

OUTLINES
OF
THEOLOGY.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE DECREES OF GOD IN GENERAL.

1. *What are the decrees of God?*

See Con. of Faith, chap. iii., Larger Cat., Q. 12, and Shorter Cat., Q. 7.

The decree of God is his eternal, unchangeable, holy, wise and sovereign purpose, comprehending at once all things that ever were or will be in their causes, conditions, successions and relations, and determining their certain futurition. The several contents of this one eternal purpose are, because of the limitation of our faculties, necessarily conceived of by us in partial aspects, and in logical relations, and are therefore styled DECREES.

2. *How are the acts of God classified, and to which class do theologians refer the decrees?*

All conceivable divine actions may be classified as follows :

1st. Those actions which are *immanent and intrinsic*, belonging essentially to the perfection of the divine nature, and which bear no reference whatever to any existence without the Godhead. These are the acts of eternal and necessary generation, whereby the Son springs from the Father, and of eternal and necessary procession whereby the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and all those actions whatsoever involved in the mutual society of the divine persons.

2d. Those actions which are *extrinsic and transient*, i. e., those free actions proceeding from God and terminating upon the creature, occurring successively in time, as God's acts in creation, providence and grace.

3d. The third class are like the first inasmuch as they are intrinsic and immanent, essential to the perfection of the divine

nature and permanent states of the divine mind, but they differ, on the other hand, from the first class, inasmuch as they have respect to the whole dependent creation exterior to the Godhead. These are the eternal and immutable decrees of God respecting all beings and events whatsoever exterior to himself.

3. *How may it be proved that the decrees of God are eternal ?*

1st. As God is infinite, he is necessarily eternal and unchangeable, from eternity infinite in wisdom and knowledge, and absolutely independent in thought and purpose of every creature. There can never be any addition to his wisdom, nor surprise to his foreknowledge, nor resistance to his power, and therefore there never can be any occasion to reverse or modify that infinitely wise and righteous purpose which, from the perfection of his nature, he formed from eternity.

2d. Scripture directly affirms it.—Acts xv., 18, (*ἀπ' αἰῶνος*, *from eternity*), Matt. xxv., 34 ; Eph. i., 4 ; 2 Thes. ii., 13 ; 2 Tim. i., 9 ; 1 Cor. ii., 7. Time is limited duration measured by succession, and therefore commenced at the creation ; “*before the world*,” therefore, means “*before time*,” or from eternity ; “*Æternitas est una, individua, et tota simul*.”

4. *How may it be proved from Scripture that the decrees of God relate to all events ?*

Eph. i., 10, 11 ; Acts xv., 18 ; xvii., 26 ; Job xiv., 5 ; Isa. xlv., 10. Even the free acts of men, (Eph. ii., 10,) even their wicked actions.—Acts ii., 23 ; iv., 27, 28 ; Ps. lxxvi., 10 ; Prov. xvi., 4. Also what men call accidental events.—Prov. xvi., 32, compare with Acts xv., 18. All things in heaven and on earth.—Dan. iv., 34, 35.

5. *Prove the universality of God's decrees from providence.*

It follows from the eternity, immutability, and infinite wisdom, foreknowledge, and power of God, that his temporal working in providence must in all things proceed according to his eternal purpose.—Eph. i., 11, and Acts xv., 18. But both Scripture and reason alike teach us that the providential government of God comprehends all things in heaven and on earth *as a whole*,

and every event in detail.—Prov. xvi., 33 ; Dan. iv., 34, 35 ; Matt. x., 29, 30.

6. *Prove this doctrine from prophecy.*

God has in the Scriptures foretold the certain occurrence of many events, including the free actions of men, which have afterwards surely come to pass. Now the ground of prophecy is foreknowledge, and the foundation of the foreknowledge of an event as certainly future, is God's decree that made it future. The eternal immutability of the decree is the only foundation of the infallibility either of the foreknowledge or of the prophecy. But if God has decreed certain future events, he must also have included in that decree all of their causes, conditions, coördinates, and consequences. No event is isolated ; to make one certainly future implies the determination of the whole concatenation of causes and effects which constitute the universe.

7. *What reasons may be assigned for contemplating the decrees of God as one, all-comprehensive purpose ?*

1st. As above shown, the decrees of God are eternal and immutable. 2d. No event is isolated. To decree one implies the foreordination of the whole concatenation of events which constitute the universe. As all events constitute one system, they must have been determined in one purpose. 3d. God decrees all things as they actually occur, *i. e.*, as produced by causes, and as depending upon conditions, etc. The same decree, therefore, which determines the event, determines it as produced by its cause, and as depending upon its conditions.

Most of the mistakes which heterodox speculators have made, with reference to the nature of God's decrees, arise from the tendency of the human mind to confine attention to one fragment of God's eternal purpose, and to regard it as isolated from the rest. This decree never determined the certain occurrence of any single event as separated from the second causes which produce it, but it at once, and as a whole, determines the certain occurrence of all things that ever come to pass, the causes as well as their effects, the condition as well as that which is suspended upon it, and all in the very relations in which they actually occur.

8. *In what sense are the decrees of God free ?*

The decrees of God are free in the sense that in decreeing he was solely actuated by his own infinitely wise, righteous, and benevolent good pleasure. He has always chosen as he pleased, and he has always pleased consistently with the perfection of his nature.

9. *In what sense are the decrees of God sovereign ?*

They are sovereign in the sense that while they determine absolutely whatever occurs without God, their whole reason and motive is within the divine nature, and they are neither suggested nor occasioned by, nor conditioned upon anything whatsoever without him.

10. *What is the distinction between absolute and conditional decrees ?*

An absolute decree is one which, while it may include conditions, is suspended upon no condition, *i. e.*, it makes the event decreed, of whatever kind, whether of mechanical necessity or of voluntary agency, certainly future, together with all the causes and conditions, of whatever nature, upon which the event depends.

A conditional decree is one which decrees that an event shall happen upon the condition that some other event, possible but uncertain (not decreed), shall actually occur.

The Socinians denied that the free actions of men, being intrinsically uncertain, are the objects of knowledge, and therefore affirmed that they are not foreknown by God. They held that God decreed absolutely to create the human race, and after Adam sinned he decreed absolutely to save all repenting and believing sinners, yet that he decreed nothing concerning the sinning nor the salvation of individual men.

The Arminians, admitting that God certainly foreknows the acts of free agents as well as all other events, maintain that he absolutely decreed to create man, and foreseeing that man would sin he absolutely decreed to provide a salvation for all, and actually to save all that repent and believe, but that he conditionally decreed to save individual men on the condition, foreseen but not foreordained, of their faith and obedience.

11. *What are the objections to attributing conditional decrees to God ?*

Calvinists admit that the all comprehensive decree of God determines all events according to their inherent nature, the actions of free agents as free, and the operation of necessary causes, necessarily. It also comprehends the whole system of causes and effects of every kind ; of the motives and conditions of free actions, as well as the necessary causes of necessary events. God decreed salvation upon the condition of faith, yet in the very same act he decreed the faith of those persons whose salvation he has determined. "Whom he did *predestinate*, them he *also called*." Thus his decree from the beginning embraced and provided for the free agency of man, as well as the regular procedures of nature, according to established laws. Thus also his covenants, or conditional promises, which he makes in time, are in all their parts the execution of his eternal purpose, which comprehended the promise, and the condition in their several places as means to the end. But that the decree of God can be regarded as suspended upon conditions which are not themselves determined by the decree is evidently impossible.

1st. This decree has been shown above (questions 3-7) to be eternal and all comprehensive. A condition implies liability to change. The whole universe forming one system, if one part is contingent, the whole must be contingent, for if one condition failed the whole concatenation of causes and effects would be deranged. If the Arminian should rejoin that although God did not foreordain the free acts of men, yet he infallibly foreknew and provided for them, and therefore his plans can not fail ; then the Calvinist replies that if God foresaw that a given man, in given circumstances, would act at a given juncture in a certain way, then God in decreeing to create that very man and place him in those very circumstances, at that very juncture, did foreordain the certain futuration of that very event, and of all its consequences. That God's decree is immutable and does not depend upon uncertain conditions, is proved (1.) from its eternity, (2.) from the direct assertions of Scripture.—Is. xiv., 24, 27 ; xlv., 10 ; Ps. xxxiii., 11 ; Prov. xix., 21 ; Rom. ix., 11 ; Eph. iii., 11.

2d. The foreknowledge of God, as Arminians admit, is eternal and certain, and embraces all events, free as well as necessary.

But, (1.) as shown in the preceding paragraph, this foreknowledge involves foreordination, and (2.) certainty in the foreknowledge implies certainty in the event; certainty implies determination; determination leaves us to choose between the decree of an infinitely wise, righteous, and benevolent God, and a blind fate.

3d. A conditional decree would subvert the sovereignty of God and make him, as to the administration of his whole government and the execution of all his plans, dependent upon the uncontrollable actions of his own creatures. But the decrees of God are sovereign.—Isa. xl., 13, 14; Dan. iv., 35; Rom. ix., 15–18.

4th. His decree is declared to depend upon his own “good pleasure,” and the “counsel of his own will.”—Eph. i., 5, 11; Rom. ix., 11; Matt. xi., 25, 26.

5th. The decree of God includes the means and conditions.—2 Thes. ii., 13; 1 Pet. i. 2; Eph. i., 4.

6th. His decree absolutely determines the free actions of men.—Acts iv., 27, 28; Eph. ii., 10.

7th. God himself works in his people that faith and obedience which are called the conditions of their salvation.—Phil. ii., 13; Eph. ii., 8; 2 Tim. ii., 25.

12. *How far are the decrees of God efficacious and how far permissive?*

All the decrees of God are equally efficacious in the sense that they all infallibly determine the certain futurition of the event decreed. Theologians, however, classify the decrees of God thus: 1st. As efficacious in as far as they respect those events which he has determined to effect through necessary causes, or in his own immediate agency. 2d. As permissive, as far as they respect those events which he has determined to allow dependent free agents to effect.

13. *How may it be proved that the decree of God renders the event certain?*

1st. From the nature of the decree itself as sovereign and unchangeable, (see above.)

2d. From the essential nature of God in his relation to his creation, as an infinitely wise and powerful sovereign.

3d. The foreknowledge of God regards future events as certain. The ground of this certainty must be either in God, or in the events themselves, which last is fatalism.

4th. The Scriptures ascribe a certainty of futurition to the events decreed. There is a needs be that the event should happen "as it was determined."—Luke xviii., 31-33 ; xxiv., 46 ; Acts ii., 23 ; xiii., 29 ; 1 Cor. xi., 19 ; Matt. xvi., 21.

14. *How does this doctrine, that God's universal decree renders the occurrence of all future events certain, differ from the ancient doctrine of fate ?*

1st. The doctrine of fate supposed the certainty of events to be determined by a law of necessary causation, effecting its end irresistibly and irrespectively of the free choice of the human agents concerned. The Christian doctrine of God's decrees, on the other hand, regards that decree as determining the certainty of the event only in dependence upon, and in relation to all the causes and conditions which precede and attend it. It determines the free act through the free will of the free agent.

2d. Fate was regarded as the concurrent action of all material causes operating blindly and necessarily.

The decrees of Jehovah, on the other hand, are the infinitely wise and immutable purposes of a righteous and merciful Father.

15. *What objection to this doctrine of unconditional decrees is derived from the admitted fact of man's free agency ?*

Objection.—Foreknowledge implies the certainty of the event. The decree of God implies that he has determined it to be certain. But that he has determined it to be certain implies, upon the part of God, an efficient agency in bringing about that event which is inconsistent with the free agency of man.

We answer : It is evidently only the *execution* of the decree, and not the decree itself, which can interfere with the free agency of man. On the general subject of the method in which God executes his decrees, see below, the chapters on Providence, Effectual Calling, and Regeneration.

We have here room only for the following general statement :

1st. The Scriptures attribute all that is good in man to God ;

these "he works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." All the sins which men commit the Scriptures attribute wholly to the man himself. Yet God's permissive decree does truly determine the certain futurity of the act ; because God knowing certainly that the man in question would in the given circumstances so act, did place that very man in precisely those circumstances that he should so act. But in neither case, whether in working the good in us, or in placing us where we will certainly do the wrong, does God in executing his purpose ever violate or restrict the perfect freedom of the agent.

2d. We have the fact distinctly revealed that God has decreed the free acts of men, and yet that the actors were none the less responsible, and consequently none the less free in their acts, Acts ii., 23 ; iii., 18 ; iv., 27, 28 ; Gen. i., 20, etc. We never can understand *how* the infinite God acts upon the finite spirit of man, but it is none the less our duty to believe.

3d. According to that theory of the will which makes the freedom of man to consist in the *liberty of indifference*, *i. e.*, that the will acts in every case of choice in a state of perfect equilibrium, equally independent of all motives for or against, and just as free to choose in opposition to all desires as in harmony with them, it is evident that the very essence of liberty consists in uncertainty. If this be the true theory of the will, God could not execute his decrees without violating the liberty of the agent, and certain foreknowledge would be impossible.

But as shown below, in chapter 18, the true theory of the will is that the liberty of the agent consists in his acting in each case as, upon the whole, he pleases, *i. e.*, according to the dispositions and desires of his heart, under the immediate view which his reason takes of the case. These dispositions and desires are determined in their turn by the character of the agent in relation to his circumstances, which character and circumstances are surely not beyond the control of the infinite God.

16. *What is meant by those who teach that God is the author of sin ?*

Many reasoners of a Pantheistic tendency, *e. g.*, Dr. Emmons, maintain that as God is infinite in sovereignty, and by his decree determines so by his providence, he effects every thing which

comes to pass, so that he is actually the only real agent in the universe. Still they religiously hold that God is an infinitely holy agent in effecting that which, produced *from* God, is righteous, but, produced *in* us, is sin.

17. *How may it be shown that God is not the author of sin?*

The admission of sin into the creation of an infinitely wise, powerful and holy God is a great mystery, of which no explanation can be given. But that God can not be the author of sin is proved, 1st, from the nature of sin, which is, as to its essence, *ἀνομία*, want of conformity to law, and disobedience to the Law-giver.

2d. From the nature of God, who is as to essence holy, and in the administration of his kingdom always forbids and

• punishes sin.

3d. From the nature of man, who is a responsible free agent who originates his own acts. The Scriptures always attribute to divine grace the good actions, and to the evil heart the sinful actions of men.

18. *How may it be shown that the doctrine of unconditional decrees does not represent God as the author of sin?*

The whole difficulty lies in the awful fact that sin exists. If God foresaw it and yet created the agent, and placed him in the very circumstances under which he did foresee the sin would be committed, then he did predetermine it. If he did not foresee it, or, foreseeing it, could not prevent it, then he is not infinite in knowledge and in power, but is surprised and prevented by his creatures. The doctrine of unconditional decrees presents no special difficulty. It represents God as decreeing that the sin shall eventuate as the free act of the sinner, and not as by any form of coercion causing, nor by any form of temptation inducing him to sin.

19. *What is the objection to this doctrine derived from the use of means?*

This is the most common form of objection in the mouths of ignorant and irreligious people. If an immutable decree makes all future events certain, "*if what is to be, will be,*" then it fol-

lows that no means upon our part can avoid the result, nor can any means be necessary to secure it.

Hence as the use of means is commanded by God, and instinctively natural to man, since many events have been effected by their use, and many more in the future evidently depend upon them, it follows that God has not rendered certain any of those events which depend upon the use of means on the part of men.

20. *What is the ground upon which the use of means is founded?*

This use is founded upon the command of God, and upon that fitness in the means to secure the end desired, which our instincts, our intelligence, and our experience disclose to us. But neither the fitness nor the efficiency of the means to secure the end, reside inherently and independently in the means themselves, but were originally established and are now sustained by God himself; and in the working of all means God always presides and directs providentially. This is necessarily involved in any Christian theory of Providence, although we can never explicate the relative action (*concursus*) of God on man, the infinite upon the finite.

21. *How may it be shown that the doctrine of decrees does not afford a rational ground of discouragement in the use of means?*

This difficulty (stated above, question 19) rests entirely in a habit of isolating one part of God's eternal decree from the whole, (see question 7), and in confounding the Christian doctrine of decrees with the heathen doctrine of fate, (see question 14.) But when God decreed an event he made it certainly future, not as insulated from other events, or as independent of all means and agents, but as dependent upon means and upon agents freely using those means. The same decree which makes the event certain, also determines the mode by which it shall be effected, and comprehends the means with the ends. This eternal, all comprehensive act embraces all existence through all duration, and all space as one system, and at once provides for the whole in all its parts, and for all the parts in all their relations to one another and to the whole. An event, therefore, may

be certain in respect to God's decree and foreknowledge, and at the same time truly contingent in the apprehension of man, and in its relation to the means upon which it depends.

22. What are the proper practical effects of this doctrine ?

Humility in view of the infinite greatness and sovereignty of God, and of the dependence of man. Confidence and implicit reliance upon the wisdom, righteousness, goodness and immutability of God's purposes, and cheerful obedience to his commandments ; always remembering that God's precepts, as distinctly revealed, and not his decrees, are the rule of our duty.

CHAPTER X.

PREDESTINATION.

1. *What are the different senses in which the word predestination is used by theologians?*

1st. As equivalent to the generic word decree, as including all God's eternal purposes.

2d. As embracing only those purposes of God which specially respect his moral creatures.

3d. As designating only the counsel of God concerning fallen men, including the sovereign election of some and the most righteous reprobation of the rest.

4th. It is sometimes restricted in the range of its usage so far as to be applied only to the eternal election of God's people to everlasting life.

The sense marked as 3d, above, is the most proper usage.—See Acts iv., 27, 28.

2. *In what senses are the words προγινώσκω (to know beforehand), and πρόγνωσις (foreknowledge), used in the New Testament?*

Προγινώσκω is compounded of πρό, *before*, and γινώσκω, of which the primary sense is *to know*, and the secondary sense *to approve*, e. g., 2 Tim. ii., 19; John x., 14, 15; Rom. vii., 15. This word occurs five times in the New Testament. Twice, e. g., Acts xxvi., 5, and 2 Pet. iii. 17, it signifies previous knowledge, *apprehension*, simply. In the remaining three instances, Rom. viii., 29; xi., 2; 1 Pet. i., 20, it is used in the secondary sense of *approve beforehand*. This is made evident from the context, for it is used to designate the ground of God's predestination of individuals to salvation, which elsewhere is expressly said to be "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose

and grace," and "to the good pleasure of his will," 2 Tim. i., 9 ; Rom. ix., 11 ; Eph. i., 5.

Πρόγνωσις occurs but twice in the New Testament, *e. g.*, Acts ii., 23, and 1 Pet. i. 2, in both of which instances it evidently signifies approbation, or choice from beforehand. It is explained by the equivalent phrase "determinate counsel."

3. *What is the New Testament usage of the words ἐκλέγω (to elect) and ἐκλογή (election) ?*

Ἐκλέγω occurs twenty-one times in the New Testament. It is used to signify, 1st, Christ's choice of men to be apostles, Luke vi., 13 ; John vi., 70. 2d. God's choice of the Jewish nation as a peculiar people, Acts xiii., 17. 3d. the choice of men by God, or by the church for some special service, Acts xv., 7, 22. 4th. The choice made by Mary of the better part, Luke x., 42. 5th. In the great majority of instances God's eternal election of individual men to everlasting life, John xv., 16 ; 1 Cor. i., 27, 28 ; Eph. i., 4 ; James ii., 5.

Ἐκλογή occurs seven times in the New Testament. Once it signifies an election to the apostolic office.—Acts ix., 15. Once it signifies those chosen to eternal life.—Rom. xi., 7. In every other case it signifies the purpose or the act of God in choosing his own people to salvation.—Rom. ix., 11 ; xi., 5, 28 ; 1 Thes. i., 4 ; 2 Pet. i., 10.

4. *To whom is election referred in the Scriptures ?*

The eternal decree, as a whole, and in all its parts, is doubtless the concurrent act of all the three persons of the Trinity, in their perfect oneness of counsel and will.

But in the economy of salvation, as revealed to us, the act of sovereign election is specially attributed to the Father, as his personal part, even as redemption is attributed to the Son, and sanctification to the Spirit.—John xvii., 6, 9 ; vi., 64, 65 ; 1 Thes. v. 9.

5. *Are individuals, classes, or communities, the object of election ?*

The word "election" (as shown above, question 3) is applied to the designation by God of certain nations and classes of men to privileges and offices in the visible church. But that it is also

10. *What is the Arminian theory as to the order of the decrees relating to the human race ?*

1st. The decree to create man. 2d. Man, as a moral agent, being fallible, and his will being essentially contingent, and his sin therefore being impreventible, God, foreseeing that man would certainly fall into the condemnation and pollution of sin, decreed to provide a free salvation through Christ for all men, and to provide sufficient means for the effectual application of that salvation to the case of all. 3d. He decreed absolutely that all believers in Christ should be saved, and all unbelievers reprobated for their sins. 4th. Forseeing that certain individuals would repent and believe, and that certain other individuals would continue impenitent to the last, God from eternity elected to eternal life those whose faith he foresaw, on the condition of their faith, and reprobated those whom he foresaw would continue impenitent on the condition of that impenitence.

With the Arminian the decree of redemption precedes the decree of election, which is conditioned upon the foreseen faith of the individual.

With the Calvinist, on the other hand, the decree of election precedes the decree of redemption, and the decree of election is conditioned upon the simple good pleasure of God alone.—See Appendix B.

11. *What is the view of this subject entertained by the French Protestant theologians, Camero, Amyraut, and others ?*

These theological professors at Saumur, during the second quarter of the seventeenth century, taught that God, 1st. Decreed to create man. 2d. To permit man to fall. 3d. To provide, in the mediation of Christ, salvation for all men. 4th. But, foreseeing that if men were left to themselves none would repent and believe, therefore he sovereignly elected some to whom he decreed to give the necessary graces of repentance and faith.

The new school theology of America, as far as it relates to the decrees of God, is only a revival of this system.

It differs from the Calvinistic view in making the decree of redemption precede the decree of election.

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from the number of creatable, but from the mass of actually sinful men.—John xv., 19; Rom. xi., 5, 7.

3d. The Scriptures declare that the elect are chosen to sanctification, and to the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. They must therefore have been regarded when chosen as guilty and defiled by sin.—1 Pet. i., 2; Eph, i., 4-6.

4th. Predestination includes reprobation. This view represents God as reprobating the non-elect by a sovereign act, without any respect to their sins, simply for his own glory. This appears to be inconsistent with the divine righteousness, as well as with the teaching of Scripture. The non-elect are “ordained to dishonor and wrath *for their sins*, to the praise of his glorious *justice*.—Conf. Faith, ch. 3, Sec. 3-7, L. Cat., question 13; S. Cat., question 20.

8. *What is the true interpretation of Eph. iii., 9, 10.*

This passage is claimed as a direct affirmation of the supralapsarian theory. If the *iva*, introducing the tenth verse, refers to the immediately preceding clause, which closes the ninth verse, then the passage teaches that God created all things, *in order that* his manifold wisdom might be displayed by the church to the angels. It is evident, however, that *iva* refers to the preceding phrase, in which Paul declares he was ordained to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and to enlighten all men as to the mystery of redemption. All this he was commissioned to do, *in order that* God's glory might be displayed, etc.—See Hodge on Ephesians.

9. *What is the sub-lapsarian view of predestination?*

The sub-lapsarian (sub lapsum) theory of predestination, or the decree of predestination, viewed as subsequent in purpose to the decree permitting man to fall, represents man as created and fallen as the object of election. The order of the decrees then stand thus: 1st. The decree to create man. 2d. To permit man to fall. 3d. The decree to elect certain men, out of the mass of the fallen and justly condemned race, to eternal life, and to pass others by, leaving them to the just consequences of their sins. 4th. The decree to provide salvation for the elect.

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ereign good pleasure of God, and not foreseen faith, the ground of election. The objection to this view is, that it is an essential element in that radically false view of the atonement called the governmental theory.—See Chapter XXII., questions 6, 7.

12. *In what sense do the Lutherans teach that Christ is the ground of election?*

They held that God elected his own people to eternal life *for Christ's sake*. They appeal to Eph. i., 4, "According as he hath chosen us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world." This view may evidently be construed either with the Arminian or the French theory of the decrees above stated, *i. e.*, we were chosen in Christ for his sake, either as we were foreseen to be in him through faith, or because God, having provided through Christ salvation for all men, would, by the election of certain individuals, secure at least in their case the successful effect of Christ's death.

This view, of course, is rebutted by the same arguments which we urge against the theories above mentioned. We are said to be chosen "in him," not *for Christ's sake*, but because the eternal covenant of grace includes all the elect under the headship of Christ. The love of God is everywhere represented as the ground of the gift of Christ, not the work of Christ the ground of the love of God.—John iii., 16; 1 John iv., 10.

13. *What is the Arminian doctrine as to the ground of election?*

The faith and repentance of the elect themselves, as foreseen by God.

14. *What, according to the Calvinistic view, is the ground of predestination?*

The eternal, sovereign, and infinitely wise, righteous, and loving will of God.

15. *What arguments overthrow the Arminian and establish the Calvinistic view?*

1st It is derogatory to the sovereignty and infinite perfections of God to regard any decree of his as conditional upon any thing without himself.—See above, Chap. IX., question 11.

2d. On the contrary, the Scriptures always assign the good pleasure of God as the ground of election.—Eph. i., 5, 11 ; 2 Tim. i., 9 ; Rom. viii., 28. Its ground is declared to be in God and not in us, John xv., 16–19 ; Matt. xi., 26 ; James ii., 5 ; and to be of grace and not of works, Rom. xi., 4–7. This is affirmed, argued and illustrated, Rom. ix., 10–13.

3d. Faith and repentance are themselves declared to be “the gift of God,” Eph. ii., 8 ; Acts v., 31, and therefore were included in the decree, and could not have been the indeterminate condition of it.—See Chapter IX., question 7.

4th. It is expressly affirmed that the elect were chosen “to be holy,” and “to be conformed to the image of his Son,” and not because these were foreseen ; faith and repentance, therefore, are the consequents, not the grounds of election, Rom. viii., 29 ; Eph. i., 4 ; ii., 10 ; 2 Thess. ii., 13 ; 1 Pet. i., 2.

5th. Man, antecedently to election, could not have been foreseen as repentant and believing, because human nature can bring forth no such fruits. But God elects his people to grace, and through grace to faith and to all the fruits thereof. Therefore, “whom he did predestinate them he also called.”—Rom. viii., 30 ; 2 Thess. ii., 13, 14.

6th. The elect and the effectually called are the same, and the calling is based upon the election, 2 Tim. i., 9, 10 ; Rev. xvii., 14.—See Chapter XXV.

7th. All the elect shall believe, John x., 16 and 27–29 ; vi., 37–39 ; xvii., 2, 9, 24, and only the elect believe, and *because they are such*, John x., 26 ; Acts xiii., 48 ; ii., 47.

16. *What argument may be drawn from the nature of the objections to Paul's doctrine, with which the Apostle deals in the 9th chapter of Romans ?*

Paul's doctrine is indetical with the Calvinistic view. 1st. Because he expressly teaches it. 2d. Because the objections he notices as brought against his doctrine are the same as those brought against ours. The design of the whole passage is to prove God's sovereign right to cast off the Jews as a peculiar people, and to call all men indiscriminately by the gospel.

This, he argues, 1st, that God's ancient promises embraced not the natural descendants of Abraham as such, but the spiritual

seed. 2d. That "God is perfectly sovereign in the distribution of his favors."

But against this doctrine of divine sovereignty two objections are introduced and answered by Paul.

1st. It is unjust for God thus of his mere good pleasure to show mercy to one and to reject another, v. 14. This precise objection is made against our doctrine at the present time also. "It represents the most holy God as worse than the devil, as more false, more cruel, and more unjust."—Methodist Doctrinal Tracts, pp. 170, 171. This Paul answers by two arguments. (1.) God claims the right "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," vs. 15, 16. (2.) God in his providence exercises the right, as in the case of Pharaoh, vs. 17, 18.

2d. The second objection is that this doctrine is inconsistent with the liberty and accountability of men. The same objection is made against our doctrine now also.

Paul answers this objection by condescending to no appeal to human reason, but simply (1.) by asserting God's sovereignty as creator, and man's dependence as creature, and (2.) by asserting the just exposure of all men alike to wrath as sinners.—See Analysis of chap. ix., 6–24, in Hodge's Com. on Romans.

17. *How can the doctrine of gratuitous election be reconciled with the justice of God?*

Gratuitous election as the ultimate ground of salvation is not only clearly consistent with justice, but it is the only conceivable principle which is so. Justice necessarily holds all sinners alike as destitute of all claims upon God's favor, and will admit of salvation being offered at all only on the ground of sovereign favor. The essence of salvation by the gospel is that it is of grace, not of debt.—Lam. iii., 22; Rom. iv., 4, 5; xi., 6; Eph. i., 6, 7; ii., 8–10. If this be so it is evident that while no one can be saved upon any other ground than that of a gratuitous election, it rests only with God himself to save all, many, few, or none. Justice can not demand that because some are saved all must be. Those not elected are simply left to be dealt with according to justice for their own sins. There is a lurking feeling among many that somehow God owes to all men at least a full opportunity of being saved through Christ. If so there was no grace in

Christ's dying. "I reject," says Wesley, Meth. Doc. Tracts, pp. 25, 26, "the assertion that God might justly have passed by me and all men, as a bold, precarious assertion, utterly unsupported by holy Scripture." Then, we say, *of course* the gospel was of debt, not of grace.

18. *How does this doctrine consist with the general benevolence of God?*

The only difficulty at this point is to reconcile the general benevolence of God with the fact that he, being infinitely wise and powerful, should have admitted a system involving the sin, final impenitence, and consequent damnation of any. But this difficulty presses equally upon both systems.

The *facts* prove that God's general benevolence is not inconsistent with his allowing some to be damned for their sins. This is all that reprobation means. Gratuitous election, or the positive choice of some does not rest upon God's general benevolence, but upon his special love to his own, John xvii., 6, 23 ; Rom. ix., 11-13 ; 1 Thess. v., 9.

19. *How does this doctrine consist with the general gospel offer?*

In the general offers of the gospel God exhibits a salvation sufficient for and exactly adapted to all, and sincerely offered to every one without exception, and he unfolds all the motives of duty, hope, fear, etc., which ought to induce every one to accept it, solemnly promising that whosoever comes in no wise shall be cast out. Nothing but a sinful unwillingness can prevent any one who hears the gospel from receiving and enjoying it.

The gospel is for all, election is a special grace in addition to that offer. The non-elect may come if they will. The elect will come.

There is just as great an apparent difficulty in reconciling God's *certain* foreknowledge of the final impenitence of the great majority of those to whom he offers and upon whom he presses, by every argument, his love with the fact of that offer ; especially when we reflect that he foresees that his offers will certainly increase their guilt and misery.

20. *How far is assurance of our election possible, and on what grounds does such assurance rest?*

An unwavering and certain assurance of the fact of our election is possible in this life, for whom God predestinates them he also calls, and whom he calls he justifies, and we know that whom he justifies, he also sanctifies. Thus the fruits of the Spirit prove sanctification, and sanctification proves effectual calling, and effectual calling election.—See 2 Pet. i., 5–10 ; 1 John ii., 3.

Besides this evidence of our own gracious states and acts, we have the Spirit of adoption, who witnesseth with our spirits and seals us.—Rom. viii., 16, 17 ; Eph. iv., 30.

In confirmation of this we have the example of the apostles (2 Tim. i., 12) and of many Christians.

21. *What is reprobation?*

Reprobation is the aspect which God's eternal decree presents in its relation to that portion of the human race which shall be finally condemned for their sins.

It is, 1st, negative, in as much as it consists in passing over these, and refusing to elect them to life ; and, 2d, positive, in as much as they are condemned to eternal misery.

In respect to its negative element, reprobation is simply sovereign, since those passed over were no worse than those elected, and the simple reason both for the choosing and for the passing over was the sovereign good pleasure of God.

In respect to its positive element, reprobation is not sovereign, but simply judicial, because God inflicts misery in any case only as the righteous punishment of sin. “The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath *for their sins*.”—Con. Faith, Chap. III., Sec. 7.

22. *How may this doctrine of reprobation be proved to be true?*

1st. It is involved in the doctrine of unconditional election, and is therefore established by all the evidence upon which that doctrine rests, (see above, question 15.)

2d. It is directly taught in such passages as the following :

Rom. ix., 10-24 ; 1 Pet. ii., 8 ; 2d Pet. ii., 12 ; Jude 4 ; Rev. xiii., 8.

23. *What is the objection to this doctrine stated, (Rom. ix., 19,) and how does Paul answer it ?*

“Why doth he yet find fault?” If he has not given gracious ability to obey, how can he command.—See also Methodist Doctrinal Tracts, p. 171.

The apostle answers by showing, 1st, (verses 20, 21,) that God is under no obligation to extend his grace to all or to any ; and, 2d, that the “vessels of wrath” were condemned for their own sins, to manifest God’s just wrath, while the “vessels of mercy” were chosen not for any good in them, but to manifest his glorious grace (verses 22, 23).

24. *In what sense is God said to harden men (see Rom. i., 24-28, and ix., 18) ?*

This is doubtless a judicial act wherein God withdraws from sinful men, whom he has not elected to life, for the just punishment of their sins, all gracious influences, and leaves them to the unrestrained tendencies of their own hearts, and to the uncoun-
teracted influences of the world and the devil.

25. *How can the doctrine of reprobation be reconciled with the holiness of God ?*

Reprobation leaves men in sin, and thus leads to the increase of sin throughout eternity. How then can God, in consistency with his holiness, form a purpose the designed effect of which is to leave men in sin, and thus lead inevitably to the increase of sin.

But it is acknowledged by Arminians as well as Calvinists, that God did create the human race in spite of his certain foreknowledge that sin would be largely occasioned thereby, and he did create individual men in spite of his certain foreknowledge that these very men would continue eternally to sin. The simple difficulty is, the fact that God does not convert all men.

26. *What is the practical bearing of this doctrine on Christian experience and conduct ?*

It must be remembered, 1st. That this truth is not inconsistent with, but is part of the same gracious system with the equally certain principles of the moral liberty and responsibility of man, and the free offers of the gospel to all. 2d. That the sole rule of our duty is the commands, threatenings, and promises of God clearly expressed in the gospel, and not this decree of election, which he never reveals except in its consequents of effectual calling, faith, and holy living.

When thus held the doctrine of predestination—

1st. Exalts the majesty and absolute sovereignty of God, while it illustrates the riches of his free grace and his just displeasure with sin.

2d. It enforces upon us the essential truth that salvation is entirely of grace. That no one can either complain, if passed over, or boasts himself, if saved.

3d. It brings the inquirer to absolute self-despair, and the cordial embrace of the free offer of Christ.

4th. In the case of the believer, who has the witness in himself, this doctrine at once deepens his humility, and elevates his confidence to the full assurance of hope.