

## WCF 3: OF GOD'S ETERNAL DECREE

We come now to a chapter in the Westminster Confession of Faith that marks it out as distinctly Calvinistic, not that there are many non-Calvinistic Protestant Creeds to begin with. But the contrast between Calvinism and Arminianism; or Augustinianism and Pelagianism is nowhere more pronounced than in the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and His decree. Augustinians and Calvinists insist that the Bible teaches us that God decreed everything that comes to pass in creation, providence and redemption; and that God is sovereignly bringing to pass day by day, moment by moment all that He has decreed. This doctrine differs sharply from fatalism in that we believe God is in control of all things, and that God is a hearer and answerer of prayers. Pelagians and Arminians (i.e. Semi-Pelagians) do not understand that, and accuse Augustinians and Calvinists of fatalism, of making God the author of sin, and of making men mere automatons. This chapter if studied carefully will prove otherwise.

### God's Decree in General

*3.1 God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass:<sup>1</sup> yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin,<sup>2</sup> nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.<sup>3</sup>*

*<sup>1</sup>Eph 1:11; Rom 11:33; Heb 6:17; Rom 9:15, 18; Jas 1:13, 17; 1 Jn 1:5; Acts 2:23; Mt 17:12; Acts 4:27–28; Jn 19:11; Prov 16:33.*

- God has from all eternity, a plan with reference to His creation. “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa 46:9–10).
- This plan comprehends and determines all things and events of every kind—whether great or small, whether good or evil—that come to pass. Even things that appear to happen by chance have been decreed: “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD” (Prov 16:33). So even disasters and the acts of the wicked are ordained of God: “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil [i.e., disaster]: I the LORD do all these things” (Isa 45:7; cf. Amos 3:6b); “The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Prov 16:4).
- This plan is consistent with God’s infinite wisdom and holiness. This is how it can be said “And we know that ALL things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28). So Joseph explained to his brothers: “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Gen 50:20).
- God’s absolute ordination of all things that comes to pass does not violate the freedom and responsibility of His creatures. Thus James says, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (Jas 1:13). So Judas is condemned though it was decreed that Christ would be delivered by him: “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe

unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born” (Mt 26:24). Peter, in his sermon at Pentecost, similarly charged the Jews for their wickedness of slaying the Lord: “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (Acts 2:23; see also Acts 4:28).

- This is so because God does not violate the freedom of His creatures which are free agents. The decisions and actions of such free agents are contingent upon secondary causes, which are ordained by God. God does not manipulate the heart or will. The will of a free agent is dependant on what it determines to be most attractive at the point of decision. God does not violate the will of free agents. Thus, when a rational free agent sins, he is fully responsible for his sin. The divines express this idea beautifully: “*Neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures*”
- Similarly, God’s absolute ordination does not mean that “*the liberty or contingency of second causes [is] taken away, but rather established.*” What are second causes? Second causes are simply ‘means’ to accomplish an end. God has ordained all things that will come to pass. But in general, especially in the physical realm, He does not directly bring about what was ordained by a direct intervention. He does so in the spiritual realm in such acts as regeneration; but in the physical realm it is seldom done except during the periods in Redemptive History when God would display His power through miracles, such as during the Lord’s earthly ministry. Indeed, miracles are events or acts that are brought about directly by God’s power contrary to the laws of nature and without second causes. But miracles are rare, for God has chosen normally to bring about what he has ordained through means or second causes. Although the way that a second cause functions has also been ordained, we must see it has been ordained according to its nature. So if God has ordained that you pass an examination, He would ordain that you study hard; get to school on time; the questions asked are those which you can answer; your pen works; the script marker likes your answer, etc, etc. All these second causes must concur to bring about the event in consideration (namely your passing of your examination). Thus proving that “*the liberty or contingency of second causes [is not] taken away, but rather established.*”

### **God’s Decree is Unconditional**

3.2 *Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions;<sup>1</sup> yet hath He not decreed any thing because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Acts 15:18; <sup>2</sup>1 Sam 23:11–12; Mt 11:21, 23; Rom 9:11, 13, 16, 18.

- This point addresses one of the main points of debate between Luther and Erasmus during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation, a debate that gave rise to Luther’s famous work, *The Bondage of the Will*. Erasmus had insisted that God decreed what comes to pass only in the sense that He foresaw everything that would come to pass down the corridor of time. Luther countered that God foresaw because He decreed everything.
- We must insist with Luther, that God’s decree is not at any point dependant on God’s foresight of what will happen. It may, in fact, be said that God knows all things future

because He decreed whatsoever comes to pass, or that God is omniscient because He is absolutely sovereign. This must be so not only because God's sufficiency would otherwise be contradicted, but because God alone is an independent being. All God's creatures have their being in Him (Acts 17:28a). Socinians and Rationalists err by saying that God cannot foresee the free actions of His creatures, or else they would not be free. Arminians agree that He foresees their actions, but deny that He determines them. But Scripture plainly teaches that, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18), because He "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph 1:11).

- Bearing this in mind, we see that the decree of God, will definitely come to pass in all its details and it is in no aspect conditional. In other words, whatever comes to pass, is not merely one of multiple possible outcomes that depends on some intervening conditions. Every step of the way is ordained of God. It is true that some aspect of God's decree have an appearance of coming to pass only upon certain (supposed) conditions, in that some things must happen before the event that is the object of the decree. For example, God revealed to Paul that He would save him and his companions on the ship to Rome, but only on condition that the sailors remain in the ship (Acts 27:24, 31). Thus, we may say that God decreed to save them only on condition that the sailors remain in the ship. This gives the appearance that God's plan could be frustrated by the sailors. But the reality is that God has not only decreed that all in the ship would be saved, but that the sailors would be prevented from fleeing. This intermediate decree is not made known to the centurion and the sailors, at least not as a plan of God, but as a requirement of God, so that they are held responsible for their actions.

Likewise, God has chosen to save his elect from the wrath to come, but He decreed to save them only through repentance and faith in Christ. We take note that both faith and repentance are gifts of God (Eph 2:8; Acts 11:18), and so we know that whether they will be saved or not is not conditioned upon a free response to the Gospel which could go either way. Yet, God has decreed that the salvation of his elect is to be conditioned upon their repentance and faith, and therefore the duty to repent and believe is given that the elect may know their responsibility towards the Lord.

This is how we must understand our duty to pray: God has decreed to provide for our various needs, but He also decreed that these needs be sought through prayer. So we see that prayer does not change anything in that God's decree is not conditional. Yet, we are encouraged to pray as a revealed duty for God has ordained that He would provide our needs in answer to our prayers.

### **God's Decree in Relation to the Eternal Destinies of His Rational Creatures**

*3.3 By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels<sup>1</sup> are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim 5:21; Mt 25:41; <sup>2</sup> Rom 9:22-23; Eph 1:5-6; Prov 16:4.

*3.4 These angels and men, thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.<sup>1</sup>*

The first two paragraphs speak about the sovereign decree of God in general. These two paragraphs apply the doctrine to God's rational creatures,—namely men and angels,—for which God has ordained to have everlasting existence. We note (1) that there are only two destinies for such creatures—everlasting life or everlasting death; (2) that the numbers destined for either destiny are absolutely fixed; and (3) that the destiny for each creature is determined individually and unchangeably.

We note also the careful wordings of the divines: those who are to be granted everlasting life, are said to be “*predestinated* unto everlasting life.” On the other hand, those who are to be condemned to everlasting death are said to be “*foreordained* to everlasting death.” The next three paragraphs will explain the difference between the two terms, namely that for the elect, some extraordinary and supernatural acts are provided for their salvation; while the rest are passed by. The choice of language suggests an infralapsarian leaning, although William Twisse, the first president of the Westminster Assembly was a supralapsarian. Supralapsarianism is, however, not condemned by the assembly.

The distinction between infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism has to do with the logical order or arrangement of the aspects in God's eternal decree, and not the timing of individual decrees as some suppose. Or to put it more bluntly, it is a gross error to say that infralapsarians believe God decreed election after the Fall took place. No, no; all Calvinists believe that the decree (or decrees if we look at the constituent parts separately, cf. *WSC* 7 & 8) was made before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). It is one decree which many aspects logically inter-related to one another. The question is: Which aspect of the decree come first, and which follows? Or in particular, does the decree of election logically precedes or follows the decree pertaining to the Fall? We are of course speaking of decrees here in reference to the aspects of the one decree. Is the will of God to have an elect people to enjoy and glorify Him the primary focus of the decree; or is the will of God to create the world the primary focus of the decree? If it is the former, then, the decree of election must logically precede the decree pertaining to the Fall; if the latter, then the decree of election must logically follow the decree pertaining to the Fall.

Very briefly, *Infralapsarianism*, is an order of the decrees, in which the arrangement reflects the order in which the decrees work out in history, and so it may be said to be developed upon a historical principle. Since the providential out-working of the decree of salvation is in the order creation, then fall, then redemption, it is deemed that the decree to redeem the elect must follow the decree that all men should fall into sin. So the order may be presented as follows:

1. the decree to create the world and (all) men
2. the decree that (all) men would fall
3. the election of some fallen men to salvation in Christ (and the reprobation of the others)
4. the decree to redeem the elect by the cross work of Christ
5. the decree to apply Christ's redemptive benefits to the elect.<sup>1</sup>

This scheme is held by most Calvinists today and is implicitly adopted by the Canons of Dort, and arguably by the Westminster Confession of Faith. In this scheme, the reprobates are viewed as being passed-by and condemned because of their sin, though most who hold to this scheme are careful not to portray the decree to allow the Fall as bare permission, which is Arminianism.

It is suggested that one of the reasons, many Calvinists hold to this view is that over against the commonly held *supralapsarian* view, it presents God as gracious and tender towards the elect sinner while holy and just toward the reprobate sinner. The common *supralapsarian* view, it is noted, suggests that in the decree of election and reprobation, God is contemplating man not as sinners but as unfallen persons. It is felt that such a scheme makes God appear to be arbitrary and even to be the author of sin. And moreover, when the apostle Paul while discussing election and reprobation appeal God's word to Moses "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" (Rom 9:15), he seems to be suggesting that God is contemplating man as fallen when He elected some to life.

The problem with this scheme, however, is that it is no better than the Amyraldian scheme in explaining why each step should lead to the next; and neither does it do justice to a number of passages in Scripture such as Romans 9:19-24 which teaches us that God did indeed sovereignly (or if you like, 'arbitrarily'), make of the same lump of clay some vessels of honour and some vessels of dishonour.<sup>ii</sup>

The *Supralapsarian View*, on the other hand, seeks to draw out an order of the decrees based on God's ultimate goal for all history or providence; and so it may be said to be developed upon a *Teleological* (from *telos*: end or goal) principle. To illustrate how this principle works, we may think the planning involved in the mind of, say, a young engineer who has a singular aspiration to serve as a pastor. He has no alternative goal. His singular goal is to enter the pastoral ministry! How does he go about planning to achieve his goal? He must plan by working backward! In order that he might enter the ministry, he must be called. In order that he might be called, he must first be trained for the ministry. In order that he might be trained, he must enroll in a seminary. In order that he might enroll in a seminary, he must first quit his job, etc. The man will, no doubt, execute his plan in reverse order, but he must develop his plan from the goal backwards in order to arrive at the various intermediate steps that he must take.

What is the ultimate goal of God in history or providence (and so the ultimate goal for His decrees)? We may infer from several passages in Scripture that it is that there may be a body of saints (the church) to enjoy and glorify Him fully forever (see for example, Eph 1:4, 3:10). The question of how this goal may be achieved through subordinate steps has lead theologians such as Reymond, Hoeksema, Clark, and possibly Zanchius to come up with a consistent *supralapsarian* order of decree as follows:

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1. the election of some sinful men to salvation in Christ (and the reprobation of the rest of sinful man in order to make known the riches of God's gracious mercy to the elect)
2. the decree to apply Christ's redemptive benefits to the elect sinners
3. the decree to redeem the elect sinners by the cross work of Christ
4. the decree that men should fall
5. the decree to create the world and men.<sup>iii</sup>

Take note that in this scheme (unlike the more commonly held *supralapsarian* scheme), God is represented as discriminating among men viewed as sinners rather than simply as men. This answers the objection of *infralapsarians* based on Roman 9:15, mentioned above; and does not contradict Romans 9:21, for the lump of clay is clearly representing sinners, rather than neutral humanity, else why are the elect spoken of as vessels of *mercy* (Rom 9:23). Or to put it in another way, the ultimate goal of God for providence that is revealed in Scripture is not just to have saints enjoying and glorifying him, but to have saints who are sinners redeemed in Christ enjoying and glorifying Him forever! For such sinners to fully appreciate the extent of God's mercy, it is necessary that there should also be the existence of the reprobate who would experience God's justice and wrath (cf. Rom 9:22).

Whichever position we take, we must be careful not to deny the doctrine of reprobation as is fashionable for some so-called Calvinist to do. Calvinism is simply 'Paulism' systematised. Paul teaches us that God moulded on lump of clay into a vessel of honour while, while another He moulds into a vessel of dishonour (Rom 9:21). He did not say

that God mould some lumps of clay into vessels of honour, but passed by the rest of the lumps and left them to take their own shape!

Read Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*, pages 118–125; or even better Robert Reymond's *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, pages 475-502 for an excellent treatment of the subject. Understanding the difference between the two positions helps us to think clearly on the decree of God.

### **God's Decree with Reference to His Elect**

*3.5 Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory,<sup>1</sup> out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto;<sup>2</sup> and all to the praise of His glorious grace.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Eph 1:4, 9, 11; Rom 8:30; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Thes 5:9; <sup>2</sup>Rom 9:11, 13, 16; Eph 1:4, 9; <sup>3</sup>Eph 1:6, 12.

Arminians believe that God chose the elect on account of His foreknowledge that they would believe in Christ, do good works and persevere in their faith. In other words, election, as far as the Arminian is concerned, is to be understood retrospectively. Our Confession teaches otherwise. The elect are chosen “*according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will*” and “*out of His mere free grace and love.*” This doctrine is expressly taught in Scripture:

- a. Election is conditioned on the good pleasure of God's will:  
“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will ... In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph 1:5, 11 cf. Mt 11:25–26; Jn 15:16, 19).
- b. If election is based on foreknowledge of good works, then it is no more gracious:  
“... there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. ...” (Rom 11:5–6). “[God] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim 1:9).
- c. Faith and Repentance are the fruits of election and so cannot be conditions:  
“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10; cf. Eph 1:4). “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Jn 6:37). “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you” (Jn 10:26). “... and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48b).
- d. Regeneration is wholly a work of God which must precede faith since man is by nature dead in trespasses and sin: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8). “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:3). Since regeneration is not conditioned on faith and repentance, it must be conditioned on God's decree.

- e. God claims to have the sovereign prerogative to elect whom He will: “As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. ... So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. ... Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” (Rom 9:13, 16, 21).

*3.6 As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto.<sup>1</sup> Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ;<sup>2</sup> are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified,<sup>3</sup> and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation.<sup>4</sup> Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>1 Pet 1:2; Eph 1:4–5; 2:10; 2 Thes 2:13; <sup>2</sup>1 Thes 5:9–10; Tit 2:14; <sup>3</sup>Rom 8:30; Eph 1:5; 2 Thes 2:13; <sup>4</sup>1 Pet 1:5; <sup>5</sup>Jn 17:9; Rom 8:28–39; Jn 6:64–65; 10:26; 8:47; 1 Jn 2:19.

Two important truths are taught in this paragraph:

- a. God’s design of redemption is particular—for the elect only. This is stated twice: (1) Positively, that “*God hath appointed the elect unto glory*” and that “*they who are elected... are redeemed by Christ.*” And (2) negatively, that “[*none*] other [*are*] redeemed by Christ... but the elect only.” This truth is clearly taught in Scripture: “As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep” (Jn 10:15). It is also the only logical view.

A.A. Hodge is certainly right when he says: “A purpose to save all and a purpose to save only some could not co-exist in the divine mind” (*Confession of Faith*, 74). If God willed to save all, all will be saved. Otherwise, salvation becomes contingent upon man’s response,—which our Confession repudiates; or God’s will be no more sovereign,—which is blasphemous. Christ’s atonement was therefore definite and particular in design.

- b. As God has chosen the elect and appointed them to glory, He has also predestined the means by which the elect will be brought into His kingdom and to progress unto glory.
- Since man is totally dead in trespasses and sin, the only way that the elect may be saved is to be regenerated and “*effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season.*”
  - But God’s work of salvation does not end there. The Scripture teaches that the elect “are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet 1:5; cf. Phil 1:6, 2:13). The salvation of the elect is from beginning to eternity a work of the Lord: “... whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom 8:30).
  - Our Confession draws on other passages (such as 1 Peter 1:2; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:10) as well to explain that those who are effectually called unto faith in Christ “*are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation.*” Salvation, in other words, is not seen in the Confession merely as an event that happens at a point, but as being a process that culminates with the glorification of the elect. This is an important to note when studying the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

### God's Decree with Reference to the Reprobate

3.7 *The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.*<sup>1</sup>

*Mt 11:25–26; Rom 9:17–18, 21–22; 2 Tim 2:19–20; Jude 4; 1 Pet 2:8.*

There are some professedly Calvinistic theologians who would deny that there is such a thing as reprobation though they affirm election.

- But both election and reprobation are taught in the Scripture: “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” (Rom 9:21–22; cf. 2 Tim 2:19–20; Jude 4; 1 Pet 2:8).
- Moreover the one thing unavoidably follows the other. If God has only chosen some,—not all,—to life, then it necessarily follows that He has chosen not to show grace to the rest.
- Furthermore, just as He has chosen to show the elect mercy—though they also deserve damnation,—He has chosen to treat the reprobate according to the principles of strict justice.

Our Confession is very carefully worded so that we may understand that the damnation of the reprobate is not unjust. In fact, they are ordained to dishonour and wrath *for their sin*. This is consistent with Paul’s answer to the query, “Is there unrighteousness [or unfairness] with God?” (Rom 9:14): “For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Rom 9:15). Thus, in *WCF* 3.5, we are told that the salvation of the elect is “to the praise of His glorious grace”; while here we are taught the damnation of the reprobate is “to the praise of His glorious justice” (*WCF* 3.7).

Election and Reprobation may be compared in the following table:

	<b>Election</b>	<b>Reprobation</b>
<b>When?</b>	Eternity ‘Past’	Eternity ‘Past’
<b>Remote/Ultimate Cause</b>	God & His secret counsel	God & His secret counsel
<b>Proximate Cause</b>	God & His grace	Man & his sin
<b>Providential Execution</b>	Predestination to Life	Condemnation to Death
<b>How does it glorify God?</b>	It magnifies His Grace	It magnifies His Justice

### Counsel and Caveat Regarding this Doctrine

3.8 *The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care,<sup>1</sup> that men, attending the will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election.<sup>2</sup> So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God,<sup>3</sup> and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation, to all that sincerely obey the Gospel.<sup>4</sup>*

*Rom 9:20; 11:33; Deut 29:29; 2 Pet 1:10; Eph 1:6; Rom 11:33; Rom 11:5–6, 20; 2 Pet 1:10; Rom 8:33; Lk 10:20.*



Robert Shaw has well remarked:

“The doctrine of predestination is, indeed, a high mystery—one of the deep things of God, which our feeble intellects cannot fully comprehend. In our inquiries about it, we ought to repress a vain curiosity, and not attempt to be wise above what is written. But, since the doctrine is revealed by God in His Word, it is a proper subject for sober investigation, and ought to be published from the pulpit and from the press” (*Exposition of the WCF*, 58–9).

Calvin similarly remarked:

“... we should not investigate what the Lord has left in secret, [but] we should not neglect what He has brought into the open, so that we may not be convicted of excessive curiosity on the one hand, or of excessive ingratitude on the other” (*ICR* 3.21.4).

Note how our Confession carefully distinguishes between the revealed will and secret will of God. Predestination is a high mystery: it represents the secret will of God and is not designed to govern our lives but to “afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation, to all who sincerely obey the Gospel.” The principles to govern our lives is the Gospel and “the will of God revealed in His Word.” Thus, in the preaching of the Gospel, the unsaved is to be addressed not as elect or reprobate but as sinners ready to perish. All without distinction must be commanded to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an obligation that rests equally on all, and all are to be encouraged with the same words of our Lord: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Jn 6:37).

It is, nevertheless, the duty and privilege of the believer to make the fact of His eternal calling and election sure (2 Pet 1:10) by working out his salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12).

—JJ Lim

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<sup>i</sup> Reymond, *op cit.*, 480. Take note that the Amyraldians transpose no. 3 and 4, while asserting that the decree to redeem is for all men and not just for the elect.

<sup>ii</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 481-8 for further objections.

<sup>iii</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 489.