

The Anatomy of Arminianism

Or,

The Opening of the Controversies of these times
(formerly handled in the Low-Countries) concerning the
Doctrine of Providence, of Predestination, of the Death of
Christ, of Nature and Grace, etc.

Chapter 12: What Predestination Is

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There are certain men crept in which were before ordained to this condemnation (Jude 4).



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Chapter 12: What Predestination Is

Pierre du Moulin

That God saves those whom of his mere grace he chose out of mankind corrupted and obnoxious to the curse. What Predestination is: The parts of it. That Arminius did not understand what the decree of Predestination is, and that he has utterly taken away election.

Seeing that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and all men without exception are born guilty of the curse; it is certain that no man can be freed from the curse but by the mere grace and favor of God. This grace he has revealed to us in Christ, apart from whom there is no salvation. For he put on our nature, that by this means of his coming between, as it were by this knot, man might be joined with God; and he suffered death that he might satisfy for our sins, and so, reconciliation being made, we might be restored to the title and degree of the sons of God.

This benefit and saving grace God declares to us by the gospel, wherein that covenant of free grace, whereof Christ is the mediator and foundation, is propounded.

By this gospel, eternal life is promised to those who believe in Christ. For as there is no salvation without Christ, so without faith, Christ cannot be apprehended, nor can we come to the salvation appointed only for the faithful. For as the Apostle

says in Hebrews 11, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” I call faith, not that vain trust whereby men sleep in their vices, and their consciences are benumbed, while they have a good hope of the mercy of God; but a lively faith “which does work by charity” (Galatians 5:6), which by that very means increases love, because it drives away fear.

This faith man has not of himself, neither is it a thing of man’s free will, but the gift of God, and the effect of the Holy Spirit, who draws men by a powerful calling and seals in men’s hearts, and deeply impresses in their consciences the promises of God propounded in the gospel.

All men have not this faith, as the apostle says (2 Thessalonians 3), for then all men should be converted and saved, but only they whom Paul says “are called by the purpose of God” (Romans 8:28), and whom God of his mere good pleasures has chosen to salvation.

Faith is given by the mere good pleasure of God; neither is it given to the worthy, but it makes those worthy to whom it is given; neither does God foreknow any good in man, but that which he himself shall do: as hereafter shall more fully be taught.

This eternal and therefore immutable decree of God is called “Predestination”; which is a part of the providence of God: For providence is called Predestination, when it applies itself to the salvation or condemnation of the reasonable creature; and when it dispenses and disposes the means by which men come to salvation; for that these things are governed by the divine will, and that God according to his good pleasure gives to some that which he denies to others, cannot be doubted. For though the Scripture was silent here, yet reason would cry out, that it is not likely, that God who extends his care to all things, is negligent in this thing alone, which is the chief thing.

Furthermore, although there be a predestination among the angels, as Saint Paul witnesses, who in I Timothy 5:21 calls the angels “elect”: Here we are to deal only with the Predestination of men, as that which alone belongs to us.

Predestination is therefore the decree by which in the work of our salvation, God has from eternity determined what he will do with every man. Or thus: Predestination is the decree of God, by which, of the corrupted mass of mankind, he has decreed to save certain men by Christ, and justly to punish the rest for their sins.

Of this Predestination there are two parts; the one is election, the other is reprobation, where of the first does necessarily lay down the second. For as often as some are chosen out of many, the rest are necessarily reprobated: and some are preferred, others being neglected.

Of election and of the elect there is often mention in the Scriptures. “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 20:16). “God has chosen us in Christ, before the foundations of the world were laid” (Ephesians 2:4). “The purpose of God according to election doth stand, not of works, but of him that calleth” (Romans 9:11). “There is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:5). “False christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall show signs and wonders to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect” (Mark 13:22).

On the other side, that some are reprobates, the Scripture witnesses in I Peter 2:8: “Which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed.” And Jude 4: “Certain men are crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation.” To this belong what was said in Revelation 20:1: “That there is cast into the lake of fire, whosoever is not found written in the book of life”: Which book is nothing else, but the catalogue of the elect, determined by the decree of God.

We have Jacob and Esau for a notable example of this difference of whom while they were yet shut up in the womb, before they had done either good or evil,

God pronounces: “I have loved Jacob; I have hated Esau” (Romans 9). Also the two thieves crucified with Christ, “Two shall be in a bed, the one shall be received, and the other left” (Luke 17:34). Not much unlike that which happened to Pharaoh’s butler and his chief baker, who being shut up in the same prison, the one was brought forth to honor, the other to punishment.

An example of this difference God has showed, not only in Abraham, but also in his stock, which for no desert of theirs, he preferred before other nations, “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, the Lord’s portion was his people, Jacob was the lot of his inheritance” (Deuteronomy 32). And lest anyone should suppose that that was done for the virtue of that people foreseen; he thus speaks to his people: “Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it, for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people” (Deuteronomy 9:6).

And although predestination does comprehend reprobation; seeing that it is certain that the wicked are appointed to a certain end, and to their deserved punishments: yet the Apostle, by the word “Predestination” does understand only Election, as in Romans 8: “Those that he predestinated, he called.” And Ephesians 1:5: “Having predestinated us to the adoption of children.” Thomas Aquinas, imitating this manner of speaking, defines predestination in Part 1 of his Summa (Question 23, Article 2) like this: “Predestination is the preparation to grace in the present, and to glory in the world to come.”

But when concerning this doctrine diverse men think diversely; yet Arminius alone has attained the nature of predestination less than any other; and greatly fumbles in the very entrance. In his theological disputations (Disputation 13. Thesis 3), Arminius says that the genus and general of predestination is the decree, and he says that “not the legal decree, according to which it is said, the man that does them shall live in them: but the evangelical decree, which speaks thus: This is the will of

God, that everyone that sees the Son and believes in him, should have life eternal.” And all the Arminians following him comprehend the whole doctrine of predestination in four decrees. The first they will have to be that, whereby God decreed to send his son to redeem mankind. The second, that whereby he decreed to give eternal life to them that believe. The third, that whereby he decreed to give all men grace, and sufficient power to believe. The fourth, that whereby he decreed to give salvation to the particular men whom he foreknew would be believed and would persevere in the faith. And as the links of a chain, the Arminians so knit these decrees, that the latter decrees depend on the former, and by the former, the way is to the latter.

By these things it is plain that Arminius did not understand what the decree of predestination was. For the decree of predestination is that whereby God has appointed what he will do with us and not what he would have us do. Untowardly therefore does Arminius place among the decrees of God that will of God, whereby he has appointed those to be saved, who shall believe, seeing that in this will the commandment of God is included. Arminius himself in the same place comprehends Predestination under providence and makes predestination a species, or part of providence. If therefore that speech, “he that believeth shall be saved,” is not the decree of providence, certainly it will not be the decree of predestination; seeing Predestination is no other thing than providence, restrained to the salvation or reprobation of men. It plainly appears that Arminius opposes this decree, which he calls “evangelical,” to the legal decree, by which it is said: “He that shall do these things shall live in them”; which is manifestly, not the decree of providence, but the rule of justice: And if not this, then certainly not the other, seeing the rules of the gospel do no more belong to the providence of God, and therefore not to predestination, than the rules of the Law.

Therefore, of those four decrees, the second is to be wiped out, and a place to be appointed for it in the doctrine of the gospel, and not in the eternal decree and secret predestination. And so, of those four links, the second being taken away, the whole chain is broken, and as it were, one pin being drawn out, the whole joining together of that frame is loosed and dissolved.

May what? That Arminius altogether overthrows Election and makes it to be a thing only in name? For he denies that the number of the Elect is determined by the decree of God; whence it comes to pass that no man at all is elected: For if the salvation of several men were determined by the decree of God, it would also be determined that this or that man were of the number, and so of several men, the whole sum would be certainly and determinately finished: But if the number of the elect is not fore-determined by the decree of God, the Book of Life containing the number of them that are to be saved (Revelation 20), and the number of the brethren not yet fulfilled (Revelation 6:11), and whatsoever the Scripture says of the sheep that were given to Christ, even before their conversion, must needs vanish away.

And when Arminius will have all men to be elected by a conditional election; that is, so they will believe, and by their free-will, rightly use the grace which is offered them: he does lay down an election which is not an election because it is equally extended to all: He does not elect that does not prefer some before others. What? That by this general election, Simon Magus and Simon Peter were equally elected? And the election is extended to Judas and Pharaoh.

But that is the most dangerous that Arminius makes the election of several men to come after faith, and so makes the election of God to depend on man's free-will: Whence it comes to pass that the salvation of man is a thing merely contingent and not necessary, because it depends upon a thing that is contingent and mutable, to wit, upon man's will. For although God does certainly foreknow those contingent casual things, which are to be after, yet is not therefore the election or salvation of

man necessary, for a thing is not therefore certain because it is certainly fore-known. And because election is not an act of the foreknowledge of God, but of his will; the execution whereof (if we may give credit to Arminius) depends on the fulfilling of the condition, which may be hindered by man: For the School and followers of Arminius are of the opinion, that every man has power of believing, and that God is bound to give to all men power of fulfilling the condition of the second covenant, and that the grace of God is but the cause in part of faith, and that it is not begot in man by the grace of God alone.

So while the Arminians will have every particular person to be elected by God, for faith fore-seen; that is, that they are certainly appointed to salvation whom God foresees will come, when they shall be called, and will persevere, they do plainly deny them to be elected: For to receive all that come is not to elect or choose; for although the Arminians will have both precedent and concomitant grace to be given by God, yet they will have it in the power of man's free will to refuse grace or not to refuse it. Surely Arminius would have God to predestinate those to salvation whom he from eternity foresaw would by their own free-will use aright his grace. But I deny that this can be called Election, seeing it is rather a decree of admitting those that will come to Christ, when they might not come: who (if Arminius' doctrine gets place) first choose God and apply themselves to him before they are appointed to salvation by God.

I let pass, that Arminius will have particular men so to be elected for faith fore-seen, that they belong to the election, not whom he has decreed, but whom he has fore-seen will persevere in the faith until death. Whence it comes, that God elects none, unless he be considered as dead, or else in the very point between life and death, which if it be true, Arminius does say amiss, when he says, that believers are elected: for he should say, that they are elected, who cease to believe.

Add to this that new and prodigious opinion of the Arminians whereby they think that reprobates may be saved and those who are elect may be damned, not as they are the reprobate or the elect, but as they are indued with power to believe, and to come to salvation. But if he who is a reprobate by the decree of God may be saved, and he who is elected may be damned, it is plain that Predestination is not the decree of God, but a thing only in title, and a floating will, or mere and bare foreknowledge; the certainty whereof depends upon the fore-seeing of an uncertain thing, to wit, man's free-will. Who, I pray, would endure a man speaking thus? "I am indeed a reprobate, but I can effect that I should be saved"; or, "I am elected, but it is in my power to effect that I should be reprobated."

If therefore the certainty of election should be made to depend upon man's will, it might come to pass, that no man should believe in Christ, and so Christ had died in vain.

But by that series and order of the four decrees, whereby Christ is appointed to death before God had determined who should be saved; Christ is made the head of the church without any certain members, which is mere dotage: For Christ is fained to be given to be the head of the church, without the certain will of God, what should afterward be his body. Yea, by the doctrine of the Arminians, it may come to pass that Christ should be a head without a body, and the church should be none at all, for they think that there is none of the elect which may not be damned.

This also is not to be omitted, that the Arminians, to the end that they might maintain that concatenation, or linking together of the four decrees, affirm that Christ died, not for the faithful, but for all men indistinctly; not more for Peter than for Judas; and that Christ in his death, had not determined whom he would save by his death, yea, that when Christ died, election had no place because election is a thing after the death of Christ.

The example of Caiaphas and Judas is here of special weight: For by the doctrine of Arminius, God elects all men under this condition that they believe in the death of Christ. I demand therefore, whether God chose Caiaphas and Judas to salvation, under this condition, that they should believe in the death of Christ? This surely cannot be said; because God had decreed to use the wickedness of Caiaphas and Judas to deliver Christ to death. How could they be elected to salvation, under the condition of believing in the death of Christ, who were appointed to that very thing, that by their incredulity and wickedness, Christ might be delivered to death? But we only touch these things cursorily and by the way, they are to be expounded more exactly in their place.