

Of the Decrees of Rejection, of Some Angels, and of Some Men.

by John Gill

John Gill explores the theological concepts of divine rejection and election concerning both angels and men, emphasizing God's sovereignty in these decrees.

Scripture: Jeremiah 6:30, Matthew 7:23, Matthew 25:41, John 13:18, Romans 9:18, Romans 11:5-7, 1 Timothy 5:21, 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 1:6, Revelation 20:15

Topics: "Divine Sovereignty", "Election and Rejection"

Description

John Gill addresses the complex theological concepts of divine rejection, focusing on the rejection of certain angels and men. He explains that God's decree of rejection is rooted in His sovereign will, contrasting it with the doctrine of election. Gill emphasizes that while some angels were chosen and confirmed in grace, others were passed over and appointed to judgment, illustrating God's justice and sovereignty. He further discusses the rejection of some men, highlighting that this non-election is not based on sin but on God's good pleasure, ultimately serving His glory. The sermon invites reflection on the nature of God's decrees and the implications for humanity's understanding of grace and judgment.

Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 2--Chapter 3

OF THE DECREE OF REJECTION, OF SOME ANGELS, AND OF SOME MEN.

I make use of the word "rejection" in this article, partly because it is a scriptural phrase and ascribed to God, and partly because it is that act of God which gives the name of reprobate to any; and is the foundation of that character, "reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them", (Jer 6:30) and stands opposed to election, (1 Sam. 15:26, 10:24) but chiefly because the other word reprobation, through wrong and frightful ideas being affixed to it, carries in it with many a sound harsh and disagreeable; or otherwise they are of the same signification, and no amendment is made in the doctrine or sense of it, by using the one instead of the other.

This doctrine of rejecting some angels and some men from the divine favour, is spoken of but sparingly in scripture, yet clearly and plainly; though chiefly left to be concluded from that of election, and from whence

it most naturally and rationally follows. I shall begin with, 1. The rejection of some of the angels, which consists of two parts: 1a. A non-election, or preterition of them, a passing over them or passing by them, when others were chosen; and which may be concluded from the choice of others; for if some were elect, others must be non-elect; if some were chosen, others were not; if some were taken, others must be passed by and left: that some of them are elect is certain, they are expressly called "elect angels", (1 Tim. 5:21) and consequently are distinguished from others who are not elected; or otherwise the title and character of "elect" must be insignificant and impertinent.

Both these were considered alike, upon an equal foot, when the one were elected, and the other not; they were viewed as not yet created and fallen, but as lying in the pure mass of creatureship or creability; God saw in his power what creatures of this kind he could produce into being, as he also saw in his will whom he would; and of those he could and would create, he determined to choose some and leave others, and both for his own glory; for they could not be considered as fallen creatures, or in the corrupt mass, since the elect angels never fell; and the moment they were elected, the others were passed by or rejected; and so must be under the same consideration; and consequently the election of the one, and the rejection of the other, must be wholly owing to the sovereign will of God: both these were brought into being as God determined they should, and are equally his creatures, (Ps. 104:4) and were both made pure and holy creatures, angels of light, bright morning stars, shining in the purity and holiness of their nature; for such were Satan and his angels in their original creation; the devil, our Lord says, "abode not in the truth", (John 8:44) which implies that he had been in the truth, though he continued not in it; in his allegiance and fidelity to God his creator; in his integrity, purity, and holiness, as a creature of veracity; but framing lies, he became the father of them.

What he was in, but abode not in, is the "first estate", of integrity, innocence, and happiness, in which he was created, but kept it not (Jude 1:6). To some angels God decreed to give, and did give grace to confirm them in the state in which they were created; these are the elect angels, who are said to be "mighty", and to "excel in strength"; not only in natural, but in spiritual strength. To others he decreed not to give confirming grace, but to deny it to them; and which he was not obliged to give, it being what could not be challenged by the laws and dues of creation, and was mere favour to those on whom it was bestowed; wherefore the others were left to the mutability of their will, which is that weakness and folly the angels were chargeable with in their creation state, (Job 4:18) hence of their own freewill they sinned and fell, and left their habitation, (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6) what their sin was by which they fell, will be considered in course, when we come to the fall of Adam, and of theirs; this leads on to observe the other part of the decree respecting them. 1b.

The appointment of them to wrath and damnation; in this they were viewed as sinful, fallen creatures; this decree is meant by their being "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day", (Jude 1:6; 2 Peter 2:4) for by chains are meant the purposes and decrees of God, by which they are bound and held fast, and from which they cannot loose themselves; and as the decrees of God are called "mountains of brass", (Zech. 6:1) so they may be called chains of iron and brass for the same reasons; namely, their firmness, mutability, and duration; they are "everlasting" chains, and in these they are reserved under darkness; meaning either the state of darkness in which they are, being deprived of that light and knowledge they had; and also being under horror and black despair, without the least gleam of the light of joy and comfort; or that state of darkness to which they are appointed and reserved, even that "blackness of darkness" to which the wandering stars, as these may be said to be, are reserved, (Jude 1:13) and moreover they are appointed and reserved "to the judgment of the great day", to the great

day of the last judgment; when they will be brought forth in chains before the judgment seat of Christ, and will have their final sentence passed and executed on them, which as yet seems not to have been done, (Matthew 8:29) then will Christ sit on the throne of judgment, and saints will stand by, together with the good angels, as approvers of the righteous sentence: and therefore saints are said to "judge angels", as well as the world of the ungodly, (1 Cor. 6:2, 3) that is, the evil angels, to which judgment they are appointed by the decree of God; and to endure eternal wrath and damnation; signified by "everlasting fire, prepared", in the decrees and purposes of God, "for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

I proceed to, 2. The decree concerning the rejection of some of the sons of men. It may be observed, that we can hear and read of the non-election and rejection of angels, and of their preordination to condemnation and wrath, with very little emotion of mind: the devils may be cast down to hell, to be everlastingly damned, and be appointed thereunto, and it gives no great concern; no hard thoughts against God arise, no charge of cruelty, want of kindness to his creatures and offspring, and of injustice to them; but if anything of this kind is hinted at, with respect to any of the apostate sons of Adam, presently there is an outcry against it; and all the above things are suggested.

What is the reason of this difference? It can be only this, that the latter comes nearer home, and more nearly affects us; it is partiality to ourselves, our nature, and race, to which this is owing; otherwise, far greater severity, if it may be so called, is exercised on fallen angels, than on fallen man; for God has not spared one of the angels that sinned, provided no saviour for them, nor so much as given them the means of grace; but consigned them all over at once to everlasting wrath and ruin: whereas, not only a Saviour is provided for fallen men, and means of grace allowed them, but thousands, and ten thousands, millions and millions of them are saved, by the abundant mercy and grace of God, through Christ.

But to go on, 2a. First, I shall prove that there is a non-election, or rejection of some of the sons of men, when others were chosen; and, indeed, from the election of some, may fairly be inferred, the non-election of others. Common sense tells us, that of persons or things, if some are chosen, others must be left: if there is a remnant of the sons of men, according to the election of grace, then there are others not included in it, which are left unchosen, and are called the rest.

"The election", that is, elect men, "hath obtained it", righteousness and eternal life; "and the rest were blinded" (Rom. 11:5, 7). Our Lord says, "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen", (John 13:18) plainly intimating, that all were not chosen, and it is certain one was not, and whom he calls "the son of perdition"; one, not only deserving of it, but appointed to it; for though chosen to an office, as an apostle, yet not to grace and glory, (John 17:12) and how many such there be, no man can pretend to say; but it is evident there are some, and who are generally described by negative characters; as not known by God and Christ; the elect are God's people, whom he knows; they are elect, according to his foreknowledge; which carries in it love and affection to them; but of others Christ says, "I never knew you"; he knew them by his omniscience, but not with such knowledge as he knows the elect of God; he never knew them as the objects of his Father's love, and his own; he never knew them as the objects of his Father's choice, and his own; he never knew them in the gift of his Father to him, (Matthew 7:23) hence they are represented as "not" loved, which is meant by being hated: "Esau have I hated"; that is, had not loved him, as he had Jacob; for it cannot be understood of positive hatred, for God hates none of his creatures, as such, only as workers of iniquity; but of negative hatred, or of not loving him; which, in comparison of the love he bore to Jacob, might be called hatred: in which sense the word is used in Luke 14:26.

Moreover, they are spoken of as "not" being given to Christ; for if there are some that are "given" to him "out of the world", then there must be a world which are not given, and for whom he has not so much concern as even to pray for them, (John 17:6, 9) they are frequently described, as not having their names written, and not to be found written in the Lamb's book of life, (Rev. 13:8, 17:8, 20:15). Now as election is signified by the writing of names in the book of life, non-election is expressed by not writing the names of some there; and if those whose names are written there, are the elect, then those whose names are not written there, but are left out, must be non-elect: to which may be added, that our Lord says of these persons, "Ye are not of my sheep", and gives this as a reason why they believed not in him (John 10:26).

But the goats he will place on his left hand, pass sentence of condemnation on them, and send them into everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:33, 41, 46). Moreover, from the effects of election not having place in some persons, it may be concluded, that there are such who are non-elect. The effectual calling is a certain fruit and effect of election; "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called", (Rom. 8:30) not only externally, but internally, with an holy and heavenly calling, to grace here, and glory hereafter.

But are all called in this manner? No; there are some who have not so much as the outward call by the ministry of the word, have not the external means of grace; but as they sin without law, perish without it (Rom. 10:14, 2:12). Those who are chosen, are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ; they are chosen to holiness, and through sanctification of the Spirit. But are all made like to Christ, and conformed to his image? do not many bear the image of Satan, imitate him, and do his lusts? are all men made holy, or have they the sanctification of the Spirit?

Whom God predestinates he justifies, by the righteousness of his Son. But are all men justified? No; for though he justifies some of all sorts and nations; as the circumcised Jews by faith, and the uncircumcised Gentiles through faith, yet not every individual; yea, there is a world that will be condemned, and consequently not predestinated to life (1 Cor. 11:32). They that are chosen, are predestinated to the adoption of children, and enjoy both the grace and inheritance of children.

But are all children and heirs? is there not such a distinction among men, as children of God, and children of the devil; between whom there is, and will be, an eternal difference? (1 John 3:10) and therefore there must be an election, and a non-election among them. Moreover, whom God has predestinated, or chosen to life and happiness, these he glorifies, (Rom. 8:30) they obtain the glory of Christ, which his Father has given him for them, and to which they are chosen and called (John 17:22; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14).

But are all glorified? do not some go into perdition, even into everlasting punishment? and therefore must be considered as non-elect (Rev. 17:8; Matthew 25:46). To all which may be added, that those that are given to Christ, which is but another phrase for being chosen in him; these, he says, shall come to him, and he will in no wise cast them out; yea, that they are his sheep, whom he must bring to his Father, to himself, to his fold, to grace and glory (John 6:37 10:16). But are there not some whom Christ will drive away from him, and to then, say, "Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire" (Matthew 7:23, 25:41).

All this put together most clearly and fully proves, that there are some who are not chosen of God, but rejected by him. 2b. Secondly, The parts of this decree, concerning the rejection of men, are commonly said to be preterition and pre-damnation. 2b1. Prov..eterition is God's passing by some men, when he chose others: and in this act, or part of the decree, men are considered as in the pure mass of creatureship, or creability; in which state they are found, when passed by or rejected, and in which they are left, even just as they are found, nothing put into them; but were left in the pure mass, as they lay, and

so no injury done them; nor is God to be charged with any injustice towards them: in this act sin comes not into consideration, as it does in a following one; for in this men are considered as not created, and so not fallen; but as unborn, and having done neither good nor evil (Rom. 9:11).

And this is a pure act of sovereignty in God, and to his sovereign will it is to be ascribed; who has the same sovereign power, and greater, than the potter has over his clay, to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour (Rom. 9:19, 20, 22). This being expressed, as before observed, by negative phrases, is, by some, called negative reprobation. 2b2. Pre-damnation is God's appointment, or preordination of men to condemnation for sin; and is what is spoken of in Jude 1:4.

"There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation"; and who are described by the following characters, "ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and, or even our Lord Jesus Christ"; which, when observed, is sufficient to clear this decree of God from the charge of cruelty and injustice: and this, by some, is called, positive reprobation. The word krima, translated "condemnation", in the above quoted text, some render "judgment", and interpret it of judicial blindness and hardness of heart; which appeared in the persons embracing and spreading false and pernicious doctrines spoken of; and this is, indeed, what they are foreordained, or appointed to, as a punishment of former sins; for this hardness, &c. presupposes former sins, and an obstinate continued course in them; either against the light and law of nature, which they like not to walk according to, and therefore God gives them up, pursuant to his decree, to a reprobate mind, to do things not convenient, (Rom. 1:24, 28) or against divine revelation, precepts, counsels, and admonitions, like Israel of old, hearkening not to the voice of the Lord, in his word, nor paying any regard to his instructions; and therefore he gives them up, as he determined to do, to their own hearts' lusts, and to walk in their own counsels, (Ps. 81:11, 12) and this is the sense of the word in John 9:39.

God hardens some mens' hearts, as he did Pharaoh's, and he wills to harden them, or he hardens them according to his decreeing will; "Whom he will he hardeneth", (Rom. 9:18) this he does not by any positive act, by infusing hardness and blindness into the hearts of men; which is contrary to his purity and holiness, and would make him the author of sin; but by leaving men to their natural blindness and hardness of heart; for the understanding is naturally darkened; and there is a natural blindness, hardness, and callousness of heart, through the corruption of nature, and which is increased by habits of sinning; men are in darkness, and choose to walk in it; and therefore God, as he decreed, gives them up to their own wills and desires, and to Satan, the god of the world, they choose to follow, and to be led captive by, who blinds their minds yet more and more, lest light should break in unto them, (Eph. 4:18; Ps. 82:5; 2 Cor. 4:4) and also God may be said to harden and blind, by denying them that grace which can only cure them of their hardness and blindness, and which he, of his free favour, gives to his chosen ones, (Ezek. 36:26, 27) but is not obliged to give it to any; and because he gives it not, he is said to hide, as he determined to hide, the things of his grace from the wise and prudent, even because it so seemed good in his sight, (Matthew 11:25, 26).

Hence this blindness, hardness, insensibility, and stupidity, are represented as following upon non-election; not as the immediate effect of it, but as consequences of it; and such as neither judgments nor mercies can remove; and bring persons to a right sense of sin, and repentance for it (Rom. 11:7-10). The sin and fall of Adam having brought him into a state of infidelity, in which God has concluded him: and he does not think fit to give to every man that grace which can only cure him of his unbelief, and without which, and unless almighty power and grace go along with the means they have, they cannot believe;

whereby the decrees, predictions, and declarations of God are fulfilled in them, (John 12:37-40) yea, as Christ is said to be set, or appointed, "for the fall of many in Israel", (Luke 2:34) so many are appointed to stumble at the Word, at him, the Stone of stumbling, and Rock of offence, being children of disobedience, and left as such; when, to those who are a chosen generation, he is a precious cornerstone, and they believe in him, and are saved by him, (1 Peter 2:7-9) hence we read of some, who, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, to them are sent by God strong delusions, and they are given up to believe a lie, that they might be damned; not that God infuses any delusion or deceit into them, but because of their disbelief of, and disrespect to him and his Word, he suffers their corruptions to break forth and prevail, not giving restraining grace to them; so that they become a prey to them that lie in wait to deceive; and being easy and credulous, they believe lies spoken in hypocrisy; which issue in their damnation; while others, beloved of the Lord, and chosen from the beginning to salvation, obtain the glory of Christ (2 Thess. 2:10-14).

But though all this is a most certain truth, and is contained in the decree we are speaking of, yet condemnation, or everlasting punishment, seems to be meant in the passage quoted; or, however, this is what some men are foreordained unto. Some will have it, that this refers to something forewritten, as they choose to render the word; to some prophecy concerning the condemnation of those persons, and particularly to that of Enoch, (Jude 1:14, 15) but it is not certain that prophecy was ever written; besides, a prophecy, or prediction, of anything future, is founded upon an antecedent predetermination and appointment; God foretells by his prophets what will be, because he has determined it shall be; if, therefore, the condemnation of those persons was foretold in any written prophecy, it was because God had decreed it should come upon them, or they be brought into it.

It seems to have the same sense with God's appointing men unto wrath; which, though not in so many words expressed, is manifestly implied; as when the apostle says, "God hath not appointed us to wrath", who yet were children of wrath, and deserving of it as others; "but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ": it suggests, that though he had not appointed them, yet he had appointed others to wrath, and who are therefore called "vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction", by their own sins and transgressions (1 Thess. 5:9; Rom. 9:22).

With which agrees what is said of some wicked men, who are "reserved" in the purposes and decrees of God, "to the day of destruction"; in consequence of which, "they shall be brought to the day of wrath", which God has appointed for the execution of his wrath; and hence the casting of the fury of his wrath, in all the dreadful instances of it, is called "the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed; unto him of God", (Job 21:30, 20:23-29) and this is the sense of Proverbs 16:4, for the meaning of the text is not, nor is it our sense of it, as some misrepresent it, as if God made man to damn him; we say no such thing, nor does the text; our sentiment is, that God made man neither to damn nor save him; but he made him for his own glory, and he will be glorified in him, in one way or another: nor that he made man wicked, in order to damn him; for God made man upright; men made themselves wicked by their own inventions; which are the cause of damnation: but the true sense of the passage is, that "the Lord hath made", that is, has appointed "all things for himself", for his own glory: and should it be objected, that the wicked could not be for his glory, it is added, "Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil"; that is, he has appointed the wicked for the day of evil, to suffer justly for their sins, to the illustration of the glory of his justice. 2c.

Thirdly, The causes of this act. 2c1. The efficient cause is God; it is the Lord, that makes all things for his own glory, and the wicked for the day of evil; it is God that appoints to wrath, and foreordains to

condemnation; what if "God willing to show his wrath", &c (Prov. 16:4; 1 Thess. 5:9; Rom. 9:22). And, 2c1a. It is an act of his sovereignty, who does what he pleases in heaven and in earth; he does according to his will in the armies of the heavens, and among the inhabitants of the earth; as he does all things, so this, according to the counsel of his will; for though it is sovereign, it is not in such sense arbitrary as to be without reason and wisdom; it is a wise counsel of his, for his own glory.

The objector, introduced by the apostle, supposes this, that it is an act of his sovereign will; and therefore says, "Why does he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" and which the apostle denies not, but reasons upon it, and confirms it (Rom. 9:19-22). 2c1b. It is agreeable to his justice: the same apostle treating on this subject asks, "Is there unrighteousness with God?" that is, to love one and hate another, to choose one and not another, before they were born, or had done good or evil; and he answers, "God forbid"; since in his act of passing by one, when he chose another, he left him as he found him, without putting, or supposing, any iniquity in him; without any charge of any sin or laying him under a necessity to commit any.

In the act of pre-damnation, he considers him as a sinner, and foreordains him to punishment for his sins; and if it is no injustice in God to punish men for sin, it cannot be unjust in him to determine to punish for it: if the judgments of God on antichrist are true and righteous, and display his holiness and justice, it cannot be unrighteous in him to decree to inflict these judgments on him, and his followers, here and hereafter: if it is a righteous thing with God to render tribulation to them that trouble his people, and so to them that commit any other sin, it must be agreeable to his justice to appoint them to indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; even every soul of man that does evil, if he pleases. 2c1c.

Nor is this act contrary to his goodness; all persons and things are his own, and he may do with them as he pleases, without an impeachment of this or any other perfection of his; "Is thine eye evil", says he, "because I am good?" (Matthew 20:15). What distinguishing grace and goodness has been exercised towards fallen man, when no degree of sparing mercy was shown to fallen angels! and what goodness has been laid up, and wrought out, for many of the sons of Adam, though others have been rejected! and even on them that are rejected, what riches of providential goodness have been, and are bestowed on them, in the most plentiful and liberal manner! with what lenity, patience, forbearance, and "longsuffering", has God "endured the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction", fitted by themselves! (Rom. 2:4 9:22).

This act of God is neither contrary to the mercy, nor to the wisdom of God, nor to the truth and sincerity of God, in his promises, declarations, calls, &c. nor to the holiness and justice of God; as I have elsewhere^[1] made abundantly to appear. 2c2. The moving, or impulsive cause of God's making such a decree, by which he has rejected some of the race of Adam from his favour, is not sin, but the good pleasure of his will: sin is the meritorious cause of eternal death, wrath, and damnation; wrath is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, and comes upon the children of disobedience, whom God leaves in it; the wages, or demerit of sin, is death, even death eternal: but then it is not the impulsive cause of the decree itself; not of preterition, because that, as election, was before good or evil were done, and irrespective of either; nor of pre-damnation, God, indeed, damns no man but for sin; nor did he decree to damn any but for sin; but yet, though sin is the cause of damnation and death, the thing decreed, it is not the cause of the decree itself: it is the cause of the thing willed, but not the moving cause of God's will; for nothing out of God can move his will; if it could, the will of God would be dependent on the will and actions of men; whereas, his purpose, whether with respect to election or rejection, stands not on the works and will of men, but on his own will and pleasure: besides, if sin was the cause of the decree itself, or of God's will to reject men, then all would be rejected, since all fell in Adam; all are under sin, all have

sinned, and come short of the glory of God; all are, by nature, children of wrath, and deserving of it: what then could move God to choose one and reject another, but his sovereign goodwill and pleasure? that then is the sole moving and impulsive cause of such a decree; when we have searched the scriptures most thoroughly, and employed our reasoning powers to the highest pitch, and racked our invention to the uttermost; no other cause of God's procedure in this affair can be assigned, but what Christ has expressed; "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight"; as to hide the things of his grace and gospel from some, and reveal them to others; so to decree and determine within himself, to act in this manner, (Matthew 11:25, 26). 2c3.

The final cause, or end of this decree, is his own glory; this is the ultimate end of all his decrees and appointments, and so of this, appointing the wicked for the day of evil; it was for this purpose he raised up Pharaoh, and decreed all he did concerning him, that he might show his power in him, his sovereignty and dominion over him, and that his name and glory might be declared throughout all the earth: and the same view he has with respect to all the vessels of wrath, namely, to show his wrath, and to make his power known, in their destruction, which is of themselves; it is not the death and damnation of the sinner, in which he delights not, that is his ultimate end; it is his own glory, the glory of his perfections, and particularly the glory of his justice and holiness (Prov.. 16:4; Rom. 9:17, 22). 2d.

Fourthly, The date of this decree is as ancient as eternity itself; wicked men are "before of old", said to be "ordained to condemnation" (Jude 1:4). Some who would have the word rendered, "before written", as already observed, suppose the text refers to a written prophecy, concerning the condemnation of those men, and that regard is had to a parallel place in 2 Peter 2:1-3. So Grotius. But if Jude had that in his view, he would never have said that they were "of old", a long time ago, before written, and prophesied of; since, according to the common calculation, that epistle of Peter was written in the same year that this of Jude's was: the date of election and rejection must be the same; Esau was hated, as early as Jacob was loved, or rejected when he was chosen; and both were done before they were born.

If men were chosen from the beginning, that is, from eternity to salvation; then those that were not chosen, or not ordained to eternal life, were foreordained as early to condemnation; and so is the Syriac version of the text in Jude, "were from the beginning ordained"; the same date that is given of election in 2 Thessalonians 2:13. And, indeed, there can be no new decree, appointment, or purpose, made by God in time; if the decree of election was from eternity, that of rejection must be so too; since there cannot be one without the other; if some were chosen before the foundation of the world, others must be left, or passed by, as early; and, indeed, those whose names are left out of the book of life, are expressly said to be "not written in the book of life, from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 17:8).

And from the whole, 2e. Fifthly, The properties of this decree will appear to be much the same with those of the decree of election, and need be but just mentioned: as, 2e1. That it is an eternal decree of God. This did not arise in the mind of God in time, as no new act does, but was made before the foundation of the world. 2e2. That it is free and sovereign, owing to his own will and pleasure, not moved to it by anything out of himself; "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth", (Rom. 9:18) and so he determined to do. 2e3.

It is immutable and irrevocable; is it expressed by a decree, a preordination? all the decrees of God are unalterable, there is an immutability in his counsel, let it be concerning what it may. Is it expressed by a writing or a forewriting, as in Jude 1:4? It is such a writing as ever remains in full force. Did Pilate say, "what I have written, I have written", signifying it should remain without any alteration? (John 19:22). Then

it may be concluded, that what God has written shall remain, and never be revoked; for he is in one mind, and none can turn him. 2e4.

It is of particular persons; it does not merely respect events, characters, and actions; but the persons of men; as they are persons who are chosen in Christ, and appointed, not to wrath, but to obtain salvation by him; so they are persons who are foreordained to condemnation, whose names are left out of the book of life, while others are written in it. 2e5. It is a most just and righteous decree; and no other but such can be made by God, who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. ENDNOTES:

[1] See my book, The Cause of God and Truth, part 3. chap. 1, 2.

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