

THE
DOCTRINE OF ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION

STATED AND ASSERTED.

BY THE REVEREND MR. A—— T——.*

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is granted, that the ensuing tract is, in good measure, a translation. Nevertheless, considering the unparalleled modesty and self-diffidence of the young translator, and the tenderness wherewith he treats his opponents, it may well pass for an original.

CHAPTER I.

Wherein the Terms made Use of are defined and explained.

1. WHEN love is predicated of God, it signifies, (1.) His eternal benevolence, that is, his everlasting will, purpose, and determination to deliver, bless, and save his people. Of this, no good works wrought by them are, in any sense, the cause. Neither are the merits of Christ to be considered as any way moving or exciting this good-will of God to his elect; since the gift of Christ is an effect of this free and eternal favour. The term implies, (2.) Complacency, delight, and approbation. With this love, God cannot love even his elect, as considered in themselves, because they are sinners; but as united to Christ, and partakers of his righteousness. Love implies, (3.) Actual beneficence, which, properly speaking, is nothing else than the effect or accomplishment of the other two. This respects all blessings, temporal, spiritual, or eternal. Temporal good things are indeed bestowed on all, elect or reprobate; but they are given as blessings to the elect only; to whom, also,

* This tract, which is deduced from Mr. Toplady's translation of a treatise by Zanchius, was overlooked in the arrangement of Mr. Wesley's publications on the Calvinistic controversy. It should have been inserted in Vol. X., p. 370. That it was written by Mr. Wesley, though it has not been included in any previous collection of his Works, will appear manifest, on comparing the paragraph with which it concludes, with the argument of the tract entitled, "The Consequence Proved," Vol. X., p. 370.—EDIT. [1831.]

the other benefits respecting grace and glory are peculiar. And this love of beneficence, no less than that of benevolence and complacency, is irrespective of any worthiness in man.

2. When hatred is ascribed to God, it implies, (1.) A negation of benevolence; or, a resolution not to have mercy on such and such men, nor to endue them with any of those graces which stand connected with eternal life. So, "Esau have I hated;" that is, I did, from all eternity, determine within myself, not to have mercy on him. The sole cause of which is, not the unworthiness of the persons hated, but the sovereignty of the Divine will. (2.) It denotes displeasure and dislike; for sinners, who are not interested in Christ, cannot but be infinitely displeasing to eternal purity. (3.) It signifies a positive will to punish and destroy the reprobate for their sins; of which will, the infliction of misery upon them is but the necessary effect.

3. The term election is taken in a fourfold sense; and commonly signifies, (1.) "That eternal, sovereign, unconditional, particular, and immutable act of God, whereby he selected some from among all mankind to be everlastingly saved." (2.) It sometimes signifies "that almighty act, whereby God actually separates his elect from the world, by effectual calling." (3.) By election is sometimes meant, "God's taking a whole nation or body of men into external covenant with himself." (4.) Election sometimes signifies "the temporary designation of some person, or persons, to the filling up some particular station in civil life."

4. Reprobation denotes either, (1.) God's eternal preterition of some men, when he chose others to glory; and his predestination of them to fill up the measure of their iniquities, and then to receive the just punishment of their crimes, even "destruction from the presence of the Lord:" Or, (2.) God's forbearing to call by his grace, those whom he hath thus ordained to condemnation. (3.) The word may denote God's refusal to grant to some nations the light of the gospel revelation.

5. The purpose of God; his gracious intention, from eternity, of making his elect everlastingly happy.

6. Foreknowledge ascribed to God imports, (1.) That general prescience, whereby he knew, from all eternity, both what he himself would do, and what his creatures, in consequence of his efficacious and permissive decree, should do likewise. (2.) That special prescience, which has for its objects his own elect, and them alone.

7. Predestination has for its objects all things that are created: No creature, whether rational or irrational, animate or inanimate, is exempted from its influence. All beings whatever, from the highest angel to the meanest reptile, are the objects of God's eternal decrees. However, it chiefly refers to angels or men, whether good or evil. It may be considered as, (1.) "That eternal and immutable decree of God, whereby he did, from before all time, determine and ordain to create, dispose of, and direct to some particular end, every person and thing to which he has given, or is yet to give, being." (2.) Predestination, as relating to mankind only, is "the everlasting, sovereign, and invariable purpose of God, whereby he did determine within himself to create Adam in his own image, and then to permit his fall; and to suffer him thereby to plunge himself and his whole posterity into sin, misery, and death." (3.) Predestination, as relating to the elect only, is "that eternal, unconditional, particular, and irreversible act of the Divine will, whereby, in adorable sovereignty, God determined within himself to deliver a certain number of Adam's degenerate offspring out of that sinful and miserable estate into which they were to fall." (4.) Predestination, as it regards the reprobate, is "that eternal, sovereign, immutable act of God's will, whereby he hath determined to leave some men to perish in their sins, and to be justly punished for them."

CHAPTER II.

Wherein the Doctrine of Predestination is explained, as it relates in general to all Men.

THUS much being premised, 1. We assert, that there is a predestination of some particular persons to life, for the praise of the glory of Divine grace; and a predestination of other particular persons to death: Which death of punishment they shall inevitably undergo, and that justly, on account of their sins.

Now, this twofold predestination, of some to life, and of others to death, (if it may be called twofold, both being constituent parts of the same decree,) cannot be denied, without likewise denying the very existence of God. I say again, whoever denies

this decree and foreknowledge of God does virtually deny God himself; since his will, decree, and foreknowledge, are no other than God himself willing, and decreeing, and foreknowing.

2. We assert, that God did from eternity decree to make man in his own image; and also decreed to suffer him to fall from that image, and thereby to forfeit the happiness with which he was invested: Which decree, and the consequences of it, were not limited to Adam, but included all his posterity.

3. We assert, that, as all men are not elected to salvation, so neither are all men ordained to condemnation.

4. We assert, that the number of the elect, and also of the reprobate, is so fixed and determinate, that neither can be augmented or diminished.

5. That the decrees of election and reprobation are immutable and irreversible.

CHAPTER III.

Concerning Election unto Life.

WHAT I have farther to advance on this subject I shall reduce to several positions:—

Pos. 1. Those who are ordained unto eternal life were not so ordained on account of any good works to be wrought by them, nor yet for their future faith; but purely and solely of free, sovereign grace, and according to the mere pleasure of God.

Pos. 2. As many as are ordained to eternal life are ordained to enjoy that life in and through Christ. Here let it be carefully observed, that not the merits of Christ, but the sovereign love of God only, is the cause of election itself; but then the merits of Christ are the procuring cause of that salvation to which men are elected.

Pos. 3. They who are predestinated to life are likewise predestinated to all those means which are necessary in order to that life.

Pos. 4. Not one of the elect can perish, but they must all necessarily be saved.

Pos. 5. The salvation of the elect was not the principal end of their being chose; but God's grand end in appointing them to life, was, that he might be glorified.

Pos. 6. The end of election, which, with regard to the elect, is eternal life, and the means conducive to it, such as the gift of the Spirit, faith, &c., are so inseparably connected together, that whoever is possessed of these shall surely obtain that; and none can obtain that, who are not first possessed of these.

Pos. 7. The elect may attain to the knowledge and assurance of their predestination to life; and they ought to seek after it.

Pos. 8. The true believer ought not only to be thoroughly established in the point of his own election, but should likewise believe the election of all his other fellow-believers and brethren in Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

Of Reprobation.

FROM what has been said concerning the election of some, it unavoidably follows, that there must be a rejection of others. I shall, in the discussion of this, throw what I have to say into several distinct positions:—

Pos. 1. God did, from all eternity, decree to leave some of Adam's fallen posterity in their sins, and to exclude them from the participation of Christ and his benefits.

Pos. 2. Some men were, from all eternity, not only negatively excepted from a participation of Christ and his salvation; but positively ordained to continue in their natural blindness and hardness of heart, by the just judgment of God.

Thus God efficaciously permitted (having so decreed) the Jews to be the crucifiers of Christ, and Judas to betray him. Hence we find St. Austin speaking thus: "Judas was chosen, but it was to do a most execrable deed, that thereby the adorable work of redemption might be accomplished. When, therefore, we hear our Lord say, 'Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?' we must understand it thus, that the eleven were chosen in mercy, but Judas in judgment: They were chosen to partake of Christ's kingdom: He was chosen to betray him, and be the means of shedding his blood." (*De Corr. et Grat.*, cap. 7.)

Pos. 3. The non-elect were predestinated, not only to continue in final impenitency, sin, and unbelief; but were

likewise for such their sins righteously appointed to infernal death hereafter.

Pos. 4. As the future faith and good works of the elect were not the cause of their being chosen ; so neither were the future sins of the reprobate the cause of their being passed by ; but both the choice of the former, and the decretive omission of the latter, were owing merely and entirely to the sovereign will and determining pleasure of God.

Pos. 5. God is the Creator of the wicked, but not of their wickedness : He is the Author of their being, but not the infuser of their sin.

Pos. 6. The condemnation of the reprobate is necessary and inevitable.

Pos. 7. The punishment of the non-elect was not the ultimate end of their creation ; but the glory of God.

Pos. 8. Notwithstanding God did, from all eternity, irreversibly choose some to be partakers of salvation, and reject the rest ; acting in both according to the good pleasure of his own sovereign will ; yet he did not herein act an unjust, tyrannical, or cruel part ; nor show himself a respecter of persons.

(1.) He is not unjust in reprobating some ; for, being absolute Lord of all his creatures, he is accountable to none for his doings, and cannot be chargeable with injustice for disposing of his own as he will.

Nor, (2.) Is the decree of reprobation a tyrannical one. It is, indeed, strictly sovereign ; but sovereignty and tyranny are distinct. He is a tyrant who, being originally a lawful Prince, abuses his power, and governs contrary to justice and mercy. But who dares to lay either of these accusations to the Divine charge ?

(3.) God, in the reprobation of some, does not act a cruel part. Who ever accused a chief Magistrate of cruelty, for not sparing a company of atrocious malefactors ? Is this a parallel case ?

Nor, (4.) Is God, in choosing some and rejecting others, a respecter of persons. He considers all men as sinners by nature ; and has compassion not on persons of this or that sex, age, or station, but on whom, and because, he will have compassion.

Before I conclude this head, I will obviate a fallacious objection, very common in the mouths of our opponents :

“How,” say they, “is the doctrine of reprobation reconcilable with the doctrine of a future judgment?” To which I answer, that there needs no pains to reconcile these two. In the last day, Christ will sit as Judge; and openly publish, and solemnly ratify, his everlasting decrees, by receiving the elect into glory, and by passing sentence on the non-elect, (not for having done what they could not help, but,) for their wilful ignorance of divine things, and their obstinate unbelief; for their omissions of moral duty, and for their repeated iniquities and transgressions, which they could not help.

CHAPTER V.

Showing, that the Doctrine of Predestination should be openly preached and insisted on.

UPON the whole, it is evident, the doctrine of God’s eternal and unchangeable predestination should be publicly taught from the pulpit and the press; that even the meanest of the people may not be ignorant of a truth which is the very foundation of man’s happiness. Which I thus prove:—

1. The gospel is to be preached; and that not partially, and by piece-meal, but the whole of it. For, so far as the gospel is maimed, or any branch of the evangelical system is passed over in silence; so far the gospel is not preached. Scarce any other distinguishing doctrine of the gospel can be preached, without this of predestination. Election is the golden thread that runs through the whole Christian system: It is the leaven that pervades the whole lump. It is the bond which connects and keeps together the whole Christian system; which, without this, is like a system of sand, ever ready to fall to pieces. It is the cement which holds the fabric together; nay, it is the very soul that animates the whole frame. It is so blended and interwoven with the entire scheme of gospel doctrine, that, when the former is excluded, the latter bleeds to death.

Nor is the gospel to be preached only, but preached to every creature; that is, to reasonable beings, promiscuously, and at large; to all who frequent the Christian ministry, whether high or low, young or old, learned or illiterate. All who

attend on the ministrations of Christ's Ambassadors have a right to hear the gospel fully, clearly, and without mincing. The justice of God's procedure herein is unquestionable. The reprobates have nothing to complain of; since whatever God does is just and right.

And now, why should not this doctrine be preached and insisted upon in public?—a doctrine which is of express revelation; a doctrine which conduces to the comfort of the elect; and leaves even the ungodly themselves without excuse!

Christ and his Apostles delivered these matters, not to some privileged persons only, but to all at large who had ears to hear. Therefore, it is incumbent on every faithful Minister likewise: Nor is that Minister a faithful one, faithful to Christ, to truth, and to souls, who keeps back any part of the counsel of God, and buries these doctrines in silence, which he is commanded to preach "upon the house-tops."

I add, that the doctrine of predestination is not only useful, but absolutely necessary to be taught and known. For,—

1. Without it, we cannot form just and becoming ideas of God.

2. Because the grace of God cannot be maintained without it.

3. By the preaching of predestination, man is duly humbled, and God alone is exalted.

4. Predestination should be publicly taught and insisted upon, in order to confirm true believers in the certainty of their salvation.

5. Without the doctrine of predestination, we cannot enjoy a lively sight and experience of God's special love and mercy towards us in Christ Jesus. The blessing of election rises in value proportionably to the fewness of its objects.

6. Another reason for the unreserved publication of this doctrine is, that from a sense of God's peculiar, eternal, and unalterable love to his people, their hearts may be inflamed to love him in return. Would you know what it is to love God as your Father, Friend, and Saviour, you must fall down before his electing mercy. Till then, you are only hovering about in quest of true felicity; but you will never find the door, much less can you enter into rest. And

without taking predestination into the account, genuine morality, and the performance of truly good works, will suffer, starve, and die away. Love to God is the very fuel of acceptable obedience; but the fuel of holy affection can only be maintained and increased in the heart by the sense of God's predestinating love. Electing goodness being the very life and soul of obedience, the latter, even good works, must flourish or decline, in proportion as election is glorified or obscured.

A 7th argument for the preaching of predestination is, that by it we may be excited to the practice of universal godliness.

8. Unless predestination be preached, we shall want one great inducement to the exercise of brotherly kindness.

Hence it appears, that since the preaching of predestination is thus evidently calculated to kindle the twofold flame of love to God and love to man; it must, by necessary consequence, conduce to the advancement of universal obedience, and to the performance of every social and religious duty: Which alone would be a sufficient motive to the public delivery of that important doctrine.

9. Lastly: Without a due sense of predestination, we shall want the surest and the most powerful inducement to patience, resignation, and dependence on God, under every spiritual and temporal affliction.

Such, therefore, being the uses that arise from the faithful preaching, and the cordial reception, of predestination; may we not affirm, that our faith, and all right worship of God, depend, in no small degree, upon our knowledge of that doctrine?

The sum of all is this: One in twenty (suppose) of mankind are elected; nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will: The reprobate shall be damned, do what they can.

Reader, believe this, or be damned.

Witness my hand,

A— T—.