

“What it means to be Reformed”; Session # 29 – Sola Gratia – “Common Grace and Reprobation”, Prepared for the Adult Sunday School class on March 1st, 2015, by Pastor Paul Rendall.

Read Psalm 76: 1-12 – “In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion.” “There He broke the arrows of the bow, the shield and sword of battle.” “Selah.” “You are more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey.” “The stouthearted were plundered; they have sunk into their sleep; and none of the mighty men have found the use of their hands.” “At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse were cast into a dead sleep.” “You Yourself, are to be feared; and who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?” “You cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared and was still.” “When God arose to judgment, to deliver all the oppressed of the earth.” “Selah.” “Surely the wrath of man shall praise You; with the remainder of wrath You shall gird Yourself.” “Make vows to the Lord your God, and pay them; let all who are around Him bring presents to Him who ought to be feared.” “He shall cut off the spirit of princes; He is awesome to the kings of the earth.”

Last week we began considering God’s Reprobation; that is, His passing by a great number of people in the Decree of Election (this is called Preterition), and His justly condemning them for their sins. We need to better understand this truth; that God does not simply create people to destroy them and damn them forever. Rather, those whom He does not choose to eternal life, He passes them by and leaves them to their own will and their own ways. He doesn’t soften their heart or give them regenerating grace; and all of these actions of His are perfectly righteous and will redound to the praise of His glorious Justice in the Day that He judges the world in righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord. The reason why God chooses some persons unto eternal life, and passes by others, is not known to any man. It is not because the elect are better people than the non-elect. Both are worthy of condemnation. But it is God’s view of the non-elect, and His actions in relation to them that we want to more carefully and Biblically explore lest we become hyper-Calvinistic in our theology and misrepresent God’s sovereignty as arbitrary and cruel. God does have a General Love for all mankind in the gospel, and His free offer of salvation is extended to whosoever will believe. In order to attempt to show you more of the relationship between God’s Reprobation and His Common Grace, I want you to turn with me to:

Romans 9: 17-24 – “For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.’ “Therefore He has mercy on whom He will, and whom He wills He hardens.” “You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault?’ “For who has resisted His will?” “But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God?” “Will the things formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ “Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?” “What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

Concerning the word “vessels” used here in relation to the words, “wrath”, and “mercy”, take a look at Jeremiah 18, verses 1-12. In that passage, Jeremiah is given an illustration of God’s sovereignty when he is sent down to the potter’s house. The potter was making something on

the wheel, and the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make. “Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying: ‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?’” says the Lord, “Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!”

You can see here that God makes all men, creating them as vessels, but they are marred. This was not the potter’s fault, in the context of this passage. It was the vessel’s fault that the marring took place. It was uncooperative clay. In the context of these verses, it was the nation of Israel’s fault, whom the marred pot represents. The Lord, according to His own purposes, remade the marred pot into another vessel, as it seemed good to Him. This is His sovereignty in the salvation of men and nations. But the marring of any pot and its becoming a vessel of wrath only comes about because of the vessel is being left to itself and the potter not having anything to do with it to remake it. Instead He purposes to judge and condemn it; to fashion disaster against it. Look at the language in 10: “If it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.” “Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you.’” “Return now everyone from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.” “And they said, ‘That is hopeless!’” “So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart.” Notice the dynamic interaction that takes place between God and the vessels of wrath. He intended good for them if they would repent, but they said it was hopeless, and that they would follow the dictates of their own heart. Therefore, He fashions disaster for them. That is all a part of His reprobation; first showing them common grace and goodness, and then when they stubbornly will not consider what He could do to change them to refashion their lives, then He gives them over to destruction in His time.

Notice the language of Romans 11: 22 – God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. The reason that God endures this dishonoring of Himself by the vessels of wrath is so that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He has prepared beforehand for glory”, that is, His elect, both Jew and Gentile. In this way God is glorified both in His Justice and in His Mercy; both attributes needed to be set forth to all men that they might know Him as He really is.

The following portions are taken from his book Dogmatic Theology, Volume 1.

P. 431 – 462 (some of these portions have been rearranged from their right order, but the content was not at all modified)

1. “Reprobation relates to regenerating grace, not to common grace.

It is an error to suppose that the reprobate are entirely destitute of grace. All mankind enjoy common grace. There are no elect or reprobate in this reference. Every human being experiences some degree of the ordinary influences of the Spirit of God. St. Paul teaches that God strives with man universally. He convicts him of sin, and urges him to repent of it, and forsake it. (Romans 1: 18-20; Romans 2: 3, 4; Acts 17: 24-31) “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness, so that they are without excuse.” “And do you think, O man, that you shalt escape the judgment of God?” “Or so you despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” “God has

made of one blood all nations of men, and appointed the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might feel after him (that they might grope for Him) and find him : for in him we live and move and have our being.” The reprobate resist and nullify common grace ; and so do the elect. The obstinate selfishness and enmity of the human heart defeats the Divine mercy as shown in the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, in both the elect and non-elect. Acts 7: 51, “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart and ears!” You always resist the Holy Spirit.” The difference between the two cases is, that in the instance of the elect, God follows up the common grace which has been resisted, with the regenerating grace which overcomes the resistance; while in the instance of the reprobate, he does not.

2. It is in respect to the bestowment of this higher degree of grace, that St. Paul affirms that God “hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth”[i.e. does not soften].

“It is,” says Bates (Eternal Judgment, II.), “from the perverseness of the will and the love of sin, that men do not obey the gospel. For the Holy Spirit never withdraws his gracious assistance, till resisted, grieved, and quenched by them. It will be no excuse, that Divine grace is not conferred in the same eminent degree upon some as upon others that are converted; for the impenitent shall not be condemned for want of that singular powerful grace that was the privilege of the elect, but for receiving in vain that measure of common grace that they had. If he that received one talent had faithfully improved it, he had been rewarded with more; but upon the slothful and ungrateful neglect of his duty, he was justly deprived of it, and cast into a dungeon of horror, the emblem of hell. “Reprobated persons are striven with by the Holy Spirit, and are convicted of sin, but they resist these strivings, and the Holy Spirit proceeds no further with them. In his sovereignty, he decides not to overcome their resistance of common grace. The non-elect are the subjects of common grace, to which they oppose a strenuous and successful determination of their own will. Every sinner is stronger than common grace, but not stronger than regenerating grace. The non-elect “may be and often are outwardly called by the ministry of the word, and have some common operations of the Spirit, who for their willful neglect and contempt of the grace offered to them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Jesus Christ.” Westminster S. C., 68. Isa. 6 : 9, 10, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed.” The resistance and abuse of common grace is followed by desertion of God; which negative desertion is, in this passage of the evangelical prophet, called, Hebraistically, a positive stupefying, hardening and deafening.

3. Preterition is not inconsistent with the doctrine of the Divine mercy. A man who has had common grace has been the subject of mercy to this degree. If he resists it, he cannot complain because God does not bestow upon him still greater mercy, in the form of regenerating grace. A sinner who has quenched the convicting influence of the Holy Spirit cannot call God unmerciful, because he does not afterwards grant him the converting influence. A beggar who contemptuously rejects the five dollars offered by a benevolent man cannot charge stinginess upon him, because, after this rejection of the five dollars, he does not give him ten. A sinner who has repulsed the mercy of God in common grace, and demands that God grant a yet larger degree, virtually says to the Infinite One : “Thou hast tried once to convert me from sin ; now try again, and try harder.”

4. The efficient and blameworthy cause of the perdition of the non-elect is not the decree of preterition, but the self-determined apostasy and sin of the non-elect.

Mere permission is not causation. “The non-elect is not condemned and lost because God did not elect him, but because he “ sinned and came short of the glory of God,” Rom. 3 : 23. “Well; because of unbelief, they were broken off,” Rom. 11 : 20. The sentence of the last day will not be founded upon God’s negative act of not saving, but upon the sinner’s positive act of sinning. Christ will not say to the impenitent, “Depart, because I did not save thee,” but, “Depart, because thou hast sinned, and hast no sorrow for it.” Should John Doe throw himself into the water and be drowned, while Richard Roe stood upon the bank and did nothing, the verdict would be that the act was suicide, not homicide: Drowned, not because Richard Roe did not pull him out, but because John Doe threw himself in.” It is true that Richard Roe, in this instance, would be guilty of a neglect of duty towards God, in not saving the life of John Doe, but he would not be guilty of the murder of John Doe. Richard Roe’s non-performance of his duty towards God, would not transfer the guilt of John Doe’s act of self-murder to him. Were God under an obligation to save the sinner, the decree of preterition would be unjustifiable. It would be a neglect of duty. But salvation is grace, not debt ; and therefore the decision not to bestow it, is an act of justice without mercy. “On them that fell, severity,” or exact justice, is inflicted. Rom. 11 : 22. While, then, election is the efficient cause of salvation, preterition is not the efficient cause of perdition. If I hold up a stone in my hand, my holding it up is the efficient cause of its not falling ; but if I let it go, my letting it go is not the efficient cause of its falling. The efficient cause, in this case, is the force of gravity. Non-prevention is in action, and inaction is not causation. On the side of election, the efficient cause of salvation is the Holy Spirit in regeneration; but on the side of reprobation, the efficient cause of perdition is the self-determination of the human will. See South : Sermon on Deut. 29 : 4.

5. The ultimate end of all of God’s acts is in himself. Romans 11 : 36, “For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.” When God elects and saves a sinner, the attribute of mercy is glorified. When he leaves a sinner in sin and punishes him, the attribute of justice is glorified. Neither salvation nor damnation are ultimate ends, but means to an ultimate end: namely, the manifested glory of the triune God. To exhibit justice is honorable to God, as well as to exhibit mercy. “The ministration of death was glorious. The ministration of condemnation is glorious”, 2 Cor. 3 : 7, 9. The two great systems of theology which divide evangelical Christendom, Calvinism and Arminianism, are marked by their difference respecting the doctrines of election and preterition. 1. In the Calvinistic system, election precedes faith, and preterition precedes perseverance in unbelief. God elects a sinner to the bestowment of regenerating grace, and faith in Christ is the consequence. God passes by a sinner in the bestowment of regenerating grace (though he may bestow all the grades of grace below this), and endless unbelief is the consequence. God is thus the efficient cause and author of faith, but not of unbelief. The electing decree is efficacious, and originates faith. The non-electing decree is permissive, and merely allows existing unbelief to continue.

In the Arminian system, election is subsequent to faith, and preterition is subsequent to perseverance in unbelief. God elects an individual, because his faith is foreseen ; and God omits to bestow regenerating grace upon an individual, because his persistence in sin and unbelief is foreseen. For the Divine mind, the faith and the perseverance in unbelief have occurred, and the election and preterition follow after them, as their consequence. Consequently, in the Arminian scheme, the reasons for election and preterition are not secret but known. Man’s faith is the reason for election; man’s perseverance in unbelief is the reason for preterition. The Arminian election and preterition are judicial, not sovereign acts of God. They are of the nature of reward

and punishment. Because a man believes in Christ, he is elected: this is his reward. Because he persists in sin and unbelief, he is passed by : this is his punishment. The Calvinistic election and preterition are sovereign, not judicial acts. A man is elected, because of God's good pleasure (*Κατα Ευδοκίαν*), not because of faith; and a man is passed by, because of God's good pleasure, not because of persistence in sin. Since the Arminian election succeeds saving faith, in the logical order, it must in the same order succeed death. Inasmuch as in the Arminian scheme the believer may at any time before death fall from faith, and therefore it cannot be determined until after death who has saving faith, it follows that a man cannot be elected until after he is dead. In the order of events, death is prior to election. The Arminian election and preterition are the election and preterition of qualities : namely, of faith and persevering unbelief. The Calvinistic election and preterition are those of persons : namely, Peter, James, and John. The Arminian election is inconsistent with a part of the Arminian statement respecting inability. If God elects a sinner because he foresees that he will believe and repent, it follows that the sinner has power to believe and repent. If election is conditioned by the act of the human will in believing, this act must be within the sinner's ability.

But in the 17th chapter of the Declaration of the Remonstrants, the following statement is found: "Man has not saving faith from himself, neither is he regenerated or converted by the force of his own free will ; since in the state of sin he is not able of and by himself, to think, will, or do any good thing any good thing that is saving in its nature, particularly conversion and saving faith." If this were all that is said in the Arminian Articles respecting ability it would be impossible to harmonize it with conditional election. Unconditional election alone is consistent with it. But in connection with this statement of inability, a view of grace is presented that modifies and really retracts this assertion of utter inability, and is consistent with conditional election. Though it is said that man by apostasy "is not able of and by himself to think, will, or do any good thing that is saving in its nature", yet, it is also said that "the Holy Spirit confers, or at least is ready to confer, upon all and each to whom the word of faith is preached, as much grace as is sufficient for generating faith, and carrying forward their conversion in its successive stages." Every man, therefore, that hears the gospel receives a degree of grace that is sufficient for regeneration, provided that he rightly uses it. If therefore he is not regenerated, it must be from the lack of his human efficiency in co-operation with the Divine.

The difference, consequently, between the believer and unbeliever, the elect and non-elect, is referable not wholly to God's electing grace, but partly to the right use made of grace by the man himself. Dependence upon regenerating grace in the Arminian scheme is partial, not total ; and the Arminian election depends partly upon the act of the human will, and not wholly upon the will of God. It is objected to the doctrine of preterition, that God cannot be sincere in the universal offer of the gospel in Mark 16 : 15. 1. The first reply is: That sincerity depends upon the intrinsic nature of the thing desired, not upon the result of endeavors to attain it. A parent sincerely desires the reformation of a child, because his reformation is a good thing in itself. He may have little or no expectation of accomplishing it, but this does not weaken his longing, or impair the sincerity of his efforts. A miser upon his death bed desires wealth as a species of good, as sincerely as ever, but he knows that he can no longer have it. In like manner, God, by reason of his inherent compassion, may sincerely desire the conversion of a sinner, as the sinner's highest good, though he knows that it will never take place.

6. The Arminian theory has no advantage over the Calvinistic at this point. God, says the Arminian, sincerely desires the sinner's repentance, although he foreknows infallibly that his desire will not be gratified by the action of the sinner. The decree of God is not always expressive of his desire, but sometimes may be contrary to it. God decreed sin, and yet prohibited it. A man's decision, which is his decree in a particular case, is frequently contrary to

his natural inclination. He decides to suffer pain in the amputation of a limb, though he is utterly averse to pain. His natural spontaneous desire is to escape physical pain, but in this particular instance he decides not to escape it. If there are sufficient reasons for it, a man's particular decision may be not only no index of his general desire, but directly contrary to it. The same is true of God. The natural spontaneous desire of God towards all men, the non-elect as well as the elect, is expressed in Ezekiel 33 : 11 ; 18 : 32. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure (yen* = to desire) in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his evil way and live. I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, saith the Lord ; wherefore turn yourselves and live. This Divine desire is constitutional. It springs from the compassionate love of the Creator towards the soul of the creature, and is founded in the essential benevolence of the Divine nature.

But this general and abiding desire is distinguishable from the realization or gratification of it by a particular decision in a particular instance. It is conceivable that God may sincerely desire that Judas Iscariot would believe on Christ, and repent of sin, and yet for some sufficient reason decide not to overcome his opposition, and incline him to the act of faith. God desires that there should be no physical pain in his creation. He takes no delight in physical distress. But in particular instances, he decides not to realize this desire by a special act of his own in preventing or removing pain. The purpose of God, in distinction from his desire, towards the non-elect, is expressed in Exodus 9 : 16, "For this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth", and in Rom. 9 : 18, "Whom he will, he hardeneth." The purpose spoken of here, was the decision of God not to interfere with the will of Pharaoh. God desired that Pharaoh would spontaneously and of his own accord let the people go. Exodus 9 : 1, "Let my people go." But he decided not to overcome the unwillingness of Pharaoh to let the people go. Ex. 9 : 12, "God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not." This "hardening" was the not softening of his already hard heart. God sent Moses to persuade Pharaoh. This indicated the divine desire. But God at the same time informed Moses that his persuasion would fail. Ex. 7 : 1-4. This indicated the divine purpose not to conquer Pharaoh's obstinacy.

Christ, in deep sincerity and in tears, said : "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee ; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not", Luke 13 : 34 ; 19 : 41. He unquestionably desired that the inhabitants of Jerusalem would yield to that degree of common grace with which they had been blest, and would repent and believe on him ; and he unquestionably could have exerted upon them that degree of uncommon grace, by which he is "the author and finisher of faith", Heb. 12 : 2; and by which he demonstrates that "all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth," Matt. 28: 18. Yet he did not exert his power to overcome the obstinacy and resistance of the human will in this instance. Those inhabitants of Jerusalem over whom he had wept were passed by in the bestowment of regenerating grace, but not of common.

One class of Scripture texts teaches that the benevolent desire of God is, that all men should turn from sin. Another class teaches that for reasons unknown to man, but sufficient for God, God determines in some instances not to gratify his own desire. There is nothing self-contradictory in this ; for it finds a parallel in human action. It is indeed strange to human view, that an Omnipotent Being should, in even a single instance, forbear to bring about what he sincerely desires. But if there be a sufficient reason for it in the Divine mind, there is nothing intrinsically contradictory in the procedure, and there is certainly nothing unjust to the sinner in it. Says Turretin (Institutio, IV. xvii. 33), "God delights in the conversion and eternal life of the sinner, as a thing pleasing in itself, and congruous with his own infinitely compassionate nature, rather than in his perdition ; and therefore demands from man, as an act due from him, to turn

if he would live. But although he does not will, in the sense of delighting in, the death of the sinner, he at the same time wills, in the sense of decreeing, the death of the sinner for the display of his justice. Even as an upright magistrate, though he does not delight in and desire the death of the criminal, yet determines to inflict the just penalty of the law.”

God desires that the non-elect would turn of himself, by the spontaneous action of his own will under the operation of common grace. He would rejoice in such a conversion. The entreaty, “Turn ye, why will ye die”, springs out of this desire. That this entreaty of God fails in this case is owing to the sinner, and therefore does not prove that God is insincere in his desire. Sincerity, we have seen, is independent of the result. If the failure of this entreaty were due to God’s own action, then, indeed, insincerity might be charged. If God, at the time when he is entreating a man to turn, were at work to prevent him from turning, the entreaty would be hypocritical. But God, instead of hindering the sinner, is helping him with that degree of grace which is called “common.” The reason why the Divine entreaty thus accompanied with common grace is unsuccessful, is the resistance of the sinner. Surely, the fact that God does not think proper to add a second degree of grace in order to overcome the sinner’s resistance of the first degree of grace, does not prove that God is insincere in his desire for the sinner’s conversion under the first degree of grace. If a man offer a beggar a small sum and it is rejected, it would be absurd to say that because he does not now offer him a large sum, he was insincere in the first offer. A parent wills the payment of a son’s debts, in the sense of desiring that his son would by industry and economy pay the debts which he has contracted; but he may not will the payment of these debts in the sense of deciding to pay them for him ; the reason being, that should he pay them he would do injustice to the other members of his family.

A certain class of objections to election and reprobation rests upon the assumption that God is not merciful, unless he shows special mercy, and not sincere, unless he does all that he possibly can to save sinners. This is a fallacy. Sincerity in extending an invitation, does not involve an obligation to give a disposition to accept it. God is merciful in bestowing the gifts of providence and of common grace, though he go no farther than this ; and he is sincere in doing what he does in common grace, though he does not exert saving grace. Says Richard Baxter, “If God please to stop Jordan and dry up the Red Sea for the passage of the Israelites, and to cause the sun to stand still for Joshua, must he do so for every man in the world, or else be accounted unmerciful ? Suppose a king knew his subjects to be so wicked that they have everyone a design to poison themselves with something that is enticing by its sweetness : the king not only makes a law strictly charging them all to forbear to touch that poison ; but sendeth special messengers to entreat them, and tell them the danger. If these men will not hear him, but willfully poison themselves, is he therefore unmerciful ? But suppose that he hath three or four of his sons that are infected with the same wickedness, and he will not only command and entreat them, but he will lock them up, or keep the poison from them, or feed them by violence with better food, is he unmerciful unless he will do so by all the rest of his kingdom? If common grace should prevail over the sinner’s resistance, it would be saving grace. This is not the same as saying, that the sinner by a right use of common grace makes it saving grace. In this latter case, there is a co-operation of the sinner with God in regeneration. The sinner by working concurrently with common grace renders it effectual. This is synergistic regeneration, and involves conditional election.

7. How we view the Order of the Decrees is important to how we will view God Himself.

P. 442 –

The supralapsarian theory places, in the order of decrees, the decree of election and preterition before the fall, instead of after it. It supposes that God begins by decreeing that a certain number

of men shall be elected, and reprobated. This decree is prior even to that of creation, in the logical order. The supralapsarian order of decrees is as follows : 1. The decree to elect some men to salvation, and to leave some to perdition, for the divine glory. 2. The decree to create the men thus elected and reprobated. 3. The decree to permit them to fall. 4. The decree to justify the elect, and to condemn the non-elect. The objections to this view are the following: (a) The decree of election and preterition has reference to a non-entity. Man is contemplated as creatable, not as created. Consequently, the decree of election and preterition has no real object. "Homo creabilis et labilis non est objectum praedestinationis, sed creates et lapsus." (Man, is called created and likely to err, there is no object of predestination, but they were created and fell) Turretin : Institutio, IV. ix. 5. Man is only ideally existent, an abstract conception ; and therefore any divine determination concerning him, is a determination concerning non-entity. But God's decrees of election and reprobation suppose some actually created beings, from which to select and reject. "On whom (ov) he will, he hath mercy; and whom he will, he hardeneth." Romans 9 : 18. The first decree, in the order of nature, must therefore be a decree to create. God must bring man into being, before he can decide what man shall do or experience. It is no reply to say, that man is created in the Divine idea, though not in reality, when the decree of predestination is made. It is equally true that he is fallen in the Divine idea, when this decree is made. And the question is, What is the logical order, in the divine idea, of the creation and the fall ? (b) The Scriptures represent the elect and non-elect, respectively, as taken out of an existing aggregate of beings. John 15 : 19, "I have chosen you out of (ek) the world." (c) The elect are chosen to justification and sanctification. Eph. 1 : 4-6 ; 1 Pet. 1 : 2. They must therefore have been already fallen, and consequently created. God justifies "the ungodly" Rom. 4:5; and sanctifies the unholy, (d) The supralapsarian reprobation is a Divine act that cannot presuppose sin, because it does not presuppose existence. But the Scriptures represent the non-elect as sinful creatures. In Jude 4, the men who were "of old ordained to this condemnation" are "ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness", Accordingly, the Westminster Confession (III. 7) affirms that God passes by the non-elect, and "ordains them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice." The supralapsarian quotes Rom. 9 : 11, in proof of his assertion that election and preterition are prior to the creation of man. "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil," Jacob was chosen and Esau was left. This is an erroneous interpretation. Birth is not synonymous with creation. Parents are not the creators of their children. Man exists before he is born into the world. He exists in the womb; and he existed in Adam. Accordingly, in Rom. 9 : 10, 12, it is said that "when Rebecca had conceived, it was said to her, The elder shall serve the younger." The election and preterition related to the embryonic existence. Jacob and Esau had real being in their mother, according to Ps. 139 : 15, 16: "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them." St. Paul (Gal. 1 : 15) says that he was "separated and called from his mother's womb." God says to Jeremiah (1 : 5), "Before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee." In saying that they had not "done any good or evil"; at the moment of their election and preterition, actual transgression after birth is meant. Original sin, or corruption of nature, characterized them both ; otherwise, it would be absurd to speak of electing one of them to mercy, and leaving the other to justice. Absolute innocence can neither be elected nor rejected, saved or lost. Eph. 3 : 9, 10 is explained by the Supralapsarian, to teach that creation is subsequent in the order to redemption. But the clause, "who created all things by Jesus Christ", is parenthetical, not the principal clause. The clause *Ina gnwristhe etc.*, depends on *εναγγελισαστηαι* and *πητισαε* in ver. 8, 9. See Olshausen and Hodge, in loco.

The decree of preterition does not necessitate perdition, though it makes it certain. Because: (a) It has no effect at all, in the order of decrees, until after the free will of man has originated sin. The decree of preterition supposes the voluntary fall of man. It succeeds, in the order of nature, the decree to permit Adam's sin. Preterition, consequently, has to do only with a creature who is already guilty by his own act, and justly "condemned already", John 3 : 18. (&) It is a permissive not an efficient act on the part of God, that is exerted in preterition. In respect to regeneration, God decides to do nothing, in the case of a non-elect sinner. He leaves him severely alone. He permits him to have his already existing self-determination, his own voluntary inclination. This is not compulsion, but the farthest possible from it. Compulsion might with more color of reason be charged upon election, than upon preterition. For in this case, God works in the human will "to will".

John Bunyan (Reprobation Asserted, Chapter 11) lays down the following propositions : 1. Eternal reprobation makes no man a sinner. 2. The foreknowledge of God, that the reprobate will perish, makes no man a sinner. 3. God's infallible determining upon the damnation of him that perishes, makes no man a sinner. 4. God's patience and forbearance until the reprobate fits himself for eternal destruction, makes no man a sinner. 6. The decree of preterition makes perdition certain, because the bondage of the sinner's will to evil prevents self-recovery. There are but two agents who can be conceived of, as capable of converting the human will from sin to holiness : namely, the will itself, and God. If owing to its own action the human will is unable to incline itself to holiness, and God purposes not to incline it, everlasting sin follows, and this is everlasting perdition. The certainty of the perdition of the non-elect arises from his inability to recover himself from the consequences of his own free agency, and the decision of God to leave him "to eat of the fruit of his own way, and to be filled with his own devices", Prov. 1 : 31. 7. The reason for preterition, or not bestowing regenerating grace, is secret and unknown to man. It supposes sin, but not a greater degree of sin than in the elect. This is taught in Rom. 9 : 11 : "The children not having done any good or evil, in order that the purpose of God might stand, not of works, it was said, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Election also supposes sin, but not a less degree of sin than in the non-elect. Saul of Tarsus was a violent and bitter enemy of the gospel, but was "a chosen vessel." This is the sovereignty of God in election and preterition, taught in Rom. 9:18: "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." The meaning of "harden" here, is, "not to soften." The meaning of Rom. 9: 11, is, "not to love." This text is equivalent to Luke 17 : 34 : "The one shall be taken, the other shall be left." The word *emisna* is employed Hebraistically, not classically. It does not denote the positive emotion of hatred against sin, because it is expressly said that in election and preterition reference is not had to holiness and sin. A man is not elected because he is holy, or omitted because he is sinful. "Hatred", here, denotes the withholding of regenerating mercy. It is the same Hebraistic use of the word "hate" with that of Christ, in Luke 14 : 26 compared with Matt. 10 : 37. To "hate" father and mother is the same as to "love less," in comparison. Compare also the Hebraistic use of "hide", to denote, "not to reveal," in Matt. 12 : 25. The popular signification of "reprobate" denotes an uncommonly wicked person. In this, it differs from the scriptural and theological signification, which denotes mere non-election, with no reference to degrees of sin. A similar Hebrew idiom is seen in Ps. 141 : 4: "Incline not my heart to any evil thing."

The negative permission to incline himself, the Psalmist calls a positive inclining by God. He asks God to keep him from his own inclination to evil. Again, preterition, while supposing existing sin and unbelief, does not rest upon foreseen perseverance in sin and unbelief. God did not omit Esau in the bestowment of regenerating grace, because he foreknew that he would continue to do wrong in the future. He was passed by, "not having done any evil": that is,

without reference either to past or future transgressions. A reference to these, would have been a reason for passing by Jacob, as well as Esau. Perseverance in sin is the consequence of preterition, not the cause of it. God decides not to overcome the sinner's resistance and obstinacy, and the result is, that he persists in his willful course. Hence, future perseverance in sin is not the reason why God does not bestow regenerating grace upon the non-elect. 8. The final end of both election and reprobation is the Divine glory, in the manifestation of certain attributes. It is no more true that God creates any merely to damn them, than that he creates them merely to save them.