

A
CONTEMPLATION
ON THE
WILL AND DOMINION
OF THE
LORD JESUS CHRIST,
ON HIS
DIGNITY AND PREROGATIVES,
AND ON THE
AFFECTIONS OF CHRIST.

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 C O N T E M P L A T I O N
 O N T H E
 W I L L A N D D O M I N I O N
 O F
 C H R I S T.

The WILL of CHRIST is accurately distinguished into the WILL of his DECREE and the WILL of his COMMAND.—The former signifies all THINGS which he purposes to do—the latter includes his whole LAW, or all THINGS which he requires to be done—his LAW is a RULE, which commands all that is right, and forbids all that is wrong.

VI. **T**HE WILL of CHRIST is an infinite and most glorious power of self-determination, or free choice to do a thing, or to let it alone.

There is the most perfect liberty in Christ. Liberty in him is found in it's full perfection. He is so free, that he can do whatever he pleases; but he is so holy and just, that he will never please to do a sinful or unjust action.

The will of Christ is distinguished into secret and revealed. His

His secret will becomes revealed in creation, providence, and grace; in all events which take place in every part of the world, and in every hour of the lives of all mankind. His secret will becomes revealed by all the grand chain of prophecy. A large series of which prophecies we have given in ten classes, or heads, concerning Christ himself, the Jews, the Egyptians, the Tyrians, the Ninevites, the four universal monarchies, under the representation of a grand image, and of four wild beasts, the siege and destruction of Jerufalem, with many others, in vol. the second of my Contemplations, from page 41 to page 176.

The will of Christ, which he would have performed and obeyed by us, is revealed in his law, which was originally inscribed on the heart of man, and is now written in the ten commandments, and also in the positive precepts of the gospel. See the rules for understanding this holy law, in Contemplations, vol. II. p. 259--261.

The secret will of Christ is revealed in the gospel in a most astonishing and glorious manner. Here we have the richest depths of Christ's gracious heart laid open to a ruined world; and all his gracious intentions concerning our free and eternal redemption, are fully made known.

The most accurate distinction of the will of
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Christ is into that of the will of his DECREES, and the will of his COMMANDS.

CHRIST'S will of his COMMANDS or precept, or his commanding will, is the rule of men's duty; which consists in the most intense love to Christ, and love to all mankind as our fellow creatures. This law we shall endeavour to explain and enforce in it's proper place.

CHRIST'S will of decree is the primary, original, and proper will of Christ. This is the rule of all his own actions. The LORD JESUS CHRIST acts and performs all things in heaven, earth, and hell, according to the will of his purpose. This will of Christ is always done: it cannot be resisted and made void by devils, or bad men, or good men, or angels. And this will we should always attentively regard, in all we purpose and perform; saying, if the Lord will, we will do this or that, Jam. iv. 13--15. 1 Cor. iv. 19. This WILL we should own and submit to in every thing that concerns us in life and in death. Thy will be done, O! Lord Jesus, in all that befalls us, should be our temper and language every moment to our last breath.

I. The OBJECTS of the WILL of CHRIST.

These are himself; his father; his holy spirit; his people; his angels; all bad men; and all
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other things without himself, whether good or evil—these are all the objects of his will.

All GOOD things are the objects of his will: all EVIL things are the objects of his will. The EVIL of chastisement of true believers; the EVIL of punishment of the wicked in this life, and in hell, is the object of Christ's will; and all the dreadful and eternal torments of the damned are for the glory of his infinite WRATH, which is no other than his PUNISHING JUSTICE.

The EVIL of FAULT or BLAME, i. e. SIN, is the object of the will of Christ.—In sin there are three things always to be considered; the ACT, the GUILT or offence and the obligation to suffer, and the actual PUNISHMENT. The only difficulty is concerning the act of sin. As to the act of sin, it may be considered as it is a natural or a MORAL act: or the ACT, and the disorder, irregularity, and vitiosity of that act. As a natural act, we are all dependent upon CHRIST every moment: in him we live, and move, and have our being, Acts xvii. 28. This natural and incessant dependence on Christ is demonstrated with great clearness, strength, and beauty, by that prince of divines, Dr. Witfius, in his *Œconomy of the Covenants*, book I. chap. viii. sect. xii--xxx. If this is not reasoning, I profess I never saw it, and never expect to see it.

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With respect to *sinful* ACTIONS. There are two self-evident truths to be set down as certain and eternal, whether we can see their connexion and agreement or no.

A X I O M 1.

That CHRIST is not, and cannot be the author of sin.

A X I O M 2.

That the providence of Christ has a concern with all sinful actions, in some sense or another: for Christ is the source of all motion and action; but the vitiosity, deformity, and filthiness of sin, as it is a departure from the order of the divine law, is of men only, and not of Christ.

But I must forbear enlarging on this sublime and difficult subject, and remit my readers to the second volume of my Contemplations, p. 381--384. where they will find a clear account of this matter, with reference to Dr. Doddridge's Lectures, p. 71. the great Andrew Baxter, in his Appendix on the Soul; Dr. Gill, in his Body of Divinity, vol. I. p. 135. and Dr. Witfius.

II. The NATURE and PROPERTIES of the WILL of CHRIST.

The will of Christ is natural and essential; eternal; immutable; invincible, and always
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efficacious

efficacious to produce the effect designed. The will of Christ has no cause out of himself; for then there would be something prior to Christ. His will is not conditional, or dependent on creatures or actions. His will is most sovereign and free in all creation, providence, and in the salvation of immortal souls.—See all these properties explained in *Contemplations*, vol. II. p. 384--387.

RECOLLECTION and devotional Exercise on
the WILL and DECREES of CHRIST.

The will and decrees of Christ may inspire us with a good and confident expectation of the happy final issue of all things concerning every true christian.

We may safely lay down the following truths, as self-evident to every man of sense in the whole world.

A X I O M 1.

The decrees of Christ can never clash with his laws, or with our duty and best interest.

A X I O M 2.

Christ has never decreed any thing *against* my loving him with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and all my strength.

A X I O M 3.

Christ has never decreed any thing *against* my
faith

faith in his person, blood, and righteousness; and my joy in him as the supreme good.

A X I O M 4.

Christ has never decreed any thing *against* my imitation of his beautiful example, or against my living *from* him as my principle, *like* him as my pattern, and *to* him as my end.

A X I O M 5.

Christ has never decreed any thing *against* my duty and gratitude to the Holy Spirit.

A X I O M 6.

Christ has never decreed any thing *against* my duty to myself, with respect to temperance, chastity, humility, prudence, diligence, and fortitude.

A X I O M 7.

Christ has never decreed any thing against my ardent love to the true church and people of God.

A X I O M 8.

Christ has never decreed any thing *against* my love to all mankind; or my justice, mercy, and truth towards the whole world.

A X I O M 9.

Christ has never decreed any thing against wise and virtuous FRIENDSHIP amongst true christians.

A X I O M 10.

A X I O M 10.

Christ has never decreed any thing against my true honour, my true riches and interests, my true joy, peace, and pleasure.

A X I O M 11.

Christ has never decreed that the devil, the world, and sin, should be absolute tyrants over me to the end of life, or that wicked men should trample my soul under their feet.

A X I O M 12.

All true christians may safely and confidently conclude, that Christ has never decreed any thing against our delight in his perfections, or our interest in his heart, or our union with his person, and our perception of his beauty. He has never decreed any thing against his church being the object of his love and delight; because he invites us to come into his company every moment, and he hates to have us leave it. For this is his language: Let me see thy face, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely, Song ii. 14.—See Dr. Owen and the judicious Brine, on Communion with God; with Dr. Gill on the above passage, in his admirable Exposition of the Song of Songs.

Let us now return to view the will of Christ in it's volitions and decrees, on purpose to enlarge
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large our conceptions of his glorious person and infinite perfections; as well as to teach us to extract strong consolation from this sublime subject, and apply it to the richest designs of practical godliness.

What an amazing grandeur is to be seen in the decrees and purposes of Christ!

Only consider for a moment the vast extent and objects of his will, as God over all.

The objects are the universe, the whole universe to the uttermost star—the earth and all it's changes to the last universal burning—the oceans, seas, rivers, and springs—the changes of the weather, the rain, hail, winds, tempests, frost, snow, the thunder and lightning!—the revolutions of nature—the spring, summer, autumn, and winter—the succession of day and night—the dreadful deluge, and the re-peopling the world with new generations of mankind; with the settlement of all nations—the four universal monarchies or empires—the CHURCH of GOD in every age. This is an object of his *will* above all things besides. It's members; it's great men; it's doctrine and morals; it's internal holiness and external worship; it's battles and triumphs over all it's enemies, and final salvation! This was an object worthy of a God. The persecutions

tions of the church of Christ; the glory of the church in the latter day; and the personal reign of Christ—all these were the glorious objects of his will.

Every individual of mankind, from his birth to his death, with all the minute affairs of every good man in the world!

All that Christ himself was to be in his incarnation, life, and death, was the object of his will and choice—all his obedience and sufferings, from the manger to the cross, and from the cross to the tomb; his resurrection and ascension to glory—all his promises and prophecies; all his threatenings to his enemies; and grace to his friends. The final state of all bad men in hell—and the final state of all good men in heaven; with all the consequent transports and horrors of the two eternal worlds, have been, and now are, the objects of Christ's most wise and holy will.

The USES of the DECREES of CHRIST.

The decrees or purposes of Christ's will are clearly interpreted by all the rich promises of the covenant of grace: and these promises not only unfold in *general* the purposes of Christ, but they likewise give a *particular* and distinct account of the special blessings that believers may expect in their several DEGREES in the christian temper and
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life; in their STATIONS in the church; and in their various CONDITIONS and circumstances in civil society: and all these degrees, stations, and conditions are so clearly described in scripture, that if a christian is wise to discern his own degree, station, and condition, he may safely apply to such peculiar promises which suit his own case; and from the promises he may rise to the purposes of Christ; and rejoice to see that every thing kind, generous, and good is to be found in Christ's heart towards himself.

Now what a noble spring are the decrees of Christ, to excite us to wise and generous actions and brave undertakings, for the glory of his person and perfections; to promote his cause, interest, and kingdom in the world! When we consider and believe that Christ has taken, even from eternity, the wisest and best care of all events in the church and the world; and has secured a good issue of all things that ever happen in the universe,* or amongst his people: and how securely may we trust in Christ, for a fair account of every event at last, even of the worst appearances of things, in the most corrupt and disorderly state of the world and the church, since they have not escaped his eternal foresight and provision!

What then remains for us to care about, but
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* See this well illustrated in Edwards's History of Redemption.

only to do our DUTY; and to apply to it so much the more cheerfully and resolutely, as we have no need to distract our minds about the issues of things; because Christ has secured the good and happy consequences of all worthy actions.

With what calmness, serenity, and fortitude may a worthy and good man commit himself to Christ in a course of well doing?

What has he to fear? What has he to dread? that should deter or divert him from the most difficult or dangerous works or services he is called to engage in, or warranted by the word of God to perform. For the true christian knows that *nothing* is left to chance, or fortune, or fate; which are words fit only for ideots and fools. Nothing is left to the absolute will and power of creatures; but all events in the *natural*, and all occurrences in the MORAL WORLD, are regulated by the decrees and will of Christ; which will of his doth daily and very often bring forth to view, what could never be expected from the OUTWARD FACE OF THINGS: and which decree of Christ is so far interpreted by all the promises of grace, in a special and particular manner, that let the decree of Christ open how it will, the wise and gracious christian shall be made better by every thing, and worse by nothing that takes place in his whole administration of divine providence and grace.

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Let this then be a source of strong CONSOLATION; and a mighty spring of brave and generous actions,* for the interest and glory of Christ.

Let us never abuse the decrees of Christ. We abuse his purpose and decrees, when we expect any good, in the neglect of prudent means to obtain it; or refuse to obey the rules which Christ has prescribed to us in his holy word.

We abuse Christ's decrees, when we plead them as a reason or excuse for our committing sin; or for a justification of our own folly and imprudence: or when we fret against his purpose and providence, after we have acted a perverse part of conduct; and by departing from the line of duty, have brought distress and misery upon ourselves.

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* Amongst the vast variety of good actions and services to be performed for the glory of Christ; I might observe, that there are some that more *peculiarly* belong to gospel ministers; and some that in a special manner belong to the people.—I will, at present, mention only three:—*assisting*, to the utmost of our power, in bringing forwards sound, judicious preachers of the gospel—another good work is making an annual collection for the fund, or to succour aged ministers who are laid aside from their master's work—and a third good work is raising and supporting protestant charity-schools all over the kingdom. For a farther view of this noble subject, read Dr. Doddridge's chapter, entitled, *The Christian urged to exert himself for Purposes of Usefulness*. See *Rise and Progress of Religion*, chap. xxviii. and Dr. Gill, on good works, in his *Body of Practical Divinity*, p. 456-461.

Let us daily consider this great and sure truth, or

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Whatever the decrees of Christ are, they leave us to the full use of our rational powers; and under an obligation to pursue the dictates of right reason, and the word of GOD, for our temporal and eternal welfare, as much as if there were NO DECREES at all.

Christ's LAW, which we may and ought to know clearly, and not his DECREE, is the rule of our duty. His decree we cannot know till the event reveals it; but his law we may know, as the measure and only rule of our whole conduct.

Christ does not want our sins and follies for the accomplishment of his purposes; although his wisdom will not lose his own ends by those sins, and he will over-rule them to a good issue in his glory and his people's happiness. But let us ever remember, that this does not lessen the infinite malignity and guilt of sin, which would bring on every sinner eternal ruin, if it were not prevented by sovereign and invincible grace.

Berry Street Serm. VI. p. 92.

LORD JESUS! suffer us not to abuse thy secret decrees and purposes; but assist us to keep close to thy holy law, as the rule of our duty towards
 GOD,

GOD, ourselves, and all mankind; and let us ever rejoice in this grand truth, that wisdom, duty, and happiness coincide, and are one. What a benevolent constitution is this, and how worthy of our attention, admiration, gratitude, and praise.

VIII. CHRIST hath the full DOMINION of GOD.

The dominion or sovereignty of Christ consists in his right to make what creatures he pleases—in his right to possess, and use as entirely his *own*, all the creatures he has made—and in his right to dispose of all the creatures, in all worlds, which he hath made and doth possess. See the great Charnock on the Divine Attributes, vol. I. edit. 3. p. 424.

SOVEREIGN POWER belongs to CHRIST; or Christ, as the great GOD over all, blessed for ever, hath an absolute dominion over all the creation, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational; to govern, dispose, and determine their existence from moment to moment as he sees good.

The grand act of dominion was Christ's decree for creating the whole frame of the world; and of doing, or permitting to be done, whatever should be in it, to the end of time, and to the moment of the dissolution of the whole fabric or structure of the universe.

DEMONSTRATIONS

DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE DOMINION OF CHRIST.

1. His giving the world an actual existence in it's matter, form, beauty, parts, the laws of nature and final causes, according to the eternal ideas which existed in his infinite understanding.

2. His universal preservation, and direction of all things; his suspending the laws of nature; his acting above or beyond the laws of nature; and his acting quite contrary to the laws of nature. See his absolute will over the *inanimate* creation, in the general deluge—in the Red Sea—the sun and moon made to stand still—the raging fiery furnace forbearing to burn. See his most absolute dominion over the *animate* creation: the beasts obey him, and go into the ark—the frogs come at his command—the lice—the locusts hear his voice—the dumb ass speaks by his order—the lion kills a prophet, but dares not tear his flesh—the voracious ravens feed a prophet—the whale swallows up another, and carries him safe down to the bottom of the sea; and the third day, at Christ's command, vomits him up on dry land—lions obey him, and become lambs—all diseases and devils flee before him; and death, in amaze, lets go his prisoners—the passions of wicked men obey his voice—and the invisible world feels his absolute power.

3. The supreme and rightful dominion of
Christ

Christ is assented to by all the greatest, the wisest, and best of men, in all ages of the church; in their actions and practice; in their confessions and words. Abel brings him his best lambs for sacrifice—Noah obeys him and builds the ark—Abraham obeys, and goes out of his country, not knowing whither he went—Moses appears before the king, and fears not his wrath—Aaron holds his peace—David says, here I am, let the Lord do with me as seemeth him good. They all own him as the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; they say, we are the clay, thou art the potter.—Job asserts, that he gives not account of his matters: another great man acknowledges, that he does, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, what he pleases; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou! Dan. iv. 35. Another confesses that Christ is exalted as head above all.

4. ANGELS and DEVILS own Christ's absolute and eternal dominion over all things.

The *holy* angels actively obey Christ in all things; they love to please him; they enquire into his will; they delight to execute his commands; they fly through universal space to serve his interest, protect his people, and to spread abroad his glory.

The *sinful* angels, stiled devils, though full of
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pride and malice against Christ, yet they are forced to own his dominion: the grand rebel spirit durst not speak one word when our redeemer pronounced his doom in the garden of Eden, and see, all through the New Testament, the devils durst not answer again, or disobey his sovereign pleasure.

5. CHRIST himself *asserts* his absolute and eternal dominion over all things. In very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, Exod. ix. 16. Who made the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord? iv. 11. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, Exod. xxxiii. 19. Rom. ix. 15. I am the first and the last—my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure, Isa. xlvi. 10. Wo to him that striveth with his maker: shall the clay say to the potter, What vessel makest thou, Isa. xlv. 9. Hath not the potter power over the clay? Rom. ix. 21. I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither can any deliver out of my hand: if I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever: if I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies: I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, Deut. xxxii. 39--42. That is a most tremendous declaration of his sublime dominion, which we have from the
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mouth of Christ himself, in Ezek. xiv. 8. 9. I will set my face against that man, and if the prophet be deceived, I, Jehovah, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him; the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh to him. O! my readers, let us adore his perfections, let us revere his absolute dominion, and bow our whole souls to his sovereign pleasure.

6. The several ACTIONS and INSTITUTIONS of Christ shew his absolute dominion over the universe.

His placing the eternal state and condition of man on the single footing of his eating or not eating the fruit of a tree in the midst of the garden—his not destroying our first parents immediately on their act of rebellion—his giving a free promise of salvation through his own incarnation and death, without being asked—his protecting Cain, though he was so horrid a murderer, and deserved to die in a moment—his preserving Ham from the deluge, though he was probably a much worse character than many who perished—conferring the blessing on Jacob, although he took very unlawful steps to obtain it—his softening the heart of Esau, when he was on the very purpose and point of the keenest revenge—his ex-

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cluding Moses from Canaan, for a fretful and indecent temper and expression—and yet bearing with peevish Jonah to an amazing degree—whilst Uzzah dies for only touching the ark—yet the Philistines were allowed to bear it away in triumph. What striking evidences are these, of the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ! In the book of Esther we have striking evidences of Christ's absolute dominion over the persons, counsels, and actions of men: in working on the heart of the king; over-ruling the lot which was cast by Haman; confounding his pride; bringing him to utter ruin; and advancing Mordecai to the highest honour and power.

7. The sovereign dominion of Christ shines gloriously in his constantly and universally over-ruling the designs and actions of men, to bring his own counsels to pass; although men's purposes are improper in their own nature; yea, although they are contrived intentionally to prevent the counsels and promises of God. The builders of Babel confounded in their designs—Jacob grows rich under oppression—Joseph is advanced through his brethren's cruelty and his mistress's lust—the Israelites increase more than ever under Pharaoh's tyranny—although Moses was slow of speech, yet he shall be Christ's ambassador

bassador to Pharaoh—Deborah, a female warrior, shall be the deliverer of the Israelites—Gideon shall have no more than three hundred men, with lamps and pitchers, to fight the battles of God—Shamgar shall destroy six hundred men with an ox goad—Sampson shall kill a thousand men with a jaw bone—Daniel and his friends shall thrive with pulse and water—the persecution of the apostles shall spread the gospel through the Roman empire—the blood of the martyrs shall be the seed of the church—and the Roman emperors, with all their cruelty and rage, shall make christianity flourish amongst millions! and the history* of the church, in all ages, will furnish us with ten thousand demonstrations of the glorious, the awful, and the gracious dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

8. Christ's dominion of grace brightly appears in subduing the stubborn spirits of sinners, at their effectual calling and regeneration, according to his sovereign pleasure. The regeneration of a soul is a most glorious display of Christ's dominion over immortal spirits; it is a more noble action than the casting out a legion of devils, and is followed with more happy and eternal consequences; it is the motion of God in the
 X 2 creature,

* See LAMPE'S Synopsis of Ecclesiastical History, 12mo. 1726; with FOX'S Book of Martyrs, and COLLET on Providence, 8vo. 1740.