

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 16: Opinions on Predestination

by Peter du Moulin, Minister of the Church at Paris

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



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Chapter 16: Opinions on Predestination

Pierre du Moulin

The opinions of the parties upon the doctrine of Predestination.

We have already said that predestination is the decree of God, by which, in the work of our salvation, God has from eternity determined what he will do with every particular man; and that there are two parts or species of it, election and reprobation.

Arminius (in Thesis 15. *Theolog. Disputa.*) understanding by the name of predestination only election, thus defines it: “Predestination is the decree of God’s good pleasure in Christ, whereby from eternity he has determined within himself to justify, to adopt, and freely reward with eternal life the faithful, to whom he has decreed to give faith, to the praise of his glorious grace.” All other his sectaries do with one mouth say that election is the decree of God of saving those that believe in Christ and shall persevere in faith.

But here the Arminians do with a marvelous craft hide their mind and meaning. For that definition laid down by Arminius does seem to teach that God chose some certain men to salvation. But it is otherwise, nor is this the meaning of this definition: for by these words, “the faithful to whom he decreed to give faith,”

they do not understand some certain men whom God has precisely elected; but they only insinuate of what quality they are whom God would elect, to wit, such as should believe: And they teach that God is often disappointed of that will by which he has decreed to give men faith, and that he may be condemned whom God has so elected. For they deny that this decree is precise, but that it is conditional, and depends on foreseen faith; of which faith the grace of God is but a partial cause, for free-will also has a part here, in the power whereof it is used well or ill the preventing and accompanying grace of God, and either to receive, or to refute it. Therefore, they make God, by this decree, seriously to intend the salvation of all men, and to have determined to give them sufficient grace and power to believe: but that he is disappointed of this his decree and intention in many, man's will hindering it, whereby it comes to pass that God is deceived of his natural desire and first intention which surely must needs be the best. Lest therefore anyone should think that by this decree of election, which Arminius defines, some certain men are appointed to life, it must be observed that this decree, according to the meaning of Arminius, conditionally belongs to all men whatsoever, and that by this antecedent will, Pharaoh and Judas, and etc. are conditionally elected; wherefore the Arminians deny that the number of the elect is certain by the precise appointment of God which can neither be increased, nor be diminished.

Observe also that that definition laid down by Arminius does not belong to infants, who are taken away by an immature and unreasonable death; for the Arminians will have only them that believe to be elected.

Besides this general and conditional election, by which all men without exception are elected, they make another election of particular men, which rests and relies on foreseen faith. This they define to be the absolute decree of God, of saving some certain men, whom he from eternity foresaw would believe in Christ and persevere in the faith, which faith and perseverance, they say, is considered in the decree of Election, as already fulfilled. The same men are also of the opinion that

this Election, while we are pilgrims upon earth is incomplete and revocable: For so Greuinchouius (p. 136-137): “As the good things of our salvation, which are continued, faith being continued, and are revoked and called back, faith being denied, are incomplete; so Election is in this life incomplete, not peremptory, not irrevocable”: But the course of Election being finished, they will have this decree to them to be complete and irrevocable.

They will have the will of God, of saving some certain men, to be after the will of man, and to depend upon the foreseeing of faith.

They will have that first election to belong to the antecedent will; the latter Election to the consequent will.

That God supplies to men the means to believe, they think it to be the act of his providence, and not of this election, whereby he has appointed some certain men to glory: and they deny true faith and perseverance in faith, to be an effect of this latter and absolute election: seeing precise election rather depends on the fore-seeing of that faith, and faith is before Election: For they deny that God has precisely predestinated anyone to faith, but they will have it, that they that have faith are predestined to salvation.

They comprehend the whole doctrine of Election in four decrees, which they so knit among themselves with a perpetual linking, that the latter depend on the former.

The first decree of God is of giving his Son for the abolishing of sin and for the redemption of all mankind, in which redemption they would have all mankind to be reconciled, and remission of sins to be obtained for all. The second decree, that whereby God decreed to save them that believe and would persevere in faith: This is that general and conditional Election. The third decree, is that whereby God decreed to give to all men sufficient grace for faith and repentance: which power, they say, is given irresistibly; yea, and that God is bound to give all men this grace. But the very act of believing, they say, is not given but resistibly, lest force should

be offered to man's will. They deny therefore that God decreed to give to any one precisely and absolutely faith, and the act of believing. The fourth and last decree they would have to be that whereby God has precisely and absolutely decreed to save some certain men, for their fore-seen faith.

These are the decrees of the Arminians and this is the sum of their whole doctrine in the searching and viewing of which, the labor is not small, they do so enwrap their meanings, they do so hide their minds, that there always lies open some hole to escape by; whose meaning he that does not know, will easily believe, they have wrong done them, they do so parget¹ (cover) over their error with beautiful colors as if they were of the same opinion with us, when they are very far distant from us. Then also if one in expounding their opinion, has not expressed all, even their least distinctions, or has not observed all their shifts, it cannot be said, what tragedies they stir up, how miserably they complain, as it were, of force and grievous slanders, and calumny: Being ready also to foreswear Arminius, and themselves to pluck up their own opinions, and to maintain the cause of the Papists, finally, to do anything so they may escape our hands.

But we handle the matter more plainly, nor do we so laboriously, cut the Election of God into members: Neither do we prescribe an order to God, by which he should have digested, or yet ought to digest his thoughts, and to dispose his decrees. We acknowledge there is no general election, seeing there is no election where nothing is left: And we acknowledge no election, unless it be of several and particular persons, and that also to be precise and determined by the purpose of God; neither do we think any to be elected, but he that shall certainly and infallibly come to salvation: Nor do we believe that we are elected from faith, or for faith, but unto faith. For God does not elect those that are good, by any goodness which goes before election, but by his election he will make them good: nor does he fore-know any

¹ "Parget" refers to covering over part of a building (especially a brick wall) with plaster that bears an ornamental pattern.

good in us, but what he himself is to bring to pass; which is not to fore-see, but fore-ordain: Neither do we make the election of particular person to depend upon man's will: yea, and we believe that perseverance and the confirmation of man's will in faith proceeds from God's free election of grace, by which he decreed to give to them whom he appointed to an end, the means to come to that end.

We agree with the Arminians in this, that God, in electing, considers a man, not only as fallen, but as one that by his gift is to believe: for those whom he appointed to salvation, he appointed also to faith and repentance; but we do not think, that in election, faith is considered as accomplished, but as that which should be accomplished by the grace of God, and which is the effect of our election; and that God does this not by compelling the will, not by bowing it and granting that of its own accord it should follow him, calling: Not by a force, which is therefore called irresistible, because thou canst not resist it although thou wouldest, seeing this very thing is a part of this grace, that thou shalt not be willing to resist it: But that God is bound to give his grace to men, we detest it, as an opinion contumelious, and reproachful, against the majesty of God. Also we despise the opinion of the Arminians, whereby they determine that God equally desires salvation to all, as an opinion contrary to the Scripture and experience.

We say that Election is the eternal, and therefore immutable decree of God, whereby out of mankind fallen and corrupted, God decreed of his own mere grace, by Christ, to save some certain men, and to give them the means whereby they might come to salvation.

The decree of giving faith and repentance, we make to be part of that decree: For the decree concerning the end, includes, also the means; so the decree of making war includes horses, arms, and provision; and the will whereby any one has decreed to build, necessarily includes the will of gathering together stones and timber. Neither do we think it safe to pull asunder the counsels of God, and as it were, scrupulously to cut them into pieces.

