

THEOLOGICAL DISPUTATION ON THE EFFICACY OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN RELATION TO EVIL

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Explaining the efficacy of Divine Providence in Evil, that is, in guilt or sin, we previously noted the following:

1. Providence is an act of will, which presupposes, however, an act of intellect, representing all ends, that is, subordinate, and all possible means: and consequently, with Theodorus Smisingh, we define Providence as an effective direction of things towards established ends.
2. Sin is ἀνομία (anomia), according to the definition of the Apostle John, 1st Epistle, III, 4, that is, deviation from the law, which is the image of the divine will, to which the rational creature is obliged to conform.
3. The act and the morality of the act can and should be distinguished; although they are not separated.
4. Sin could have been committed by the creature in a state of integrity, as one that was created good, holy, and just, but defective; in fact, the event testifies that it has fallen, Scripture demonstrates, and the light of weakened nature proves.
5. There is no supreme evil that fights against the supreme good; this was an error of the Manicheans.

With these preliminary observations, we affirm that God's Providence concerns both the material and the formal aspects of sin, both in relation to its origin and its progress and consummation.

The acts of God's Providence concerning sin, in terms of its origin or principle, are:

- Predetermination, Concurrence, Impediment, Permission. The first two concern the act, which is subordinate to the viciousness.
- Predetermination is the action of God, by which God operates in the will, exciting it, and occurs beforehand, in the moment of Nature, in its influence on the effect through concurrence with the will, with the previous movement of the active power, to be produced; what concurrence is, deduce from the sayings. Both acts presuppose the conservation of the subject and the rational powers, of which that is the principle from which, these are the principles from which, they elicit moralizing acts, and it is evident that conservation does not actualize the possible, but continues what has already been actualized.

Two subsequent acts follow, namely, Impediment and Permission:

1. **Impediment:**
 - Almost an action contrary to natural propensity. For to impede (these are the words of the famous Twiss) is to go against natural inclination.

○ The impediment is either moral or physical; the former concerns the morality of the act and its non-existence in omission; since, in one or the other case, through legislation, which here, so to speak, places an obstacle to the power of the rational creature, it is removed; nor is this impediment of sin as such, as Arminius wishes, but of morality, indifferently in both the act and its omission, being subject: and so far from impeding sin, that by this means, occasionally, it may be possible to seek it.

2. Deviation:

○ The unpremeditated path is impossible. Physical impediment places an obstacle either to power or to will, and in both cases, by placing a barrier, prevents the agent from acting on what it is inclined to.

○ Theologians anxiously ask here how such impediment occurs. Arminius asserts that power is impeded in four ways:

1. By the deprivation of life.
2. By the ablation or diminution of the forces to act.
3. By the opposition of equal forces.
4. By the subtraction of the object.

3. ○ Arminius does not please me, for by the same means, an angel with created, dependent, finite power could prevent the effect from occurring: and here the infinite is not surpassed: moreover, less precisely, if not absurdly, it is said that someone is impeded, by the deprivation of life, which is the foundation of the powers, for example, Adam, nor gives from the tree of life, Alexander, so that Belgium may not be devastated. For here, neither an obstacle is placed to the act, nor to inclination (which, however, theologians, among others the famous Twiss and Rutherford, require), for neither is present.

○ Others place the impediment in the denial of concurrence, or in further subtraction: in fact, by this, I do not deny that any agent does nothing; however, I also do not admit that in this way God immediately impedes properly, on the contrary, it is evident that not, from what was immediately said before, for impediment requires, for the most part, an obstacle placed extrinsically in a connatural manner, although it can also be degenerated into bodily acts, but in spiritual acts, it is necessarily connatural, because there is no action of the body over the spirit. These observations about power are sufficient, and the same reason applies to will in relation to imperated acts.

○ As for the acts elicited by the volitive power, if and how they are impeded, Twiss confesses it is very difficult to explain; it is evident that they can be impeded, according to Philippians 2.13, but how they are impeded seems to be indicated by the same Apostle in Galatians 5.17. Others prefer to interpret this passage in relation to acts in the order of efficiency. It is noted that the act elicited by will, as nature, cannot be properly impeded, nor coerced; although the same will, as regulatable by legislation, or rather, regulated, is impeded by the denial of grace in the elect before conversion, or by the subtraction of the same in the regenerated for some particular act.

○ Here I stop, and do not meddle more in this thorny matter; let him consult Twisse in his defenses, whoever wishes. The impediment, in the order in which it is placed, is always effective; we do not recognize any sufficient impediment, for the sufficient contradistinct to the effective (which they call sufficient incongruent) is not given. That being so, according to the Remonstrants, the effect could not occur, I add, God cannot be both the impediment and the permissor of the same vicious act.

4. Permission:

○ Permission follows, which is also either Moral or Physical. The former, when one is not coerced by law not to act wrongly unless they incur guilt and penalty, and this permission concerns not so much the act as the morality.

○ The legality of the act is considered. This, Physical, when, without placing an obstacle, prevents another from acting, nor forces the free agent to act. This, opposed to action, not occasionally, but always, not freely, but necessarily, permits sin, distinct from impediment, permitting sins not freely, but not necessarily, and sometimes permits sins. It is not the suspension of impediments, nor of the sufficient ones, because of what was said before, here applicable with due modifications, nor of the effective ones; for thus both good and bad acts would be permitted by God. What is absurd, since Scripture restricts permission to sin or bad acts only (Gen. xx. 6, Deut. xviii. 14).

○ God permits sins voluntarily, carefully, acting omnipotently, knowing, and with the deliberate intention that they be perpetrated by the rational creature. The reason is that God concurs effectively for sin as to its material aspect, and this efficiency is included in permission, as it refers to sin taken concretely. I reject here, therefore, both the Pontiffs and the Remonstrants, who place Permission in relation to the Effects of secondary causes, as an idle intuition, in the order of will, the Principal Cause of those things, namely, of moralized evils, non-violation, non-impossibility, non-necessitation of the cause for another, in which, given the thing so permitted, it may not be, but all the absurdities have been abundantly refuted by ours. We, on the contrary, place Permission as effective, and the thing permitted as infallibilized as to existence, so that, once it is given, the thing is given the necessity of actuality of the Consequence, of inference; remaining, however, this permission in the order as to non-existent morality, Most Just and Most Holy, because by law for God, I add, and with physical influx only as the most universal cause that contributes to the act, the reason for sin is not imputable, for imputability arises from the obligation of the law to impede, which, being God the legislator, is in no way obligated, and is not obligated to impede sin, His permission cannot be culpably imputed to Him. Moreover, this permission is an act of the Most Just Judge who punishes for sins from the beginning.

You say, God does not want?

IV. The acts of divine Providence concerning sin, in terms of progress, are Direction and Determination:

1. **Direction:**

- Direction is the act of Divine Providence by which the sin already permitted is directed where God wills. This will is determined by some specific object, or by the End. The will determined in the object causes the human will, inclined to sin by sin, not to be led to anything that presents itself, but rather to this than to that, being led by this effective direction. The heart of man plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps; this direction takes place according to the connatural mode of action, without violating the free power, although it infallibly determines the event as to the result, see the example in the Jews in Acts 4:28.
- The same will, determined in the end, causes sin to serve the holy purpose, wisely and effectively directed, not so much of the sinner, but of him who permits it sanctimoniously. The end is either for the good of the elect (Rom. 8:28) or for the perdition of the reprobate, so that they accumulate for themselves treasures of divine wrath, and for this reason are truly condemned (Rom. 2:5). The ultimate end is the Glory of God (Prov. 16:4).

2. **Determination:**

- Determination is the act of God's Providence by which the sin permitted by Him does not wander beyond the prescribed limits. These limits are either concerning place, so that it happens there and not here; concerning time, so that it happens in this, and not in that difference of time, so that it ends under that and not in this, which before could be doubted whether it should be conveniently attributed to this Determination, which is an act of divine Providence; for the Determination of this previous moment at which sin occurs seems to arise from the remote Decree; and proximally from the very permission, which being a temporary act of God, permits sin at that and not at another point in time, by the force of which it exists, in that and not in another.
- A term is set for this duration when by the will of God the evil is ordered to cease (Acts 17:30). In times past God allowed... etc. The limits of magnitude are those by which sin is prevented from growing further. By this providential care of God, the sins of the pious do not grow to irredeemability, but the sins of the reprobate grow to a point, and no further.
- Two causes can be attributed: so that the vehemence and ardor of doing evil does not harm the faithful in the matter of salvation, this and that previous impediment are from God as Father of the pious (Job 1:12 and 2:6). Another, which arises from nature itself, is the Judgment by which he destroys those whose number is complete (Gen. 15:16), and for this reason, some things that are proper to the creature are sometimes attributed to God, as in the hand of God (Job 1: last verse).

V. **Punishment and Remission:**

1. Punishment:

- They follow, which concern the formal aspect of sin as a meritorious cause, by which these acts are carried out, for they are punished by the essential force of the Obligation of sin, either by vicarious compensation or by punishment, in the absence of the former.
- I would not want anyone to doubt whether these acts should be referred more to Justice and Mercy, than to Providence. For God provides for the rational creature, even sinful, and that in a manner convenient to its nature, that is, justly, by the force of which it is necessarily punished by Providence according to justice.
- Indeed, the immutable law obliges to punishment antecedent to God's decree that exists in itself; however, punishment is inflicted here, and now, to all degrees, and for that duration, regulated by the will of Providence. Punishment is the affliction of the rational creature because of sins, as a meritorious cause: formally, its reason consists in vengeance, which is the retribution of offenses, correcting them according to merits.
- Punishment is either Desertion, or Affliction, or Destruction, not total, which is called annihilation; for that cannot be a punishment, which is (as Tilenus elegantly puts it in Syntagma part 1, last disp.) an evil that the creature suffers against its will, having its origin in the sin it committed voluntarily. Thus, Destruction denotes all penal death.
- Here I would like to investigate whether corporal Death has an essential respect to Punishment. I answer: I consider that the Penalty that corporal death has in itself in this state is by free constitution of God, consequently adventitious, not essential. These arguments move me: 1. That otherwise God could not kill an innocent creature; 2. That the possibility of dying in Adam would have been simply impossible, for that state, although theologians place a hypothetical impossibility there. What can be objected, we will try to resolve.

2. Desertion:

- It is in the subtraction of grace:
 - 1. Habitual, by blindness, hardening, and delivering over to the power of evil: which is either in the reprobate mind, or in the desires of the flesh, or in the power of Satan, operating powerfully in the children of disobedience;
 - 2. Actual, by which this or that evil act is effectively sought, without assistance: what Arminius places in his persuasions.
- 3. ○ Affliction is a sad evil, by which the creature is afflicted, it can also be a dishonest evil, that is, sin, not as such.

4. Remission:

- Absolute remission, without satisfaction, is not given, nor, however, does it fight in any way. Founded formally on passive obedience, it is not all Justification without the active one, which Christ should have rendered to himself and to us. Remission is an act of God's Providence, by which, according to mercy, He remits

the guilt of sin. I stop here, seek more in the books of common places, there is no time to describe them.

Corollaries of the Respondent:

1. Do the creatures in hell sin desperately? Affirmative.
2. Is the act of the divine decree concerning possible non-futures positive or negative? Affirmative for the first, negative for the second.
3. The cause of reprobation outside God does not exist, neither in the positive act nor in the negative; in relation to the intention of both it is given in relation to the execution.
4. Avenging justice in God as to the outcome, given Sin, is essential; Mercy, given the miserable, is not.
5. What is the origin of possibility? God, or a thing that does not involve contradiction? Inquiry.
6. Can all permission have the nature of punishment? Affirmative, except the permission of Adam's fall.
7. Was there a virtual demerit before the fall, by which permission could have been an act of justice? Negative.
8. An act as such, without connotation of morality, is absurdly said to be permitted.
9. General concurrence indifferent; Middle Knowledge by which the effect is known before the cause, the possible eternity of the world, are truly mere contradictions.
10. We do not recognize an executive principle distinct from the commanding one in God, because Entities should not be multiplied.
11. God cannot afflict an innocent creature with infernal torments.