

The Sovereign Providence of God

Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked? (Ecclesiastes 7:13)

It cannot be questioned but the crook in the lot, considered as a crook, is a penal evil, whatever it is for the matter of it; that is, whether the thing in itself, its immediate cause and occasion, are sinful or not, it is certainly a punishment of affliction. Now, as it may be, as such, holily and justly brought on us, by our Sovereign Lord and Judge, so he expressly claims the doing or making of it. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?" Wherefore, since there can be no penal evil but of God's making, and the crook in the lot is such an evil, it is necessarily concluded to be of God's making.

Secondly, it is evident, from the Scripture doctrines of divine providence, that God brings about every man's lot, and all the parts of it. He sits at the helm of human affairs, and turns them about in whatever way he lists. "Whatever the Lord pleased, that He did in heaven and in earth, in the seas and all deep places. " There is not anything whatever befalls us without his overruling hand. The same providence that brought us out of the womb, brings us to, and fixes us in the condition and place allotted for us, by him who "has determined the times and the bounds of our habitation. " It overrules the smallest and most casual things about us, such as "hairs of our head being all numbered;" a "lot cast into the lap. " Yea, the free acts of our will, by which we choose for ourselves: for even "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as rivers of water. "And the whole steps we make, and which others make in reference to us; for "the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walks to direct his steps. " And this, whether these steps causing the crook are deliberate and sinful ones, such as Joseph's brothers selling him into Egypt; or whether they are undesigned, such as manslaughter purely casual, as when one hewing wood kills his neighbor with "the head of

the ax slipping from the helve. " For there is a holy and wise providence that governs the sinful and the heedless actions of men, as a rider does a lame horse, of whose halting, not he, but the horse's lameness is the true and proper cause; wherefore in the former of these cases, God is said to have sent Joseph into Egypt, and in the latter, to deliver one into his neighbor's hand.

Lastly, God has, by an eternal decree, immovable as mountains of brass appointed the whole of every one's lot, the crooked part of it, as well as the straight. By the same eternal decree, by which the high and low parts of the earth, the mountains and the valleys, were appointed, are the heights and the depths, the prosperity and adversity, in the lot of the inhabitants of there determined; and they are brought about, in time, in a perfect agreeableness there.

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