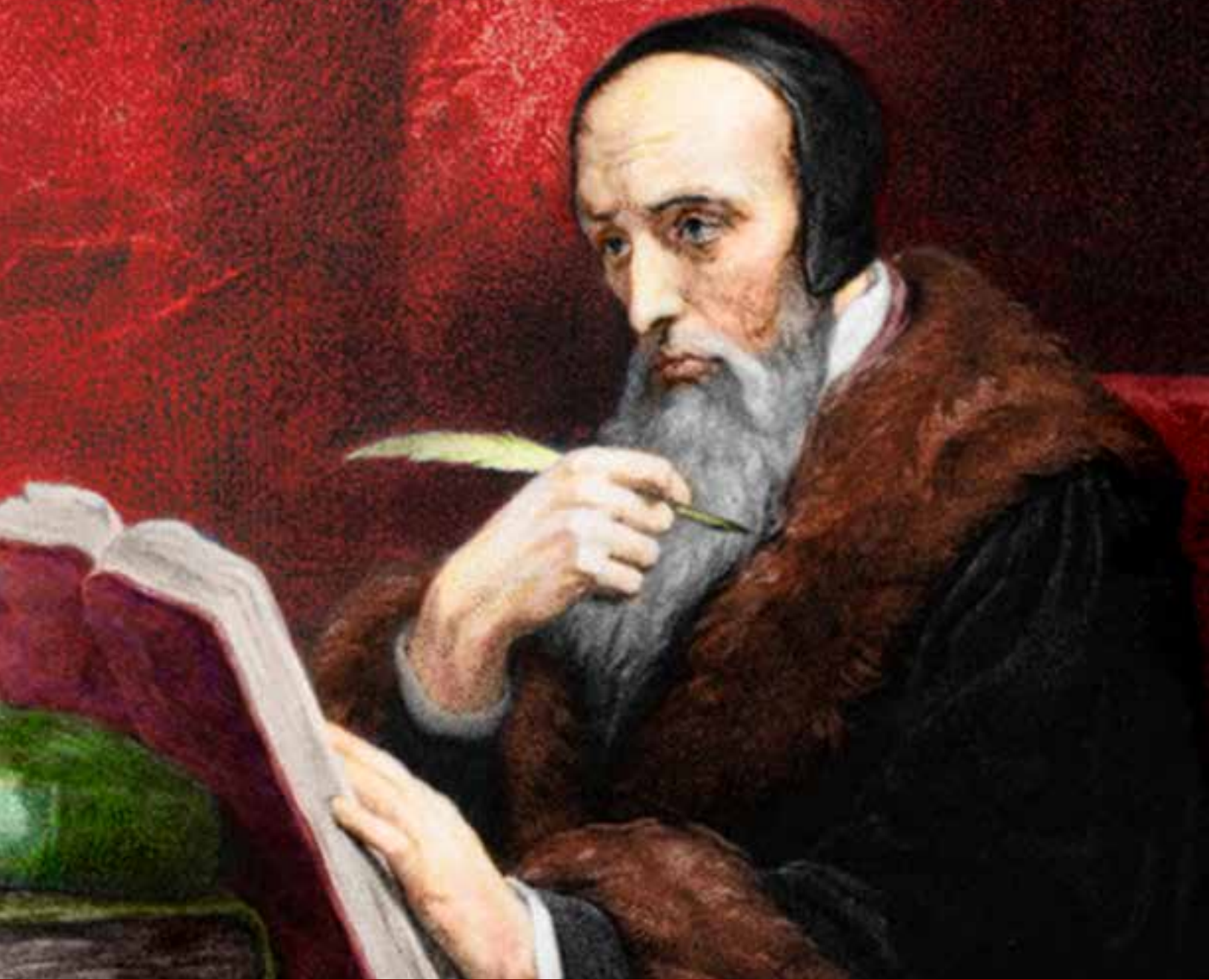


Christian Classic Series



**CALVIN** on  
**PREDESTINATION** and **ELECTION**

*from*

**INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION**

**JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564)**

# CALVIN ON PREDESTINATION AND ELECTION

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By which God has predestined some to salvation and others to destruction

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This is a reprint of chapters XXI-XXIII from the 1559 edition of John Calvin's theological masterwork, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 3, translated into English in 1845 by Henry Beveridge. The publishers desire to introduce the *Institutes* to a modern generation of readers. Therefore, we have undertaken careful improvements in the punctuation and minor editing of the translation while remaining true to the meaning of Calvin's original. "Part One" of this reprint is from chapter 21 in the original, "Part Two" is from chapter 22, and "Part Three" from chapter 23. The editors have added many definition footnotes.

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PART ONE  
OF THE ETERNAL ELECTION<sup>1</sup>

*By which God has predestined some to salvation  
and others to destruction*

Section 1  
The Necessity of This Doctrine

*Introduction*

The covenant of life is not preached equally to all, and among those to whom it is preached, does not always meet with the same reception. This diversity displays the unsearchable depth of the divine judgment, and is without doubt subordinate to God's purpose of eternal election. But if it is plainly owing to the mere pleasure of God that salvation is spontaneously offered to some, while others have no access to it, great and difficult questions immediately arise—questions which are inexplicable when just views are not entertained concerning election and predestination. To many this seems a perplexing subject because they deem it most incongruous that, of the great body of mankind, some should be predestinated to salvation and others to destruction. How causelessly they entangle themselves will appear as we proceed.

We may add that, in the very obscurity which deters them, we may see not only the utility of this doctrine, but also its most pleasant fruits. We shall never feel persuaded, as we ought, that our salvation flows from the free mercy of God as its fountain, until we are made acquainted with His eternal election—the grace of God being illustrated by the contrast, viz.,<sup>2</sup> that He does not adopt all promiscuously<sup>3</sup> to the hope of salvation, but gives to some what He denies to others.

It is plain how greatly ignorance of this principle detracts from the glory of God and impairs true humility. But though thus necessary to be known, Paul declares that it cannot be known unless God, throwing works entirely out of view, elects those whom He

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<sup>1</sup> Part 1: John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 529-540.

<sup>2</sup> viz. – *Latin: videlicet* = that is to say; namely.

<sup>3</sup> promiscuously – randomly.

has predestined. His words are, “Even so then at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Rom 11:6). If to make it appear that our salvation flows entirely from the good mercy of God, we must be carried back to the origin of election, then those who would extinguish it wickedly do as much as in them lies to obscure what they ought most loudly to extol, and pluck up humility by the very roots. Paul clearly declares that it is only when the salvation of a remnant is ascribed to gratuitous<sup>4</sup> election that we arrive at the knowledge that God saves whom He wills of His mere good pleasure—and does not pay a debt, a debt which never can be due. Those who preclude access and would not have anyone to obtain a taste of this doctrine, are equally unjust to God and men; there being no other means of humbling us as we ought, or making us feel how much we are bound to Him.

Nor, indeed, have we elsewhere any sure ground of confidence. This we say on the authority of Christ, Who—to deliver us from all fear, and render us invincible amid our many dangers, snares, and mortal conflicts—promises safety to all that the Father hath taken under His protection (Joh 10:26). From this we infer that all who know not that they are the peculiar people of God, must be wretched from perpetual trepidation,<sup>5</sup> and that those, therefore, who—by overlooking the three advantages which we have noted—would destroy the very foundation of our safety, consult ill for themselves and for all the faithful. What? Do we not here find the very origin of the Church, which, as Bernard<sup>6</sup> rightly teaches, “[it] could not be found or recognized among the creatures,<sup>7</sup> because it lies hid (in both cases wondrously) within the [bosom] of blessed predestination and the mass of wretched condemnation?”<sup>8</sup>

### *Human Curiosity*

But before I enter on the subject, I have some remarks to address to two classes of men.<sup>9</sup> The subject of predestination, which in itself is attended with considerable difficulty, is rendered very perplexing, and hence perilous, by human curiosity, which cannot be restrained from wandering into forbidden paths and climbing to the clouds—determined, if it can, that none of the secret things of God shall remain unexplored. When we see many, some of them in other respects not bad men, everywhere rushing into this audacity<sup>10</sup> and wickedness, it is necessary to remind them of the course of duty in this matter. First, then, when they inquire into predestination, let them remember that they are penetrating into the recesses of the divine wisdom, where he who rushes

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<sup>4</sup> **gratuitous** – freely given; unmerited.

<sup>5</sup> **trepidation** – feeling of alarm or dread.

<sup>6</sup> **Bernard of Clairvaux** (1090-1153) – best known theologian of his day; wrote mystical, theological, devotional works and hymns such as “O Sacred Head Now Wounded.”

<sup>7</sup> **creatures** – human beings created by God.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* lxxviii. 4 (MPL 183. 1161; tr. Eales, *Life and Works of St. Bernard* IV. 480 f.).

<sup>9</sup> The first class is addressed here and in Section 2, and the second class in Section 3.

<sup>10</sup> **audacity** – disrespectful boldness.

forward securely and confidently, instead of satisfying his curiosity, will enter an inextricable labyrinth.<sup>11</sup> For it is not right that man should with impunity pry into things which the Lord has been pleased to conceal within Himself, and scan that sublime eternal wisdom which it is His pleasure that we should not apprehend but adore, [so] that therein also His perfections may appear. Those secrets of His will, which He has seen it meet<sup>12</sup> to manifest, are revealed in His Word—revealed in so far as He knew to be conducive to our interest and welfare.

## Sections 2-4

### How to Study This Doctrine

#### 2. Danger of Excessive Curiosity on This Subject

“We have come into the way of faith,” says Augustine,<sup>13</sup> “let us constantly adhere to it. It leads to the chambers of the king, in which are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. For our Lord Jesus Christ did not speak invidiously<sup>14</sup> to His great and most select disciples when He said, ‘I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now’ (Joh 16:12). We must walk, advance, increase, that our hearts may be able to comprehend those things which they cannot now comprehend. But if the last day shall find us making progress, we shall there learn what here we could not.”<sup>15</sup> If we give due weight to the consideration that the Word of the Lord is the only way which can conduct us to the investigation of whatever it is lawful for us to hold with regard to Him, and is the only light which can enable us to discern what we ought to see with regard to Him, it will curb and restrain all presumption. For it will show us that the moment we go beyond the bounds of the Word we are out of the course, in darkness, and must every now and then stumble, go astray, and fall.

Let it, therefore, be our first principle that to desire any other knowledge of predestination than that which is expounded by the Word of God, is no less infatuated<sup>16</sup> than to walk where there is no path or to seek light in darkness. Let us not be ashamed to be ignorant in a matter in which ignorance is learning. Rather, let us willingly abstain from the search after knowledge to which it is both foolish as well as perilous, and even fatal,

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<sup>11</sup> Thus, Eck boasts that he had written of predestination to exercise his youthful spirits.

Johann Maier von Eck (1486-1543) was a German Scholastic theologian.

<sup>12</sup> **meet** – appropriate.

<sup>13</sup> **Augustine** (AD 354-430) – Bishop of Hippo, early church theologian known by many as the father of orthodox theology; born in Tagaste, North Africa.

<sup>14</sup> **invidiously** – in a manner that is likely to cause resentment.

<sup>15</sup> Augustine; *Homily in John*.

<sup>16</sup> **infatuated** – made foolish; inspired with extravagant passion.

to aspire. If an unrestrained imagination urges us, our proper course is to oppose it with these words, “It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory” (Pro 25:27). There is good reason to dread a presumption which can only plunge us headlong into ruin.

### 3. Sufficiency of Scripture in This Study

There are others who, when they would cure this disease, recommend that the subject of predestination should scarcely if ever be mentioned, and tell us to shun every question concerning it as we would a rock. Although their moderation is justly commendable in thinking that such mysteries should be treated with moderation, yet because they keep too far within the proper measure, they have little influence over the human mind, which does not readily allow itself to be curbed. Therefore, in order to keep the legitimate course in this matter, we must return to the Word of God, in which we are furnished with the right rule of understanding. For Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which, as nothing useful and necessary to be known has been omitted, so nothing is taught but what it is of importance to know. Everything, therefore, delivered in Scripture on the subject of predestination, we must beware of keeping from the faithful, lest we seem either maliciously to deprive them of the blessing of God, or to accuse and scoff at the Spirit as having divulged what ought on any account to be suppressed.

Let us, I say, allow the Christian to unlock his mind and ears to all the words of God which are addressed to him, provided he do it with this moderation, viz., that whenever the Lord shuts His sacred mouth, he also desists from inquiry. The best rule of sobriety<sup>17</sup> is not only in learning to follow wherever God leads, but also, when He makes an end of teaching, to cease also from wishing to be wise. The danger which they dread is not so great that we ought on account of it to turn away our minds from the oracles<sup>18</sup> of God. There is a celebrated saying of Solomon, “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing” (Pro 25:2). But since both piety and common sense dictate that this is not to be understood of everything, we must look for a distinction—lest under the pretense of modesty and sobriety we be satisfied with a brutish ignorance. This is clearly expressed by Moses in a few words, “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever” (Deu 29:29). We see how he exhorts the people to study the doctrine of the Law in accordance with a heavenly decree because God has been pleased to promulgate<sup>19</sup> it, while he at the same time confines them within these boundaries, for the simple reason that it is not lawful for men to pry into the secret things of God.

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<sup>17</sup> **sobriety** – self-control.

<sup>18</sup> **oracles** – authoritative or infallible pronouncements; the Scriptures.

<sup>19</sup> **promulgate** – publish.

#### 4. Scripture Is Safe to Follow

I admit that profane men lay hold of the subject of predestination to carp,<sup>20</sup> cavil,<sup>21</sup> snarl, or scoff. But if their petulance<sup>22</sup> frightens us, it will be necessary to conceal all the principal articles of faith, because they and their fellows leave scarcely one of them unasailed with blasphemy. A rebellious spirit will display itself no less insolently<sup>23</sup> when it hears that there are three persons in the divine essence, than when it hears that God, when He created man, foresaw everything that was to happen to him. Nor will they abstain from their jeers when told that little more than five thousand years have elapsed since the creation of the world<sup>24</sup>—for they will ask, Why did the power of God slumber so long in idleness? In short, nothing can be stated that they will not assail with derision.

To quell their blasphemies, must we say nothing concerning the divinity of the Son and Spirit? Must the creation of the world be passed over in silence? No! The truth of God is too powerful, both here and everywhere, to dread the slanders of the ungodly—as Augustine powerfully maintains in his treatise, *De Bono Perseverantiæ*.<sup>25</sup> For we see that the false apostles were unable, by defaming and accusing the true doctrine of Paul, to make him ashamed of it. There is nothing in the allegation that the whole subject is fraught with danger to pious minds, as tending to destroy exhortation, shake faith, disturb and dispirit the heart. Augustine disguises not that on these grounds he was often charged with preaching the doctrine of predestination too freely; but, as it was easy for him to do, he abundantly refutes the charge.

As a great variety of absurd objections are here stated, we have thought it best to dispose of each of them in its proper place.<sup>26</sup> Only I wish it to be received as a general rule, that the secret things of God are not to be scrutinized, and that those which He has revealed are not to be overlooked, lest we may, on the one hand, be chargeable with curiosity and, on the other, with ingratitude. For it has been shrewdly observed by Augustine<sup>27</sup> that we can safely follow Scripture—which walks softly, as with a mother’s step—in accommodation to our weakness. Those, however, who are so cautious and timid that they would bury all mention of predestination in order that it may not trouble weak minds, with what colour, pray, will they cloak their arrogance when they indirectly charge God

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<sup>20</sup> **carp** – find fault in a disagreeable way.

<sup>21</sup> **cavil** – raise trivial objections; find fault without reason or cause.

<sup>22</sup> **petulance** – irritation; complaining.

<sup>23</sup> **insolently** – in a rudely bold or disrespectful manner; insultingly; in an impertinently contemptuous manner.

<sup>24</sup> The understanding that the earth’s age is relatively young was commonly held throughout Church history until modern times. It was well researched by James Ussher (1581-1656), whose scholarship estimated the age of the earth to be about 6,000 years and was published in his *The Annals of the World*, which traced history from creation to AD 70. It has been corroborated by many “young earth” scientists in our day. See *Understanding the Times* by Ken Ham and *Evolution or Creation?*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

<sup>25</sup> Augustine; *De Bono Perseverantiæ*, “The Good Preservation”; c. xiv-xx.

<sup>26</sup> This is addressed in Part Three (chapter 23 of *Institutes*).

<sup>27</sup> *De Genesi ad Literam*, Lib. v.



with a want<sup>28</sup> of due consideration, in not having foreseen a danger for which they imagine that they prudently provide? Whoever, therefore, throws obloquy<sup>29</sup> on the doctrine of predestination, openly brings a charge against God as having inconsiderately allowed something to escape from Him which is injurious to the Church.

## Sections 5-7

### Predestination in Scripture

#### 5. The Relation of Foreknowledge and Predestination in Scripture

The predestination by which God adopts some to the hope of life and adjudges others to eternal death, no man who would be thought pious ventures simply to deny; but it is greatly caviled at, especially by those who make prescience<sup>30</sup> its cause. We, indeed, ascribe both prescience and predestination to God; but we say that it is absurd to make the latter subordinate to the former.<sup>31</sup>

When we attribute prescience to God, we mean that all things always were, and ever continue, under His eye; that to His knowledge there is no past or future, but all things are present—and indeed *so* present, that it is not merely the idea of them that is before Him (as those objects are which we retain in our memory), but that He truly sees and contemplates them as actually under His immediate inspection. This prescience extends to the whole circuit of the world and to all creatures.

By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God by which He determined with Himself whatever He wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation. Accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death. This God has testified not only in the case of single individuals; He has also given a specimen of it in the whole posterity of Abraham, to make it plain that the future condition of each nation was entirely at His disposal: “When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance” (Deu 32:8-9).

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<sup>28</sup> **want** – lack.

<sup>29</sup> **obloquy** – strong public disfavor.

<sup>30</sup> **prescience** – knowledge of actions or events before they occur.

<sup>31</sup> This is addressed in Part Two, section 1 (chapter 22 of *Institutes*).

The separation is before the eyes of all: in the person of Abraham, as in a withered stock, one people is specially chosen while the others are rejected. But the cause does not appear, except that Moses—to deprive posterity of any handle for glorying—tells them that their superiority was owing entirely to the free love of God. The cause which he assigns for their deliverance is, “Because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them” (Deu 4:37); or more explicitly in another chapter, “The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the LORD loved you” (Deu 7:7-8). He repeatedly makes the same intimation, “Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the LORD’s thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them” (Deu 10:14-15).

Again, in another passage, holiness is enjoined upon them because they have been chosen to be a peculiar people; while in another, love is declared to be the cause of their protection (Deu 23:5). This, too, believers with one voice proclaim: “He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob, whom he loved” (Psa 47:4). The endowments with which God had adorned them, they all ascribe to gratuitous love, not only because they knew that they had not obtained them by any merit, but that not even was the holy patriarch endued with a virtue that could procure such distinguished honour for himself and his posterity. And the more completely to crush all pride, he upbraids them with having merited nothing of the kind, seeing they were a rebellious and stiff-necked people (Deu 9:6). Often also do the prophets remind the Jews of this election, by way of disparagement and opprobrium,<sup>32</sup> because they had shamefully revolted from it.

Be this as it may, let those who would ascribe the election of God to human worth or merit come forward. When they see that one nation is preferred to all others, when they hear that it was no feeling of respect that induced God to show more favour to a small and ignoble body, nay, even to the wicked and rebellious, will they plead against Him for having chosen to give such a manifestation of mercy? But neither will their obstreperous<sup>33</sup> words hinder His work; nor will their invectives,<sup>34</sup> like stones thrown against heaven, strike or hurt His righteousness—nay, rather, they will fall back on their own heads. To this principle of a free covenant, moreover, the Israelites are recalled whenever thanks are to be returned to God, or their hopes of the future to be animated. “The LORD he is God,” says the psalmist; “it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (Psa 100:3; 95:7). The negation which is added, “not we ourselves,” is not superfluous,<sup>35</sup> to teach us that God is not only the author of all the good qualities in which men excel, but that they originate in Himself, there being nothing in them worthy of so much honour. In the following words, also,

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<sup>32</sup> **opprobrium** – reproach mingled with contempt or disdain.

<sup>33</sup> **obstreperous** – unruly; resisting control in a noisy manner.

<sup>34</sup> **invectives** – condemnatory, abusive remarks.

<sup>35</sup> **superfluous** – unnecessary.

they are enjoined to rest satisfied with the mere good pleasure of God: “O ye seed of Abraham, his servant; ye children of Jacob, his chosen” (Psa 105:6).

And after an enumeration of the continual mercies of God as fruits of election, the conclusion is that He acted thus kindly because He remembered His covenant. With this doctrine accords the song of the whole Church, “They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them,” (Psa 44:3). It is to be observed that, when the land is mentioned, it is a visible symbol of the secret election in which adoption is comprehended. To like gratitude David elsewhere exhorts the people, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance” (Psa 33:12). Samuel thus animates their hopes, “The LORD will not forsake his people for his great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people” (1Sa 12:22). And when David’s faith is assailed, how does he arm himself for the battle? “Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts” (Psa 65:4).

But as the hidden election of God was confirmed both by a first and second election, and by other intermediate mercies, Isaiah thus applies the term, “The LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel,” (Isa 14:1). Referring to a future period, the gathering together of the dispersion, who seemed to have been abandoned, He says that it will be a sign of a firm and stable election, notwithstanding the apparent abandonment. When it is elsewhere said, “I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away” (Isa 41:9), the continual course of His great liberality is ascribed to paternal kindness. This is stated more explicitly in Zechariah 2:12 by the angel: the Lord “shall choose Jerusalem again,” as if the severity of His chastisements had amounted to reprobation, or the captivity had been an interruption of election—which, however, remains inviolable,<sup>36</sup> though the signs of it do not always appear.

## **6. Election of Old Testament Israel**

We must add a second step of a more limited nature, or one in which the grace of God was displayed in a more special form, when of the same family of Abraham God rejected some and, by keeping others within His Church, showed that He retained them among His sons. At first Ishmael had obtained the same rank with his brother Isaac, because the spiritual covenant was equally sealed in him by the symbol of circumcision. He is first cut off, then Esau, at last an innumerable multitude, almost the whole of Israel. In Isaac was the seed called. The same calling held good in the case of Jacob. God gave a similar example in the rejection of Saul. This is also celebrated in the psalm, “Moreover, he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: but chose the tribe of Judah” (Psa 78:67-68). This the sacred history sometimes repeats, that the secret grace of God may be more admirably displayed in that change. I admit that it was by their own fault Ishmael, Esau, and others fell from their adoption; for the condition an-

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<sup>36</sup> **inviolable** – incapable of being broken.

nexed was that they should faithfully keep the covenant of God, whereas they perfidiously<sup>37</sup> violated it. The singular kindness of God consisted in this: that He had been pleased to prefer them to other nations; as it is said in the psalm, “He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them” (Psa 147:20).

But I had good reason for saying that two steps are here to be observed; for in the election of the whole nation, God had already shown that in the exercise of His mere liberality He was under no law, but was free; so that He was by no means to be restricted to an equal division of grace, its very inequality proving it to be gratuitous. Accordingly, Malachi enlarges on the ingratitude of Israel, in that—being not only selected from the whole human race, but set peculiarly apart from a sacred household—they perfidiously and impiously spurn God, their beneficent Parent. “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau” (Mal 1:2-3). For God takes it for granted that—as both were the sons of a holy father and successors of the covenant, in short, branches from a sacred root—the sons of Jacob were under no ordinary obligation for having been admitted to that dignity. But when, by the rejection of Esau the first born, their progenitor,<sup>38</sup> though inferior in birth,<sup>39</sup> was made heir, He charges them with double ingratitude in not being restrained by a double tie.

## 7. Election of Individuals in the New Testament

Although it is now sufficiently plain that God, by His secret counsel, chooses whom He will while He rejects others, His gratuitous election has only been partially explained until we come to the case of single individuals, to whom God not only offers salvation, but so assigns it that the certainty of the result remains not dubious or suspended. These are considered as belonging to that one “seed” of which Paul makes mention (Rom 9:8; Gal 3:16; etc.). For although adoption was deposited in the hand of Abraham, yet—as many of his posterity were cut off as rotten members, in order that election may stand and be effectual—it is necessary to ascend to the Head in Whom the heavenly Father hath connected His elect with each other and bound them to Himself by an indissoluble tie. Thus in the adoption of the family of Abraham, God gave them a liberal display of favour which He has denied to others; but in the members of Christ there is a far more excellent display of grace, because those engrafted into Him as their Head never fail to obtain salvation.

Hence Paul skillfully argues, from the passage of Malachi which I quoted (Rom 9:13; Mal 1:2), that when God, after making a covenant of eternal life, invites any people to Himself, a special mode of election is in part understood, so that He does not with promiscuous grace effectually elect all of them. The words “Jacob have I loved” refer to the whole progeny of the patriarch, which the prophet there opposes<sup>40</sup> to the posterity of

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<sup>37</sup> **perfidiously** – faithlessly, disloyally.

<sup>38</sup> **progenitor** – ancestor in the direct line.

<sup>39</sup> **inferior in birth** – Jacob was not the first-born, therefore not entitled to special privileges.

<sup>40</sup> **opposes** – mentions in opposition to.

Esau. But there is nothing in this repugnant<sup>41</sup> to the fact that in the person of one man is set before us a specimen of election which cannot fail of accomplishing its object. It is not without cause Paul observes that these are called “a remnant” (Rom 9:27; 11:5), because experience shows that of the general body many fall away and are lost, so that often a small portion only remains.

The reason why the general election of the people is not always firmly ratified, readily presents itself; viz., that on those with whom God makes the covenant, He does not immediately bestow the Spirit of regeneration, by Whose power they persevere in the covenant even to the end. The external invitation, without the internal efficacy of grace which would have the effect of retaining them, holds a kind of middle place between the rejection of the human race and the election of a small number of believers. The whole people of Israel are called the Lord’s inheritance, and yet there were many foreigners among them. Still, because the covenant which God had made to be their Father and Redeemer was not altogether null, He has respect to that free favour rather than to the perfidious defection of many.

Even by them His truth was not abolished, since by preserving some residue to Himself, it appeared that His calling was without repentance. When God ever and anon gathered His Church from among the sons of Abraham rather than from profane nations, He had respect to His covenant; which, when violated by the great body, He restricted to a few that it might not entirely fail. In short, that common adoption of the seed of Abraham was a kind of visible image of a greater benefit which God deigned to bestow on some out of many. This is the reason why Paul so carefully distinguishes between the sons of Abraham according to the flesh and the spiritual sons, who are called after the example of Isaac. Not that simply to be a son of Abraham was a vain or useless privilege (this could not be said without insult to the covenant), but that the immutable counsel of God, by which He predestinated to Himself whomsoever He would, was alone effectual for their salvation.

But until the proper view is made clear by the production of passages of Scripture, I advise my readers not to prejudge the question. We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much: that God by His eternal and immutable counsel determined, once for all, those whom it was His pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was His pleasure<sup>42</sup> to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel, as regards the elect, is founded on His free mercy, without any respect to human worth; while those whom He dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible, judgment.

In regard to the elect, we regard calling as the evidence of election, and justification as another symbol of its manifestation, until it is fully accomplished by the attainment of glory. But as the Lord seals His elect by calling and justification, so by excluding the rep-

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<sup>41</sup> **repugnant** – contrary; contradictory.

<sup>42</sup> **pleasure** – will; choice.

robate<sup>43</sup> either from the knowledge of His name or the sanctification of His Spirit, He by these marks in a manner discloses the judgment which awaits them.

I will here omit many of the fictions which foolish men have devised to overthrow predestination. There is no need of refuting objections which, the moment they are produced, abundantly betray their hollowness. I will dwell only on those points which either form the subject of dispute among the learned, or may occasion any difficulty to the simple, or may be employed by impiety<sup>44</sup> as specious pretexts for assailing the justice of God.

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<sup>43</sup> **reprobate** – disapproved; rejected; pertaining to those without faith, left in their sins, and abandoned by God to judgment (Romans 1-2).

<sup>44</sup> **impiety** – lack of reverence toward God.

PART TWO  
THIS DOCTRINE CONFIRMED<sup>1</sup>

*By proofs from Scripture*

Sections 1-5  
The Ground of Election Found  
in God, Not Man

**1. Election Not Based on Human Merit**

Many controvert<sup>2</sup> all the positions which we have laid down, especially the gratuitous election of believers, which, however, cannot be overthrown. For they commonly imagine that God distinguishes between men according to the merits which He foresees that each individual is to have—giving the adoption of sons to those whom He foreknows will not be unworthy of His grace, and dooming those to destruction whose dispositions He perceives will be prone to mischief and wickedness. Thus by interposing foreknowledge as a veil, they not only obscure election, but pretend to give it a different origin. Nor is this the commonly received opinion of the vulgar<sup>3</sup> merely, for it has in all ages had great supporters (*see* section 8). This I candidly confess, lest anyone should expect greatly to prejudice our cause by opposing it with their names.

The truth of God is here too certain to be shaken, too clear to be overborne by human authority. Others, who are neither versed in Scripture nor entitled to any weight, assail sound doctrine with a petulance and improbity<sup>4</sup> which it is impossible to tolerate.<sup>5</sup> Because God of His mere good pleasure electing some, passes by others; they raise a plea

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<sup>1</sup> Part 2: John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 544-558.

<sup>2</sup> **controvert** – argue against.

<sup>3</sup> **vulgar** – ordinary people.

<sup>4</sup> **improbity** – dishonesty.

<sup>5</sup> French, *Il y en a d'aucuns, lesquels n'estans exercés en l'Eeriture ne sont dignes d'aucun credit ne reputation; et toutes fois sont plus hardis et temeraires à diffamer la doctrine qui leur est incognue; et ainsi ce n'est pas raison que leur arrogance soit supportée.*—“There are some who, not being exercised in Scripture, are not worthy of any credit or reputation, and yet are more bold and presumptuous in defaming the doctrine which is unknown to them, and hence their arrogance is insupportable.”

against Him. But if the fact is certain, what can they gain by quarrelling with God? We teach nothing but what experience proves to be true, viz., that God has always been at liberty to bestow His grace on whom He would. Not to ask in what respect the posterity of Abraham excelled others, if it be not in a worth—the cause of which has no existence out of God—let them tell why men are better than oxen or asses. God might have made them dogs when He formed them in His own image. Will they allow the lower animals to expostulate<sup>6</sup> with God, as if the inferiority of their condition were unjust? It is certainly not more equitable that men should enjoy the privilege which they have not acquired by any merit, than that He should variously distribute favours as seems to Him meet.

If they pass to the case of individuals, where inequality is more offensive to them, they ought at least, in regard to the example of our Saviour, to be restrained by feelings of awe from talking so confidently of this sublime mystery. He is conceived a mortal man of the seed of David; what, I would ask them, are the virtues by which He deserved to become in the very womb, the Head of angels, the only begotten Son of God, the image and glory of the Father, the light, righteousness, and salvation of the world? It is wisely observed by Augustine<sup>7</sup> that, in the very Head of the Church, we have a bright mirror of free election, lest it should give any trouble to us the members—viz., that He did not become the Son of God by living righteously, but was freely presented with this great honour that He might afterwards make others partakers of His gifts. Should anyone here ask, Why others are not what He was—or Why we are all at so great a distance from Him, Why we are all corrupt while He is purity—he would not only betray his madness, but his effrontery<sup>8</sup> also. But if they are bent on depriving God of the free right of electing and reprobating, let them at the same time take away what has been given to Christ.

It will now be proper to attend to what Scripture declares concerning each. When Paul declares that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4), he certainly shows that no regard is had to our own worth; for it is just as if he had said, Since in the whole seed of Adam our heavenly Father found nothing worthy of His election, He turned His eye upon His own Anointed, that He might select as members of His body those whom He was to assume into the fellowship of life. Let believers, then, give full effect to this reason: viz., that we were in Christ adopted unto the heavenly inheritance because in ourselves we were incapable of such excellence. This He elsewhere observes in another passage, in which He exhorts the Colossians to give thanks that they had been made meet<sup>9</sup> to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints (Col 1:12). If election precedes that divine grace by which we are made fit to obtain immortal life, what can God find in us to induce Him to elect us?

What I mean is still more clearly explained in another passage. God, says he,

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<sup>6</sup> **expostulate** – argue; dispute.

<sup>7</sup> Augustine; *de Corrept. et Gratia ad Valent.*, c. 15; *Hom. de Bono Perseveran.*, c. 8. Item, *de Verbis Apost.* Sermon. viii.

<sup>8</sup> **effrontery** – shameless boldness.

<sup>9</sup> **meet** – fit; suitable.



...hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will (Eph 1:4-5).

Here he opposes the good pleasure of God to our merits of every description.

## 2. Election Grounded in God's Eternal Will

That the proof may be more complete, it is of importance to attend to the separate clauses of that passage: when they are connected together they leave no doubt. From giving them the name of "elect," it is clear that he is addressing believers, as indeed he shortly after declares. It is, therefore, a complete perversion of the name to confine it to the age in which the gospel was published. By saying they were elected "before the foundation of the world," he takes away all reference to worth. For what ground of distinction was there between persons who as yet existed not, and persons who were afterwards like them to exist in Adam? But if they were elected in Christ, it follows not only that each was elected on some extrinsic<sup>10</sup> ground, but that some were placed on a different footing from others, since we see that all are not members of Christ.

In the additional statement that they were elected that they might "be holy," the apostle openly refutes the error of those who deduce election from prescience, since he declares that whatever virtue appears in men is the *result* of election. Then, if a higher cause is asked, Paul answers that God so "predestined," and predestined "according to the good pleasure of his will." By these words he overturns all the grounds of election which men imagine to exist *in themselves*. For he shows that whatever favours God bestows in reference to the spiritual life, flow from this one fountain, because God chose whom He would and, before they were born, had the grace which He designed to bestow upon them set apart for their use.

## 3. Good Works the Fruit, Not Cause, of Election

Wherever this "good pleasure" of God reigns, no good works are taken into account. The apostle, indeed, does not follow out the antithesis,<sup>11</sup> but it is to be understood as he himself explains it in another passage: "Who hath...called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2Ti 1:9). We have already shown that the additional words, "that we might be holy," remove every doubt. If you say that He foresaw they would be holy and therefore elected them, you invert the order of Paul. You may, therefore, safely infer: if He elected us that we might be holy, He did not elect us because He foresaw that we *would be* holy. The two things are evidently inconsistent; viz., that the pious owe it to election that they are holy, and yet attain to election by means of works.

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<sup>10</sup> **extrinsic** – external.

<sup>11</sup> **antithesis** – opposite.

There is no force in the cavil to which they are ever recurring, that the Lord does not bestow election in recompense<sup>12</sup> of preceding [merits], but bestows it in consideration of *future* merits. For when it is said that believers were elected that they “might be holy,” it is at the same time intimated that the holiness which was to be in them has its origin in election. And how can it be consistently said that things derived from election are the cause of election? The very thing which the apostle had said, he seems afterwards to confirm by adding, “According to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself” (Eph 1:9); for the expression that God “purposed in himself” is the same as if it had been said that, in forming His decree, He considered nothing external to Himself. Accordingly, it is immediately subjoined that the whole object contemplated in our election is that “we should be to the praise of his glory” (1:12). Assuredly, divine grace would not deserve all the praise of election, were not election gratuitous; and it would not be gratuitous did God, in electing any individual, pay regard to his future works.

Hence, what Christ said to His disciples is found to be universally applicable to all believers: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (Joh 15:16). Here He not only excludes past merits, but declares that they had nothing in themselves for which they could be chosen, except in so far as His mercy anticipated. And how are we to understand the words of Paul, “Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?” (Rom 11:35). His meaning obviously is that men are altogether indebted to the preventing<sup>13</sup> goodness of God, there being nothing in them, either past or future, to conciliate His favour.

#### **4. Election Grounded in God’s Purpose, Not Man’s Work**

In the Epistle to the Romans, in which he again treats this subject more reconditely<sup>14</sup> and at greater length, he declares that “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom 9:6); for though all were blessed in respect of hereditary right, yet all did not equally obtain the succession. The whole discussion was occasioned by the pride and vain-glorying of the Jews, who, by claiming the name of the Church for themselves, would have made the faith of the gospel dependent on their pleasure—just as in the present day the papists<sup>15</sup> would fain under this pretext substitute themselves in place of God. Paul, while he concedes that in respect of the covenant they were the holy offspring of Abraham, yet contends that the greater part of them were strangers to it—and that not only because they were degenerate, and so had become bastards instead of sons, but because the principal point to be considered was the special election of God, by which alone His adoption was ratified. If the piety of some established them in the hope of salvation, and the revolt of others was the sole cause of their being rejected, it would have been foolish and absurd in Paul to carry his readers back to a secret election.<sup>16</sup> But if the will of God (no

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<sup>12</sup> **recompense** – payment for performing a service.

<sup>13</sup> **preventing** – coming beforehand.

<sup>14</sup> **reconditely** – obscurely.

<sup>15</sup> **papists** – those who give allegiance to the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>16</sup> **secret election** – election before the foundation of the world, out of all human sight.

cause of which external to Him either appears or is to be looked for) distinguishes some from others, so that all the sons of Israel are not true Israelites, it is vain for anyone to seek the origin of his condition in himself.

He afterwards prosecutes the subject at greater length by contrasting the cases of Jacob and Esau. Both being sons of Abraham, both having been at the same time in the womb of their mother, there was something very strange in the change by which the honour of the birthright was transferred to Jacob—and yet Paul declares that the change was an attestation<sup>17</sup> to the election of the one and the reprobation of the other.

The question considered is the origin and cause of election. The advocates of foreknowledge insist that it is to be found in the virtues and vices of men. For they take the short and easy method of asserting that God showed in the person of Jacob, that He elects those who are worthy of His grace; and in the person of Esau, that He rejects those whom He foresees to be unworthy. Such is their confident assertion; but what does Paul say? “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her [Rebecca], The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Rom 9:11-13). If foreknowledge had anything to do with this distinction of the brothers, the mention of time would have been out of place. Granting that Jacob was elected for a worth to be obtained by future virtues, to what end did Paul say that he was not yet born?

Nor would there have been any occasion for adding that as yet he had done no good, because the answer was always ready: that nothing is hid from God, and that therefore the piety of Jacob was present before Him. If works procure favour, a value ought to have been put upon them before Jacob was born, just as if he had been of full age. But in explaining the difficulty, the apostle goes on to show that the adoption of Jacob proceeded not on works, but on the calling of God. In works he makes no mention of past or future, but distinctly opposes them<sup>18</sup> to the calling of God, intimating that when place is given to the one, the other is overthrown—as if he had said the only thing to be considered is what pleased God, not what men furnished of themselves.

Lastly, it is certain that all the causes which men are wont to devise as external to the secret counsel of God, are excluded by the use of the terms *purpose* and *election*.

## 5. Salvation Founded on Free Election

Why should men attempt to darken these statements by assigning some place in election to past or future works? This is altogether to evade what the apostle contends for, viz., that the distinction between the brothers is not founded on any ground of works, but on the mere calling of God, inasmuch as it was fixed before the children were born. Had there been any solidity in this subtlety, it would not have escaped the notice of the apostle; but—being perfectly aware that God foresaw no good in man, save that

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<sup>17</sup> **attestation** – testimony; proof.

<sup>18</sup> **opposes them** – sets them in opposition.

which He had already previously determined to bestow by means of His election—he does not employ a preposterous arrangement which would make good works antecedent<sup>19</sup> to their cause. We learn from the apostle's words that the salvation of believers is founded entirely on the decree of divine election, that the privilege is procured not by works, but free calling.

We have also a specimen of the thing itself set before us. Esau and Jacob are brothers, begotten of the same parents, within the same womb, not yet born. In them all things are equal, and yet the judgment of God with regard to them is different: He adopts the one and rejects the other. The only right of precedence was that of primogeniture;<sup>20</sup> but that is disregarded, and the younger is preferred to the elder. Nay, in the case of others, God seems to have disregarded primogeniture for the express purpose of excluding the flesh from all ground of boasting. Rejecting Ishmael, He gives His favour to Isaac; postponing Manasseh, He honours Ephraim.

## Sections 6-9

### Election All of Grace

#### **6. The Elect: Objects of Mercy and Active Foreknowledge**

Should anyone object that these minute<sup>21</sup> and inferior favours do not enable us to decide, with regard to the future life, that it is not to be supposed that he who received the honour of primogeniture was thereby adopted to the inheritance of heaven (many objectors do not even spare Paul, but accuse him of having in the quotation of these passages wrested Scripture from its proper meaning); I answer as before, that the apostle has not erred through inconsideration or spontaneously misapplied the passages of Scripture; but he saw (what these men cannot be brought to consider) that God purposed under an earthly sign to declare the spiritual election of Jacob, which otherwise lay hidden at His inaccessible tribunal. For unless we refer the primogeniture bestowed upon him to the future world, the form of blessing would be altogether vain and ridiculous, inasmuch as he gained nothing by it but a multitude of toils and annoyances, exile, sharp sorrows, and bitter cares.

Therefore, when Paul knew beyond a doubt that by the external, God manifested the spiritual and unfading blessings which He had prepared for His servant in His kingdom, he hesitated not—in proving the latter—to draw an argument from the former. For we must remember that the land of Canaan was given in pledge of the heavenly inheritance;

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<sup>19</sup> **antecedent** – going before in time; prior; previous.

<sup>20</sup> **primogeniture** – right of the eldest son to inherit his father's estate.

<sup>21</sup> **minute** – extremely small.

and that therefore there cannot be a doubt that Jacob was, like the angels, engrafted into the body of Christ [so] that he might be a partaker of the same life. Jacob, therefore, is chosen, while Esau is rejected: the predestination of God makes a distinction where none existed in respect of merit.

If you ask the reason the apostle gives it, “For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Rom 9:15). And what, pray, does this mean? It is just a clear declaration by the Lord that He finds nothing in men themselves to induce Him to show kindness, that it is owing entirely to His own mercy, and, accordingly, that their salvation is His own work. Since God places your salvation in Himself alone, why should you descend to yourself? Since He assigns you His own mercy alone, why will you recur to your own merits? Since He confines your thoughts to His own mercy, why do you turn partly to the view of your own works?

We must therefore come to that smaller number whom Paul elsewhere describes as foreknown of God (Rom 11:2); not foreknown, as these men imagine, by idle, inactive contemplation, but in the sense which it often bears. For surely when Peter says that Christ was “delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Act 2:23), he does not represent God as merely contemplating, but as actually accomplishing our salvation.

Thus also Peter, in saying that the believers to whom he writes are elect “according to the foreknowledge of God” (1Pe 1:2), properly expresses that secret predestination by which God has sealed those whom He has been pleased to adopt as sons. In using the term *purpose* as synonymous with a term which uniformly denotes what is called a fixed determination, he undoubtedly shows that God, in being the author of our salvation, does not go beyond Himself. In this sense, he says in the same chapter that Christ as “a lamb...was foreordained before the creation of the world” (1Pe 1:19-20). What could have been more frigid or absurd than to have represented God as looking from the height of heaven to see whence the salvation of the human race was to come? By a people foreknown, Peter means the same thing as Paul does by a remnant selected from a multitude [who were] falsely assuming the name of God. In another passage, to suppress the vain boasting of those who, while only covered with a mask, claim for themselves in the view of the world a first place among the godly, Paul says, “The Lord knoweth them that are his” (2Ti 2:19).

In short, by that term he designates two classes of people: the one consisting of the whole race of Abraham, the other a people separated from that race, and though hidden from human view, yet open to the eye of God. And there is no doubt that he took the passage from Moses, who declares that God would be merciful to whomsoever he pleased (although he was speaking of an elect people whose condition was apparently equal); just as if he had said that in a common adoption was included a special grace which He bestows on some as a holier treasure, and that there is nothing in the common covenant to prevent this number from being exempted from the common order. God—being pleased in this matter to act as a free dispenser and disposer—distinctly declares that the only

ground on which He will show mercy to one rather than to another is His sovereign pleasure; for when mercy is bestowed on him who asks it, though he indeed does not suffer a refusal, he, however, either anticipates or partly acquires a favour, the whole merit of which God claims for Himself.

## 7. The Father's Donation to the Son

Now, let the supreme Judge and Master decide on the whole case. Seeing such obduracy<sup>22</sup> in His hearers, that His words fell upon the multitude almost without fruit, He, to remove this stumbling-block, exclaims, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me...And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing" (Joh 6:37, 39). Observe that the donation of the Father is the first step in our delivery into the charge and protection of Christ. Someone, perhaps, will here turn round and object that those only peculiarly belong to the Father who make a voluntary surrender by faith. But the only thing which Christ maintains is that, though the defections of vast multitudes should shake the world, yet the counsel of God would stand firm—more stable than heaven itself [so] that His election would never fail. The elect are said to have belonged to the Father before He bestowed them on His only begotten Son.

It is asked if they were His by nature? Nay, they were aliens, but He makes them His by delivering them. The words of Christ are too clear to be rendered obscure by any of the mists of caviling. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (Joh 6:44-45). Did all promiscuously bend the knee to Christ, election would be common; whereas now in the small number of believers a manifest diversity appears. Accordingly our Saviour, shortly after declaring that the disciples who were given to Him were the common property of the Father, adds, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (Joh 17:9). Hence it is that the whole world no longer belongs to its Creator except in so far as grace rescues—from malediction,<sup>23</sup> divine wrath, and eternal death—some, not many, who would otherwise perish, while He leaves the world to the destruction to which it is doomed.

Meanwhile, though Christ interposes<sup>24</sup> as a Mediator,<sup>25</sup> yet He claims the right of electing in common with the Father: "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen" (Joh 13:18). If it is asked whence He hath chosen them, He answers in another pas-

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<sup>22</sup> **obduracy** – extreme stubbornness; the state of being hardened.

<sup>23</sup> **malediction** – curse.

<sup>24</sup> **interposes** – intervenes.

<sup>25</sup> **Mediator** – *literally*: "one who goes between." "It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all Eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified." (*Second London Baptist Confession*, 8.1) See also Free Grace Broadcaster 183, *Christ the Mediator*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

sage: “out of the world” (Joh 15:19), which He excludes from His prayers when He commits His disciples to the Father. We must, indeed, hold—when He affirms that He knows whom He has chosen—first, that some individuals of the human race are denoted; and second, that they are not distinguished by the quality of their virtues, but by a heavenly decree. Hence it follows that, since Christ makes Himself the author of election, none excel by their own strength or industry. In elsewhere numbering Judas among the elect, though he was a devil (Joh 6:70), He refers only to the apostolical office, which—though a bright manifestation of divine favour (as Paul so often acknowledges it to be in his own person)—does not, however, contain within itself the hope of eternal salvation. Judas, therefore, when he discharged the office of apostle perfidiously, might have been worse than a devil; but not one of those whom Christ has once engrafted into His body will He ever permit to perish—for in securing their salvation, He will perform what He has promised; that is, exert a divine power greater than all (Joh 10:28). For when He says, “Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition” (Joh 17:12), the expression—though there is a catachresis<sup>26</sup> in it—is not at all ambiguous. The sum is that God, by gratuitous adoption, forms those whom He wishes to have for sons; but that the intrinsic<sup>27</sup> cause is in Himself because He is contented with His secret pleasure.

## 8. Augustine: The Grace of God Does Not Find Fit Persons, but Makes Persons Fit To Be Chosen

But Ambrose, Origen, and Jerome<sup>28</sup> were of opinion that God dispenses His grace among men according to the use which He foresees that each will make of it. It may be added that Augustine also was for some time of this opinion; but after he had made greater progress in the knowledge of Scripture, he not only retracted it as evidently false, but powerfully confuted it.<sup>29</sup> Nay, even after the retractation—glancing at the Pelagians,<sup>30</sup> who still persisted in that error—he says,

Who does not wonder that the apostle failed to make this most acute observation? For after stating a most startling proposition concerning those who were not yet born, and afterwards putting the question to himself by way of objection, “What then? Is there unrighteousness with God?” he had an opportunity of answering that God foresaw the merits of both. He does not say so, but has recourse to the justice and mercy of God.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> **catachresis** – unusual use of words.

<sup>27</sup> **intrinsic** – belonging to something as a basic and essential feature of what it is.

<sup>28</sup> **Ambrose, Origen, and Jerome** – influential teachers from the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>29</sup> Augustine; *Retract. Lib. i. c. 13*.

<sup>30</sup> **Pelagians** – sect in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries that followed the teachings of the heretic Pelagius (c. 354-c. 420), a British monk who argued that people could reform themselves by free will and that they can take the first steps toward salvation without the assistance of God’s grace. His views were condemned as heresy by the Council of Ephesus (431).

<sup>31</sup> Augustine; *Epist. 106, ad Sixtum*.

And in another passage, after excluding all merit before election, he says,

Here, certainly, there is no place for the vain argument of those who defend the foreknowledge of God against the grace of God, and accordingly maintain that we were elected before the foundation of the world because God foreknew that we would be good, not that He Himself would make us good. This is not the language of Him Who says, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (Joh 15:16). For had He chosen us because He foreknew that we would be good, He would at the same time also have foreknown that we were to choose Him.<sup>32</sup>

Let the testimony of Augustine prevail with those who willingly acquiesce in the authority of the Fathers: although Augustine allows not that he differs from the others,<sup>33</sup> but shows by clear evidence that the difference which the Pelagians invidiously objected to him is unfounded. For he quotes from Ambrose,<sup>34</sup> “Christ calls whom He pities.” Again, “Had He pleased, He could have made them devout instead of undevout; but God calls whom He deigns<sup>35</sup> to call, and makes religious whom He will.”<sup>36</sup> Were we disposed to frame an entire volume out of Augustine, it were easy to show the reader that I have no occasion to use any other words than his; but I am unwilling to burden him with a prolix statement.

But assuming that the Fathers<sup>37</sup> did not speak thus, let us attend to the thing itself. A difficult question had been raised, viz., Did God do justly in bestowing His grace on certain individuals? Paul might have disencumbered himself of this question at once by saying that God had respect to works. Why does he not do so? Why does he rather continue to use a language which leaves him exposed to the same difficulty? Why, but just because it would not have been right to say it? There was no obliviousness<sup>38</sup> on the part of the Holy Spirit, Who was speaking by his mouth. He, therefore, answers without ambiguity that God favours His elect because He is pleased to do so, and shows mercy because He is pleased to do so. For the words, “I...will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy” (Exo 33:19) are the same in effect as if it had been said, God is moved to mercy by no other reason than that He is pleased to show mercy. Augustine’s declaration, therefore, remains true: the grace of God does not find, but *makes* persons fit to be chosen.

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<sup>32</sup> Augustine in Joann. 8; see also what follows to the same effect.

<sup>33</sup> Latin, *a reliquis*; French, *les autres Docteurs anciens*—“the other ancient doctors [scholars].”

<sup>34</sup> **Ambrose** (c. 339-397) – bishop of Milan and early defender of Christ’s deity.

<sup>35</sup> **deigns** – stoops down; condescends.

<sup>36</sup> Augustine; *Lib. de Prædest. Sanct.*; chapter 19.

<sup>37</sup> **Church Fathers** – teachers during the first centuries after Christ’s death, held in high esteem for their leadership.

<sup>38</sup> **obliviousness** – forgetfulness; ignorance.



## 9. Predestination Not Based on Prevenient Grace

Nor let us be detained by the subtlety of Thomas:<sup>39</sup> that the foreknowledge of merit is the cause of predestination; not, indeed, in respect of the predestinating act, but that on our part it may in some sense be so called—namely, in respect of a particular estimate of predestination, as when it is said that God predestinates man to glory according to his merit, inasmuch as He decreed to bestow upon him the grace by which he merits glory. For while the Lord would have us to see nothing more in election than His mere goodness, for anyone to desire to see more is preposterous affectation. But were we to make a trial of subtlety, it would not be difficult to refute the sophistry<sup>40</sup> of Thomas. He maintains that the elect are in a manner predestinated to glory on account of their merits, because God predestines to give them the grace by which they merit glory.

What if I should, on the contrary, object that predestination to grace is subservient to election unto life and follows as its handmaid; that grace is predestined to those to whom the possession of glory was previously assigned, the Lord being pleased to bring His sons by election to justification? For it will hence follow that the predestination to glory is the cause of the predestination to grace, and not the converse. But let us have done with these disputes as superfluous among those who think that there is enough of wisdom for them in the Word of God. For it has been truly said by an old ecclesiastical writer, “Those who ascribe the election of God to merits are wise above what they ought to be.”<sup>41</sup>

## Sections 10-11 Election, the Gospel, and Reprobation

### 10. Election Inconsistent with Proclamation of the Gospel?

Some object that God would be inconsistent with Himself in *inviting all* without distinction while He elects only a few. Thus, according to them, the universality of the promise destroys the distinction of special grace. Some moderate men speak in this way, not so much for the purpose of suppressing the truth, as to get quit<sup>42</sup> of puzzling questions and curb excessive curiosity. The intention is laudable, but the design is by no means to be approved, dissimulation being at no time excusable.

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<sup>39</sup> **Thomas Aquinas** (1225-1274) – Italian Dominican friar, Catholic priest, philosopher, and scholastic theologian. He has influenced much of modern ethics and political theory. He attempted to synthesize Aristotelian philosophy with the principles of Christianity. His best known works are *Summa Theologiae* and the *Summa contra Gentiles*.

<sup>40</sup> **sophistry** – argumentation that is intentionally deceptive.

<sup>41</sup> Ambrose; *de Vocat. Gentium*, Lib. i. c. 2.

<sup>42</sup> **get quit** – be released; be absolved from an endeavor.

In those again who display their petulance, we see only a vile cavil or a disgraceful error. The mode in which Scripture reconciles the two things—viz., that by external preaching all are called to faith and repentance, and that yet the Spirit of faith and repentance is not given to all—I have already explained and will again shortly repeat. But the point which they assume, I deny as false in two respects: for He Who threatens that when it shall rain on one city there will be drought in another (Amos 4:7)—and declares in another passage that there will be a famine of the Word (Amos 8:11)—does not lay Himself under a fixed obligation to call all equally. And He Who—forbidding Paul to preach in Asia and leading him away from Bithynia—carries him over to Macedonia (Act 16:6), shows that it belongs to Him to distribute the treasure in what way He pleases. But it is by Isaiah [that] He more clearly demonstrates how He destines the promises of salvation specially to the elect (Isa 8:16); for He declares that His disciples would consist of them only, and not indiscriminately of the whole human race.

Whence it is evident that the doctrine of salvation, which is said to be set apart for the sons of the Church only, is abused when it is represented as effectually available to all. For the present let it suffice to observe that, though the word of the gospel is addressed generally to all, yet the gift of faith is rare. Isaiah assigns the cause when he says that the arm of the Lord is not revealed to all (Isa 53:1). Had he said that the gospel is malignantly and perversely contemned<sup>43</sup> because many obstinately refuse to hear, there might perhaps be some colour for this universal call. It is not the purpose of the prophet, however, to extenuate the guilt of men when he states the source of their blindness to be that God deigns not to reveal His arm to them. He only reminds us that since faith is a special gift, it is in vain that external doctrine sounds in the ear. But I would fain know from those doctors<sup>44</sup> whether it is mere preaching or faith that makes men sons of God. Certainly when it is said, “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (Joh 1:12), a confused mass is not set before us, but a special order is assigned to believers, who are “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (Joh 1:13).

But it is said [that] there is a mutual agreement between faith and the Word. That must be wherever there is faith. But it is no new thing for the seed to fall among thorns or in stony places (Mat 13:20-22), not only because the majority appear in fact to be rebellious against God, but because all are not gifted with eyes and ears (Mat 13:14). How, then, can it consistently be said that God calls while He knows that the called will not come? Let Augustine answer for me: “Would you dispute with me? Wonder with me, and exclaim, O the depth! Let us both agree in dread, lest we perish in error.”<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, if election is, as Paul declares, the parent of faith, I retort<sup>46</sup> the argument and maintain that faith is not general since election is special. For it is easily inferred from the series of causes and effects—when Paul says that the Father “hath blessed us

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<sup>43</sup> **contemned** – treated with contempt; despised.

<sup>44</sup> **doctors** – learned men; scholars.

<sup>45</sup> Augustine; *de Verb. Apost.*; Sermon xi.

<sup>46</sup> **retort** – when debating an issue, to reply to an argument with a better argument.

with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:3-4)—that these riches are not common to all, because God has chosen only whom He would. And the reason why in another passage he commends the faith of the elect, is to prevent anyone from supposing that he acquires faith of his own nature—since to God alone belongs the glory of freely illuminating those whom He had previously chosen (Ti 1:1). For it is well said by Bernard,

His friends hear apart when He says to them, Fear not, little flock; “unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom” (Luk 8:10). Who are these? Those whom He foreknew and predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. He has made known His great and secret counsel. The Lord knoweth them that are His, but that which was known to God was manifested to men. Nor, indeed, does He deign to give a participation in this great mystery to any but those whom He foreknew and predestinated to be His own.<sup>47</sup>

Shortly after, he concludes, “The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him; from everlasting through predestination, to everlasting through glorification: the one knows no beginning, the other no end.”

But why cite Bernard as a witness when we hear from the lips of our Master: “Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God” (Joh 6:46)? By these words He intimates that all who are not regenerated by God are amazed<sup>48</sup> at the brightness of His countenance. And, indeed, faith is aptly conjoined with election, provided it holds the second place. This order is clearly expressed by our Saviour in these words, “This is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing...And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life” (Joh 6:39-40). If He would have all to be saved, He would appoint His Son their guardian, and would engraft them all into His body by the sacred bond of faith.

It is now clear that faith is a singular pledge of paternal love, treasured up for the sons whom He has adopted. Hence Christ elsewhere says that the sheep follow the shepherd because they know His voice, but that they will not follow a stranger, because they know not the voice of strangers (Joh 10:4-5). But whence that distinction, unless that their ears have been divinely bored?<sup>49</sup> For no man makes himself a sheep, but is formed by heavenly grace. And why does the Lord declare that our salvation will always be sure and certain, but just because it is guarded by the invincible power of God (Joh 10:29)? Accordingly, He concludes that unbelievers are not of His sheep (Joh 10:26). The reason is because they are not of the number of those who, as the Lord promised by Isaiah, were to be His disciples. Moreover, as the passages which I have quoted imply perseverance, they are also attestations to the inflexible constancy of election.

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<sup>47</sup> Bernard; *ad Thomam Præpos. Benerlae.*; Epist. 107.

<sup>48</sup> **amazed** – *older usage*: overwhelmed with sudden surprise, bewilderment, or confusion.

<sup>49</sup> **bored** – marked by the Shepherd.

## **11. Reprobation As Well As Election Rooted in the Mere Pleasure of God**

We come now to the reprobate, to whom the apostle at the same time refers (Rom 9:13). For as Jacob, who as yet had merited nothing by good works, is assumed into favour; so Esau, while as yet unpolluted by any crime, is hated. If we turn our view to works, we do injustice to the apostle, as if he had failed to see the very thing which is clear to us. Moreover, there is complete proof of his not having seen it, since he expressly insists that when as yet they had done neither good nor evil, the one was elected, the other rejected, in order to prove that the foundation of divine predestination is not in works. Then—after starting the objection, Is God unjust?—instead of employing what would have been the surest and plainest defense of His justice (*viz.*, that God had recompensed Esau according to his wickedness), he is contented with a different solution: *viz.*, that the reprobate are expressly raised up in order that the glory of God may thereby be displayed. At last, he concludes that God hath “mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth” (Rom 9:18). You see how he refers both to the mere pleasure of God. Therefore, if we cannot assign any reason for His bestowing mercy on His people but just that it so pleases Him, neither can we have any reason for His reprobating others but His will. When God is said to visit in mercy or harden whom He will, men are reminded that they are not to seek for any cause beyond His will.

PART THREE  
REFUTATION OF THE CALUMNIES<sup>1</sup>

*By which this doctrine is always unjustly assailed*

Sections 1-3  
Defense of Predestination and Reprobation  
against Objections Based on God's Justice

**1. A Defense of the Doctrine of Reprobation**

The human mind, when it hears this doctrine, cannot restrain its petulance, but boils and rages as if aroused by the sound of a trumpet. Many, professing a desire to defend the Deity from an invidious<sup>2</sup> charge, admit the doctrine of election, but deny that anyone is reprobated.<sup>3</sup> This they do ignorantly and childishly, since there could be no election without its opposite reprobation. God is said to set apart those whom He adopts for salvation. It were most absurd to say that He admits others fortuitously,<sup>4</sup> or that they by their industry acquire what election alone confers on a few. Those, therefore, whom God passes by, He reprobates, and that for no other cause but because He is pleased<sup>5</sup> to exclude them from the inheritance which He predestines to His children.

Nor is it possible to tolerate the petulance of men in refusing to be restrained by the Word of God in regard to His incomprehensible counsel, which even angels adore. We have already been told that hardening is not less under the immediate hand of God than [under] mercy. Paul does not, after the example of those whom I have mentioned, labour anxiously to defend God by calling in the aid of falsehood; he only reminds us that it is unlawful for the creature to quarrel with its Creator. Then how will those who refuse to admit that any are reprobated by God explain the following words of Christ: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Mat 15:13)? They are

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<sup>1</sup> **calumnies** – false accusations; malicious misrepresentations.

Part 3: John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 560-578.

<sup>2</sup> **invidious** – calculated to cause resentment; bringing envious dislike.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard; in *Die Ascensionis*; Sermon 2.

<sup>4</sup> **fortuitously** – by chance.

<sup>5</sup> **He is pleased** – It is His choice.

plainly told that all whom the heavenly Father has not been pleased to plant as sacred trees in His garden, are doomed and devoted to destruction. If they deny that this is a sign of reprobation, there is nothing, however clear, that can be proved to them.

But if they will still murmur, let us in the soberness<sup>6</sup> of faith rest contented with the admonition of Paul, that it can be no ground of complaint that God, “willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory” (Rom 9:22-23). Let my readers observe that Paul, to cut off all handle for murmuring and detraction, attributes supreme sovereignty to the wrath and power of God—for it were unjust that those profound judgments, which transcend all our powers of discernment, should be subjected to our calculation.

It is frivolous in our opponents to reply that God does not altogether reject those whom in lenity<sup>7</sup> He tolerates, but remains in suspense with regard to them, if peradventure they may repent; as if Paul were representing God as patiently waiting for the conversion of those whom He describes as fitted for destruction. For Augustine, rightly expounding this passage, says that where power is united to endurance, God does not permit, but rules.<sup>8</sup>

They add, also, that it is not without cause the vessels of wrath are said to be fitted for destruction, and that God is said to have prepared the vessels of mercy (Rom 9:22-23), because in this way the praise of salvation is claimed for God, whereas the blame of perdition is thrown upon those who of their own accord bring it upon themselves. But were I to concede that, by the different forms of expression, Paul softens the harshness of the former clause, it by no means follows that he transfers the preparation for destruction to any other cause than the secret counsel of God. This, indeed, is asserted in the preceding context, where God is said to have raised up Pharaoh, and to harden whom He will (Rom 9:17-18). Hence it follows that the hidden counsel of God is the cause of hardening. I at least hold with Augustine that, when God makes sheep out of wolves, He forms them again by the powerful influence of grace that their hardness may thus be subdued, and that He does not convert the obstinate, because He does not exert that more powerful grace, a grace which He has at command if He were disposed to use it.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Predestination Does Not Make God Unjust

These observations would be amply sufficient for the pious and modest, and such as remember that they are men. But because many are the species of blasphemy which these virulent dogs utter against God, we shall, as far as the case admits, give an answer

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<sup>6</sup> **soberness** – self-control; seriousness, solemnity, gravity; sobriety.

<sup>7</sup> **lenity** – mercy.

<sup>8</sup> Augustine; *Cont. Julian.*; Lib. v. c. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Augustine; *de Prædest. Sanct.*; Lib. i. c. 2.

to each. Foolish men raise many grounds of quarrel with God, as if they held Him subject to their accusations.

First, they ask why God is offended with His creatures, who have not provoked Him by any previous offence; for to devote to destruction whomsoever He pleases more resembles the caprice<sup>10</sup> of a tyrant than the legal sentence of a judge—and, therefore, there is reason to expostulate with God if at His mere pleasure men are, without any desert of their own, predestinated to eternal death. If at any time thoughts of this kind come into the minds of the pious, they will be sufficiently armed to repress them by considering how sinful it is to insist on knowing the causes of the divine will, since it is itself, and justly ought to be, the cause of all that exists. For if His will has any cause, there must be something antecedent to it, and to which it is annexed; this it were impious to imagine. The will of God is the supreme rule of righteousness,<sup>11</sup> so that everything which He wills must be held to be righteous by the mere fact of His willing it. Therefore, when it is asked why the Lord did so, we must answer: Because He pleased.

But if you proceed farther to ask *why* He pleased, you ask for something greater and more sublime than the will of God, and nothing such can be found. Let human temerity<sup>12</sup> then be quiet and cease to inquire after what exists not, lest perhaps it fails to find what does exist. This, I say, will be sufficient to restrain anyone who would reverently contemplate the secret things of God. Against the audacity of the wicked, who hesitate not openly to blaspheme, God will sufficiently defend Himself by His own righteousness, without our assistance, when depriving their consciences of all means of evasion: He shall hold them under conviction, and make them feel their guilt.

We, however, give no countenance to the fiction of absolute power,<sup>13</sup> which, as it is heathenish, so it ought justly to be held in detestation by us. We do not imagine God to be lawless. He is a law to Himself because, as Plato<sup>14</sup> says, men labouring under the influence of concupiscence<sup>15</sup> need law; but the will of God is not only free from all vice, but is the supreme standard of perfection, the law of all laws. But we deny that He is bound to give an account of His procedure; and we moreover deny that we are fit of our own ability to give judgment in such a case. Wherefore, when we are tempted to go farther than we ought, let this consideration deter us, Thou shalt be “justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest” (Psa 51:4).

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<sup>10</sup> **caprice** – unpredictable change of mind; whim.

<sup>11</sup> Augustine; *Dein Gen. cont. Manich.*; Lib. i. c. 3.

<sup>12</sup> **temerity** – foolish or rash boldness; recklessness.

<sup>13</sup> French, *Toutesfois en parlant ainsi, nous n'approuvons pas la reverie des theologiens Papistes touchant la puissance absolue de Dieu.*—“Still, in speaking thus, we approve not of the reverie of the popish theologians touching the absolute power of God.”

<sup>14</sup> **Plato** (ca. 428-347 BC) – influential Greek philosopher.

<sup>15</sup> **concupiscence** – illegitimate desire; craving; lust.

### 3. Sinful Man Deserves Nothing but Wrath from God

God may thus quell His enemies by silence. But lest we should allow them with impunity to hold His sacred name in derision, He supplies us with weapons against them from His Word. Accordingly, when we are accosted in such terms as these: Why did God from the first predestine some to death when, as they were not yet in existence, they could not have merited sentence of death?—let us by way of reply ask in our turn, What do you imagine that God owes to man, if He is pleased to estimate him by His own nature? As we are all vitiated<sup>16</sup> by sin, we cannot but be hateful to God—and that not from tyrannical cruelty, but the strictest justice. But if all whom the Lord predestines to death are naturally liable to sentence of death, of what injustice, pray, do they complain? Should all the sons of Adam come to dispute and contend with their Creator, because by His eternal providence they were before their birth doomed to perpetual destruction; when God comes to reckon with them, what will they be able to mutter against this defense? If all are taken from a corrupt mass, it is not strange that all are subject to condemnation. Let them not, therefore, charge God with injustice, if by His eternal judgment they are doomed to a death to which they themselves feel that, whether they will or not, they are drawn spontaneously by their own nature. Hence it appears how perverse is this affectation of murmuring, when of set purpose they suppress the cause of condemnation which they are compelled to recognise in themselves, that they may lay the blame upon God. But though I should confess a hundred times that God is the author (and it is most certain that He is), they do not, however, thereby efface<sup>17</sup> their own guilt, which, engraven on their own consciences, is ever and anon presenting itself to their view.

## Sections 4-8

### God's Justice and the Fall of Man

#### 4. God Not Charged with Evil for Decree of Sin and the Fall

They again object, Were not men predestinated by the ordination<sup>18</sup> of God to that corruption which is now held forth as the cause of condemnation? If so, when they perish in their corruption, they do nothing else than suffer punishment for that calamity into which, by the predestination of God, Adam fell and dragged all his posterity headlong with him. Is not He, therefore, unjust in thus cruelly mocking His creatures?

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<sup>16</sup> **vitiated** – corrupted; debased. See *The Doctrine of Human Depravity* by A. W. Pink (1886-1952); available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

<sup>17</sup> **efface** – wipe out.

<sup>18</sup> **ordination** – authoritative appointment; decree.



I admit that by the will of God all the sons of Adam fell into that state of wretchedness in which they are now involved; and this is just what I said at the first: that we must always return to the mere pleasure of the divine will, the cause of which is hidden in Himself. But it does not forthwith follow that God lies open to this charge. For we will answer with Paul in these words, “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” (Rom 9:20-21).

They will deny that the justice of God is thus truly defended, and will allege that we seek an evasion, such as those are wont to employ who have no good excuse. For what more seems to be said here than just that the power of God is such as cannot be hindered, so that He can do whatsoever He pleases? But it is far otherwise. For what stronger reason can be given than when we are ordered to reflect Who God is? How could He Who is the Judge of the world commit any unrighteousness? If it properly belongs to the nature of God to do judgment, He must naturally love justice and abhor injustice. Wherefore, the apostle did not, as if he had been caught in a difficulty, have recourse to evasion. He only intimated that the procedure of divine justice is too high to be scanned by human measure, or comprehended by the feebleness of human intellect.

The apostle, indeed, confesses that in the divine judgments there is a depth in which all the minds of men must be engulfed if they attempt to penetrate into it. But he also shows how unbecoming it is to reduce the works of God to such a law as that we can presume to condemn them the moment they accord not with our reason. There is a well-known saying of Solomon (which, however, few properly understand): “The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors” (Pro 26:10). For he is speaking of the greatness of God, Whose pleasure it is to inflict punishment on fools and transgressors, though He is not pleased to bestow His Spirit upon them. It is a monstrous infatuation<sup>19</sup> in men to seek to subject that which has no bounds to the little measure of their reason. Paul gives the name of “elect” to the angels who maintained their integrity (1Ti 5:21). If their steadfastness was owing to the good pleasure of God, the revolt of the others proves that they were abandoned.<sup>20</sup> Of this no other cause can be adduced than reprobation, which is hidden in the secret counsel of God.

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<sup>19</sup> **infatuation** – foolish or all-absorbing passion.

<sup>20</sup> French, *Si leur constance et fermeté a été fondée au bon plaisir de Dieu, la revolte des diables montre qu'ils n'ont pas été retenus, mais plustost delaissez.*—“If their constancy and firmness was founded on the good pleasure of God, the revolt of the devils shows that they were not restrained, but rather abandoned.”

## 5. The Judgments of God Unsearchable

Now, should some Manes<sup>21</sup> or Cœlestinus<sup>22</sup> come forward to arraign<sup>23</sup> divine providence (*see* section 8), I say with Paul that no account of it can be given because, by its magnitude, it far surpasses our understanding. Is there anything strange or absurd in this? Would we have the power of God so limited as to be unable to do more than our mind can comprehend? I say with Augustine that the Lord has created those who, as He certainly foreknew, were to go to destruction, and He did so because He so willed. Why He willed it is not ours to ask, as we cannot comprehend, nor can it become us even to raise a controversy as to the justice of the divine will. Whenever we speak of it, we are speaking of the supreme standard of justice.<sup>24</sup> But when justice clearly appears, why should we raise any question of injustice?

Let us not, therefore, be ashamed to stop their mouths after the example of Paul. Whenever they presume to carp, let us begin to repeat: Who are ye, miserable men, that bring an accusation against God, and bring it because He does not adapt the greatness of His works to your meager capacity? As if everything must be perverse that is hidden from the flesh! The immensity of the divine judgments is known to you by clear experience. You know that they are called “a great deep” (Psa 36:6). Now, look at the narrowness of your own mind, and say whether it can comprehend the decrees of God. Why then should you, by infatuated inquisitiveness, plunge yourselves into an abyss which reason itself tells you will prove your destruction? Why are you not deterred, in some degree at least, by what the Book of Job, as well as the prophetic books, declare concerning the incomprehensible wisdom and dreadful power of God? If your mind is troubled, decline not to embrace the counsel of Augustine,

You, a man, expect an answer from me: I also am a man. Wherefore, let us both listen to Him Who says, “O man, who art thou?” (Rom 9:20). Believing ignorance is better than presumptuous knowledge, seeking merits you will find nought but punishment. O the height! Peter denies, a thief believes. O the height! Do you ask the reason? I will tremble at the height. Reason you, I will wonder; dispute you, I will believe. I see the height; I cannot sound the depth. Paul found rest, because he found wonder. He calls

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<sup>21</sup> **Manes** (also Mani, Manichaeus, c. 216-276 AD) – Persian founder of Manichaeism, a form of Gnosticism that viewed reality as a struggle between a good, spiritual world of light and an evil, material world of darkness.

<sup>22</sup> **Caelestius** (AD 4<sup>th</sup> century) – major follower of Pelagius, whose heretical teachings opposed the doctrine of original sin. Pelagius emphasized that men could turn to God of their own free will. This brought numerous theological disputes about the nature of sin with Augustine and the theologian Jerome. Caelestius went much further than Pelagius in stating that the sin of Adam had only harmed himself and not all of humanity.

The French adds at this place: *ou autre heretique*—“or other heretic.”

<sup>23</sup> **arraigned** – called before a court in order to answer an accusation of wrongdoing.

<sup>24</sup> See Augustine; Ep. 106.

the judgments of God “unsearchable”—and have you come to search them? He says that His ways are “past finding out”—and do you seek to find them out?<sup>25</sup>

We shall gain nothing by proceeding farther. For neither will the Lord satisfy the petulance of these men, nor does He need any other defense than that which He used by His Spirit, Who spoke by the mouth of Paul. We unlearn the art of speaking well when we cease to speak with God.

## 6. Predestination No Excuse for Sin

Impiety starts another objection which, however, seeks not so much to criminate God as to excuse the sinner—though he who is condemned by God as a sinner cannot ultimately be acquitted without impugning the Judge. This, then, is the scoffing language which profane tongues employ: “Why should God blame men for things the necessity of which He has imposed by His own predestination? What could they do? Could they struggle with His decrees? It were in vain for them to do it since they could not possibly succeed. It is not just, therefore, to punish them for things the principal cause of which is in the predestination of God.”

Here I will abstain from the defense to which ecclesiastical writers usually recur: that there is nothing in the prescience of God to prevent Him from regarding man as a sinner, since the evils which He foresees are man’s, not His. This would not stop the caviler, who would still insist that God might, if He had pleased, have prevented the evils which He foresaw—and not having done so, must with determinate counsel have created man for the very purpose of so acting on the earth. But if, by the providence of God, man was created on the condition of afterwards doing whatever he does, then that which he cannot escape, and which he is constrained by the will of God to do, cannot be charged upon him as a crime. Let us, therefore, see what is the proper method of solving the difficulty.

First, all must admit what Solomon says, “The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Pro 16:4). Now, since the arrangement of all things is in the hand of God, since to Him belongs the disposal of life and death, He arranges all things by His sovereign counsel in such a way that individuals are born who are doomed from the womb to certain death, and are to glorify Him by their destruction. If anyone alleges that no necessity is laid upon them by the providence of God, but rather that they are created by Him in that condition because He foresaw their future depravity, [then] he says something, but does not say enough.

Ancient writers, indeed, occasionally employ this solution, though with some degree of hesitation. The Schoolmen,<sup>26</sup> again, rest in it as if it could not be gainsayed.<sup>27</sup> I, for my part, am willing to admit that mere prescience lays no necessity on the creatures—though some do not assent to this, but hold that it is itself the cause of things. But Val-

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<sup>25</sup> Augustine; *de Verb. Apost.* Sermon 20.

<sup>26</sup> **Schoolmen** – succession of theologians and writers of the Middle Ages who taught logic, metaphysics, and theology, such as Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).

<sup>27</sup> **gainsayed** – denied.

la,<sup>28</sup> though otherwise not greatly skilled in sacred matters, seems to me to have taken a shrewder and more acute view, when he shows that the dispute is superfluous, since life and death are acts of the divine will rather than of prescience. If God merely foresaw human events, and did not also arrange and dispose of them at His pleasure, there might be room for agitating the question “How far [does] His foreknowledge amount to necessity?” But since He foresees the things which are to happen simply because He has decreed that they are so to happen, it is vain to debate about prescience, while it is clear that all events take place by His sovereign appointment.

## 7. The Fall of Man Decreed by God

They deny that it is ever said in distinct terms [that] God decreed that Adam should perish by his revolt.<sup>29</sup> As if the same God, Who is declared in Scripture to do whatsoever He pleases, could have made the noblest of His creatures without any special purpose. They say that, in accordance with free-will, he was to be the architect of his own fortune, that God had decreed nothing but to treat him according to his desert. If this frigid fiction is received, where will be the omnipotence of God, by which—according to His secret counsel on which everything depends—He rules over all?

But whether they will allow it or not, predestination is manifest in Adam’s posterity. It was not owing to nature that they all lost salvation by the fault of one parent. Why should they refuse to admit with regard to one man that which, against their will, they admit with regard to the whole human race? Why should they in caviling lose their labour? Scripture proclaims that all were, in the person of one, made liable to eternal death. As this cannot be ascribed to nature, it is plain that it is owing to the wonderful counsel of God. It is very absurd in these worthy defenders of the justice of God to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel (Mat 23:24).

I again ask how it is that the fall of Adam involves so many nations—with their infant children—in eternal death without remedy, unless that it so seemed meet<sup>30</sup> to God? Here the most loquacious<sup>31</sup> tongues must be dumb. The decree, I admit, is dreadful; and yet it is impossible to deny that God foreknew what the end of man was to be before He made him, and foreknew because He had so ordained by His decree. Should anyone here inveigh<sup>32</sup> against the prescience of God, he does it rashly and unadvisedly. For why, pray, should it be made a charge against the heavenly Judge that He was not ignorant of what was to happen?

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<sup>28</sup> **Lorenzo Valla** – (c. 1407-1457) – Italian priest, humanist, rhetorician, and educator; born in Rome to a lawyer in the papal court. He served as a priest and professor. He is best known for two works: his dialogue *De Voluptate* (On Pleasure), and his treatise *De Elegantiss Latinæ Linguae*, which returned Latin composition to its classical roots.

<sup>29</sup> See Calvin, *De Prædestinatione* [“Predestination”].

<sup>30</sup> **meet** – fitting; appropriate.

<sup>31</sup> **loquacious** – disposed to talk much; talkative.

<sup>32</sup> **inveigh** – complain bitterly.

Thus, if there is any just or plausible complaint, it must be directed against predestination. Nor ought it to seem absurd when I say that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his posterity; but also at His own pleasure arranged it. For as it belongs to His wisdom to foreknow all future events, so it belongs to His power to rule and govern them by His hand. This question, like others, is skillfully explained by Augustine: “Let us confess with the greatest benefit, what we believe with the greatest truth: that the God and Lord of all things, Who made all things very good, both foreknew that evil was to arise out of good, and knew that it belonged to His most omnipotent goodness to bring good out of evil, rather than not permit evil to be—and so ordained the life of angels and men as to show in it, first, what free-will could do; and, secondly, what the benefit of His grace and His righteous judgment could do.”<sup>33</sup>

## 8. Defense of God’s Justice in the Decree of the Fall

Here they recur to the distinction between will and permission, the object being to prove that the wicked perish only by the permission, but not by the will, of God. But why do we say that He “permits,” but just because He *wills*? Nor, indeed, is there any probability in the thing itself, viz., that man brought death upon himself merely by the permission, and not by the ordination, of God—as if God had not determined what He wished the condition of the chief of His creatures to be. I will not hesitate, therefore, simply to confess with Augustine that the will of God is necessity, and that every thing is necessary which He has willed; just as those things will certainly happen which He has foreseen.<sup>34</sup>

Now, if in excuse of themselves and the ungodly, either the Pelagians, or Manichees,<sup>35</sup> or Anabaptists,<sup>36</sup> or Epicureans<sup>37</sup> (for it is with these four sects we have to discuss this matter) should object the necessity by which they are constrained, in consequence of the divine predestination, they do nothing that is relevant to the cause. For if predestination is nothing else than a dispensation of divine justice—secret indeed, but unblameable, because it is certain that those predestinated to that condition were not unworthy of it—it is equally certain that the destruction consequent upon predestination is also most just. Moreover, though their perdition depends on the predestination of God, the cause and matter of it is in themselves. The first man fell because the Lord

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<sup>33</sup> Augustine; *Enchir. ad Laurent.*

<sup>34</sup> Augustine; *de Gen. ad Lit.*; Lib. vi. cap. 15.

<sup>35</sup> **Manichees** – followers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century Iranian philosopher Mani (AD 216-ca. 277), who founded a complex form of Gnosticism and taught that Christ was a prophet, but not the incarnate Son of God.

<sup>36</sup> **Anabaptists** – literally “re-baptizer”: Greek *ana* “again” and *baptizo* “baptize”; those during the Reformation who rejected infant baptism for believers’ baptism. German, Swiss, Polish, Dutch, and other groups emerged, often with widely different theology.

<sup>37</sup> **Epicureanism** – philosophy based upon the Greek Epicurus around 307 BC. Epicurus’ materialism led him to a general attack on divinity. He believed “pleasure” was the greatest good, achieved through modest living and self-restraint, leading to tranquility and freedom from fear, constituting happiness in its highest form.

deemed it meet that He should: why He deemed it meet, we know not. It is certain, however, that it was just, because He saw that His own glory would thereby be displayed. When you hear the glory of God mentioned, understand that His justice is included. For that which deserves praise must be just.

Man therefore falls, divine providence so ordaining, but he falls by his own fault. The Lord had a little before declared that all the things which He had made were very good (Gen 1:31). Whence then the depravity of man, which made him revolt from God? Lest it should be supposed that it was from his creation, God had expressly approved what proceeded from Himself. Therefore, man's own wickedness corrupted the pure nature which he had received from God, and his ruin brought with it the destruction of all his posterity.

Wherefore, let us in the corruption of human nature contemplate the evident cause of condemnation (a cause which comes more closely home to us), rather than inquire into a cause hidden and almost incomprehensible in the predestination of God. Nor let us decline to submit our judgment to the boundless wisdom of God, so far as to confess its insufficiency to comprehend many of His secrets. Ignorance of things which we are not able, or which it is not lawful to know, is learning, while the desire to know them is a species of madness.

## Sections 9-11

### Three More Objections Addressed

#### **9. Using Predestination as a Pretext to Sin**

Someone, perhaps, will say that I have not yet stated enough to refute this blasphemous excuse. I confess that it is impossible to prevent impiety from murmuring and objecting; but I think I have said enough not only to remove the ground, but also the pretext, for throwing blame upon God. The reprobate would excuse their sins by alleging that they are unable to escape the necessity of sinning, especially because a necessity of this nature is laid upon them by the ordination of God. We deny that they can thus be validly excused, since the ordination of God, by which they complain that they are doomed to destruction, is consistent with equity<sup>38</sup>—an equity indeed unknown to us, but most certain. Hence, we conclude that every evil which they bear is inflicted by the most just judgment of God.

Next, we have shown that they act preposterously when, in seeking the origin of their condemnation, they turn their view to the hidden recesses of the divine counsel, and wink at the corruption of nature, which is the true source. They cannot impute this cor-

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<sup>38</sup> **equity** – fairness; evenhanded dealing.

ruption to God, because He bears testimony to the goodness of His creation. For though, by the eternal providence of God, man was formed for the calamity under which he lies, he took the matter of it from himself, not from God, since the only cause of his destruction was his degenerating from the purity of his creation into a state of vice and impurity.

## 10. Does Election Make God a Respector of Persons?

There is a third absurdity by which the adversaries of predestination defame it. As we ascribe it entirely to the counsel of the divine will that those whom God adopts as the heirs of His kingdom are exempted from universal destruction, they infer that He is an acceptor of persons; but this Scripture uniformly denies (Act 10:34). Therefore, [they say that] Scripture is either at variance with itself, or respect is had to merit in election.

First, the sense in which Scripture declares that God is not an acceptor of persons, is different from that which they suppose: since the term *person* means not “man,” but those things which, when conspicuous in a man, either procure favour, grace, and dignity; or, on the contrary, produce hatred, contempt, and disgrace. Among these are, on the one hand, riches, wealth, power, rank, office, country, beauty, etc.; and, on the other hand, poverty, want, mean birth, sordidness, contempt, and the like. Thus Peter and Paul say that the Lord is no acceptor of persons, because He makes no distinction between the Jew and the Greek, and does not make the mere circumstance of country the ground for rejecting one or embracing the other (Act 10:34; Rom 2:11; Gal 3:28). Thus James also uses the same words when he would declare that God has no respect to riches in His judgment (Jam 2:5). Paul also says, in another passage, that in judging, God has no respect to slavery or freedom (Eph 6:9; Col 3:25).

There is nothing inconsistent with this when we say that God, according to the good pleasure of His will, without any regard to merit, elects those whom He chooses for sons, while He rejects and reprobates others. For fuller satisfaction the matter may be thus explained.<sup>39</sup> It is asked: How it happens that of two, between whom there is no difference of merit, God in His election adopts the one, and passes by the other? I, in my turn, ask: Is there anything in him who is adopted to incline God towards him? If it must be confessed that there is nothing, it will follow that God looks not to the man, but is influenced entirely by His own goodness to do him good. Therefore, when God elects one and rejects another, it is owing not to any respect to the individual, but entirely to His own mercy, which is free to display and exert itself when and where He pleases. For we have elsewhere seen that, in order to humble the pride of the flesh, “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1Co 1:26). So far is God in the exercise of His favour from showing any respect to persons.

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<sup>39</sup> See *Augustine*; Epist. 115, *et ad Bonif.*, Lib. ii, cap. 7.

## 11. God Not Bound to Show Mercy to All Men

Wherefore, it is false and most wicked to charge God with dispensing justice unequally because, in this predestination, He does not observe the same course towards all. If (say they) He finds all guilty, let Him punish all alike; if He finds them innocent, let Him relieve all from the severity of judgment. But they plead with God as if He were either interdicted<sup>40</sup> from showing mercy; or were obliged, if He show mercy, entirely to renounce judgment. What is it that they demand? That if all are guilty, all shall receive the same punishment. We admit that the guilt is common, but we say that God in mercy succours some.

Let Him (they say) succour all. We object that it is right for Him to show by punishing that He is a just judge. When they cannot tolerate this, what else are they attempting than to deprive God of the power of showing mercy; or, at least, to allow it to Him only on the condition of altogether renouncing judgment? Here the words of Augustine most admirably apply:

Since in the first man the whole human race fell under condemnation, those vessels which are made of it unto honour, are not vessels of self-righteousness, but of divine mercy. When other vessels are made unto dishonour, it must be imputed not to injustice, but to judgment.<sup>41</sup>

Since God inflicts due punishment on those whom He reprobates, and bestows unmerited favour on those whom He calls, He is free from every accusation; just as it belongs to the creditor to forgive the debt to one, and exact it of another. The Lord therefore may show favour to whom He will, because He is merciful; not show it to all, because He is a just judge. In giving to some what they do not merit, He shows His free favour; in not giving to all, He declares what all deserve. For when Paul says, “God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all,” it ought also to be added that He is debtor to none, for “who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?” (Rom 11:32, 35).

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<sup>40</sup> **interdicted** – prohibited; forbidden.

<sup>41</sup> Augustine; Epist. 106, *De Prædest. et Gratia*; *De Bono Persever.*, cap. 12.



## Sections 12-14

### Defense of Predestination against Objections Based on Holiness

#### **12. Does Election Lead to a Licentious Lifestyle?**

Another argument which they employ to overthrow predestination is that, if it stand, all care and study of well-doing must cease. For what man can hear (say they) that life and death are fixed by an eternal and immutable decree of God, without immediately concluding that it is of no consequence how he acts, since no work of his can either hinder or further the predestination of God? Thus all will rush on and, like desperate men, plunge headlong wherever lust inclines. And it is true that this is not altogether a fiction, for there are multitudes of a swinish nature who defile the doctrine of predestination by their profane blasphemies, and employ them as a cloak to evade all admonition and censure. [They say,] “God knows what He has determined to do with regard to us: if He has decreed our salvation, He will bring us to it in His own time; if He has doomed us to death, it is vain for us to fight against it.”

But Scripture, while it enjoins us to think of this high mystery with much greater reverence and religion, gives very different instruction to the pious, and justly condemns the accursed license of the ungodly. For it does not remind us of predestination [in order] to increase our audacity, and tempt us to pry with impious presumption into the inscrutable counsels of God; but rather to humble and abase us, that we may tremble at His judgment and learn to look up to His mercy. This is the mark at which believers will aim.

The grunt of these filthy swine is duly silenced by Paul. They say that they feel secure in vice because, if they are of the number of the elect, their vices will be no obstacle to the ultimate attainment of life. But Paul reminds us that the end for which we are elected is, “that we should be holy and without blame before him” (Eph 1:4). If the end of election is holiness of life, it ought to arouse and stimulate us strenuously to aspire to it, instead of serving as a pretext for sloth. How wide the difference between the two things: between ceasing from well-doing because election is sufficient for salvation, and its being the very end of election that we should devote ourselves to the study of good works.

Have done, then, with blasphemies which wickedly invert the whole order of election. When they extend their blasphemies farther, and say that he who is reprobated by God will lose his pains if he studies to approve himself to Him by innocence and probity<sup>42</sup> of life, they are convicted of the most impudent falsehood. For whence can any such study arise but from election? As all who are of the number of the reprobate are vessels formed unto dishonour, so they cease not, by their perpetual crimes, to provoke the an-

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<sup>42</sup> **probity** – honesty.

ger of God against them and give evident signs of the judgment which God has already passed upon them. So far is it from being true, that they vainly contend against it.

### 13. Does Election Lead to Lax Preaching on Holiness?

Another impudent and malicious calumny against this doctrine is that it destroys all exhortations to a pious life. The great odium<sup>43</sup> to which Augustine was at one time subjected on this head, he wiped away in his treatise *De Correptione et Gratia* to Valentinus, a perusal of which will easily satisfy the pious and docile.<sup>44</sup> Here, however, I may touch on a few points which will, I hope, be sufficient for those who are honest and not contentious.

We have already seen how plainly and audibly Paul preaches the doctrine of free election; is he, therefore, cold in admonishing and exhorting? Let those good zealots compare his vehemence with theirs, and they will find that they are ice, while he is all fervour. And surely every doubt on this subject should be removed by the principles which he lays down: that God hath not called us to uncleanness; that everyone should possess his vessel in honour; that we are the workmanship of God, “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (1Th 4:4, 7; Eph 2:10). In one word, those who have any tolerable acquaintance with the writings of Paul will understand, without a long demonstration, how well he reconciles the two things which those men pretend to be contradictory to each other.

Christ commands us to believe in Him (Joh 6:40), and yet there is nothing false or contrary to this command in the statement which He afterwards makes: “No man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father” (Joh 6:65). Let preaching then have its free course that it may lead men to faith, and dispose them to persevere with uninterrupted progress. Nor, at the same time, let there be any obstacle to the knowledge of predestination, so that those who obey may not plume themselves on anything of their own, but glory only in the Lord. It is not without cause our Saviour says, “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Mat 13:9). Therefore, while we exhort and preach, those who have ears willingly obey. In those, again, who have no ears is fulfilled what is written, “Hear ye indeed, but understand not” (Isa 6:9). “But why (says Augustine) have some ears, and others not? Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Are we, therefore, to deny what is plain because we cannot comprehend what is hid?” This is a faithful quotation from Augustine; but because his words will perhaps have more authority than mine, let us adduce the following passage from his treatise, *De Bono Persever*.

Should some on hearing this turn to indolence and sloth, and leaving off all exertion, rush headlong into lust, are we, therefore, to suppose that what has been said of the foreknowledge of God is not true? If God foreknew that they would be good, will they not be good, however great their present wickedness? and if God foreknew that they would be wicked, will they not be wicked, how great soever the goodness now seen in

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<sup>43</sup> **odium** – hatred; dislike.

<sup>44</sup> **docile** – teachable; willing to learn.

them? For reasons of this description, must the truth which has been stated on the subject of divine foreknowledge be denied or not mentioned? and more especially when, if it is not stated, other errors will arise?<sup>45</sup>

The reason for not mentioning the truth is one thing, the necessity for telling the truth is another. It were tedious to inquire into all the reasons for silence. One, however, is: lest those who understand not become worse, while we are desirous to make those who understand better informed. Now, such persons, when we say anything of this kind, do not indeed become better informed, but neither do they become worse. But when the truth is of such a nature, that he who cannot comprehend it becomes worse by our telling it, and he who can comprehend it becomes worse by our not telling it, what think ye ought we to do? Are we not to tell the truth, that he who can comprehend may comprehend—rather than not tell it, and thereby not only prevent both from comprehending, but also make the more intelligent of the two to become worse, whereas if he heard and comprehended others might learn through him? And, we are unwilling to say what, on the testimony of Scripture, it is lawful to say—for we fear lest, when we speak, he who cannot comprehend may be offended; but we have no fear lest, while we are silent, he who can comprehend the truth be involved in falsehood.<sup>46</sup>

Glancing again at the same view, he more clearly confirms it.

Wherefore, if the apostles and teachers of the Church who came after them did both—if they discoursed piously of the eternal election of God, and at the same time kept believers under the discipline of a pious life—how can those men of our day, when shut up by the invincible force of truth, think they are right in saying that what is said of predestination, though it is true, must not be preached to the people? Nay, it ought indeed to be preached, that whoso hath ears to hear may hear. And who hath ears if he hath not received them from Him Who has promised to give them? Certainly, let him who receives not, reject. Let him who receives, take and drink, drink and live! For as piety is to be preached, that God may be duly worshipped; so predestination also is to be preached, that he who hath ears to hear may, in regard to divine grace, glory not in himself, but in God.<sup>47</sup>

#### **14. How Should We Preach the Doctrine of Election?**

And yet as that holy man had a singular desire to edify, he so regulates his method of teaching as carefully, and as far as in him lay, to avoid giving offence. For he reminds us that those things which are truly, should also be fitly, spoken. Were any one to address the people thus: “If you do not believe, the reason is because God has already doomed you to destruction,” he would not only encourage sloth, but also give countenance to wickedness. Were any one to give utterance to the sentiment in the future tense, and say

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<sup>45</sup> Augustine; *De Bono Persever.*; cap. 15.

<sup>46</sup> Augustine; *De Bono Persever.*; cap. 16.

<sup>47</sup> Augustine; *De Bono Persever.*; cap. 20.

that those who hear will not believe because they are reprobates, it were imprecation<sup>48</sup> rather than doctrine. Wherefore, Augustine not undeservedly orders such—as senseless teachers or sinister and ill-omened prophets—to retire from the church. He, indeed, elsewhere truly contends that “a man profits by correction only when He (Who causes those whom He pleases to profit without correction) pities and assists. But why is it thus with some, and differently with others? Far be it from us to say that it belongs to the clay and not to the potter to decide.”

He afterwards says, “When men by correction either come or return to the way of righteousness, who is it that works salvation in their hearts but He Who gives the increase, whoever it be that plants and waters? When He is pleased to save, there is no free-will in man to resist. Wherefore, it cannot be doubted that the will of God (Who hath done whatever He hath pleased in heaven and in earth, and Who has even done things which are to be) cannot be resisted by the human will, or prevented from doing what He pleases, since with the very wills of men He does so.”

Again, “When He would bring men to Himself, does He bind them with corporeal<sup>49</sup> fetters? He acts inwardly—inwardly holds, inwardly moves their hearts—and draws them by the wills which He has wrought in them.” What he immediately adds must not be omitted: “Because we know not who belongs to the number of the predestinated, or does not belong, our desire ought to be that all may be saved. And hence, every person we meet, we will desire to be with us a partaker of peace. But our peace will rest upon the sons of peace. Wherefore, on our part, let correction be used as a harsh yet salutary<sup>50</sup> medicine for all, that they may neither perish nor destroy others. To God it will belong to make it available to those whom He has foreknown and predestinated.”



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<sup>48</sup> **imprecation** – curse.

<sup>49</sup> **corporeal** – bodily.

<sup>50</sup> **salutary** – beneficial; conducive to health, spiritual health in this case.