

## THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

### Chapter 3-Of God's Eternal Decree.

VIII. The Doctrine of this high Mystery of Predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care,<sup>1</sup> that men attending the Will of God revealed in his Word, and yeelding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectuall Vocation, be assured of their eternall Election.<sup>2</sup> So shall this Doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God,<sup>3</sup> and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the Gospel.<sup>4</sup>

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Question 1—*Ought predestination to be publicly taught and preached?*

*Answer*—Yes. Because, 1.) Christ and the apostles frequently taught it (as appears from the Gospel), Matt. 11:20, 25; 13:11; 25:34; Luke 10:20; 12:32; John 8:47; 15:16, etc.; and from the epistles of Paul, Rom. 9; Rom. 8:29, 30; Eph. 1:4, 5; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Thess. 5:9; 2 Thess. 2:13, etc. Nor otherwise do Peter, James and John express themselves who speak repeatedly of this mystery whenever occasion offered. *cf.* 1 Pet. 1:2; Jas. 1:18; 1 John 2:19; 2 John 1. Now, if it was proper for them to teach it, why is it not proper for us to learn it? *cf.* Rom. 15:4. Why should God teach what would have been better unspoken? *cf.* Matt. 13:11. Why did he wish to proclaim those things which it would be better not to know? *cf.* 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. Do we wish to be more prudent than God or prescribe rules for him? *cf.* Job 21:22. 2.) It is one of the primary gospel doctrines and foundations of faith, Rom. 8:30. It cannot be ignored without great injury to the church and to believers, Acts 20:26, 27. For it is the fountain of our gratitude to God, 1 Cor. 15:57, the root of humility, 1 Cor. 4:7, the foundation and most firm anchor of confidence in all temptations, 1 John 2:18, 19, the fulcrum of the sweetest consolation and the most powerful spur to piety and holiness, John 6:65-68.

Question 2—*How is this doctrine of predestination to be taught?*

*Answer*—While we think that predestination should be taught, we do not further suppose that human curiosity should be enlarged, but believe there is need here of great sobriety and prudence, Deut. 29:29; Rom. 9:20; 11:33. We ought to remain within the bounds prescribed by Scripture, not endeavoring to be wise beyond what is written, and that we have regard for the persons, places and times to regulate the discussion of it, Matt. 7:6. For it ought not to be delivered immediately and in the first instance, but gradually and slowly, John 15:15, 16. Nor ought it to be delivered equally as to all its parts, for some ought to be more frequently inculcated as more useful and better suited to the consolation of the pious (as the doctrine of election, 2 Tim. 2:19), but others ought to be handled more sparingly (as reprobation), Rom. 2:4; Jer. 10:10. In one word, all curious and fruitless questions must be avoided here, and what Paul calls “foolish and unlearned questions,” 2 Tim. 2:23, which usually engender strife and contentions. Our only object

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 9:20; 11:33; Deut. 29:29.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. 1:10.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. 1:6; Rom. 11:33

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 11:5, 6, 20; 2 Pet. 1:10; Rom. 8:33; Luke 10:20.

should be to increase our faith, not to feed curiosity; to labor for edification, not to strive for our glory, 1 Cor. 14:26.

Question 3—*What practical use does this doctrine afford?*

*Answer*—The practical use of this doctrine is that it provides a point from which men may test the reality of their interest in true religion, 2 Pet. 1:10. Both the belief of the truth and the exercise of good works, when performed by those possessing saving faith, argue much the reality of their election, 2 Thess. 2:13, 14; 1 Thess. 1:3, 4. It is the assurance of the predestination to life that stands at the center of the assurance which is of the essence of saving faith, Gal. 4:6. Knowing that there is a predestination to life, an eternal election of grace, provides the possibility of concluding with some certainty, from the things which necessarily flow from it, that one is included in the number of the elect, Rom. 8:28-31.

Question 4—*Does this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence and admiration of God, as well as diligence, humility and abundant consolation to all who obey the Gospel?*

*Answer*—Yes. For the apostle has made this doctrine a foundational matter of praise, Eph. 1:6. He also finds the mystery great cause of reverence and admiration of the high workings of the Almighty, Rom. 11:33. Secondly, this doctrine ought to instill diligence, 2 Pet. 1:10; a deep and profound humility before God's awesome sovereignty, Rom. 11:5, 6, 20; and an abiding consolation to all that strive to maintain Gospel obedience in Christ, Rom. 8:33; Luke 10:20.