

## THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

### Chapter 3-Of God's Eternal Decree.

VII. The rest of man-kinde God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsell of his own Will, whereby he extendeth, or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his Sovereign Power over his creatures, to passe by; and, to ordain them to dishonour and wrath, for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.<sup>1</sup>

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Question 1—*Has it pleased God, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extends, or withholds mercy, as he pleases, for the glory of his Sovereign power, over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain the rest of mankind to dishonour, and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice?*

*Answer*—Yes. 1 Pet. 2:8. Thus do the Arminians and other heretics err maintaining that the cause of reprobation is to be found in the creature. They are confuted because: 1.) Christ thanked his Father, Lord of heaven and Earth, because he had hid those things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes, Matt. 11:25, 26. 2.) The Scripture says to Pharaoh, even for this same purpose, have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and my name might be declared throughout all the Earth, Rom. 9:17, 18, 21, 22. 3.) In a great house, there are some vessels to honour and some to dishonour, 2 Tim. 2:19, 20. 4.) The Apostle Jude says, there are some, who of old were ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, Jude 4. Note, that the cause of reprobation, is not man's sin, but the absolute will, and good pleasure of God, Rom. 9:11. Man's sin is indeed the cause, why God will punish, Ps. 89:31, 32; but no occasion, why he did ordain, to pass by, or to punish man, Dan. 4:35. This decree is just, because God has power over man, as the Potter hath power over the clay, Isa. 64:8. Neither is the end of this decree the condemnation of the creature, but the manifestation of God's justice, Ex. 9:16. Lastly, sin is the effect of man's "free will", and condemnation is the effect of justice, but the Decree of God is the cause of neither, Jas. 1:13.

Question 2—*Is the decree of reprobation absolute, depending upon the good pleasure of God alone, or is sin its proper cause?*

*Answer*—In order to better understand the nature of reprobation, and the state of the proposed question, certain distinctions must be premised. First, before all things, the twofold act of reprobation must be distinguished. The former is called negative; the latter affirmative, or positive. The former refers to preterition; the latter to predamnation. The former consists of the denying of grace; the latter affirms their judgment and punishment.

This is a distinction of one formal act with respect to various terms and objects which stand in affirmation and negation. It is founded upon the Scripture itself, which sometimes speaks of reprobation negatively, making it to consist in the preterition of some in the destination both of grace, Matt. 11:25; 13:11; and of glory, Matt. 7:23; Rev. 20:15; at other times positively, in the destination to greater hardening, John 12:39; Rom. 9:18; and to damnation, Rom. 9:11; Jude 4.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 11:25, 26; Rom. 9:17, 18, 21, 22; 2 Tim. 2:19, 20; Jude 4; 1 Pet. 2:8.

That this reprobation is absolute, depending upon the good pleasure of God alone is proved because: 1.) Reprobation no less than election is made from good pleasure; therefore, not from foreseen unbelief, as appears in Rom. 9:18. If the will is the cause of hardening, then it is also the cause of the reprobation because the cause of a cause is also the cause of the thing caused, *contra* Ex. 4:21; 7:3. Hardening is the cause of damnation, Rom. 9:22; therefore, that which is the cause of the former is the cause of the latter, 2 Pet. 2:3. Paul proves this, Rom. 9:11, the example of the twins; also the similitude of the potter, Rom. 9:21, 22. 2.) The temporal reprobation is from God's sole good pleasure, Rom. 9:18. This is evident from Matt. 11:25-27, where Christ refers the cause of revelation and concealment of mysteries to good pleasure alone, Rom. 11:7. However, the preventing of this revelation to some closes the door to them being saved, Rom. 10:14; Acts 16:14. Therefore, it is an act of the Lord doing with his own as he wills, Mark 4:11, 12. 3.) Since unbelief is a consequence of reprobation, it cannot precede it, John 8:47; 10:26; 12:39, 40. Hence, Peter says they were appointed to this disobedience, 1 Pet. 2:8. 4.) If reprobation were made from foreseen unbelief, it would not be an inscrutable mystery, nor would the apostle have been bound to ascend to the secret, unsearchable judgment of God to stop the mouth of man, Rom. 9:14; 11:33, 34; Deut. 29:29.

Although God is said to will the salvation of all, 1 Tim. 2:4, and not to delight in the death of the sinner, Ezek. 18:23, it does not mean that he has not reprobated anyone, for Scripture testifies the contrary. It is one thing, therefore, to will the salvation of men by the will *euarestias*, (εὐαρεστίας; *i.e.*, to be pleased with it), *cf.* Col. 3:20; another to will it by the will *eudokias*, (εὐδοκίας; *i.e.*, to intend it), *cf.* Gal. 1:15. One thing to will the salvation of all men indiscriminately *as they are men*, commanding them to believe, wherein God declares his will for them, 1 John 3:23; another to will the salvation of all and everyone universally, which would be contrary to the divine will, John 9:39. The latter is incompatible with reprobation, the former is not.