered in a twofold light, — as it is *hidden*, and as it is *revealed*, — that the *revealed* will is respecting those things which God likes or dislikes; the *hidden*, concerning those things which He simply and absolutely wills to be done

and not to be done; and that it is perfectly fitting that He by His *revealed* will should will one and the same action to be done, and by His *hidden* will should will it not to be done, since He wills it in a different manner. But it may be disputed whether a *hidden* will can be maintained in God, by which He may will to be done or not to be done what His *revealed* will wills not to be done or to be done. Others say that the will of God is *of well-pleasing* or *of the sign*: which amounts to the same thing: for is not the *well-pleasing* will of God signified by His word as a sign? Others assert that one will of God is *efficacious*, the other *inefficacious*. But this is the same as saying that one can be resisted, the other cannot. And it is wonderful in what labyrinths they involve themselves, blinded either by unskilfulness or by prejudice, or rather by both. But to those who rightly consider the matter it will be evident that the will of God is one and the same in itself, distinct only in its objects. For what? is not will ‘a free appetite with reason, or at least the show of it, extended to doing or having?’ And so in God: (for let it be permitted to us to use our dark expressions to delineate those things which exist in that most clear light:) for He wills to do and He wills to have. By the former He wills something from himself; by the latter He wills something from us; by the former He wills that something should be done by Himself, and calls into play His omnipotence, which always accompanies that will; by the latter He wills that something should be done by us through righteousness, as a model for which He delivers us His law. But it is necessary that He should manifest to us whatever He wishes from us; nay, that He should also command, in order that He may obtain what He wishes from us. But what He wills to be done by Himself, what He wills to do, that He does not always reveal to us, but only sometimes, according as He judges it to conduce to His own glory and our salvation.

But you ask whether any secret will of God is here treated of; and indeed you adjoin your judgement, that there is here no treatment of that. You have already understood my opinion about the secret will: and I think with you that the secret will is not here treated of, however that may be taken. But let them say what it is that is ‘hidden’ here. Is it, that it is not possible to ‘resist God,’ so that He may not harden whom He wills to harden? But this is evident from the very language itself. Is it, who those are whom God wills to harden? Not this either; for nothing is plainer in Scripture than that sinners persevering in their sins against the patience of God, who invites them to repentance, are those whom God wills to harden. ‘But it does not appear who are those sinners: and this is hidden.’ This is true; but what has this to do with the will, that it should be called ‘hidden?’ Rather here God’s knowledge shall be called ‘hidden’ by us. But out of many such sinners God wills to harden this one, not that; and this is hidden, whom He wills to harden, in preference to others. Now I do not dispute about that; but I say that that is not discussed in this passage. Since, then, this passage does not discuss what object of the Divine will, hidden from us, is here laid down, neither does it here in any way treat of the hidden will.

But I will return to the proposition. That omnipotent will takes away the cause for just anger, if by it man is moved to sin, and with such force as cannot be resisted; and therefore by that will those who are ‘hardened’ will be excluded from the number of those with whom God can be justly angry, if they have done that, on account of which they are hardened, through being moved by that omnipotent will which no one can resist. I do not here speak of compulsion: for ‘neither can God compel, nor can the will be compelled:’ but that force of the Divine motion which is implied in the inevitable necessity of performing that to which it is impelled, suffers to excuse man and to exempt him from the just anger of God. But if man has with free will committed that which deserves hardening, he incurs guilt, and is worthy of wrath even though he be hardened by that will which cannot be resisted. For resisting, and that freely, the will

revealed in the word, which can be resisted, he falls into that necessity of the Divine decree, also revealed in the word, which cannot be resisted; and so the will of God is done respecting him, by whom the will of that has not been done. From these considerations I think an answer to the objection can easily be framed.

But let us set the *Apostle's* answer before us, — and with that earnest attention which the gravity and the difficulty of the matter demand, — at least for our model. And first we must presuppose that the Apostle did not seek escape because he could not refute the objection itself; and neither did he involve the matter in difficulties, in order to awe and restrain the objector terrified by the difficulty of the thing; but that he most aptly and solidly refuted the whole objection. I might even venture to say that in all Scripture no objection has been more sufficiently refuted. But let the objection itself with all its foundations be always present to our eyes, compressed into a brief form, so that it may be looked at, as it were, in one moment: in this wise: ‘Can God with reason be angry with those who are hardened by His own irresistible will?’ We may, for the sake of compendious significance, be allowed to make use of this phrase. But the Apostle’s answer is twofold: the one, in reproof, respecting the unworthiness of the objector and objection; the other, in refutation, with regard to the thing objected.

The reproof has three parts: the chiding, its reason, and the proof of the reason.

1. The *chiding* is set forth under the form of a question, in these words: ‘Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?’ (Verse 20.) Consider, O man, who thou art, and who God is, and thou wilt perceive that it is unbecoming of thee to reply to God in that manner. And certainly so to calumniate that glorious doctrine as to fasten the unjust fury of wrath upon God, — man being thereby exempted from all blame, — was nothing else than to resist God as if to His face, and to oppose Him to His very presence. Wherefore it is not wonderful that the Apostle, moved by the indignity of the thing, determined to reprove sharply the person so objecting.
2. The *reason* is drawn from a consequence of man and God, and from a like unworthy reply adapted to that comparison. For as these three are contained in that proposition, — man replying, God to whom he replies and the reply itself; so the reason of that proposition has reference to three things, in these words: ‘Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why has thou made me thus?’ Here man is compared to the thing formed, God to the maker, that reply to this, ‘Why hast thou made me?’ By which comparison the Apostle renders a reason why it is not becoming of man, as being the thing made, to reply thus to God, as being the Maker: as if he should say, — Just as it is not allowable for the thing formed to say to its master, ‘Why has Thou made me thus?’ so also it is not lawful for thee, O man, to reply to God in that style; for thou art nothing else but dust and a worm of the earth. God’s workmanship: but God is He who framed and formed thee.

But here we must observe what is the application of the comparison to that reply which is blamed in the thing formed; when however, we have first examined the third part, that is,

3. *The confirmation of the reason.* But that is taken from right and power, or from a comparison of the right and power which the potter has over the clay with the right and power which God has over His own workmanship, or rather over that from which He forms His workmanship. The right and power of the potter contributes to prove the unworthiness of that objection, and so to refute it.

This *comparison* goes to demonstrate that it is lawful for God to do the same with His own as the potter does with his own. As to the first, it is concluded thus: ‘If the potter has the power of making out of the same mass a vessel to honour and one to dishonour, then it is not lawful for the thing formed to say to him who formed it, “Why hast thou made me thus?” But the potter has that power: Therefore,’ &c. As to the second, ‘If the potter has that power over his clay, then God has the same over men, or rather over that form which He might be about to make of form men: But the former is .so: Therefore the latter also.’ And on that account it is most allowable for man to say to God, ‘Why hast Thou made me?’ or to make that objection on account of which the Apostle reproveth and chides the objector.

Thus far about the disposition and sum of the objurgatory answer; in which also it has been shown in what way that may conduce to the refutation of the objection itself; that is, if a fitting addition shall have been made to the comparison. Now we must deal with the right and legitimate application of those things compared: which will all be evident from the unfolding of the right and power of God over man, either already created, or to be created. But first of the application of the thing used for comparison in the reason: ‘Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why has Thou made us thus?’ The application of that will be, according to the comparison, even in one third, in this way: ‘So it is not lawful for man to reply to God in the way that thou dost in that objection.’ However that may be, that objection of the man must necessarily agree with this of the thing formed. But that was: ‘If Thou hardenest a man with Thy irresistible will, is it not fit that Thou shouldst be wroth with him:’ which, put in like shape with the thing formed, will run so: ‘Why hast Thou made me to be hardened by Thy irresistible will?’ so that that ‘thus’ in the application signifies: ‘to be hardened by Thy irresistible will?’ What Beza here says concerning the mutability of the human condition, seems to me quite unsuitable to the scope of the passage. And if we consider the proof from the power of the potter, it will be apparent that some such application of the thing compared was to be made. For what has the power of making for dishonour or honour in common with the power of making a changeable being? But it has much in common with this power of making a being that shall be shall be hardened or be followed up with mercy. But let us see now what is the application of this comparison which is made use of in the proof. ‘The potter has power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour.’ The application, taken strictly, will be this: ‘So God has power from the same mass to make some men to honour, others to dishonour;’ or, ‘some to wrath, others to mercy:’ in accordance with what is here being treated of, as appears from the following verses. Whence it is thus concluded: ‘If God has the power of making out of the same mass of mankind a vessel to wrath and a vessel to mercy, then man cannot justly say to Him, “Why hast Thou by Thy irresistible will made me to be hardened, that is, a vessel of wrath?”’ He adjoins about ‘vessels to honour and to dishonour,’ although the question is only about the hardened, because he is treating of the power of God, which is over both.

You see that I have stated these propositions most rigidly according to the sense of our adversaries, because I wish to grant to them whatever may in any way fall in with the Apostle’s scope. But now we must see in what manner these things must be understood which, with these applications, we attribute to God: namely, that He had power to make out of the mass of mankind a vessel to honour and a vessel to dishonour, — a man to be followed up with mercy, and a man to be hardened with irresistible will. The word ‘power’ here used signifies, not ‘ability,’ but ‘right and authority.’ For it is ἐξουσία, not δύναμις: therefore *absolute power* is not here treated of, by which He *can* do anything, but *right*, by which he *may* do anything. By the word ‘mass’ or ‘lump,’ Beza understands ‘mankind not yet made, much less corrupted.’

We know that Augustine is of another opinion, interpreting it as ‘mass of perdition:’ and if anyone wishes to deny, the proof which Beza brings will not suffice: to wit, that otherwise the Apostle would have said, that some vessels were left in that dishonour, others transferred from it to honour. But I am willing to grant this to him, that shapeless matter is signified under the word ‘mass.’ For simply to say that God has not the power to make from one mass a vessel of wrath, and a vessel of mercy, — to make a man to be hardened by His irresistible will, and a man to be followed up with mercy, — does not seem to me quite safe enough. For when we see that God daily makes vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath, and hardens some men and has mercy on others, it certainly is apparent that He has the right to do what He does. But I add that He had the right to do it in the same manner in which He does it, and that He determined to do it on account of those same causes on account of which He in fact does it. The matter, indeed, would be plain of itself, unless it had been involved in difficulties by a preposterous mode of explanation; which I will not here refute, lest I should be too prolix: for my intention was not now to do that, but only to demonstrate that this Chapter, on which they affirm that their doctrine rests as on a foundation, does not favour them.

I will, however, try to throw some light on this matter. When God is said to make a vessel of wrath or of mercy, to harden a man or to have mercy on him, then necessarily three points arise for our consideration, — two explicitly, one implicitly which may intervene between the two former as a condition. For, first, it is unnecessary that man be made, and be, indeed, a vessel: next, it is unnecessary that, before he become a vessel of wrath or of mercy, he be a vessel of sin, that is, an sinner: then, thirdly, that he be a vessel of wrath or of mercy. Now let us see what this work of God is.

First, it is a work of God by which He makes man to be, and not only to be, but to be for a certain end, which is signified by the name of ‘vessel,’ which is the equivalent of ‘instrument.’ But an instrument exists for the sake of some end. This end is said in Scripture to be the glory of God. God, therefore, made man to be His own glory; that is, not in order that He might receive glory from man; but that He might illustrate His glory by man much more brilliantly than by the rest of the creatures. But God’s glory is illustrated by the unveiling of His natural properties, or attributes, especially those which are considered in the second circle of the Divine glory: as justice, goodness, wisdom, power. There are others more deeply innate in the Divine essence, — simplicity, infinity, eternity, unchangeableness, &c. Now it is to be considered, by the display of what properties the glory of God was first to have been illustrated. I say, those of goodness, justice, wisdom, power. For it is the part of the goodness to communicate itself; of justice, to prescribe the plan of communication; of wisdom, to know how that should and may be done; of power, to be able to communicate itself by its own act. *Goodness*, then, impels God, not only to make other things, but to make man especially; that is, that He should communicate Himself to nothing by way of likeness, so that from nothing and that communication which should exist which is ‘man.’ *Justice* prescribed the mode in which it was proper that that communication should be made; for she is the ‘arbitress of goodness,’ or, as Tertullian says, the ‘arbitress of God’s works.’ *Wisdom* knew in what way it would become God to communicate Himself to that which was to be made man, and how God could do it. *Power*, the instrument of these attributes, was ready at hand to execute. For God can communicate His likeness to nonentity. But man was created only to be the vessel of that goodness, justice, wisdom, power; and in this way he was the vessel of glory illustrated. We must see how he becomes a vessel for further illustrating the glory of God. And rightly so: for God made man not so that he should be only what he was made, but that he might tend to greater perfection. For God did not think that it is sufficient satisfaction to His goodness that He should communicate Himself



to man but once, as His Creator, but His own glorifier; but He wished further to communicate Himself to man, as the glorifier of man himself; and in order to accomplish that, He endowed him not only with natural, but also with supernatural gifts. But *justice* prescribed the plan and model of this communication; to wit, that it ought not to be made except under condition, if man should live conformably to the Divine image in obedience to the commands of God: and because he could be exalted, he could also be abased; and nothing more just than that he should be abased, if he abused those gifts, by the right use of which he would be exalted to the highest dignity. Man was, therefore, in that respect, a vessel for ‘illustrating the just goodness and anger of God, by which God may declare His signal goodness in blessing him if he lives righteously, and His severe wrath in punishing him if he transgresses His command.’

Thus God in the beginning made man, and in him the rest of men, vessels for illustrating His righteous goodness and anger, that is, fit instruments for that purpose: but actually He did not so make them exempt with the intervention of that which is here to be considered in the Second place. But man, placed in this position by God, by transgressing the commandment made himself a bad vessel, that is, a sinner; no cooperation of God conducing to this result, except what became his goodness, justice, wisdom, nay, and consistency, in the primaeval institution of creation; whereby nothing would be wanting to man’s liberty, nor would the actual mode of freewill be hindered, — be impelled to this or that. But man, existing in this state, with all his posterity, whom God had determined to produce from his blood in the ordinary manner, was worthy that God should, according to his merit, bestow on him wrath and punishment; that is, that He should in reality make him a ‘vessel of wrath.’ But that same *goodness* (which I may here be allowed to call the womb of mercy) did not suffer this; neither, moreover did God’s justice itself, the arbitress of goodness and mercy. The *wisdom* of God, indeed, knew that punishment was due to that cause, that is, to sin, and *justice* willed what was to be inflicted on the cause; but the former also knew what what further was due to goodness, and the latter, in acquaintance with its nature, willed that on goodness also should be bestowed what was its due; namely, the highest demonstration of itself and its moving forward towards mercy, which is the affectation of goodness towards the miserable, and therefore those of ill desert. For it became the goodness of God to communicate itself not only to the non-existing and to existences meriting nothing, and to those of good desert, (where they had performed the command), but also to those of ill desert, and to the transgressors of the law; that it might both give to them that hath, and might spare him that misuses; being as victorious against sin by remission as triumphant over mortality by creation.

*Wisdom* therefore found out a method by which its deserts might be bestowed on the cause, and its fitting claims be allowed to goodness; to wit, Jesus Christ the Mediator, on whom that cause of mankind might be laid, to be conducted and carried through before the tribunal of justice, whereby man might be a vessel for illustrating goodness and justice in the highest and most excellent manner. But here again, *justice*, mindful of its office, interposed, and showed that communication of mercy without justice should not be made *without condition* in this state any more than in the former; but that it was right a condition should be appointed, according to which that good might, out of mercy, be communicated, or not be communicated; nay, an opposite evil be incurred. And hence it was determined to make some men vessels of wrath, and others of mercy: of mercy, those who should perform the condition; of wrath, those who should transgress it, and should not desist from transgressing; and that irrevocably and necessarily: so that those who might have transgressed the condition, persisting in transgression, should by that very act become vessels of wrath; and those who had performed the condition, should by that very act become vessels of mercy; which mercy, however, grants the power of performing

in that manner in which it is becoming for mercy tempered with justice to bestow it. In short, 'God makes man a vessel; man makes himself a *bad* vessel, or sinner: God decrees to make man, according to conditions pleasing to Himself, a vessel of wrath or of mercy; which in fact He does, when the condition has been fulfilled, or wilfully neglected.'

Hence it appears what is the true sense of the things which are here advanced by the Apostle; namely, that God has the power of making men out of shapeless matter, and of enacting a decree about them, by the mere judgement and pleasure of His will, ratified by certain conditions, according to which He makes some men vessels of dishonour, other vessels to honour; and that therefore man has no just ground of expostulation with God because He has made him to be hardened by His irresistible will; since obstinacy in sins intervenes between the determination of His will and the hardening itself; on account of which God wills, according to the same pleasure of His will, to harden man by His irresistible will. If anyone simply say that God has the power of making man a vessel to dishonour and wrath, he will do the great injustice to God, and will contradict clear Scripture. Wherefore Beza himself does not dare to say that *simply*, but that those things are to be understood of the decree, which He does not execute until after man, having become a sinner, has made himself deserving of wrath. But He so subjoins the execution to the decree as to suspend the proximate cause of the execution on the decree itself; which comes to just the same thing as if he had simply, that God determined to make some men vessels of dishonour, others vessels of honour, some vessels of wrath, others vessels of mercy; and, that He might do this, to make all men sinners primarily, that He might afterwards actually make some, by justice, vessels of wrath and dishonour, others, by mercy, vessels of mercy and honour.

But, whatever absurdity may by sinister interpretation be deduced from the comparison brought forth by the Apostle, it may be seen through by rightly understanding the sole difference which exists between men and the potter's vessels. But these points have been so treated by me, not as if there could be no other application of that comparison, but in order that, allowing those with whom we now have business their own interpretation, I might show that even it, when rightly understood according to the analogy of faith, does not favour a dogma of this sort, such as they wish to conclude from hence; nay, agrees best with that other doctrine which you lay down. But what if I say, and indeed according to my right, that the application is not the one which they palm upon the Apostle's words, but that which the Apostle himself brings forward in the following two verses? — 'But if God, willing to show His wrath,' &c.; — and that in this way that description of the potter's power over the clay tends as well to confirm the reason of the chiding, as to refute the objection itself? Which very things are also closely related; for to show the unworthiness of an objection is in some measure to refute it, as we see in the former parts.

Nor do I see why this application cannot fittingly be accommodated to that proposition: 'For as the potter has power over the clay, to make from the same mass one vessel to honour, another to dishonour, so God has the same power, and indeed a much more just power, to endure with longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and to prepare the vessels of mercy for glory.' And this equity is illustrated by the ends which God has in view in both cases. But will anyone say that those things have not a fitting agreement with each other, — the making a vessel to dishonour, and by His lenity bearing with vessels of wrath already framed for dishonour, that is, destruction; but that this rather agrees to it, — the framing vessels of wrath for destruction; as the preparing vessels of mercy for glory agrees with that, — making them to dishonour? But who shall prescribe to the Apostle the mode of application for the comparison? Is it not allowable for him to demonstrate the equality of the divine power in

what God actually does with respect to vessels of wrath and of mercy; although it be less than what the potter does about vessels of dishonour; that in this way the force of the argument may be stronger, from the less to the greater, than from the equal to the things equally compared? Something, however, is wanting to that apostolical comparison; and it is clear that it is of this sort: Whether He will not have the power of doing that; or, whether therefore He cannot justly be wroth with the hardened.

But now at length let us see how excellently that objection is refuted by these words, however they are taken, whether according to the application of the comparison, or simply by their own force. I have already said, and say now again, that no objection in all Scripture seems to me to be more firmly refuted, and no answer more sufficiently to exhaust all the difficulties of the objection.

The objection had these three things: — *the antecedent*: ‘God hardens whom He will:’ *the consequent*, which was the objection: ‘Therefore He cannot rightly be angry with those who are hardened;’ the *proof of the consequent* from the adjunct of the Divine will: ‘Because God’s will cannot be resisted.’ Let the antecedent and the reason of the consequent be connected: ‘Those whom God wills to harden by His irresistible will’ — the consequent is added — ‘with them He cannot rightfully be angry.’ Four simple elements are contained in that objection:

- the Divine anger
- those who are hardened
- the irresistible will
- deservedly or undeservedly;

which fourth item I would rather call a mode either of composition by affirmation or of division by negation. An affection, or relation, is propounded between these by the objector, of this sort: The Divine anger is the adjunct which God employs about the hardened, who therefore are the object of His anger, and He the cause; as often objects have the relation of causes, not with the adjuncts themselves in themselves, but as far as they are employed about the objects, — that is, not so far as they exist by the first act, but by the second. The hardened, and the irresistible will, are put as the cause and effect: ‘The hardening is the effect of the irresistible will of God.’ Now it is asked whether, that affection, or relation, being supposed between the hardening and the irresistible will, there is the same relation between the Divine wrath and the hardened; that is, whether God can be angry with those thus hardened; which is signified by the word ‘deservedly,’ or ‘undeservedly.’

Having made these explanations, let us apply the Apostle’s answer

1. First, the Apostle declares that that ‘affection’ is not between the wrath of God and the hardened, but rather universal. For the hardening are not the object of the Divine wrath, nor is the hardening the cause of the wrath, but rather the Divine wrath is the cause of the hardening; and God in the act of hardening deals with those with whom He is already angry, that is, who by the very act are already vessels of wrath. Which the Apostle denotes in these words: ‘God hardens the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.’ There is, therefore, in those arguments not only the fallacy from ‘a cause which is not a cause,’ ‘a subject which is not a subject,’ but also an inversion of cause and effect, of subject and adjunct; wherefore the refutation of that part is most firm. So far is it from the fact that God is not able to be angry with the hardened, that on the contrary He does

not harden any except those who have already become vessels of the most just Divine wrath by their own fault. Indeed, the whole Scripture teaches that the hardening is the effect and sign of the Divine wrath. Wherefore the question is foolish, whether God can be angry with the hardened; when it should have been asked, whether God can harden those with whom He is angry.

2. Next, the Apostle replies to the ‘affection’ between hardening and the irresistible will, in these words: ‘He endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath:’ by which words he signifies that the mode of hardening is by patience and gentleness, not the omnipotent action of a will which cannot be resisted. Therefore here also is the fallacy of ‘a cause which is no cause.’ But some one will say, ‘Does not the decree by which God determines to harden the vessels of wrath proceed from the will which cannot be resisted?’ So it does truly: but it is one thing for God to use the act of an omnipotent will to effect hardening, and another to determine by that will that He will harden vessels of wrath. For in that way will is attributed to the decree of hardening, not to the act itself: between which there is so great a difference, that God can by His irresistible will make a decree concerning hardening the vessels of wrath by His patience and long-suffering. If any one retort that the hardening will follow all that more certainly for that patience, on account of that decree by which God determined not only to use His patience but to use it for hardening; and that this is equivalent to the almighty action of the will against which there can be no resistance:— I deny that they are equivalent. But many things belong to the reason of this denial, which it would be too tedious here to adduce: wherefore I will pass over the reply, because that objection does not injure the proposition. For, let us concede that the vessels of wrath are hardened by the force of an omnipotent will, will this derogate in the slightest degree from the justice of the Divine anger, since they themselves have deserved hardening, but it is for God’s decision to inflict punishment, in whatever may seem best to Him?
3. The third part of the answer is in reference to the *equity* of that Divine act, which the Apostle is now explaining, taken from its end. For what! is it not just that God should sometimes display His wrath and power? Most just. But against whom, if not against ‘vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, whom God endured with much long-suffering?’ Either it is just for God to declare His power and wrath against persons of this sort, or He will never be free to do so; and so God would be armed with power and anger in vain, as being attributes which He would never be able to exercise, in whatsoever mode He might be provoked. Hence appears, more fully than the needful refutation of that objection required, what has here been performed by the Apostle. For whatever could be urged, not only in excuse, but also in defence, nay, even in proclamation, of the Divine wrath against the hardened, is here adduced; and so are they described, against whom God wills to display His wrath and power, that they embrace in themselves all the just causes of the Divine anger together. For He is not angry with them, except when they have already become vessels of wrath; nor, when they by their own deserts are fitted for destruction, does He, as is His right, immediately execute His wrath to their destruction, but bears with them long with great long-suffering and patience, inviting them to penitence and awaiting their repentance. But when, with a hard heart and one untouched by repentance, they despise that patience and long-suffering of God, it is not wonderful that the most merciful goodness of God cannot restrain itself from the introduction of anger, lest, while

demanding everywhere that its own highest dues should be rendered to it by justice, it should seem willing to allow no place at all to justice itself.

We shall, however, propound the answer more briefly, if we fit it to the several parts of the objective syllogism. The syllogism was like this:

- He who hardens by His irresistible will, can[not] rightfully be angry with the hardened:
- But God hardens by His irresistible will:
- Therefore He cannot rightfully be angry with the hardened.

The Apostle replies to the proposition by negation: as well because it is simply false; — for those whom God hardens have deserved that hardening, and God is free to inflict it on those who have deserved it, in whatever mode He may think best; — as because the hardening is falsely alleged as the cause of God’s wrath, when they are already vessels of wrath before they are hardened, and the wrath is the cause of the hardening. Let then the proposition be corrected in this way: ‘He who by His irresistible will hardens those who, because they are vessels of wrath, have deserved that hardening, — He can moreover be rightfully angry with those who are hardened.’ To the minor he answers by laying down another mode of hardening, by which the mode assumed in the minor is taken away: for He ‘endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction;’ and why is it to be laid to God’s charge, if they are thereby hardened on account of their own wickedness? Let the minor also be corrected: ‘But God, using patience and long-suffering towards the vessels of wrath, hardens them.’ Whence also the major comes to be further corrected by the supposition of this mode of hardening, which will much commend His truth and equity. Hence it now follows that the conclusion is false; the opposite of which is the necessary sequence from the correction made in the antecedents, and is most true, not only on account of the truth preceding it, but also on account of the just and of the Divine hardening, which is, the illustration and display of God’s wrath and power. As regards that phrase, ‘vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,’ it can easily be understood from the preceding remarks. It has already been shown on what occasion the Apostle made the addition about ‘vessels of mercy:’ and because there is no question with regard to them, I shall forego any further explanation.

And thus I think I have shown *that this passage of the Apostle does not serve to confirm the opinion which many suppose to rest on the foundation of this Chapter*. But it did not seem best to treat the matters actually comprised in this Chapter at greater length, because that will be done more fittingly in another place, when we consider them by themselves, not as supported by the authority of this or that passage.

If any man will show to me  
That I with Paul do not agree,  
With readiness I will abstain  
From my own sense, and *his* retain:  
But if, still further, one will show  
That I’ve dealt faith a deadly blow,  
With deepest grief my fault I’ll own,  
And try my error to atone.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>As Arminius bursts into verse at the end of the ‘*Analysis*,’ I have felt it incumbent on me to render his hexameters and pentameters into English rhymes, which, neither sublime nor pathetic, give the spirit of the original poetry faithfully. —W.N.