

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 3.-Of God's Eternal Decree.

II. Although God knows whatsoever may, or can come to passe upon all supposed conditions,¹ yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to passe upon such conditions.²

Question 1.—*Are there conditional decrees?*

Answer.—No. Rom. 9:11, 13, 16, 18. Thus do the Arminians, Pelagians, and other heretics err maintaining conditional decrees of God. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Every decree of God is eternal; therefore it cannot depend upon a condition which takes place only in time, Eph. 1:4. 2.) God's decrees depend upon his good pleasure (εὐδοκίαν), Matt. 11:26; Eph. 1:5; Rom. 9:11. Therefore they are not suspended upon any condition outside of God, Eph. 1:11. 3.) Every decree of God is immutable, Isa. 46:10; Rom. 9:11. A conditional decree is mutable because every condition is mutable (especially if not decreed by God, but placed in the free will of man). Hence, the conditional decree ceasing, God would fail in his purpose and would be obliged to enter upon new counsels, Isa. 55:11.

It is one thing to maintain that God has not decreed to save anyone except through legitimate means, 1 Cor. 1:21; it is another, that the decree to save persons through legitimate means is conditional and uncertain, Isa. 46:10. Although faith and perseverance are related as the condition prerequisite to the decreed salvation (without them it ought not be expected), yet they are not the conditions upon which God's eternal decree of bestowing salvation upon his people depend, Phil. 2:12, 13. So far from God having decreed salvation because of these conditions, on the contrary, he also decreed faith and perseverance to them and all other means necessary for salvation, Rom. 8:30.

It is one thing for the thing decreed to be conditional; another for the decree itself. The former we grant, the latter we deny. For example, God wills salvation to have annexed to it the condition of faith and repentance in execution, but faith and repentance are not the condition or cause of the act of willing in God, Acts 13:48.

Conditional promises and threatenings do not favor conditional decrees because they do not pertain to the decreeing [decretive] will, but to the preceptive will, Luke 10:25-28. They are appendages designed to excite men to duty. They only demonstrate that God has decreed a necessary connection between the duty and the promise or threat. When Paul threatens "death to those who live after the flesh," Rom. 8:13, it would be improper to infer that God had made a conditional decree; but only that God had joined together sin and death by the most strict connection, Ezek. 18:20.

Question 2.—*Does the decree necessitate future things?*

Answer.—Yes. Acts 15:18; 1 Sam. 23:11, 12; Matt. 11:21, 23. The reasons are: 1.) All things were decreed of God by an eternal and unchangeable counsel; hence they cannot but take place in the appointed time; otherwise the counsel of God would be changed,

¹ Acts 15:18; 1 Sam. 23:11, 12; Matt. 11:21, 23.

² Rom. 9:11, 13, 16, 18.

which the Scriptures declare to be impossible, Isa. 46:10; Eph. 1:9. 2.) Scripture predicts that necessity—Matt. 18:7; 26:54; Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 1 Cor. 11:19. 3.) The most fortuitous and casual things are said to happen necessarily; Ex. 21:12, 13; Prov. 16:33; Matt. 10:29, 30; John 19:36; Acts 4:28. 4.) As all things are foreseen by an infallible foreknowledge, Acts 15:18; Heb. 4:13, so they must necessarily happen infallibly. 5.) They are certainly predicted as future so that the word of God cannot fail, nor can Scripture be broken, John 10:35. The necessity of the decree takes away the liberty of independence and the irresponsibility and uncontrol of the creature because it so depends upon the first cause that it can neither be nor move without it, Dan. 4:35. However, it does not take away the nature and properties of second causes, Acts 4:27, 28. Hence, we may say, “Adam sinned necessarily and freely:” the former with respect to the decree and the futuration of the thing; the latter with respect to his will and as to the mode, Isa. 54:16; Gen. 3:6, 7. For no matter what the necessity of the decree, still Adam sinned voluntarily and consequently most freely, Eccl. 7:29.

Although all things are said to be necessary from the decree, God cannot on this account be reckoned the author of sin, Jas. 1:13. The decree which is the cause of the futuration of sin is nevertheless neither its physical cause (by the infusion of a sinful nature), Gen. 5:1; nor its ethical cause (by the approbation of it), Prov. 6:16-19.