

On Predestination

by James Arminius

James Arminius critiques the Supralapsarian view of predestination, arguing that it is not a necessary doctrine for salvation and that it does not align with the teachings of Scripture.

Scripture: Matthew 11:28, John 3:16, Romans 6:23, Philippians 2:12, 1 Timothy 2:1

Topics: "Predestination", "Free Will"

Description

James Arminius preaches against the doctrine of Predestination, highlighting the various opinions and controversies surrounding it within the Church. He rejects the idea that Predestination is the foundation of Christianity, salvation, or certainty, emphasizing the importance of repentance, faith, and obedience in the Gospel. Arminius argues that this doctrine is not in line with the teachings of the early Church Fathers, Councils, or Reformers, and that it contradicts the nature of God, man, eternal life, eternal death, sin, grace, and the ministry of the Gospel. He concludes that this doctrine is detrimental to the glory of God, the salvation of men, the foundation of religion, and the Christian faith, as it has caused division and controversy within the Church.

Transcript

I. ON PREDESTINATION

The first and most important article in religion on which I have to offer my views, and which for many years past has engaged my attention, is the Predestination of God, that is, the Election of men to salvation, and the Reprobation of them to destruction. Commencing with this article, I will first explain what is taught concerning it, both in discourses and writings, by certain persons in our Churches, and in the University of Leyden. I will afterwards declare my own views and thoughts on the same subject, while I shew my opinion on what they advance.

On this article there is no uniform and simple opinion among the teachers of our Churches; but there is some variation in certain parts of it in which they differ from each other.

1. The first opinion, which I reject, but which is espoused by those [Supralapsarians] who assume the very highest ground of this Predestination.

The opinion of those who take the highest ground on this point, as it is generally contained in their writings, is to this effect:

"I. God by an eternal and immutable decree has predestinated, from among men, (whom he did not consider as being then created, much less as being fallen,) certain individuals to everlasting life, and others to eternal destruction, without any regard whatever to righteousness or sin, to obedience or disobedience, but purely of his own good pleasure, to demonstrate the glory of his justice and mercy; or, (as others assert,) to demonstrate his saving grace, wisdom and free uncontrollable power.

"II. In addition to this decree, God has pre-ordained certain determinate means which pertain to its execution, and this by an eternal and immutable decree. These means necessarily follow by virtue of the preceding decree, and necessarily bring him who has been predestinated, to the end which has been fore-ordained for him. Some of these means belong in common both to the decree of election and that of rejection, and others of them are specially restricted to the one decree or to the other.

"III. The means common to both the decrees, are three: the first is, the creation of man in the upright [or erect] state of original righteousness, or after the image and likeness of God in righteousness and true holiness. The second is, the permission of the fall of Adam, or the ordination of God that man should sin, and become corrupt or vitiated. The third is, the loss or the removal of original righteousness and of the image of God, and a being concluded under sin and condemnation.

"IV. For unless God had created some men, he would not have had any upon whom he might either bestow eternal life, or superinduce everlasting death. Unless he had created them in righteousness and true holiness, he would himself have been the author of sin, and would by this means have possessed no right either to punish them to the praise of his justice, or to save them to the praise of his mercy. Unless they had themselves sinned, and by the demerit of sin had rendered themselves guilty of death, there would have been no room for the demonstration either of justice or of mercy.

"V. The means pre-ordained for the execution of the decree of election, are also these three. The first is, the pre-ordination, or the giving of Jesus Christ as a Mediator and a saviour, who might by his merit deserve, [or purchase,] for all the elect and for them only, the lost righteousness and life, and might communicate them by his own power [Or virtue]. The second is, the call [or vocation] to faith outwardly by the word, but inwardly by his Spirit, in the mind, affections and will; by an operation of such efficacy that the elect person of necessity yields assent and obedience to the vocation, in so much that it is not possible for him to do otherwise than believe and be obedient to this vocation. From hence arise justification and sanctification through the blood of Christ and his Spirit, and from them the existence of all good works. And all that, manifestly by means of the same force and necessity. The third is, that which keeps and preserves the elect in faith, holiness, and a zeal for good works; or, it is the gift of perseverance; the virtue of which is such, that believing and elect persons not only do not sin with a full and entire will, or do not fall away totally from faith and grace, but it likewise is neither possible for them to sin with a full and perfect will, nor to fall away totally or finally from faith and grace.

"VI. The two last of these means [vocation and perseverance,] belong only to the elect who are of adult age. But God employs a shorter way to salvation, by which he conducts those children of believers and saints who depart out of this life before they arrive at years of maturity; that is, provided they belong to the number of the elect, (who are known to God alone,) for God bestows on them Christ as their saviour, and gives them to Christ, to save them by his blood and Holy Spirit, without actual faith and perseverance in it [faith]; and this he does according to the promise of the covenant of grace, I will be a God unto you, and unto your seed after you.

"VII. The means pertaining to the execution of the decree of reprobation to eternal death, are partly such as peculiarly belong to all those who are rejected and reprobate, whether they ever arrive at years of maturity or die before that period; and they are partly such as are proper only to some of them. The mean that is common to all the reprobate, is desertion in sin, by denying to them that saving grace which is sufficient and necessary to the salvation of any one. This negation [or denial,] consists of two parts. For, in the first place, God did not will that Christ should die for them [the reprobate,] or become their saviour, and this neither in reference to the antecedent will of God, (as some persons call it,) nor in reference to his sufficient will, or the value of the price of reconciliation; because this price was not offered for reprobates, either with respect to the decree of God, or its virtue and efficacy. (1.) But the other part of this negation [or denial] is, that God is unwilling to communicate the Spirit of Christ to reprobates, yet without such communication they can neither be made partakers of Christ nor of his benefits.

"VIII. The mean which belongs properly only to some of the reprobates, is obduration, [or the act of hardening,] which befalls those of them who have attained to years of maturity, either because they have very frequently and enormously sinned against the law of God, or because they have rejected the grace of the gospel. (1.) To the execution of the first species of induration, or hardening, belong the illumination of their conscience by means of knowledge, and its conviction of the righteousness of the law. For it is impossible that this law should not necessarily detain them in unrighteousness, to render them inexcusable. (2.) For the execution of the second species of induration, God employs a call by the preaching of his gospel, which call is inefficacious and insufficient both in respect to the decree of God, and to its issue or event. This calling is either only an external one, which it is neither in their desire nor in their power to obey. Or it is likewise an internal one, by which some of them may be excited in their understandings to accept and believe the things which they hear; but yet it is only with such a faith as that with which the devils are endowed when they believe and tremble. Others of them are excited and conducted still further, so as to desire in a certain measure to taste the heavenly gift. But the latter are, of all others, the most unhappy, because they are raised up on high, that they may be brought down with a heavier fall. And this fate it is impossible for them to escape, for they must of necessity return to their vomit, and depart or fall away from the faith."9. "IX. From this decree of Divine election and reprobation, and from this administration of the means which pertain to the execution of both of them, it follows, that the elect are necessarily saved, it being impossible for them to perish -- and that the reprobate are necessarily damned, it being impossible for them to be saved; and all this from the absolute purpose [or determination] of God, which is altogether antecedent to all things, and to all those causes which are either in things themselves or can possibly result from them."

These opinions concerning predestination are considered, by some of those who advocate them, to be the foundation of Christianity, salvation and of its certainty. On these sentiments they suppose, "is founded the sure and undoubted consolation of all believers, which is capable of rendering their consciences tranquil; and on them also depends the praise of the grace of God, so that if any contradiction be offered to this doctrine, God is necessarily deprived of the glory of his grace, and then the merit of salvation is attributed to the free will of man and to his own powers and strength, which ascription savours of Pelagianism."

These then are the causes which are offered why the advocates of these sentiments labour with a common anxiety to retain the purity of such a doctrine in their churches and why they oppose themselves to all those innovations which are at variance with them.

2. MY SENTIMENTS ON THE PRECEDING SCHEME OF PREDESTINATION.

But, for my own part, to speak my sentiments with freedom, and yet with a salvo in favour of a better judgment, I am of opinion, that this doctrine of theirs contains many things that are both false and impertinent, and at an utter disagreement with each other; all the instances of which, the present time will not permit me to recount, but I will subject it to an examination only in those parts which are most prominent and extensive. I shall, therefore, propose to myself four principal heads, which are of the greatest importance in this doctrine; and when I have in the first place explained of what kind they are, I will afterwards declare more fully the judgment and sentiments which I have formed concerning them. They are the following:

"I. That God has absolutely and precisely decreed to save certain particular men by his mercy or grace, but to condemn others by his justice: and to do all this without having any regard in such decree to righteousness or sin, obedience or disobedience, which could possibly exist on the part of one class of men or of the other.

"II. That, for the execution of the preceding decree, God determined to create Adam, and all men in him, in an upright state of original righteousness; besides which he also ordained them to commit sin, that they might thus become guilty of eternal condemnation and be deprived of original righteousness.

"III. That those persons whom God has thus positively willed to save, he has decreed not only to salvation but also to the means which pertain to it; (that is, to conduct and bring them to faith in Christ Jesus, and to perseverance in that faith ;) and that He also in reality leads them to these results by a grace and power that are irresistible, so that it is not possible for them to do otherwise than believe, persevere in faith, and be saved.

"IV. That to those whom, by his absolute will, God has fore-ordained to perdition, he has also decreed to deny that grace which is necessary and sufficient for salvation, and does not in reality confer it upon them; so that they are neither placed in a possible condition nor in any capacity of believing or of being saved."

After a diligent contemplation and examination of these four heads, in the fear of the Lord, I make the following declaration respecting this doctrine of predestination.

3. I REJECT THIS PREDESTINATION FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

I. Because it is not the foundation of Christianity, of Salvation, or of its certainty.

1. It is not the foundation of Christianity: (1.) For this Predestination is not that decree of God by which Christ is appointed by God to be the saviour, the Head, and the Foundation of those who will be made heirs of salvation. Yet that decree is the only foundation of Christianity. (2.) For the doctrine of this Predestination is not that doctrine by which, through faith, we as lively stones are built up into Christ, the only corner stone, and are inserted into him as the members of the body are joined to their head.

2. It is not the foundation of Salvation: (1.) For this Predestination is not that decree of the good pleasure of God in Christ Jesus on which alone our salvation rests and depends. (2.) The doctrine of this Predestination is not the foundation of Salvation: for it is not "the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth : " because through it "the righteousness of God" is not "revealed from faith to faith."

3. Nor is it the foundation of the certainty of salvation: For that is dependent upon this decree, "they who believe, shall be saved : " I believe, therefore, I shall be saved. But the doctrine of this Predestination embraces within itself neither the first nor the second member of the syllogism.

This is likewise confessed by some persons in these words: "we do not wish to state that the knowledge of this [Predestination] is the foundation of Christianity or of salvation, or that it is necessary to salvation in the same manner as the doctrine of the Gospel," &c.

II. This doctrine of Predestination comprises within it neither the whole nor any part of the Gospel. For, according to the tenor of the discourses delivered by John and Christ, as they are described to us by the Evangelist, and according to the doctrine of the Apostles and Christ after his ascension, the Gospel consists partly of an injunction to repent and believe, and partly of a promise to bestow forgiveness of sins, the grace of the Spirit, and life eternal. But this Predestination belongs neither to the injunction to repent and believe, nor to the annexed promise. Nay, this doctrine does not even teach what kind of men in general God has predestinated, which is properly the doctrine of the Gospel; but it embraces within itself a certain mystery, which is known only to God, who is the Predestinator, and in which mystery are comprehended what particular persons and how many he has decreed to save and to condemn. From these premises I draw a further conclusion, that this doctrine of Predestination is not necessary to salvation, either as an object of knowledge, belief, hope, or performance. A Confession to this effect has been made by a certain learned man, in the theses which he has proposed for discussion on this subject, in the following words: "Wherefore the gospel cannot be simply termed the book or the revelation of Predestination, but only in a relative sense. Because it does not absolutely denote either the matter of the number or the form; that is, it neither declares how many persons in particular, nor (with a few exceptions,) who they are, but only the description of them in general, whom God has predestinated."

III. This doctrine was never admitted, decreed, or approved in any Council, either general or particular, for the first six hundred years after Christ.

1. Not in the General Council of Nice, in which sentence was given against Arius and in favour of the Deity and Consubstantiality of the Son of God. Not in the first Council of Constantinople, in which a decree was passed against Macedonius, respecting the Deity of the Holy Spirit. Not in the Council of Ephesus, which determined against Nestorius, and in favour of the Unity of the Person of the Son of God. Not in that of Chalcedon, which condemned Eutyches, and determined, "that in one and the same person of our Lord Jesus Christ, there were two distinct natures, which differ from each other in their essence." Not in the second Council of Constantinople, in which Peter, Bishop of Antioch, and Anthymus, Bishop of Constantinople, with certain other persons, were condemned for having asserted "that the Father had likewise suffered," as well as the Son. Nor in the third Council of Constantinople, in which the Monothelites were condemned for having asserted "that there was only one will and operation in Jesus Christ."

2. But this doctrine was not discussed or confirmed in particular Councils, such as that of Jerusalem, Orange, or even that of Mela in Africa, which was held against Pelagius and his errors, as is apparent from the articles of doctrine which were then decreed both against his person and his false opinions.

But so far was Augustine's doctrine of Predestination from being received in those councils, that when Celestinus, the Bishop of Rome, who was his contemporary, wrote to the Bishops of France, and condemned the doctrines of the Pelagians, he concluded his epistle in these words: "but as we dare not despise, so neither do we deem it necessary to defend the more profound and difficult parts of the questions which occur in this controversy, and which have been treated to a very great extent by those who opposed the heretics. Because we believe, that whatever the writings according to the forementioned rules of the Apostolic See have taught us, is amply sufficient for confessing the grace of God, from whose work, credit and authority not a little must be subtracted or withdrawn," &c. In reference to the rules which

were laid down by Celestinus in that epistle, and which had been decreed in the three preceding particular Councils, we shall experience no difficulty in agreeing together about them, especially in regard to those matters which are necessary to the establishment of grace in opposition to Pelagius and his errors.

IV. None of those Doctors or Divines of the Church who held correct and orthodox sentiments for the first six hundred years after the birth of Christ, ever brought this doctrine forward or gave it their approval. Neither was it professed and approved by a single individual of those who shewed themselves the principal and keenest defenders of grace against Pelagius. Of this description, it is evident, were St. Jerome, Augustine, the author of the treatise entitled, *De Vocatione Gentium*, ["The calling of the Gentiles,"] Prosper of Aquitaine, Hilary, Fulgentius, and Orosius. This is very apparent from their writings.

V. It neither agrees nor corresponds with the Harmony of those confessions which were printed and published together in one volume at Geneva, in the name of the Reformed and Protestant Churches. If that harmony of Confessions be faithfully consulted, it will appear that many of them do not speak in the same manner concerning Predestination; that some of them only incidentally mention it; and that they evidently never once touch upon those heads of the doctrine, which are now in great repute and particularly urged in the preceding scheme of Predestination, and which I have already adduced. Nor does any single Confession deliver this doctrine in the same manner as it has just now been propounded by me. The Confessions of Bohemia, England and Wirtemburgh, and the first Helvetian [Swiss] Confession, and that of the four cities of Strasburgh, Constance, Memmingen, and Lindau, make no mention of this Predestination. Those of Basle and Saxony, only take a very cursory notice of it in three words. The Augustan Confession speaks of it in such a manner as to induce the Genevan editors to think, that some annotation was necessary on their part, to give us a previous warning. The last of the Helvetian [Swiss] Confessions, to which a great portion of the Reformed Churches have expressed their assent and which they have subscribed, likewise speaks of it in such a strain as makes me very desirous to see what method can possibly be adopted to give it any accordance with that doctrine of Predestination which I have just now advanced. Yet this [Swiss] Confession is that which has obtained the approbation of the Churches of Geneva and Savoy.

VI. Without the least contention or caviling, it may very properly be made a question of doubt, whether this doctrine agrees with the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism; as I shall briefly demonstrate.

1. In the 14th Article of the Dutch Confession, these expression occur: "Man knowingly and willingly subjected himself to sin, and, consequently, to death and cursing, while he lent an ear to the deceiving words and impostures of the devil," &c. From this sentence I conclude, that man did not sin on account of any necessity through a preceding decree of Predestination: which inference is diametrically opposed to that doctrine of Predestination against which I now contend. Then, in the 16th Article, which treats of the eternal election of God, these words are contained: "God shewed himself Merciful, by delivering from damnation, and by saving, those persons whom, in his eternal and immutable counsel and cording to his gratuitous goodness, he chose in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any regard to their works. And he shewed himself just, in leaving others in that their fall and perdition into which they had precipitated themselves." It is not obvious to me, how these words are consistent with this doctrine of Predestination.

2. In the 20th question of the Heidelberg Catechism, we read: "salvation through Christ is not given [restored] to all them who had perished in Adam, but to those only who are engrafted into Christ by the faith, and who embrace his benefits." From this sentence I infer, that God has not absolutely Predestinated any men to salvation; but that he has in his decree considered [or looked upon] them as

believers. This deduction is at open conflict with the first and third points of this Predestination. In the 54th question of the same Catechism, it is said: "I believe that, from the beginning to the end of the world, the Son of God out of the entire race of mankind doth by his word and Spirit gather or collect unto himself a company chosen unto eternal life and agreeing together in the true faith." In this sentence "election to eternal life," and "agreement in the faith," stand in mutual juxtaposition; and in such a manner, that the latter is not rendered subordinate to the former, which, according to these sentiments on Predestination ought to have been done. In that case the words should have been placed in the following order: "the son of God calls and gathers to himself, by his word and Spirit, a company chosen to eternal life, that they may believe and agree together in the true faith."

Since such are the statements of our Confession and Catechism, no reason whatever exists, why those who embrace and defend these sentiments on Predestination, should either violently endeavour to obtrude them on their colleagues and on the Church of Christ; or why they should take it amiss, and put the worst construction upon it, when any thing is taught in the Church or University that is not exactly accordant with their doctrine, or that is opposed to it.

VII. I affirm, that this doctrine is repugnant to the Nature of God, but particularly to those Attributes of his nature by which he performs and manages all things, his wisdom, justice, and goodness.

1. It is repugnant to his wisdom in three ways. (1.) Because it represents God as decreeing something for a particular end [or purpose] which neither is nor can be good: which is, that God created something for eternal perdition to the praise of his justice. (2.) Because it states, that the object which God proposed to himself by this Predestination, was, to demonstrate the glory of his mercy and justice: But this glory he cannot demonstrate, except by an act that is contrary at once to his mercy and his justice, of which description is that decree of God in which he determined that man should sin and be rendered miserable. (3.) Because it changes and inverts the order of the two-fold wisdom of God, as it is displayed to us in the Scriptures. For it asserts, that God has absolutely predetermined to save men by the mercy and wisdom that are comprehended in the doctrine of the cross of Christ, without having foreseen this circumstance, that it was impossible for man (and that, truly, through his own fault,) to be saved by the wisdom which was revealed in the law and which was infused into him at the period of his creation: When the scripture asserts, on the contrary, that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe;" that is, "by the doctrine of the cross, after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God." (1 Cor. i, 21.)

2. It is repugnant to the justice of God, not only in reference to that attribute denoting in God a love of righteousness and a hatred of iniquity, but also in reference to its being a perpetual and constant desire in him to render to every one that which is his due. (1.) It is at variance with the first of these ideas of justice in the following manner: Because it affirms, that God has absolutely willed to save certain individual men, and has decreed their salvation without having the least regard to righteousness or obedience: The proper inference from which, is, that God loves such men far more than his own justice [or righteousness.] (2.) It is opposed to the second idea of his justice: Because it affirms, that God wishes to subject his creature to misery, (which cannot possibly have any existence except as the punishment of sin,) although, at the same time, he does not look upon [or consider] the creature as a sinner, and therefore as not obnoxious either to wrath or to punishment. This is the manner in which it lays down the position, that God has willed to give to the creature not only something which does not belong to it, but which is connected with its greatest injury. Which is another act directly opposed to his justice. In accordance, therefore, with this doctrine, God, in the first place, detracts from himself that which is his own, [or his right,] and then imparts

to the creature what does not belong to it, to its great misery and unhappiness.

3. It is also repugnant to the Goodness of God. Goodness is an affection [or disposition] in God to communicate his own good so far as his justice considers and admits to be fitting and proper. But in this doctrine the following act is attributed to God, that, of himself, and induced to it by nothing external, he wills the greatest evil to his creatures; and that from all eternity he has pre-ordained that evil for them, or pre-determined to impart it to them, even before he resolved to bestow upon them any portion of good. For this doctrine states, that God willed to damn; and, that he might be able to do this, be willed to create; although creation is the first egress [or going forth] of God's goodness towards his creatures. How vastly different are such statements as these from that expansive goodness of God by which he confers benefits not only on the unworthy, but also on the evil, the unjust and on those who are deserving of punishment, which trait of Divine beneficence in our Father who is in heaven, we are commanded to imitate. (Matt. v, 45.)

VIII. Such a doctrine of Predestination is contrary to the nature of man, in regard to his having been created after the Divine image in the knowledge of God and in righteousness, in regard to his having been created with freedom of will, and in regard to his having been created with a disposition and aptitude for the enjoyment of life eternal. These three circumstance, respecting him, may be deduced from the following brief expressions: "Do this, and live :" (Rom. x, 5) "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." (Gen. ii, 17.) If man be deprived of any of these qualifications, such admonitions as these cannot possibly be effective in exciting him to obedience.

1. This doctrine is inconsistent with the Divine image, which consists of the knowledge of God and holiness. For according to this knowledge and righteousness man was qualified and empowered, he was also laid under an obligation to know God, to love, worship, and serve him. But by the intervention, or rather by the prevention, of this Predestination, it was pre-ordained that man should be formed vicious and should commit sin, that is, that he should neither know God, love, worship, nor serve him; and that he should not perform that which by the image of God, he was well qualified and empowered to do, and which he was bound to perform. This is tantamount to such a declaration as the following, which any one might make: "God did undoubtedly create man after his own image, in righteousness and true holiness; but, notwithstanding this, he fore-ordained and decreed, that man should become impure and unrighteous, that is, should be made conformable to the image of Satan."

2. This doctrine is inconsistent with the freedom of the will, in which and with which man was created by God. For it prevents the exercise of this liberty, by binding or determining the will absolutely to one object, that is, to do this thing precisely, or to do that. God, therefore, according to this statement, may be blamed for the one or the other of these two things, (with which let no man charge his Maker!) either for creating man with freedom of will, or for hindering him in the use of his own liberty after he had formed him a free agent. In the former of these two cases, God is chargeable with a want of consideration, in the latter with mutability. And in both, with being injurious to man as well as to himself.

3. This Predestination is prejudicial to man in regard to the inclination and capacity for the eternal fruition of salvation, with which he was endowed at the period of his creation. For, since by this Predestination it has been pre-determined, that the greater part of mankind shall not be made partakers of salvation, but shall fall into everlasting condemnation, and since this predetermination took place even before the decree had passed for creating man, such persons are deprived of something, for the desire of which they have been endowed by God with a natural inclination. This great privation they suffer, not in consequence of

any preceding sin or demerit of their own, but simply and solely through this sort of Predestination.

IX. This Predestination is diametrically opposed to the Act of Creation.

1. For creation is a communication of good according to the intrinsic property of its nature. But, creation of this description, whose intent or design is, to make a way through itself by which the reprobation that had been previously determined may obtain its object, is not a communication of good. For we ought to form our estimate and judgment of every good, from the mind and intention of Him who is the Donor, and from the end to which or on account of which it is bestowed. In the present instance, the intention of the Donor would have been, to condemn, which is an act that could not possibly affect any one except a creature; and the end or event of creation would have been the eternal perdition of the creature. In that case creation would not have been a communication of any good, but a preparation for the greatest evil both according to the very intention of the Creator and the actual issue of the matter; and according to the words of Christ, "it had been good for that man, if he had never been born!" (Matt. xxvi, 24.)

2. Reprobation is an act of hatred, and from hatred derives its origin. But creation does not proceed from hatred; it is not therefore a way or means, which belongs to the execution of the decree of reprobation.

3. Creation is a perfect act of God, by which he has manifested his wisdom, goodness and omnipotence: It is not therefore subordinate to the end of any other preceding work or action of God. But it is rather to be viewed as that act of God, which necessarily precedes and is antecedent to all other acts that he can possibly either decree or undertake. Unless God had formed a previous conception of the work of creation, he could not have decreed actually to undertake any other act; and until he had executed the work of creation, he could by no means have completed any other operation.

4. All the actions of God which tend to the condemnation of his creatures, are strange work or foreign to him; because God consents to them, for some other cause that is quite extraneous. But creation is not an action that is foreign to God, but it is proper to him. It is eminently an action most appropriate to Him, and to which he could be moved by no other external cause, because it is the very first of the Divine acts, and, till it was done, nothing could have any actual existence, except God himself; for every thing else that has a being, came into existence through this action.

5. If creation be the way and means through which God willed the execution of the decree of his reprobation, he was more inclined to will the act of reprobation than that of creation; and he consequently derived greater satisfaction from the act of condemning certain of his innocent creatures, than in the act of their creation.

6. Lastly. Creation cannot be a way or means of reprobation according to the absolute purpose of God: because, after the creation was completed, it was in the power of man still to have remained obedient to the divine commands, and not to commit sin; to render this possible, while God had on one part bestowed on him sufficient strength and power, he had also on the other placed sufficient impediments; a circumstance most diametrically opposed to a Predestination of this description.

X. This doctrine is at open hostility with the Nature of Eternal Life, and the titles by which it is signally distinguished in the Scriptures. For it is called "the inheritance of the sons of God ;" (Tit. iii, 7,) but those alone are the sons of God, according to the doctrine of the Gospel, "who believe in the name of Jesus Christ." (John i, 12.) It is also called, "the reward of obedience," (Matt. v, 12,) and of "the labour of love;" (Heb. vi, 10,) "the recompense of those who fight the good fight and who run well, a crown of

righteousness," &c. (Rev. ii, 10; 2 Tim. iv, 7, 8.) God therefore has not, from his own absolute decree, without any consideration or regard whatever to faith and obedience, appointed to any man, or determined to appoint to him, life eternal.

XI This Predestination is also opposed to the Nature of Eternal Death, and to those appellations by which it is described in Scripture. For it is called "the wages of sin; (Rom. vi, 23,) the punishment of everlasting destruction, which shall be recompensed to them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; (2 Thess. i, 8, 9,) the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, (Matt. xxv, 41,) a fire which shall devour the enemies and adversaries of God." (Heb. x, 27.) God, therefore, has not, by any absolute decree without respect to sin and disobedience, prepared eternal death for any person.

XII This Predestination is inconsistent with the Nature and Properties of Sin in two ways: (1.) Because sin is called "disobedience" and "rebellion," neither of which terms can possibly apply to any person who by a preceding divine decree is placed under an unavoidable necessity of sinning. (2.) Because sin is the meritorious cause of damnation. But the meritorious cause which moves the Divine will to reprobate, is according to justice; and it induces God, who holds sin in abhorrence, to will reprobation. Sin, therefore, which is a cause, cannot be placed among the means, by which God executes the decree or will of reprobation.

XIII. This doctrine is likewise repugnant to the Nature of Divine Grace, and as far as its powers permit, it effects its destruction. Under whatever specious pretenses it may be asserted, that "this kind of Predestination is most admirably adapted and quite necessary for the establishment of grace," yet it destroys it in three ways:

1. Because grace is so attempered and commingled with the nature of man, as not to destroy within him the liberty of his will, but to give it a right direction, to correct its depravity, and to allow man to possess his own proper notions. While, on the contrary, this Predestination introduces such a species of grace, as takes away free will and hinders its exercise.

2. Because the representations of grace which the scriptures contain, are such as describe it capable of "being resisted, (Acts, vii, 51,) and received in vain;" (2 Cor. vi, 1,) and that it is possible for man to avoid yielding his assent to it; and to refuse all co-operation with it. (Heb. xii, 15; Matt. xxiii, 37; Luke vii, 30.) While, on the contrary, this Predestination affirms, that grace is a certain irresistible force and operation.

3. Because, according to the primary intention and chief design of God, grace conduces to the good of those persons to whom it is offered and by whom it is received: while, on the contrary, this doctrine drags along with it the assertion, that grace is offered even to certain reprobates, and is so far communicated to them as to illuminate their understandings and to excite within them a taste for the heavenly gifts, only for this end and purpose, that, in proportion to the height to which they are elevated, the abyss into which they are precipitated may be the deeper, and their fall the heavier; and that they may both merit and receive the greater perdition.

XIV. The doctrine of this Predestination is Injurious to the Glory of God, which does not consist of a declaration of liberty or authority, nor of a demonstration of anger and power, except to such an extent as that declaration and demonstration may be consistent with justice, and with a perpetual reservation in behalf of the honour of God's goodness. But, according to this doctrine, it follows that God is the author of sin, which may be proved by four arguments:

1. One of its positions is, that God has absolutely decreed to demonstrate his glory by punitive justice and mercy, in the salvation of some men, and in the damnation of others, which neither was done, nor could have possibly been done, unless sin had entered into the world.

2. This doctrine affirms, that, in order to obtain his object, God ordained that man should commit sin, and be rendered vitiated; and, from this Divine ordination or appointment, the fall of man necessarily followed.

3. It asserts that God has denied to man, or has withdrawn from him, such a portion of grace as is sufficient and necessary to enable him to avoid sin, and that this was done before man had sinned: which is an act that amounts to the same as if God had prescribed a law to man, which it would be utterly impossible for him to fulfill, when the nature in which he had been created was taken into consideration.

4. It ascribes to God certain operations with regard to man, both external and internal, both mediate (by means of the intervention of other creatures) and immediate -- which Divine operations being once admitted, man must necessarily commit sin, by that necessity which the schoolmen call "a consequential necessity antecedent to the thing itself," and which totally destroys the freedom of the will. Such an act does this doctrine attribute to God, and represents it to proceed from his primary and chief intention, without any foreknowledge of an inclination, will, or action on the part of man.

From these premises, we deduce, as a further conclusion, that God really sins. Because, according to this doctrine, he moves to sin by an act that is unavoidable, and according to his own purpose and primary intention, without having received any previous inducement to such an act from any preceding sin or demerit in man.

From the same position we might also infer, that God is the only sinner. For man, who is impelled by an irresistible force to commit sin, (that is, to perpetrate some deed that has been prohibited,) cannot be said to sin himself.

As a legitimate consequence it also follows, that sin is not sin, since whatever that be which God does, it neither can be sin, nor ought any of his acts to receive that appellation.

Besides the instances which I have already recounted, there is another method by which this doctrine inflicts a deep wound on the honour of God -- but these, it is probable, will be considered at present to be amply sufficient.

XV. This doctrine is highly dishonourable to Jesus Christ our saviour. For, 1. It entirely excludes him from that decree of Predestination which predestinates the end: and it affirms, that men were predestinated to be saved, before Christ was predestinated to save them; and thus it argues, that he is not the foundation of election. 2. It denies, that Christ is the meritorious cause, that again obtained for us the salvation which we had lost, by placing him as only a subordinate cause of that salvation which had been already foreordained, and thus only a minister and instrument to apply that salvation unto us. This indeed is in evident congruity with the opinion which states "that God has absolutely willed the salvation of certain men, by the first and supreme decree which he passed, and on which all his other decrees depend and are consequent." If this be true, it was therefore impossible for the salvation of such men to have been lost, and therefore unnecessary for it to be repaired and in some sort regained afresh, and discovered, by the merit of Christ, who was fore-ordained a saviour for them alone.

XVI. This doctrine is also hurtful to the salvation of men.

1. Because it prevents that saving and godly sorrow for sins that have been committed, which cannot exist in those who have no consciousness of sin. But it is obvious, that the man who has committed sin through the unavoidable necessity of the decree of God, cannot possibly have this kind of consciousness of sin. (2 Cor. vii, 10.)

2. Because it removes all pious solicitude about being converted from sin unto God. For he can feel no such concern who is entirely passive and conducts himself like a dead man, with respect not only to his discernment and perception of the grace of God that is exciting and assisting, but also to his assent and obedience to it; and who is converted by such an irresistible impulse, that he not only cannot avoid being sensible of the grace of God which knocks within him, but he must likewise of necessity yield his assent to it, and thus convert himself, or rather be converted. Such a person it is evident, cannot produce within his heart or conceive in his mind this solicitude, except he have previously felt the same irresistible motion. And if he should produce within his heart any such concern, it would be in vain and without the least advantage. For that cannot be a true solicitude, which is not produced in the heart by any other means except by an irresistible force according to the absolute purpose and intention of God to effect his salvation. (Rev. ii, 3; iii, 2.)

3. Because it restrains, in persons that are converted, all zeal and studious regard for good works, since it declares "that the regenerate cannot perform either more or less good than they do." For he that is actuated or impelled by saving grace, must work, and cannot discontinue his labour; but he that is not actuated by the same grace, can do nothing, and finds it necessary to cease from all attempts. (Tit. iii, 14.)

4. Because it extinguishes the zeal for prayer, which yet is an efficacious means instituted by God for asking and obtaining all kinds of blessings from him, but principally the great one of salvation. (Luke xi, 1-13.) But from the circumstance of it having been before determined by an immutable and inevitable decree, that this description of men [the elect] should obtain salvation, prayer cannot on any account be a means for asking and obtaining that salvation. It can only be a mode of worshipping God; because according to the absolute decree of his Predestination he has determined that such men shall be saved.

5. It takes away all that most salutary fear and trembling with which we are commanded to work out our own salvation. (Phil. ii, 12) for it states "that he who is elected and believes, cannot sin with that full and entire willingness with which sin is committed by the ungodly; and that they cannot either totally or finally fall away from faith or grace."

6. Because it produces within men a despair both of performing that which their duty requires and of obtaining that towards which their desires are directed. For when they are taught that the grace of God (which is really necessary to the performance of the least portion of good) is denied to the majority of mankind, according to an absolute and peremptory decree of God -- - and that such grace is denied because, by a preceding decree equally absolute, God has determined not to confer salvation on them but damnation; when they are thus taught, it is scarcely possible for any other result to ensue, than that the individual who cannot even with great difficulty work a persuasion within himself of his being elected, should soon consider himself included in the number of the reprobate. From such an apprehension as this, must arise a certain despair of performing righteousness and obtaining salvation.

XVII. This doctrine inverts the order of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For in the Gospel God requires repentance and faith on the part of man, by promising to him life everlasting, if he consent to become a convert and a believer. (Mark i, 15; xvi, 16.) But it is stated in this [Supralapsarian] decree of

Predestination, that it is God's absolute will, to bestow salvation on certain particular men, and that he willed at the same time absolutely to give those very individuals repentance and faith, by means of an irresistible force, because it was his will and pleasure to save them. In the Gospel, God denounces eternal death on the impenitent and unbelieving. (John iii, 36.) And those threats contribute to the purpose which he has in view, that he may by such means deter them from unbelief and thus may save them. But by this decree of Predestination it is taught, that God wills not to confer on certain individual men that grace which is necessary for conversion and faith because he has absolutely decreed their condemnation.

The Gospel says, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should have everlasting life." (John iii, 16.)

But this doctrine declares; "that God so loved those whom he had absolutely elected to eternal life, as to give his son to them alone, and by an irresistible force to produce within them faith on him." To embrace the whole in few words, the Gospel says, "fulfill the command, and thou shalt obtain the promise; believe, and thou shalt live." But this [supralapsarian] doctrine says, "since it is my will to give thee life, it is therefore my will to give thee faith:" which is a real and most manifest inversion of the Gospel.

XVIII. This Predestination is in open hostility to the ministry of the Gospel.

1. For if God by an irresistible power quicken him who is dead in trespasses and sins, no man can be a minister and "a labourer together with God," (1 Cor. iii, 9,) nor can the word preached by man be the instrument of grace and of the Spirit, any more than a creature could have been an instrument of grace in the first creation, or a dispenser of that grace in the resurrection of the body from the dead.

2. Because by this Predestination the ministry of the gospel is made "the savour of death unto death" in the case of the majority of those who hear it, (2 Cor. ii, 14-16,) as well as an instrument of condemnation, according to the primary design and absolute intention of God, without any consideration of previous rebellion.

3. Because, according to this doctrine, baptism, when administered to many reprobate children, (who yet are the offspring of parents that believe and are God's covenant people,) is evidently a seal [or ratification] of nothing, and thus becomes entirely useless, in accordance with the primary and absolute intention of God, without any fault [or culpability] on the part of the infants themselves, to whom it is administered in obedience to the Divine command.

4. Because it hinders public prayers from being offered to God in a becoming and suitable manner, that is, with faith, and in confidence that they will be profitable to all the hearers of the word; when there are many among them, whom God is not only unwilling to save, but whom by his absolute, eternal, and immutable will, (which is antecedent to all things and causes whatever,) it is his will and pleasure to damn: In the mean time, when the apostle commands prayers and supplications to be made for all men, he adds this reason, "for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. ii, 1-4.)

5. The constitution of this doctrine is such, as very easily to render pastors and teachers slothful and negligent in the exercise of their ministry: Because, from this doctrine it appears to them as though it were impossible for all their diligence to be useful to any persons, except to those only whom God absolutely and precisely wills to save, and who cannot possibly perish; and as though all their negligence could be hurtful to none, except to those alone whom God absolutely wills to destroy, who must of necessity perish,

and to whom a contrary fate is impossible.

XIX. This doctrine completely subverts the foundation of religion in general, and of the Christian Religion in particular.

1. The foundation of religion considered in general, is a two-fold love of God; without which there neither is nor can be any religion: The first of them is a love for righteousness [or justice] which gives existence to his hatred of sin. The second is a love for the creature who is endowed with reason, and (in the matter now before us,) it is a love for man, according to the expression of the Apostle to the Hebrews. "for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (xi, 6.) God's love of righteousness is manifested by this circumstance, that it is not his will and pleasure to bestow eternal life on any except on "those who seek him." God's love of man consists in his being willing to give him eternal life, if he seek Him.

A mutual relation subsists between these two kinds of love, which is this. The latter species of love, which extends itself to the creatures, cannot come into exercise, except so far as it is permitted by the former, [the love of righteousness]: The former love, therefore, is by far the most excellent species; but in every direction there is abundant scope for the emanations of the latter, [the love of the creature,] except where the former [the love of righteousness] has placed some impediment in the range of its exercise. The first of these consequences is most evidently proved from the circumstance of God's condemning man on account of sin, although he loves him in the relation in which he stands as his creature; which would by no means have been done, had he loved man more than righteousness, [or justice,] and had he evinced a stronger aversion to the eternal misery of man than to his disobedience. But the second consequence is proved by this argument, that God condemns no person, except on account of sin; and that he saves such a multitude of men who turn themselves away [or are converted] from sin; which he could not do, unless it was his will to allow as abundant scope to his love for the creatures, as is permitted by righteousness [or justice] under the regulation of the Divine judgment.

But this [Supralapsarian] doctrine inverts this order and mutual relation in two ways: (1.) The one is when it states, that God wills absolutely to save certain particular men, without having had in that his intention the least reference or regard to their obedience. This is the manner in which it places the love of God to man before his love of righteousness, and lays down the position -- that God loves men (as such) more than righteousness, and evinces a stronger aversion to their misery than to their sin and disobedience. (2.) The other is when it asserts, on the contrary, that God wills absolutely to damn certain particular men without manifesting in his decree any consideration of their disobedience. In this manner it detracts from his love to the creature that which belongs to it; while it teaches, that God hates the creature, without any cause or necessity derived from his love of righteousness and his hatred of iniquity. In which case, it is not true, "that sin is the primary object of God's hatred, and its only meritorious cause."

The great influence and potency which this consideration possesses in subverting the foundation of religion, may be appropriately described by the following simile: Suppose a son to say, "My father is such a great lover of righteousness and equity, that, notwithstanding I am his beloved son, he would disinherit me if I were found disobedient to him. Obedience, therefore, is a duty which I must sedulously cultivate, and which is highly incumbent upon me, if I wish to be his heir." Suppose another son to say: "My father's love for me is so great, that he is absolutely resolved to make me his heir. There is, therefore, no necessity for my earnestly striving to yield him obedience; for, according to his unchangeable will, I shall become his heir. Nay, he will by an irresistible force draw me to obey him, rather than not suffer me to be made his

heir." But such reasoning as the latter is diametrically opposed to the doctrine contained in the following words of John the Baptist: "And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." (Matt. iii, 9.)

2. But the Christian religion also has its superstructure built upon this two-fold love as a foundation. This love, however, is to be considered in a manner somewhat different, in consequence of the change in the condition of man, who, when he had been created after the image of God and in his favour, became by his own fault a sinner and an enemy to God. (1.) God's love of righteousness [or justice] on which the Christian religion rests, is, first, that righteousness which he declared only once, which was in Christ; because it was his will that sin should not be expiated in any other way than by the blood and death of his Son, and that Christ should not be admitted before him as an Advocate, Deprecator and Intercessor, except when sprinkled by his own blood. But this love of righteousness is, secondly, that which he daily manifests in the preaching of the gospel, in which he declares it to be his will to grant a communication of Christ and his benefits to no man, except to him who becomes converted and believes in Christ. (2.) God's love of miserable sinners, on which likewise the Christian religion is founded, is, first, that love by which he gave his Son for them, and constituted him a saviour of those who obey him. But this love of sinners is, secondly, that by which he hath required obedience, not according to the rigor and severity to which he was entitled by his own supreme right, but according to his grace and clemency, and with the addition of a promise of the remission of sins, provided fallen man repent.

The [supralapsarian] doctrine of Predestination is, in two ways, opposed to this two-fold foundation: first, by stating, "that God has such a great love for certain sinners, that it was his will absolutely to save them before he had given satisfaction, through Christ Jesus, to his love of righteousness, [or justice,] and that he thus willed their salvation even in his own fore-knowledge and according to his determinate purpose." Besides, it totally and most completely overturns this foundation, by teaching it to be "God's pleasure, that satisfaction should be paid to his justice, [or righteousness,] because he willed absolutely to save such persons:" which is nothing less, than to make his love for justice, manifested in Christ, subordinate to his love for sinful man whom it is his will absolutely to save. Secondly. It opposes itself to this foundation, by teaching, "that it is the will of God absolutely to damn certain sinners without any consideration of their impenitency;" when at the same time a most plenary and complete satisfaction had been rendered, in Christ Jesus, to God's love of righteousness [or justice] and to his hatred of sin. So that nothing now can hinder the possibility of his extending mercy to the sinner, whosoever he may be, except the condition of repentance. Unless some person should choose to assert, what is stated in this doctrine, "that it has been God's will to act towards the greater part of mankind with the same severity as he exercised towards the devil and his angels, or even with greater, since it was his pleasure that neither Christ nor his gospel should be productive of greater blessings to them than to the devils, and since, according to the first offense, the door of grace is as much closed against them as it is against the evil angels." Yet each of those angels sinned, by himself in his own proper person, through his individual maliciousness, and by his voluntary act; while men sinned, only in Adam their parent, before they had been brought into existence.

But, that we may more clearly understand the fact of this two-fold love being the foundation of all religion and the manner in which it is so, with the mutual correspondence that subsists between each other, as we have already described them, it will be profitable for us to contemplate with greater attention the following words of the Apostle to the Hebrews: "He that cometh to God, must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." In these words two things are laid down as foundations to religion, in opposition to two fiery darts of Satan, which are the most pernicious pests to it, and each of

which is able by itself to overturn and extirpate all religion.

One of them is security, the other despair. Security operates, when a man permits himself, that, how inattentive soever he may be to the worship of God, he will not be damned, but will obtain salvation. Despair is in operation, when a person entertains a persuasion, that, whatever degree of reverence he may evince towards God, he will not receive any remuneration. In what human mind soever either of these pests is fostered, it is impossible that any true and proper worship of God can there reside.

Now both of them are overturned by the words of the Apostle: For if a man firmly believes, "that God will bestow eternal life on those alone who seek Him, but that He will inflict on the rest death eternal," he can on no account indulge himself in security. And if he likewise believes, that "God is truly a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him," by applying himself to the search he will not be in danger of falling into despair. The foundation of the former kind of faith by which a man firmly believes, "that God will bestow eternal life on none except on those who seek Him," is that love which God bears to his own righteousness, [or justice,] and which is greater than that which he entertains for man.

And, by this alone, all cause of security is removed. But the foundation of the latter kind of faith, "that God will undoubtedly be a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him," is that great love for man which neither will nor can prevent God from effecting salvation for him, except he be hindered by his still greater love for righteousness or justice. Yet the latter kind of love is so far from operating as a hindrance to God from becoming a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, that on the contrary, it promotes in every possible way the bestowment of that reward.

Those persons, therefore, who seek God, can by no means indulge in a single doubt concerning his readiness to remunerate. And it is this which acts as a preservative against despair or distrust. Since this is the actual state of the case, this two-fold love, and the mutual relation which each part of it bears to the other and which we have just unfolded, are the foundations of religion, without which no religion can possibly exist. That doctrine, therefore, which is in open hostility to this mutual love and to the relation that mutually subsists between them, is, at the same time, subversive of the foundation of all religion.

XX. Lastly. This doctrine of Predestination has been rejected both in former times and in our own days, by the greater part of the professors of Christianity.

1. But, omitting all mention of the periods that occurred in former ages, facts themselves declare, that the Lutheran and Anabaptist Churches, as well as that of Rome, account this to be an erroneous doctrine.

2. However highly Luther and Melancthon might at the very commencement of the reformation, have approved of this doctrine, they afterwards deserted it. This change in Melancthon is quite apparent from his latter writings: And those who style themselves "Luther's disciples," make the same statement respecting their master, while they contend that on this subject he made a more distinct and copious declaration of his sentiments, instead of entirely abandoning those which he formerly entertained. But Philip Melancthon believed that this doctrine did not differ greatly from the fate of the Stoics: This appears from many of his writings, but more particularly in a certain letter which he addressed to Gasper Peucer, and in which, among other things, he states: "Lælius writes to me and says, that the controversy respecting the Stoical Fate is agitated with such uncommon fervour at Geneva, that one individual is cast into prison because he happened to differ from Zeno. O unhappy times! When the doctrine of salvation is thus obscured by certain strange disputes!"

3. All the Danish Churches embrace a doctrine quite opposed to this, as is obvious from the writings of Nicholas Hemmingius in his treatise on Universal Grace, in which he declares that the contest between him and his adversaries consisted in the determination of these two points: "do the Elect believe," or, "are believers the true elect?" He considers "those persons who maintain the former position, to hold sentiments agreeable to the doctrine of the Manichees and Stoics; and those who maintain the latter point, are in obvious agreement with Moses and the Prophets, with Christ and his Apostles."

4. Besides, by many of the inhabitants of these our own provinces, this doctrine is accounted a grievance of such a nature, as to cause several of them to affirm, that on account of it, they neither can nor will have any communion with our Church. Others of them have united themselves with our Churches, but not without entering a protest, "that they cannot possibly give their consent to this doctrine." But, on account of this kind of Predestination, our Churches have been deserted by not a few individuals, who formerly held the same opinions as ourselves: Others, also, have threatened to depart from us, unless they be fully assured that the Church holds no opinion of this description.

5. There is likewise no point of doctrine which the Papists, Anabaptists, and Lutherans oppose with greater vehemence than this, and through whose sides they create a worse opinion of our Churches or procure for them a greater portion of hatred, and thus bring into disrepute all the doctrines which we profess. They likewise affirm "that of all the blasphemies against God which the mind of man can conceive or his tongue can express, there is none so foul as not to be deduced by fair consequence from this opinion of our doctors."

6. Lastly. Of all the difficulties and controversies which have arisen in these our Churches since the time of the Reformation, there is none that has not had its origin in this doctrine, or that has not, at least, been mixed with it. What I have here said will be found true, if we bring to our recollection the controversies which existed at Leyden in the affair of Koolhaes, at Gouda in that of Herman Herberts, at Horn with respect to Cornelius Wiggerston, and at Mendenblich in the affair of Tako Sybrants. This consideration was not among the last of those motives which induced me to give my most diligent attention to this head of doctrine, and endeavour to prevent our Churches from suffering any detriment from it; because, from it, the Papists have derived much of their increase. While all pious teachers ought most heartily to desire the destruction of Popery, as they would that of the kingdom of Antichrist, they ought with the greatest zeal, to engage in the attempt,

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