

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

Chapter 3-Of God's Eternal Decree.

V. Those of man-kinde that are predestinated unto Life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternall and immutable purpose, and the secret Counsell and good pleasure of his Will, hath chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory,¹ out of his meer free grace and love, without any fore-sight of Faith, or Good-works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto:² and all, to the praise of his glorious grace.³

Question 1—*Is the decree of predestination, (namely the decree of election and reprobation) absolute, from the mere good will, and pleasure of God?*

Answer—Yes; and, it is particular, concerning a certain number of persons, 2 Tim. 2:19; John 13:18. Thus Arminians, Lutherans and Papists err who hang this Decree upon fore-sight of persevering faith or works. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) The apostle Paul makes the good will and pleasure of God, the only cause, why this man is chosen and another as worthy is rejected, and cast off, Rom. 9:11-15. 2.) Christ himself assigns it to the good will and pleasure of God; that to some, the mysteries of faith, for their conversion are revealed, and they are hid from many others, who are nothing worse, but in some respects better, Matt. 11:25, 26. 3.) A man has no good thing in himself, whereby he may be distinguished from another, but what he has freely gotten from God, 1 Cor. 4:7. 4.) The grace of regeneration, justifying faith, effectual calling, and perseverance to the end, are given to all the elect, and to them only, according to the eternal decree of God. Therefore, they are effects, not causes, or preredquired conditions of election; Rom. 8:30; Matt. 24:24; 2 Tim. 1:9; John 15:16; Eph. 1:3-5; Matt. 13:11; Rom. 11:6, 7.

Question 2—*Is Christ the cause and foundation of election?*

Answer—No. Eph. 1:4, 11. This we deny against the Lutherans and Arminians. The reasons of the orthodox are: 1.) Election was made from God's mere good pleasure; therefore, not on account of Christ, because good pleasure excludes every cause out of God upon which election may depend. Hence by Moses, he says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," Matt. 11:25, 26; Rom. 9:11, 16; Luke 12:32. 2.) As noted above, the effect cannot be the cause. But Christ is an effect of election since he was himself elected and preordained to be Mediator, Isa. 42:1; 1 Pet. 1:20; John 3:16; note the love of God towards the world precedes the mission of the Son. Also, 1 John 4:10. Christ was destined to be the Savior and head of the elect, but the cause was the special love of God toward the elect. 3.) The object ought to be prior to the act about which it is occupied. However, the object of Christ's merit is the elect, Tit. 2:14. Therefore, election ought to precede both redemption and its decree, Acts 13:48. That the object of Christ's death is the elect is proved from the following passages: Matt. 1:21; John 10:11, 15; 15:13, 14;

¹ Eph. 1:4, 9, 11; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Thess. 5:9.

² Rom. 9:11, 13, 16; Eph. 1:4, 9.

³ Eph. 1:6, 12.

Eph. 5:25. 4.) The intention of the end ought to precede the destination of the means. Now, salvation is the end, and Christ is the means, Isa. 42:1. Therefore, the destination of salvation to the elect ought to be conceived before the destination of Christ to obtain that end. Although Christ is the foundation of salvation, he cannot be called the same with respect to election. We are said to be “elected in Christ,” Eph. 1:4, not already “existing” in him. No one can be in Christ without first being given to him by the Father, John 17:6, 7; and planted by him in faith and love to which we are elected. Compare 1 Thess. 5:9.

Question 3—*Is election made from the foresight of faith, or works; or from the grace of God alone?*

Answer—The former we deny; the latter we affirm. Eph. 2:8-10. Thus do the Arminians, Pelagians, and other heretics err who maintain that faith or works are the conditions of election. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Faith and obedience are the fruit and effect of election, not the cause, Rom. 8:30; Eph. 1:4, 5; John 1:12; Acts 13:48; Tit. 1:1. 2.) Election was made from the good pleasure of God alone, as noted above. 3.) If election is from foreseen faith, God must have foreseen it in us: either as an act of nature proceeding from us, or as an act of grace depending on God, or as a common act, arising from both. If as an act of God, he foresaw it therefore as his own gift. Thus, it would follow, not precede election. If as an act of nature, we therefore elected ourselves (contrary to Paul, 1 Cor. 4:7). 4.) If election is from foreseen faith, God would not have elected man, but rather man would have elected God, and so predestination should be called postdestination. The first cause would be made the second, contrary to Christ, John 15:16. 5.) If election is from foreseen faith, no place will be given for the objections usually urged against it, and nothing would be easier than to answer the question, why this rather than that one was chosen. Thus to no purpose would Paul exclaim, Rom. 11:33.