

*Of Arminianism
&*

Predestination

Christopher Ness

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Agape Chapel Ministries
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(Free List of Free Materials)

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Christopher Ness

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF CHRISTOPHER NESS

Christopher Ness (1621-1705) was an English Nonconformist preacher and author.

He wrote "A History and Mystery of the Old and New Testaments," a work to which Matthew Henry is thought to owe much of his most valuable material for his commentary: "A Protestant Antidote Against the Poison of Popery;" "The Crown and Glory of a Christian;" "A Christian's Walk and Work on Earth;" "A Church History from Adam," and "A Scripture Prophecy to the End of the World;" "A Discovery of the Person and Period of AntiChrist;" and "An Antidote Against Arminianism," a small work embodying in a brief form the doctrines on election, predestination, etc., as taught by John Owen, Toplady, and others.

Ness was born on December 22, 1621 at North Cave, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, the son of Thomas Ness, a husbandman there. He was educated at a private school at North Cave, under Lazarus Seaman, and entered St. John's College, Cambridge, on May 17, 1638, where he graduated B.A. and M.A. When 23 years old he retired into Yorkshire, where he became a preacher of independent tenets successively at Cliffe, or South Cliffe Chapel in his native parish, in Holderness, and at Beverley, where he taught a school. On Dr. Winter's election as provost of Trinity College, Dublin, in 1651, Ness was chosen as his successor in the living of Cottingham, near Hull, though it does not appear that he ever received Episcopal orders.

In 1656, he became a preacher at Leeds, and in 1660 he was a lecturer under the vicar, Dr. Lake, afterwards Bishop of Chichester; but his Calvinism clashed with the Arminianism of Dr. Lake, and on St. Bartholomew's day in 1662 he was ejected from his lectureship. After this he became a schoolmaster and private preacher at Clayton, Morley, and Hunslet, all in Yorkshire. At Hunslet he took an indulgence as a Congregationalist in 1672, and a new meeting-house was opened by him on June 3, 1672.

He was excommunicated no less than four times, and when in 1674 or 1675 a writ de excommunicato capiendo was issued against him, he removed to London, where he preached to a private congregation in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street. In 1684 he had to conceal himself from the officers of the crown, who had a warrant for his arrest on the charge of publishing an elogy on the death of his friend John Partridge, another Nonconformist minister. He died on December 26, 1705, aged exactly 84 years, and was buried at Bunhill Fields Cemetery.

Other A.C.M. Free Booklets by Christopher Ness:

1. *Of Free Will In The Fallen State*
2. *Of Universal Redemption*
3. *Objections Against Particular Redemption Answered*
4. *Of Final Perseverance*

Of Arminianism & Predestination

Christopher Ness

Of Arminianism in General

It hath ever been the lot of truth (like the Lord of it) to be crucified between right-hand and left-hand thieves. Truth's enemies, on all hands, are various. While some men consider the Bible to be an imposition on the world, and treat salvation by Christ as mere priestcraft and deception, there are others who tell us they have Christ, and are one with Christ, and yet with audacious effrontery cry down the ordinances of the gospel, and consider the means of grace as too burdensome for a free-born conscience, and too low and carnal for a seraphic spirit. There is as much beyond the truth as on this side of it; as much in outrunning the flock of Christ and the Lamb that leads them, as in straggling and loitering behind. Truth hath evermore observed the golden mean.

The Socinians decry the divinity of Christ and His satisfaction, as if His sufferings were exemplary only, not expiatory. The Roman Catholics turn the true worship of God into will worship, and teach their own traditions for the commandments of God, spoiling God's institutions with man's inventions. And the Arminians do call the justice of God to the bar of reason; they dare confidently wade in the deep ocean of divine mysteries, and in stating the decrees of God, where blessed Paul could find no bottom, but cried out "O the depth" etc. (Ro 11:33); they dare undertake to fetch the Apostle from off his nonplus, saying, "God foresaw that Jacob would believe, and that Esau would not believe; therefore, the one was loved and the other hated." Thus Arminius' school teacheth deeper divinity than what Paul learned in the third heaven. And they do not only with the Socinians gratify the pride of man's reason, but also the pride of man's will, in extenuating and lessening both the guilt and filth of original sin; even as Popery, their elder sister, doth gratify the pride of outward sense.

Hence Dr. Leighton calls Arminianism "the Pope's Benjamin, the last and greatest monster of the man of sin; the elixir of Anti- Christianism; the mystery of the mystery of iniquity; the Pope's cabinet; the very quintessence of equivocation." Alike hereunto Mr. Rous (Master of Eton College) addeth, saying, "Arminianism is the spawn of Popery, which the warmth of favour may easily turn into frogs of the bottomless pit." And what are the new Arminians but the varnished offspring of the old Pelagians, that makes the grace of God to lackey it at the foot, or rather, the will of man? that makes the sheep to keep the shepherd? that puts God into the same extremity with Darius, who would gladly have saved Daniel but could not (Da 6:14)?

What else can their doctrine signify which they call a prescience or foreknowledge in God, the truth of which depends, not on the decree of God, but on the free-will of the creature? This is to make the creature have no dependence on the Creator, and to fetter Divine Providence. Thus that fatal necessity, which they would lay at our doors, unavoidably remains at theirs, and (according to their scheme) God must say thus to man, "O My poor creature? that fatal fortune which hath harmed you must be endured more than bewailed, for it was from all eternity, before My providence. I could not hinder, I could not but consent to those fatal contingencies; and unavoidable Fate hath, whether I will or not, pronounced the inevitable sentence." What else is this but to overthrow all those graces of Faith, Hope, etc., to expectorate (to cast off) all vital godliness; and to pull the great Jehovah Himself out of His throne of glory, setting up dame Fortune to be worshipped in His stead?

These and many other great abominations have been discovered in the "chambers of imagery" in our days, and are nothing but measuring supernatural mysteries with the crooked metewand of degenerate reason. "Wisdom is too high for a fool" (Pr 24:7). In these points it was once well said, "Give me a mortified reason," for, to prescribe to God's infinite

comfort to one whose heart is privy to myriads of departures from God. It was well said by the Psalmist, "Who can understand his errors?" Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults" (Ps 19:12).

To tell men (as Arminians do) that they may be justified and sanctified, and God's children, all but glorification; and yet, after this, may become reprobates, and be damned in the end, is desperate doctrine indeed. Truly it is theirs which is the desperate doctrine; whereas our doctrine is only liable to false inferences from carnal persons -- from such persons as drew false conclusions from our Lord's words, and said, "Who then can be saved?" (Lu 18:26). Such inferences are not fairly deduced, but corrupt consequences drawn from good premises.

"God's ways are just, His counsels wise, No darkness can prevent His eyes; No thought can fly, nor thing can move, Unknown to Him that sits above."

He in the thickest darkness dwells, Performs His work, the cause conceals, But though His methods are unknown, Judgment and Truth support His throne.

In Heaven, and earth, and air, and seas, He executes His firm decrees; And by His saints it stands confess'd, That what He does is ever best.

Wait then, my soul, submissive wait, Prostrate before His awful seat, And, midst the terrors of His rod, Trust in a wise and gracious God."



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read the heart of his covenant God towards him as loving him everlastingly, absolutely, and peculiarly; and, in consequence of His everlasting unchangeable love, bestowing on him, and giving for him, His greatest, His best gift, even Jesus Christ; let him live as he listeth, this will be his language, aye and his practice also, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." I love Thee, because Thou hast first loved me; I am constrained thereto by the all-powerful influences of Thy grace; this fleeting world can now afford nothing satisfactory to me. I shall never be satisfied till I am absent from the body and present with the Lord, till I awake with Thy likeness (Php 1:21; 1Jo 4:19; 2Co 5:14,15; Ps 17:15.)

Objection 7. The doctrine of absolute reprobation makes men desperate; "Let me do what I can, if I am to be damned I shall be damned: I am under a fatal necessity."

Answer 1. This is to suck poison out of a sweet flower; to dash against the Rock of ages; to stumble at the Word, whereunto they were appointed (1Pe 2:8). Why hath God ordered all things by an absolute decree for ever? It is "that men should fear before Him" (Ec 3:14). God acts freely, as the first cause; and man freely, as the second; in concurrence and not by constraint.

2. This objection is well answered in the 17th Article of the Church of England: "For curious and carnal persons taking the spirit of Christ to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, by which the devil doth thrust them either into desperation or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation."

3. No man may judge himself a reprobate in this life, and so grow desperate; for final disobedience (the only infallible evidence of reprobation) cannot be discovered till death. We are not to question the secret will of God but to pay attention to His revealed will.

4. The Arminian doctrine [God foresaw what good courses I would take of my free-will, so did elect me] is miserable

understanding, and to allow Him no reasons to guide His determinations by, but what we are acquainted with, is extremely arrogant. Reason must neither be the rule to measure faith by, nor the judge of it. We may give a reason of our believing, to wit, "because it is written," but not of all things believed, as why Jacob was loved and Esau hated before they had done either good or evil -- this was the counsel of God's own will. Touching such sublime mysteries our faith stands upon two sure bottoms: the first is, that being, wisdom, and power of God doth infinitely transcend ours; so may reveal matters far above our reach; the second is; that whatsoever God reveals is undoubtedly true, and to be believed, although the bottom of it cannot be sounded by the line of our reason; because man's reason is not absolute, but variously limited, perplexed with his own frailty, and defective in its own acting.

OF PREDESTINATION

That the reader may have clear views of the doctrine of Predestination, I shall, first, state that doctrine as revealed in the Bible; second, consider the Arminian's view of it, viz., that it is conditional upon the foresight of faith, works, perseverance, etc., and, thirdly, answer the objections brought by the Arminians against the Scriptural doctrine of Election and Predestination.

The Doctrine of Predestination

Predestination is the decree of God, by which (according to the counsel of His own will) He fore-ordained some of mankind to eternal life, and refused or passed by others; for the praise of His glorious mercy and justice. Some are vessels of mercy, others are vessels of wrath. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; And that he might make known the riches of His glory on the

vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory" (Ro 9:21-23).

In a great house are various vessels both for use and ornament, vessels of honour, and vessels of dishonour, (2Ti 2:20); and the master of the house hath a right to, and can wisely use, all his vessels, even as he shall think proper. God hath His use even of Pharaoh and of the church's greatest enemies; if it be but scullion work, to brighten vessels of mercy by them. God hath appointed the Elect unto Glory; and He hath by the eternal and most free purpose of His will fore-ordained all the means thereunto; such as redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Holy Ghost, effectual calling and conversion, justification in the court of conscience by saving faith in Jesus' merits, sanctification in the heart by the Spirit, producing holy living and holy walking with God and man. And these blessed participants are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1Pe 1:5). "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things?" (Ro 8:30,31). We will say with the apostle, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation" (1Th 5:9).

It is called destination, as it comprehends a determined order of the means to the end; and pre-destination, because God appointed this order in and with Himself before the actual existence of those things so ordered. The Greek word signifies a fore-separated for God's special use; as Israel was separated from among all the nations of the world to be God's peculiar inheritance. "I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people" (Le 20:24). "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (De 7:6). I have separated you to become vessels of mercy, members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost, before all time, even from all eternity. As Divine prescience is sometimes largely taken for predestination, "God hath not cast away His people which He

till it, as his God instructs him (Isa 28:26). God decrees that fifteen years shall be added to Hezekiah's life; this made him neither careless of his health nor negligent of his food; he said not, "Though I run into fire, or into the water, or drink poison, I shall nevertheless live so long;" but natural providence, in the due use of means, co-wrought so as to bring him on to that period of time pre-ordained for him. Man's industry is subservient to God's decree; it is called, "the life of thine hand" (Isa 57:10). We may not tempt the Lord our God.

2. The golden chain has so linked the means to the end, and sanctification in order to salvation, that God doth infallibly stir up the elect to the use of the means, as well as bring them to the end by the means. "Brethren beloved of the Lord, God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth" (2Th 2:13). "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them ... Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations" (Eze 36:25-31). Those in whom the Lord hath put His spirit, let them live as they list, and I am very sure they will live godly lives.

3. The Arminian eternal prescience infers as absolute a certainty, and necessity of events, as our predestination doth; for things must be foreordained to be before they can be foreseen that they shall be. Men may argue thus from their ground, "If I be eternally foreseen to believe, I shall believe and be saved." And yet on the contrary they teach men to say, "I can repent when I will; I may be elected whenever I please, though I at present am living in lewdness, for I have a free-will to repent even on my deathbed, so I may be saved if I think proper." This is the doctrine that will make men remiss in duty! But, for an elect soul, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, to

of free-will, 'tis possible none may be saved or none lost; and then either Heaven or hell would be superfluous

Supra and Sub-lapsarianism, the difference between stated:

Objection 5. The predestinarians cannot agree about stating their decree; some stating it before the Fall, as the supra-lapsarians; and others after the Fall, as the sub-lapsarians.

Answer 1. The Arminians, by the law of retaliation, may be called sub-mortuarians, for their holding no full election till men die; and post-destinarians, for placing the eternal decree behind the race of man's life. Surely when believers die they are the subjects of glorification, not of election. Christ should have said (upon this hypothesis) to the penitent thief, "This day thou shalt be fully elected," not, "Thou shalt be with me in Paradise." And may they not also be styled re-lapsarians, for saying that the elect may totally and finally fall away; and that he who is a child of God today may be a child of the devil tomorrow?

2. Those notions of sub and supra are but human conceptions of the order of the Divine decree, which so far transcends our understanding, that our weak capacities cannot comprehend it but after the manner of men. Those several states of man, before and after the Fall, are not in the Divine understanding as they are in ours, by a succession of acts, one after another; but God by one single act orders all things; and the Divine idea in the decree is a representative of all those states at once. They are not sub-ordinanda but co-ordinanda; not this after that, but altogether in one instant of eternity.

Objection 6. Absolute election makes men remiss in duty; saying, "What need or use is there of good works? Let me live as I list; if I am elected to salvation I shall certainly be saved."

Answer 1. God's decree establishes means; it doth not only ordain the end, but the means to that end; and the one is never separated from the other. God decrees that the earth shall be fruitful; this doth not exclude, but includes, that the sun must shine upon it, showers must water it, and the husbandman must

foreknew" (Ro 11:2), that is, whom He did predestinate; so, in like manner, predestination is taken strictly and in part for election itself (Ro 8:30; Eph 1:5). I shall handle it accordingly in this following treatise, using the words Election and Predestination promiscuously.

Predestination is also called a Divine decree, for in it is the determinate counsel of God, and the counsel of His own will, in bringing to pass such ends by such and such means. "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (Ac 4:27,28). "Having predestinated us . . . according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph 1:5). "Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph 1:11). The election and predestination of the Lord is, in Scripture phrase, termed the "hand," the "determinate counsel," the "purpose," the "good pleasure" of God (Ac 2:23; Eph 1:9).

The Divine decree of Predestination hath various properties; it is eternal, unchangeable, absolute, free, discriminating, and extensive.

The First Property of the Divine Decree; it is

ETERNAL

This is proved from the following reasons:

1. God's internal and immanent acts are the same with His essence: such an act is the Divine decree: and, therefore, as God's essence is eternal, so His decree must be eternal also. Now the decree is God's decreeing, because whatever is in God is God; it is God Himself by one eternal act, decreeing and determining whatsoever should come to pass unto the praise of His own glory.

2. The second reason is deduced from the simplicity of God, which is, God considered as one mere and perfect act, without any composition or succession. There can be no more a new

thought, a new intent, or a new purpose in God, than there can be a new God. Whatever God thinks He ever thought, and always doth and will think. Whatever God purposes He always purposed, and ever and doth and will purpose. He saith, "I know the thoughts I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jer 29:11). As He cannot know anything new, neither can He intend anything new, for His name is, I AM. He takes not new counsels, as man, neither draws up new determinations.

3. The third reason is taken from Christ. If Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (as He is called, Re 13:8), then predestination to life must needs be before time, because Christ is the Foundation of election. We are elected in Him. "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4); and predestinated by Him, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph 1:5). Christ is the means. Now the end cannot be of a later date and determination than the means to that end; they have relations to each other. And if Christ be the eternal purpose of the Father, the act of electing in Christ must needs be His eternal purpose also.

4. Scripture expressly proves the eternity of the decree, saying, it was "before the world began" (2Ti 1:9; Tit 1:2); and "before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4); and it was an "eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph 3:11).

5. It is the royal prerogative of the great Jehovah to order as well as appoint things that are coming and that shall come: "I appointed the ancient people, and the things that are coming and shall come" (Isa 44:7). None can appoint God the time. He saith, "Who is like Me? and who will appoint Me the time?" (Jer 50:44). Hence time is said to travail with those eternal decrees of God, and brings forth the accomplishment of them in their proper season; and the decree will bring forth ("Before the decree bring forth," Zep 2:2). Every thing hath its

subordinate to the decree of God, determining what Adam would do out of the freedom of his own will.

2. As it respects man, Adam might have stood as well as fallen; for God gave not His creature a law only, but also furnished him with power sufficient to keep that law if he would; and if man had not been mutable, he had been God and not man. Man is mutable; God alone is immutable; in this He, the Lord, is distinguished from all created beings. Yet as it respects God, it was not possible man should stand; for in God's decree it was certain that man, being left to the mutability of his own will (upon Satan's tempting and God's permitting), would voluntarily incline to evil. Therefore Adam sinned freely in respect of himself, but necessarily in respect of God. He acted as freely therein as if there had been no decree, and yet as infallibly as if there had been no liberty. God's decree took not away man's liberty; man in the Fall, while fulfilling the decree of God, yet freely exercised the proper motions of his will.

3. Thus then God, by decreeing Adam's sin, did not subtract from Adam any grace that he had; for He decreed that he should sin voluntarily. He diminished not that power with which he was endued, only He superadded not that grace by which Adam would infallibly not have fallen; which grace was no way due to man, neither was God bound to bestow it on him. So that Adam might stand, in respect of himself; yet certainly fall, in respect of God. The Jews might have broken Christ's bones, in respect of their own free-will in such actions, yet was it not possible they should do so; for "A bone of Him shall not be broken" (Joh 19:36). It was possible, in a sense, that Christ should be delivered from His passion by legions of angels (Mt 26:53), "But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Mt 26:54). It was possible, in respect of the thing, that God might have pardoned sinners without a Christ; but impossible, inasmuch as God had decreed Christ to be the ransom. To argue on the Arminian hypothesis

come to Me, that ye might have life" (Joh 5:40). None are damned because they can do no better, but because they will do no better. If there were no will there would be no hell: and this will be the very hell of hells, that men have been, *felo de se*, self destroyers.

2. Man had a power in Adam. God gave him knowledge in his understanding, rectitude in his will, and purity in his affections: these are all lost by the Fall. God must not lose His authority to command because man by reason of sin hath lost his ability to obey.

3. May it not more truly be said, that it is the Arminians who charge God with folly and dissimulation, by their representing Him as disappointed in his purpose, and by their bringing Him in as speaking thus: "I do indeed earnestly desire to save you, but ye so hinder that I cannot do what I desire; I would, if ye would: therefore since I am, by you, frustrated of My intention, I will change My purpose of saving you, and My consequent will shall be determination to destroy you?" So said Vorstius the Arminian, "Things may happen that may bring God to grief, having tried all things in vain!"

4. But there is another view to be taken here. When God giveth command to spiritual acts He grants power to obey the same. So it was when Christ bade the man to stretch out the withered hand, and Lazarus to come forth out of the grave. The call and command of God is the conduit-pipe of strength and ability.

Objection 4. God's decree cannot be absolute and infallible, because it might have been frustrated by the possibility of Adam's standing.

Answer 1. Adam's standing was possible respecting himself, but not respecting God. To say that Adam might not have sinned is a categorical and simple proposition, and will hold good, Adam being considered in himself as clothed with the freedom of his will; and to say also, that it could not be but that Adam would sin is equally true, considering Adam was

accomplishment in time, which was decreed to fall out from all eternity.

6. If human concerns have this encomium that "these are ancient things" (1Ch 4:22), how much more the Divine decree, which is not the work of yesterday! If the negative part of predestination (the ungodly) were "of old ordained" (Jude 4), then much more the positive, God's purpose of loving Jacob, as well as hating Esau, was before they had done "either good or evil" (Ro 9:11).

Objection. Some may object, saying, We grant God's prescience or foreknowledge to be eternal, but not His predestination; that choice or election mentioned in 1Co 1:27-29 must be a temporal, not an eternal, election.

Answers 1. With God, the knowledge of things that shall come to pass must follow the decree of it; for things must first be decreed, and then foreseen in that being which they have in the decree; in this sense prescience presupposes predestination. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Ac 15:18). God hath not an imperfect but a thorough foreknowledge of all future things; the means and the end; not only as they may be, but also as they shall be, by His Divine determination.

2. Prescience, or fore-knowledge, is taken for God's love from eternity. "Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate" (Ro 8:29); that is, "whom He fore-loved" so Zanchius reads it. Whom He foreknew, not only with the knowledge of observation, but with the knowledge of approbation also; He foreknew them to be His. So it is predestination itself; and to grant an eternal prescience without an eternal predestination, is to break the links of that golden chain in Ro 8:29,30. "God hath not," and God will not, "cast away His people which He foreknew" (Ro 11:2).

3. Some grant a predestination eternal to the elect only, but to the non-elect only a prescience or naked foresight (without any pre-ordination), lest they should make God the author of the creature's sin and ruin. But these men fear where no fear is; for

the worst evil that ever was committed in the world, to wit, the crucifying of the Prince of glory, Jesus Christ, did not only fall under the foreknowledge of God, but also under His determinate counsel, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Ac 2:23; 4:28); the taking and apprehension of Christ was not barely foreknown but unchangeably determined.

4. Even suppose it be granted that the apostle speaks of a temporal election, or choice, in 1Co 1:27, etc., yet that signifies no more than our vocation or calling; and temporal reprobation intimates no more than man's obduration. The accomplishment of both these is granted to be in time, so may not be confounded with this eternal decree of God; these are but fruits and effects of that eternal decree.

Inferences drawn from the foregoing.

1. Is God's love eternal? Then Satan cannot get beyond or between this love of God and us; for it was before the world was, and so before Satan was.
2. Augustine told a curious fool that asked what God did before the world was made, "that He made hell for such as him;" but this teaches us that God was choosing us to Himself before the world began. O wonderful!
3. If so, believer, then thy saintship and sufferings have eternal glory wrapped up in them. All this comfort is lost in the contrary doctrine.

The Second Property of the Divine Decree of Predestination:

It is *UNCHANGABLE*

Hence it is compared to "mountains of brass" (Zec 6:1), and it is called, "immutability of his counsel" (Heb 6:17). This is

made evident by sundry reasons, as:

1. The Divine decree hath an unchangeable fountain, to wit, the unchangeableness of God. "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him?" (Job 23:13). He desires and He doth it; no created being can interpose between the desire and the doing, to hinder

gives not such a grace as infallibly to make them better, so it works nothing in them by which they are made worse.

2. 'Tis a mere fallacy: as if the decree of non-election was the procuring cause of man's damnation. Sin is the cause of damnation, but reprobation is not the cause of sin. David's order to Solomon concerning Joab and Shimei was not the cause why either the one or the other came to an untimely end; but it was treason against Solomon in Joab, and running from Jerusalem in Shimei, which procured their deaths (see 1Ki 2:28,40,42).

3. It is a false hypothesis to suppose that God, in the decree of reprobation, doth by an effectual means intend to bring men to damnation as in the decree of election to bring others to salvation: for salvation is a favour not due any, so God may absolutely give or deny it; but damnation is a punishment, so hath relation to a fault. Means to salvation is the gift of free grace, but damnation comes of man's own voluntary sin, and is the fruit or wages of it. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Ro 6:23). It is God that fitteth Peter for salvation; but Judas fits himself for damnation.

4. Should God constrain the creature to sin, and then damn him for it, He delighteth in the destruction of His creature, contrary to Eze 13:23 and 23:11. God did not thrust Adam into his sin, as, after he had willingly sinned, He thrust him out of Paradise. Man's punishment is from God as a judge; but man's destruction is from himself as a sinner. Let it be repeated, and again repeated, that man's sin came freely from himself.

Objection 3. It is objected against the absolute decree, that it makes God guilty of dissimulation in calling upon such as are under the negative part of it to repent, etc., just as if God bid men, whose eyes He had closed, to judge of colours; or those whose feet He had bound, to rise up and walk.

Answer 1. The non-elect's not repenting is not only from want of power ["No man can come to Me, except the Father . . . draw him" (Joh 6:44)]; but also from want of will, "Ye will not

origin of all good; He is also the Foundation of justice and equity. God is too kind to do us harm, and too just to do us wrong.

3. Jacob and Esau were equal in the womb, yet had an unequal disposing decree concerning them; this was God's right and power to do. This the apostle demonstrates, first, from Moses' testimony, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (Ex 33:19). It is His right to do so. And, secondly, from the example of the potter, who hath power over his pots, yet less than God over His creatures. Now that which the pot cannot do with the potter, that man may not do with his Maker. But the pot (supposing it could speak) could not blame the potter of injustice in appointing equal lumps to unequal ends.

4. God's decree is not an act of injustice, but of lordship and sovereignty. Justice always presupposes debt; but God (who was perfect in Himself from all eternity) could not be a debtor to man, who had his all from God; the decree is not a matter of right and wrong, but of free favour, Grace is God's own, He may do what He will with it. "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Mt 20:15). If He gives grace to some and not to others, it is no wrong in Him that is not bound to give to any.

5. God is not a respecter of persons, because He doth not choose men for their works' sake. It was before Jacob and Esau had done either good or evil. He finds all alike, and nothing to cast the balance of His choice but His own mere good pleasure. God is a free agent, and under no law in giving grace.

Objection 2. Of cruelty; as if God were worse to His creatures than tigers to their young: than rat-catchers who stop up all holes, and then hunt them with their dogs, etc. etc.

Answer 1. This is charging God foolishly, seeing no act of God can be a means to damn men. Men's own acts are the cause of it; to wit, the fulfilling their own lusts. As reprobation

their meeting together. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should repent" (Nu 23:19). "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal 3:6); with Him is no "variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas 1:17). "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations" (Ps 33:11). "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand" (Pr 19:21). Man is a poor changeable creature and changes his mind oftener than his garment, both from the darkness of his understanding and the perverseness of his will. He frequently sees something that he saw not before. But there is no such imperfection in God, all things are naked before Him, dissected, or with their faces upward. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb 4:13). He knows all His works (their natures and circumstances) as perfectly in the beginning of the world as He will do at the end of it. And He abides still in one mind when His dispensations are changed, for He decreed the change of them from all eternity.

2. The decree of Election stands upon an unchangeable foundation, to wit, that Rock of ages, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb 13:8). As the first Adam was the foundation stone in the decree of creation, so the last Adam, even Jesus, is the foundation stone in the decree of election. God hath blessed us in Him, yea, and we shall be blessed. He hath chosen us in Him; pardoned us in Him; sealed us in Him; built us up and completed us in Him; "According to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2Ti 1:9). All those acts of grace are said to be in Christ, who hath blest us in Christ (Eph 1:3); chosen us in Him (Eph 1:4); pardoned us; "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7); "in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed" (Eph 1:13); "rooted and built up in Him" (Col 2:7); and ye are "complete in Him" (Col 2:10).

by them against this Divine absolute decree of unconditional predestination.

The Arminians deal with this doctrine as the heathen emperors did with primitive Christians in the ten first persecutions, who wrapped them up in the skins of beasts, and then exposed them to be torn to pieces by their fierce ban-dogs; so do the Arminians with this great truth. They first dress it up in an ugly shape, with their own false glosses upon it, and then they let fly at it one cynical sarcasm after another, saying, "This doctrine of absolute predestination goes to accuse and charge God with injustice, dissimulation, hypocrisy," etc. etc.

Objection 1. Of injustice, in giving to equal persons unequal things; contrary to that scripture which saith, "that God is no respecter of persons" (Ac 10:34).

Answer 1. This was objected against Paul's doctrine, "What shall we say then? is there unrighteousness (is there injustice) with God? God forbid" (Ro 9:14). And seeing the apostle brings it in as the cavil of carnal reason against God's decree, we have therefore sufficient ground to reject it. God must not lose the honour of His righteousness, because the reason of it appears not to our shallow understandings. We may not reprehend what we cannot comprehend. The justice of God must not be measured by the standard of our reason; what is this but speaking wickedly for God, and talking deceitfully for Him (Job 13:7), and plainly robbing Him of all righteousness that is not consonant with our model? The work of God, and the wisdom of God, must ever be viewed as inseparably united.

2. God is righteousness itself, and darkness may sooner come from the sun (which is the fountain and source of light) than any unrighteous act from God. God's ways are always equal, though men think otherwise of them. "Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not My way equal? are not your ways unequal?" (Eze 18:25); and though they be sometimes secret and past finding out (Ro 11:33), yet are they always just. God's will is the rule ruling; but not as regulated by man's depraved reason. God is the

Indeed, Christ Himself was under Divine ordination; He "verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world" (1Pe 1:20), and is called the elect stone (1Pe 2:6). Christ is the first person elected. "Behold My servant whom I uphold, Mine elect" (Isa 42:1; Mt 12:18). Christ was chosen as the Head, and we as His members, therefore are we said to be given to Christ. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me" (Joh 17:6). Now, so long as this foundation standeth sure, so long doth the superstructure remain unchangeable. The temple stood firmly upon those two pillars, Jachin and Boza, i.e., stability and strength, so the decree of election standeth sure upon Christ the Foundation; and none can pluck an elect soul from off this Foundation. None can pluck any of Christ's out of His hands. Christ will lose none that are given to him; He will fulfil His Father's will by taking care of them all. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (Joh 6:39). "They shall never perish" (Joh 10:28).

3. 'Tis unchangeable, because it is a decree written in Heaven, and so above the reach of either angry men or enraged devils to cancel. "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2Ti 2:19), they are "the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven" (Heb 12:23). Thence it is called "the Lamb's book of life," which contains a catalog of the elect, determined by the unalterable counsel of God; which number can neither be increased nor diminished. This is to be rejoiced in above dominion over devils; "rather rejoice, because your names are in Heaven" (Lu 10:20); which, if our names may be written in Heaven today and blotted out tomorrow would be no such ground of joy. If the decrees of the Medes and Persians, which were but earthly writings, were unalterable (Da 6:8), how much more the decrees of the great God, written in Heaven, must be unchangeable. Must Pilate say, "What I have written I have written" (Joh 19:22); that is to say, "my writing shall not be altered," and shall not God say so much more? "I know (saith Solomon) that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be

themselves (Ps 50:21), wavering and fluctuating in His counsels and hanging in pendulous suspenses; yea, taking up new consultations, as dependent on the will of men, and the contingent acts flowing therefrom.

12. That which infers a succession of acts in God ought not to be admitted, and election upon foresight doth so.

God is one act, and in Him there can be no succession, for then He would not be "I AM." Foresight of faith necessarily presupposes a foregoing decree concerning the being of that faith foreseen. For, first, God must decree faith to be; second, He foresees that faith; third, then decrees to save upon that foresight. So that this foresight necessarily comes between two decrees.

Much more might be added, such as--foreseen faith can have no place in dying infants, yet of such is the kingdom of Heaven, and their names are written in the book of life (see Re 20:12). But to sum up the whole in one sentence: A conditional decree makes a conditional God, since the decree is God Himself decreeing. Therefore it must be rejected.

"May not the Sovereign Lord on high Dispense His favours as He will; Choose some to life, while others die, And yet be just and gracious still?"

Shall man reply against the Lord, And call his Maker's ways unjust? The thunder of whose dreadful word Can crush a thousand worlds to dust.

But, O my soul, if truths so bright Should dazzle and confound thy sight, Yet still His written will obey, And wait the great decisive day!"

Objections Against

The Absolute Decree of Predestination Answered

I have stated and proved the doctrine of absolute Divine Predestination. I have also considered, and, I trust, scripturally refuted the Arminian's notion of it, that it is conditional. I shall now, thirdly, answer a few of the principal objections brought

for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it" (Ec 3:14). "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure . . . I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isa 46:10,11). The sun may sooner be stopped in his course than God hindered of His work or in His will. Nature, angels, devils, men, may all be resisted, and so miss of their design; not so God: for "who hath resisted His will?" All those chariots of human occurrences and dispensations come forth from between those mountains of brass, the unalterable decrees of God (Zec 6:1); and should it be granted that one soul may be blotted out of this book of life (this writing in Heaven) then it is possible that all may be so; and, by consequence, it may be supposed that that book may become empty, and useless as waste paper; and that Christ may be a head without a body.

4. 'Tis unchangeable, for the decree concerning the end includes the means to that end, and binds them altogether with an irrefragable chain, which can never be broken. The predestinated, called, justified, glorified ones, are the same (Ro 8:30). Therefore the purpose of God according to election must stand (Ro 9:11). God doth not decree the end without the means, nor the means without the end, but both together. As a purpose for building includes the hewing of stone, and squaring of timber, and all other materials for building- work; and as a decree for war implies arms, horses, ammunition, and all warlike provisions; so here, all that are elected to salvation, are elected to sanctification also. God ordains to the means as well as to the end. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Ac 13:48). God hath ordained that we should walk in good works (Eph 2:10). We are elected unto obedience, through the "sanctification of the Spirit" (1Pe 1:2); therefore God hath promised to sanctify those whom He purposed to save. We teach with Augustine that, "Election is an ordaining to grace as well as to glory." In pre-destination, therefore, the means of salvation are no less absolutely decreed than salvation itself. We may not conceive that God's decree runs

after this form, "I will predestinate Peter to salvation, if it should so happen that he doth believe and persevere," but rather thus, "I do predestinate Peter to salvation, which, that he may infallibly obtain, I will give him both faith and perseverance." Were it otherwise, the foundation would not stand sure; yea, and God's gifts would not be without repentance, if God did not absolutely decree to give and bestow faith and perseverance to His elected ones. The covenant of grace runs in this tenure, "I will be a God to you, and ye shall be a people unto Me" that is, I will make ye so. Inferences drawn from the foregoing.

1. A name written in Heaven, where no thief, no rust, no moth comes to destroy it, is better than to be enrolled in princely courts; 'tis a name better than of sons and daughters, to be a free citizen of Heaven.
2. Though we are changeable creatures, yet unchangeable love is towards us, that keeps faster hold of us than we of it.
3. It is infinite condescension that the great God should hold a poor lump of clay so fast in His Almighty hands, as to secure our interest to all eternity (Joh 10:28,29; 1Pe 1:4,5).

The Third Property of the Divine Decree:

It is *ABSOLUTE*

It is absolute in respect of the efficient impulsive cause which cannot be anything out of God, as the following reasons evince.

1. If the Divine decree be eternal it must be absolute; for nothing can be assigned before an eternal act, as the efficient cause of it. There cannot be a cause of the will of God out of God. Predestination is an immanent act of the Divine will; and so, not only the cause, but also the first cause of all created beings; and therefore cannot (in any good sense) be said to depend on foreseen transient acts in the creature; so, by consequence, must be an absolute act, unless we will make the volitions of God to come behind the created and temporary volitions of man, which is grossly absurd. This goes to a denial of God being the first cause of all things.

10. That election which is shadowed out to us in God's love to Jacob (both person and nation) is the election according to truth; but that election was not upon foreseen faith or works.

First, Jacob the person. He was under electing love; all foresight of faith and works being excluded. "Jacob have I loved" (Ro 9:12,13). To love Jacob is to will unto him the greatest good, even everlasting salvation, and all things which accompany the same. And this was before there was any difference between him and Esau, for they were both alike in the womb, both conceived in sin. "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, The elder shall serve the younger" (Ro 9:11,12).

Second, Jacob, the nation. Our Election is typified by God's election of Israel, which plainly appears not to be an election upon foresight of worthiness in Israel; "Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart . . . Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people" (De 9:5,6). All works and worthiness are excluded, and the reason assigned is, "Because the Lord loved you" (De 7:8).

11. That which sets up the rotten Dagon of man's free-will, before or above the ark of God's special predestinating grace, ought to be rejected; and the conditional decree doth so.

The conditional decree is grounded upon a foresight of our wills receiving or rejecting of proposed grace; and so man's will is made the first mover and advanced above God's will. And the act of predestination is put in the will and power of the predestinated, and not in that of the Divine Predestinator. Hereby the power of ordering man's salvation is wrested (as it were) out of God's hands, and put into the hands of our free-will. Then salvation is the work of the saved, and not of the saver; and to will and to do is not of God's good pleasure (Php 2:13). Thus men wickedly think that God is such an one as

8. That which makes us to choose God, before God chooses us, ought not to be received; and the conditional decree upon faith foreseen doth so.

If God does not choose us until faith is foreseen in us, then it necessarily follows that we choose God before He chooses us, and we love Him before He loves us, contrary to these scriptures, "Ye have not chose Me, but I have chosen you" (Joh 15:16). "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1Jo 4:19). But the Arminians go further still, for they say, "We must be foreseen, not only to believe, but also to persevere in believing," that is, not only to choose God for our God, but also to continue in that choice to the last moment of our existence before we can be fit objects of God's choice or election!

9. That which taketh away the mysteriousness of the Divine decree ought to be rejected, and this doctrine of foreseen faith doth so.

It is a dangerous presumption for men to take upon themselves, with unwashed hands, to unriddle the deep mysteries of God with their carnal reason; where the great apostle stands at the gaze, crying, "O the depth, how unsearchable!" and "Who knoweth the mind of the Lord!" Had Paul been of the Arminian persuasion he would have answered, "Those are elected that are foreseen to believe and persevere!" This answer would not have been hard to understand even by the unlearned (that is, the carnal) men of the world, who "wrest the Scriptures unto their own destruction" (2Pe 3:16). But Paul was ignorant, and these men are wiser than the Holy Ghost; for he tells us that our election proceedeth from the will of the Elector, and not from anything in the elected. The sovereign will of God is the supreme rule of all righteousness; He will have "mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Ro 9:18). Had foreseen faith and perseverance been the causes and conditions of election, there had been no mystery in it.

2. First, if God be God; if He be an almighty, all wise, all free, and an all-disposing God, then His decree of Election must be absolute; for a conditional decree makes a conditional God, and plainly ungodly Him, by ascribing such imperfections to Him as are unworthy His majesty, and below His Divine being; as, first, it opposes His omnipotence--if some conditions be antecedent to the will of God, then the same are antecedent also to the power of God. Second, it takes away the glory of the Divine wisdom in ordering all things; for if Peter must be willing to believe before God's decree concerning Peter, then Divine wisdom doth not determine concerning the order of things. Thirdly, it takes away the glory of God's absolute liberty and independence; for if Peter's believing and Judas's not believing be antecedent to the decree of God concerning them, then Peter and Judas make themselves the objects of election and non-election, and God hath not an absolute dominion over His own creatures. The potter hath not freedom to make this lump of clay a vessel of honour and that a vessel of dishonour, and the difference will arise more from the quality of the clay than the will of the potter, and God's will must be dependent on the will of man for its determinations. This plainly overthrows the independency of God. Fourth, it takes away the glory of His all-disposing providence. If the decree be not absolute, how can God be said wholly to dispose of lots that are cast into the lap, as in Pr 16:33? Shall we say that the lot of the apostleship fell to Matthias by chance (Ac 1:26); was it not rather absolutely ordained and ordered by the Lord, to whom the Apostles prayed, as in Ac 1:24, saying, "Thou, Lord, which knoweth the hearts of all men, show whether (or which) of these two Thou has chosen . . . And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias" (Ac 1:24,26)? Thus by the disposal of lots in the lap was Achan discovered to be Israel's curse, and Saul appointed to be Israel's king (Jos 7:14-18; 1Sa 10:19-21). Man purposeth, but God disposeth; because God by an absolute decree hath foreordained all things that do come to pass. They fall not out

casually and beyond God's intention; thus it is said, "It behoved Christ to suffer" (Lu 24:46).

3. If the will of the potter be an absolute will over his pots, much more is the will of God an absolute will over mankind. It is God's own comparison (Ro 9:20,21). God compares not Himself to a goldsmith, because a goldsmith hath costly materials, such as silver and gold, which lays some obligation on him to make honourable vessels therewith. But He compareth Himself to a potter, because first, the materials of a potter are vile and sordid, to wit, clay, so more answerable to fallen mankind, out of which God maketh His choice. We are not only clay (Job 4:19), but sinful clay through the fall. Second, the potter doth not make this difference among his pots for any foreseen inherent goodness in his clay (for the whole lump before him is of an equal temper and quality), but from the pleasure of His own will. Thus the potter's power over his materials is clearer from exception than that of the goldsmith, and illustrates more the absoluteness of God's will in His choice both in vessels of honour and vessels of dishonour. Again, the distance between the clay and potter is but a finite distance, even the distance only between one creature and another, animate and inanimate; but the distance between God and mankind is infinite, not only the natural distance between God and us, as we are creatures, but also the moral distance between us, as we are sinners. The potter also must have his clay made to his hand; he cannot make his own clay, though he may temper it for his work when he hath found it; but the great God creates His own clay. He created the earth out of which man was formed. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Ge 1:1). "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground" (Ge 2:7). It follows then, if the potter by an absolute will disposes of his pots, much more hath God a right concerning His creatures.

Inferences drawn from the preceding.

1. If the absolute will of God be the universal cause of all things, then no event can fall beyond or beside God's will; and

of all. Yea, Paul himself was chosen that he might know the will of God, not that he was foreseen to do so (Ac 22:14); and he tells the Thessalonians, that "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2Th 2:13). We may not make that an antecedent to election which is but the consequent of it. "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit" (Joh 15:16).

6. That which sets up an inferior cause because a superior ought not be admitted, and the conditional decree doth so.

God is the cause of causes, and the first cause of all things. There can be no being but from Him, there can be nothing before Him. "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things" (Ro 11:36). "In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Ac 17:28). O Lord, "Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Re 4:11). God is the chief efficient cause, and the ultimate end of all beings; but if any being be antecedent to the determinations of God's will, this would take away the dignity of the supreme cause, and make an act of man superior to that of God.

7. That which takes away the certainty and unchangeableness of the Divine decree ought not to be received, and the conditional decree doth so.

If anything in man move God to choose man, then the purpose of God cannot remain firm, but must depend on some contingent act in man, be it faith, works or perseverance. If it depends on our persevering in faith, it cannot be firm and certain, according to the Arminian doctrine of falling away. For the Arminian hypothesis states the decree of God after this changeable dress, viz., "I will save all if they will obey Me, but I see they will sin. I must permit them, but I will condemn them all; yet this decree of condemnation shall not be peremptory. I will send Christ to redeem all, to save all again, if they will believe; but I see they will not. I will decree to save such as \\I foresee\\ will believe, and persevere in believing." Oh what a changeable picture of an unchangeable God!

fortune (in the world's sense of it) is but the devil's blasphemous spit upon Divine providence.

2. God's absolute will cannot be resisted; as He hath willed, so shall it come to pass; and there is no hindering the execution of it. "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand" (Isa 14:24). "Our God is in the Heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Ps 115:3). "I know that Thou canst do everything" (Job 42:2).

3. Then let us learn submission to the will of God. Proud, yet brittle clay, will be knocking their sides against the absolute will of God, till they break in pieces; so did Adonijah, when Solomon must rule; compare 1Ki 1:5 with 1Ch 22:9, and mark the end of it, 1Ki 2:23-25. O for the grace of humility to enable us to adopt the language of the prophet, "Now, O Lord, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our Potter, and we all are the work of Thy hand" (Isa 64:8).

The Fourth Property of the Divine Decree:

It is *FREE*

As the Divine decree is not conditional but absolute, so 'tis not of necessity but free, as flowing only from the pleasure of God's will. God is a free agent, and cannot fall under any obligation, so as to necessitate Him in any of His emanations to the creature; but He is graciously pleased of His own free love to oblige Himself.

1. The first argument to prove the freeness of the Divine decree is: such a decree as passeth without any obligation to necessitate the passing of it, must needs have the property of freeness; and thus it was with the divine decree. If there be any obligation it must be either in respect of objects or acts or motives; but God was not obliged in any of these respects.

First. He was not obliged in respect of objects, for God was under no necessity of having either any elect or any reprobate. He was happy in Himself from all eternity; would have been happy for ever without either of these; and to affirm that God

It makes God look upon this or that in the creature upon which the will of God is determined; thus man is the author of his own salvation, and God is not the author of it. The doctrine of the conditional decree sets God upon His watch-tower of foreknowledge to espy what men will do; whether they will believe or not, obey or not, persevere or not, and according to His observation of their actings, so He determines His will concerning them; thus the perfection both of the Divine knowledge and Divine will is with one breath denied.

4. No temporal thing can be the efficient cause of our eternal election; but faith, obedience, etc., are temporal things, the former being wrought in us, and the latter performed by us, in their appointed time.

What is this but to prefer time before eternity, and to set up a post-destination instead of a predestination?

5. That which is the fruit and effect of the Divine decree cannot be the cause of it; and faith, perseverance, etc., are but the fruits and effects of electing love.

Such as are given to Christ in the decree of election, do come to, or believe in Christ; others do not come, do not believe; and the cause assigned is, because they are not of His sheep, because they are not given to Him. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me" (Joh 6:37). Coming to Christ is believing on Him. "Ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep" (Joh 10:26). "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Ac 13:48). We may not (according to the Arminian notion) read it, "as many as believed were ordained unto life," for this would be setting the cart before the horse, as if the means were ordained before the end. We are predestinated that we should be holy, not because we are holy (Eph 1:4). We are foreordained to walk in good works, not because we do so (Eph 2:10). We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, not because we are so (Ro 8:29). It is the election that obtains faith, and not faith that obtains election (Ro 11:7). And the Apostle, in 2Ti 1:9, excludes all works (both foreseen and existing), showing that God's gracious purpose is the original

stood in need of any such objects is to deny the perfections of God. If it is called humbling Himself to look down on things in Heaven, much more on things on earth.

Second. He was not obliged by acts, as acts are necessary by a moral obligation. God was under no moral obligation to man. He had done man no wrong if He had never willed man to be, much less to be holy and happy. God was not bound to any of His actions concerning man. He cannot be a debtor to many any other way than as He makes Himself a debtor of His own good pleasure. As in His promises His love moved Him to make them, and His truth binds Him to perform them, otherwise those actions would be actions of debt, and not acts of grace, contrary to the tenor of Scripture, which makes the whole work of man's salvation to flow wholly from the free grace of God.

Third. He was not obliged in respect to motives; neither in the creature, nor yet in Christ. Not in the creature, for the being of the creature (much more the faith and good works of the creature) was the effect of the decree of God, so could not be the motive of it. Nor could the Lord foresee repentance, faith, love etc., in the creature, antecedent to His own purpose in the gift of it. Neither is Christ Himself the moving cause of the Divine decree; for Christ is the effect of God's eternal love, not the cause of it. "God so loved the world that He gave His Son" (Joh 3:16). God's love gives Christ. Therefore we are said to be elected in Christ, but never for Christ; for Christ is an elect one Himself, as was shown before. Christ was first chosen, then the members. The love of God as immediately cometh from Himself to me, as to Christ; and He was foreordained to be our Head, and we to be His members. Thus we are Christ's; and Christ is God's as the effect of His love to His elect from all eternity (1Co 3:22).

2. The second argument to prove the freeness of Divine decree is taken from the testimony of the Word of God (the Bible) in which it is affirmed to be a free act, an act of grace and not of debt, an act of love and special favour, founded

1. That which the Scriptures declare to be the cause and ground of our election, that, and that only, must be the cause and ground of it.

The good pleasure of God is the only cause and ground of our election, not any foresight of our faith, etc. That the Scriptures declare this, appears plain from Eph 1:5; "According to the good pleasure of His will," and from Eph 1:9 "Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure;" and, "predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Also, from Mt 11:25,26: "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." But why so? It is "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Again the Scriptures fully declare the same truth in Ro 9:11-15, and Ro 11:5, and in 2Ti 1:9, our salvation and calling is stated to be, "not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." The time would fail me in enumerating more passages of Scripture, for the whole Bible as with one voice crieth aloud, election is of sovereign grace and not of works; flowing only from the absolute will and good pleasure of God.

2. That which makes election an action of debt ought not to be received; and the conditional decree doth this.

An action of grace, and an action of debt, are contradictory terms. If election be an act of grace (and the whole work of salvation hath been proved to be wholly and solely from free grace), then 'tis abominable and to be rejected to make it an act of debt. If the decree be conditional (upon foreseen faith and perseverance), then is it an act of debt and not of grace, an act of justice and not of mercy. For a decree of giving glory to believers persevering, as their reward, can be nothing else but remunerative justice.

3. That which makes God go out of Himself, in His immanent and eternal actings, ought not to be received; and the conditional decree doth so.

law; but, in every generation God hath His Church visible on the earth, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. As God is no respecter of persons, so neither is He of places, nations, or generations; but hath had, and He will have, His hidden ones to the world's end.

O believer! there is ground for much rejoicing, and strong consolation, in a view of the extensiveness of God's everlasting love.

1. If predestinating love extends itself to all degrees, then, they which are poor of wealth may be rich in faith, and a master's servant may be the Lord's freeman.
2. If to both sexes, then the weaker vessel may be a chosen vessel, and an heir of the grace of life.
3. If to all ages, then believing parents may have hope of their dying children; they may belong to the election of grace; they may be bound up in the swaddling bands of the covenant of grace; so they are not as without hope for them.
4. If to all nations, then the ends of the earth may look towards Christ (as He is lifted up on the pole of the everlasting Gospel) and be saved (Isa 45:22).
5. If to all generations, then predestinating love is an inexhaustible fountain! crying always, Is there yet any of the house of the Lord among mankind that I may shew the kindness of God unto (2Sa 9:3)?

Of Conditional Predestination

Having stated the doctrine of Divine predestination, as revealed in the Scriptures, and having, from the same source, proved that it is possessed of various distinguishing properties, such as eternal, unchangeable, absolute, free, discriminating, and extensive; I come now, secondly, to consider the Arminians' view of it, viz.: "That it is conditional, upon the foresight of faith, works, perseverance," etc.

To this I answer, that predestination cannot be conditional, upon a foresight of man's faith, works, or perseverance, etc., because of the twelve following reasons:

upon the mere good pleasure of God. "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Mt 11:26), "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lu 12:32). It was a gracious purpose in God from all eternity (2Ti 1:9; Eph 1:5,9,11). Paul's repeated exclamation is, "the pleasure of His own will," "the counsel of His own will," but more fully in Ro 9:13,16 doth he exemplify this truth in Jacob and Esau. "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated . . . It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Both Malachi the Prophet (Mal 1:3), and Paul the Apostle make this instance of Jacob and Esau the fullest exemplification of free election. For they lay together in the same womb, and were born at the same time (for Jacob took hold of Esau's heel), so the contrary disposal of these two doth more illustrate the free predestination of God than any other two whatsoever. Of Jacob there came a distinguished people from all the world, even a Church unto God; and of Esau there sprang forth a persecuting seed. God hath no regard to faith in the one, or of infidelity in the other. When God's oracle passed upon them, they were both in their mother's womb, conceived in sin; and, if there were any pre-eminence, Esau had it, as being the first-born. What then cast the balance? Nothing but the good pleasure of God. God will "have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Ro 9:18). Now, in opposition to this carnal reason saith, "It was because God foresaw what they would be." Nay, but God loved them because He loved them (De 7:7,8). It was choosing love that He bare to them, and that is the best of the kind. That is the favour which God bears to His people: He loved them, and chose them for His own.

3. The third reason to prove the freeness of the Divine decree is: God hath in all ages given us examples of His free receiving some of mankind and rejecting others; this is plain from Scripture history. Of Adam's three sons, Cain, Abel, Seth, the eldest was rejected. Of Noah's three, Japheth, Shem and Ham, the youngest was rejected. Of Terah's three, Abraham, Nahor,

Haran, the middlemost was rejected; for Nahor was an idolater, and Laban swore by Nahor's idol (compare Ge 31:53 with Jos 24:2). Now why this picking and choosing, this receiving and rejecting; eldest at one time, youngest at another time, and middlemost at a third time? What is all this but to show that neither birth nor age, nor anything foreseen or existing in the creature, can produce any claim, but that all lies in the free election of God! We can give no reason, save the good pleasure of God, why Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar (both engaged in the same warfare against Israel, the church of God) had different dispensations of Heaven upon them; the one was hardened and the other humbled; why Pharaoh's baker was hanged and his butler restored to his office again; why two men shall be in one bed, the one taken, the other left; why two women shall be grinding at one mill, the one taken, the other left; why Aaron's rod, of all twelve, only blossomed.

4. If the fruits of the Divine decree be free, then must the decree itself be free. This assumption is clear, for first, our calling is from free love. Christ freely, and of His own sovereign will, called James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, and left their father uncalled with the hired servants (Mr 1:20). "He called unto Him whom He would" (Mr 3:13). "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given" (Mt 13:11). "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true" (1Jo 5:20). "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Mt 11:26). Second, our sanctification is from free grace. Of His own will He begat us (Jas 1:18). The sanctifying grace breathes where it listeth; and the wind at sea, is as much at our command as the fresh gales of this renewing Spirit. Third, our glorification is free. Eternal life is the gift of God (Ro 6:23); He doth not sell it for foreseen faith or works, but He freely gives it. Now if all these fruits of election be free, then the election itself to these fruits must be free also. If faith be the

with me in the gospel . . . whose names are in the book of life" (Phm 4:3).

3. To all ages. To young and old, to children, and to those of riper years; yea, very infants lay in the womb of the eternal decree, before ever they came out of their mother's womb. "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." (Jer 1:5). John Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from the womb (Lu 1:15); and it is probable David believed that his child belonged to the election of grace, and that its soul was bound up in the bundle of life; for he comforted himself thus; "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2Sa 12:23). David's going to the grave to it could yield him but little comfort.

4. To all nations. Grace is not immured within the walls of one nation only, but is extended to Jew and Gentile, to circumcision and uncircumcision, to Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free (Col 3:11), to some of every nation under Heaven (Ac 2:5). The partition wall, which was betwixt Jew and Gentile, is thrown down. Our Lord saith, "and other sheep I have which are not of this (the Jewish) fold: them also I must bring" (Joh 10:16). This predestinating love effectually calls its chosen ones from all quarters. "I have loved thee; therefore, I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up: and to the south, Keep not back; bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; Even everyone that is called by My name" (Isa 43:4-7).

5. To all generations. Predestinating love is like a river that runs under ground, and breaks out in certain places above the earth. To this river, this ocean of everlasting love, Moses had his eye, when of Joseph he said, "Blessed of the Lord be his land . . . for the deep that coucheth beneath" (De 33:13). So fresh veins of election breaketh forth, sometimes in one generation, and sometimes in another. It is not bound up as to time -- neither before the law, nor under the law, nor after the

The Sixth and last Property of the Divine Decree:

It is *EXTENSIVE*

The Divine decree of God's electing and predestinating love, although discriminating and particular, is, nevertheless, very extensive. "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb . . . and cried with a loud voice, saying Salvation" (Re 7:9). There is a general decree that relates to all created beings, both animate and inanimate, celestial and terrestrial; and extends itself to every individual in the whole creation of God. For as it gave a being to all things, so it preserves them in that being while they continue in the world; and the work of Providence, which extends itself from angels to worms, succeeds the work of creation. Now although this special Divine decree of predestination extends not (as the general decree) to every individual, it is nevertheless very extensive, even to all ranks, sexes, ages, nations and generations.

1. To all ranks. To all sorts and ranks of men, to princes and peasants, to high and low, to rich and poor, to bond and free. It extends itself to kings, for among them hath God His chosen vessels - His Davids, His Solomons, His Hezekiahs, His Manassehs. Though the Scriptures say (1Co 1:26) "Not many mighty, not many noble, are called," yet it doth not say, not any; for God hath had some great ones to own His ways in all ages. It extends to servants also (Tit 2:9,11), for God bestows His love on those in rags as well as those in robes. The poor have the gospel preached unto them (Mt 11:5), and God is no respecter of persons.

2. To all sexes. To both sexes is the decree extended, to male and female. God hath His elect ladies. "The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth;" and "The children of thy elect sister, greet thee" (2Jo 1:13), and both male and female are one in Christ Jesus (Ga 3:28) "I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women, which laboured

free gift of God (Eph 2:8), then predestination to faith must of necessity be also free, for God worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will (Eph 1:11).

Christian believer, there is much comfort and establishment to be drawn from a view of the freeness of the grace of God; then:

1. Admire free grace in this decree of predestination, and cry, How is it, Lord, that Thou dost manifest Thyself and Thy love to me, and not unto the world (Joh 14:22)?

2. Thou makest not thyself to differ from others, but free grace does it for thee. Thou art a lump of clay in the hands of the potter, no better than others; yea, pressed down to hell by Adam's fall; that God should lift thee up to Heaven, be thankful.

3. Rejoice in the Lord, sing to the honour of His great name, and live to His praise and glory. Did David dance before the Lord with all his might? Did he say to Michal, "It was before the Lord, who chose me before your father, to appoint me ruler over . . . Israel; therefore will I play before the Lord" (2Sa 6:14,21)? David's appointment, at that time, was but to an earthly kingdom; thou art freely chosen to inherit an Heavenly: therefore I say rejoice.

The Fifth Property of the Divine Decree:

It is *DISCRIMINATING*

That it is discriminating and particular, not universal or general, may be proved from the following arguments:

1. The very word used, Election, confutes the universality of it. There can be no choice made, where all are taken, and none left. That cannot be called election which is equally extended to every individual. He doth not elect that doth not prefer some before others. God did not choose all the thirty-two thousand Israelites that were with Gideon, to save Israel by, out of the hand of Midian, but only the three hundred that lapped; and these were chosen from out of the thirty and two thousand (Jud 7:3-7). God did not choose all the nations, but only Israel, to be a special people to Himself, "Thy God hath chosen thee . . .

above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (De 7:6). Election must therefore be discriminating, and a making of some to differ from others.

2. Scripture expressly states that only few are chosen, though many be called (Mt 20:16). It is only a little flock (Lu 12:32), and but one of a city and two of a family that are brought to Zion (Jer 3:14). "I have chosen you out of the world," saith Christ (Joh 15:19); and the Lord calls Paul a chosen vessel unto Him (Ac 9:15; 22:14). How ill it sounds in the ears of a gospel-spirit to say that Pharaoh and Judas were elected as well as Paul and Barnabas; and that Simon Magus was elected as well as Simon Peter; all which a general election, which is the Arminian hypothesis, most necessarily asserts. How can these "reprobate silver" pieces be, in a gospel sense, termed chosen vessels (as Paul was) to know God's will, and to see the Just One (Ac 22:14)?

3. If election be general under a condition of believing, then Pilate, Caiaphas, and Judas were elected under that condition; and so God is brought in to speak after this manner: I have appointed to save Pilate, Caiaphas and Judas if they will believe in the death of Christ; but, if they believe, Christ shall not be crucified, for those are the very men appointed by My determinate counsel to put Christ to death (see Ac 2:23; 4:28). Had these men believed (and they have believed according to the Arminians' views), then God's decree concerning Christ's death would not have been absolute, but depending on a condition which those men might have fulfilled (to wit, believing in Christ's death), which had they done, they had believed in that which then never would have come to pass. Thus carnal reason bespatters Divine wisdom!

4. How can it be safely said that God ever intended the salvation of any others, but those who are, or shall be, effectually saved? This would frustrate the will of God, even His will of intention, and would be contrary to the following scriptures, "Our God . . . hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Ps 115:3). "I know that Thou canst do everything,

and that no thought can be withholden from Thee" (Job 42:2). And no man can resist the will of God, for He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. And, if after all, O vain man! thou wilt still object, and say, "Why doth He yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will?" the only answer for thee is, "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?" (Ro 9:19). Thus it was, according to the sovereign will of Jehovah, that Jacob and Esau were discriminated the one from the other.

5. The apostle shows that there is this discriminating difference between man and man, that some are chosen to life, and therefore shall most certainly obtain it! others are refused and left in a perishing condition, which they shall certainly not escape. "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Ro 11:7). The difference is of God, according to the purpose of election; not as of Him that foresees faith or works, but as of Him that gives both.

We may learn from the preceding:

1. It is distinguishing love that our Potter hath made us what we are, men and women. All creatures, even toads and other obnoxious animals, were formed of the same dust with man. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground" (Ge 2:7); "and out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast" (Ge 2:19).
2. It is the will of God that some be poor and others rich; so here, that some be vessels of honour, and others of dishonour.
3. Christ raised not all up that were dead, but Lazarus, etc., nor all that were born blind, but him mentioned in John 9. Bless God for raising thee up from thy death of sin, and healing thy blindness, and not others! Thou wert alike undeserving with them! Thou wert, thou art still, in thyself, a sinner! And if thou art taught by grace, the last accents on thy faltering tongue will be the publican's prayer. "God be merciful to me a sinner."