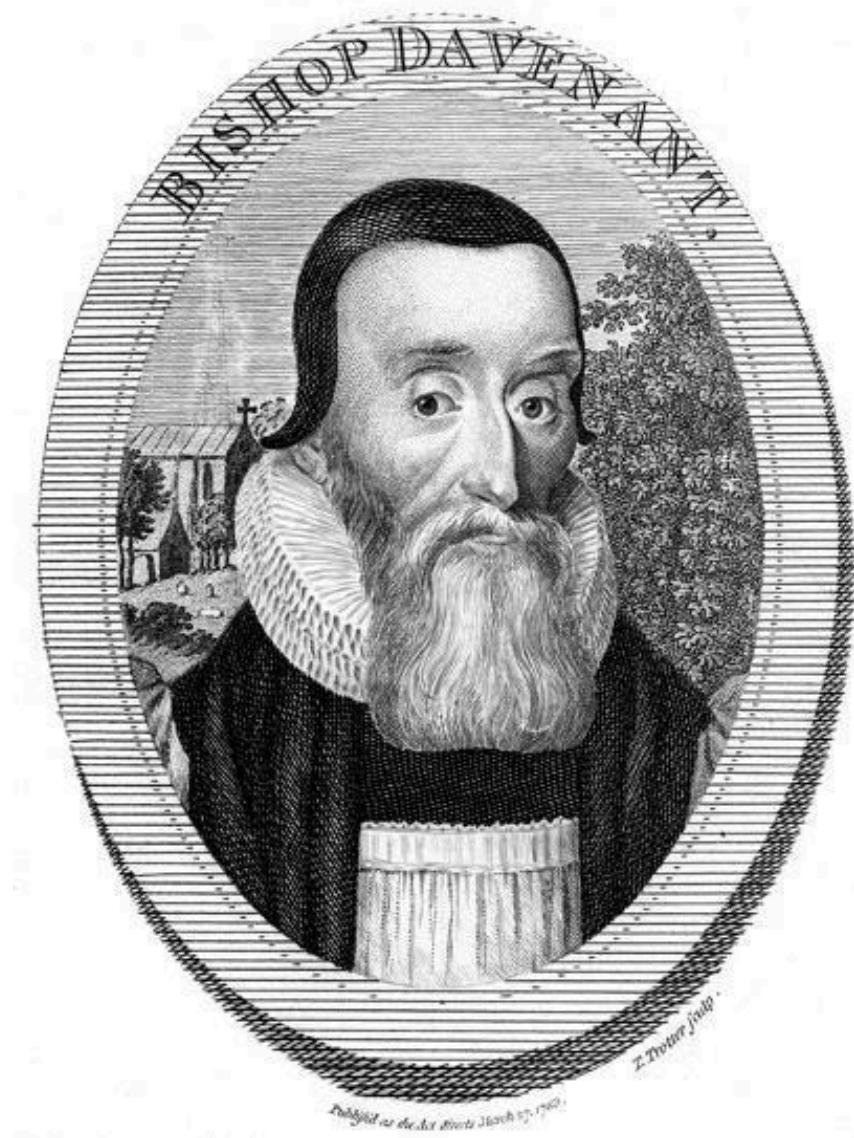


Bishop John Davenant: On Predestination & Reprobation



****Editor's Note:***

The following text has been translated using AI.

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A Preface Delivered To Academics

What the poet said of farmers—"Their labor returns in cycles" (*Georgics* 2)—applies even more truly to theologians, especially those for whom the very chair of instruction imposes necessity for toil and effort, rather than an opportunity for leisure or rest. Therefore, seeing the theological labor that is required of me by my office, I shall enter into it with a willing and eager spirit. And above all, I will pray to God that He may direct me throughout this entire undertaking, so that I do not deviate even slightly from that unshakable center of sacred truth.

The work I undertake is, in itself, arduous and fraught with many difficulties. For what could be more profound or more removed from human comprehension than that eternal decree of divine predestination, whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, we confess that certain persons were chosen—above and beyond others, indeed with some entirely passed over—to partake of eternal life in Christ? To the explanation of this matter, I have devoted my efforts. Yet I do so under this condition: let no one expect that I will address every question theologians have raised on this subject (for that would be an endless and even unnecessary labor), nor that I will entertain any of those curious inquiries by which unstable men torment themselves, harass others, and obscure and pervert the Christian faith. A steadfast faith rejects such captious and useless questions, and whoever is truly faithful in divine wisdom shows himself religious, not self-indulgent, as Hilary says in *De Trinitate*, and as Tertullian gravely asserts in *De Resurrectione*.

Therefore, in this investigation of ours, we will address only a few of the most necessary points. And we will not probe them more deeply than what Scripture, shining as our light, allows us to penetrate. If we adhere to this rule, then the doctrine of predestination ought not only to be proposed among the learned but also to be proclaimed among the people, as Augustine wisely judged in *De Perseverantia Sanctorum* (Book 2, Chapter 16). He showed that this can be done in such a way that what is said is milk for the little ones and solid food for the mature. If we follow Paul's footsteps, if we imitate the example of Saint Augustine, and if we adhere to the doctrine received in this Church of ours, there is no danger of scandal. On the contrary, if we allow the doctrine of gratuitous election to be buried or suppressed—or worse, if we passively tolerate its corruption and distortion by certain Papists and others—we cannot avoid the suspicion that our silence is not innocent. For if falsehoods being spread were displeasing to us, we would readily defend the truth.

I believe none of you is unaware that many Papist writers have reduced this whole mystery of election and reprobation—a mystery at which even Paul stood in awe—to an overly clear and facile rational distinction. They philosophize that some are chosen according to the foreknowledge of their merits, while others are rejected according to the foreknowledge of their demerits. But what is even more to be lamented is that from the Arminian school have emerged new doctors who seek to undermine the most firmly established doctrine of the catholic Church and construct some novel and entirely unknown system of election and reprobation—one utterly alien to the orthodox Churches.

What the Papists attribute to foreseen works, these men ascribe to foreseen faith and unbelief. Thus, they suppose that divine justice is upheld if we say that, before the foundation of the world, God elected only those whom He foresaw would believe upon receiving the grace of calling, and who would persevere in faith until the end. Conversely, they suppose He reprobated only those whom He foresaw would reject grace, remain in unbelief, and die in their incredulity. What excellent theologians indeed!—who introduce a man as first justified by faith and placed in a state of adoption and salvation before he is predestined by God, or before he is elected to salvation in Christ! What noble preachers of divine grace—who wish to reduce the distinction of good and evil wills in believing or not believing to nothing more than the act of human will!

They reduce God's special mercy toward believers to nothing, and whatever distinction remains, they strive to attribute entirely to the contingent act of free will in accepting, retaining, and exercising grace. How much better, and more in accord with the Apostle's teaching, was the response of Augustine, that scourge of the Pelagians, in *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum* (Book 1, Chapter 17): "God chose the faithful, not because they already were such, but so that they might be." In choosing, He makes them rich in faith, just as He makes them heirs of the kingdom. Thus, after the rise of Pelagianism, it became the established and certain judgment of Augustine and of all the Catholics that men were elected not because of their works, but to good works—not because of their faith, but to faith.

This means that those who were elect became faithful and zealous for good works—not because God foresaw that they would be so, but because they were elect. This doctrine must be defended in the Schools and preached in the Churches. For as the Papists freely spread the poison of their errors, so too must we with no less diligence prepare our own salutary antidotes. As Aristotle said, *Aischron siōpan* ("It is shameful to remain silent"), so too must we consider it shameful to be mute in God's cause, when the enemies of truth assail us on all sides with their writings and outcries.

Therefore, lest the contagion of error, so near to us, should at length also infect our own, I will, according to my limited ability, undertake an explanation of the truest doctrine—namely, that which this Anglican Church has commended to all as the doctrine to be embraced on the matter of predestination. I will also, as best I can, refute those sophistries by which our adversaries seek to subvert the sound doctrine of the Church and to establish their own novel inventions.

Chapter I – Prolegomena

But in order that this whole matter may be more easily brought to light, it will not be useless to preface the disputation itself with certain preliminary observations, the explanation of which will smooth the way for understanding this controversy.

First, because in the questions that are agitated concerning predestination and reprobation, the greatest disputes arise from the very order of our consideration, while one contends that something is prior in the Divine intellect and decrees which another considers to be posterior,

we must briefly discuss this whole matter of priority and posteriority with respect to the various logical “signs” (signa rationis).

Second, because the very terms “election,” “predestination,” and “reprobation” are used differently by different people, it will be necessary to explain the force of these terms themselves, and to show in what sense they are understood by others and in what sense they are received by us.

Third, because concerning the qualities or conditions of the subject, different people philosophize in different ways, it will be worthwhile to set forth what is absolutely required and presupposed in the very subject of predestination or reprobation considered indiscriminately.

Lastly, because beyond the common conditions, which are equally and indiscriminately required whether a person is considered as the subject of predestination or of reprobation, some additionally posit distinguishing qualities or conditions, on account of which the act of divine predestination is said to fall upon one, and the act of reprobation upon another, we must also consider what weight these things have.

For some who refer the distinction of election and reprobation to such qualities or to our acts will not, however, allow these to be called causes, much less merits; indeed, they scarcely allow even that they should be called conditions of our predestination.

But let us address the matter at hand, and let us begin with those “signs” or distinct moments, which theologians are accustomed to assign and distinguish according to the order of priority and posteriority in the acts both of the Divine intellect and will.

First, therefore, it must be known and held that if we consider the nature and perfection of God in itself, He does not first see one thing and then another, nor does He first decree or will this and then that; rather, by a single, most simple act from eternity, He has seen all things simultaneously and decreed all things simultaneously within Himself.

This conclusion is drawn most firmly from the immutability of God, as James 1:17 says:

“With God, there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

These words exclude every kind of change from the Divine nature, whether in being (in essendo) or in acting (in operando). For if we were to imagine that God acts in a successive manner in those operations which are understood as immanent in God—so that He first understands this and then that, first wills this and then that—we would be positing in God a change from potentiality to actuality, which is opposed to His most absolute simplicity.

Rightly, therefore, Ambrose (or whoever was the author of the work) says in *De Vocatione Gentium*, Book 2, Chapter 10:

"There is in God no accident, no motion, no new will, no temporal counsel, nor is His thought varied with the changes of mutable things; but He comprehends all times and temporal things with a single, eternal, and stable gaze."

Hilary also agrees, who denies in God any successive thoughts about particular things, and asserts that all things remain with God in the equal infinity of eternity (De Trinitate, Book 12, p. 192).

The Scholastics also assent to this. The Scholastics and all theologians I have consulted—except for Vorstius alone, whose ravings are unworthy even of being refuted in a theological school—hold to this.

Secondly, although all acts in the Divine mind and will are eternal, and thus are not separated by even the slightest trace of priority and posteriority, yet, from the perspective of the very things which God understands and decrees, certain signs of priority and posteriority can be distinguished, according to our mode of understanding (secundum nostrum modum intelligendi).

And in this sense, the question arises among theologians whether God first decreed to give eternal life to the elect, or rather first decreed to give them faith and obedience, which lead to eternal life; and whether He first reprobated and rejected some from eternal life before He foresaw them as fallen and defiled by sin.

Hence it is that nearly all who have written on predestination and reprobation describe a kind of series or chart, in which they attempt to delineate the order of the divine decrees—not because they judge that, in reality, one thing is prior to another in God, but because, according to the ordered dependency of things in themselves, our intellect must conceive one as prior to another.

However, it must be observed that among the Scholastics themselves, this doctrine concerning these signs or logical moments of priority and posteriority—by which our weak reason props itself up in considering the divine decrees—is not particularly certain or consistent.

Scotus, who is the primary architect of these logical signs, seems to some to have not only posited that these decrees are prior and posterior according to our mode of understanding, but even to have established that one is naturally prior to another in God Himself, as though this order of priority and posteriority could be assigned according to the nature of the thing in the divine acts themselves.

But when I carefully read what Scotus teaches about these signs in Lib. 1, Distinction 42, *quaestio unica*, and in Lib. 3, Distinction 7, *quaestio 4*, and Distinction 19, *quaestio unica*, he seems to me to teach nothing other than that there is in the things themselves some foundation from which we conceive that one divine decree is to be set before another according to a certain order of reason.

On the other hand, Occam, our countryman, denied these signs altogether, in whatever way they are considered (In I. Distinction 9, *quaestio unica*). And Biel, adopting his opinion, opposed these signs (In III. Distinction 2, *quaestio 1*, *dubium 3*), saying,

“There are not to be posited priorities in divine things, just as there are not to be posited pluralities of ordered acts. For there is one act in divine things, undivided in reality and in reason, which is the very divine essence; by that single knowledge, God foresaw the incarnation of Christ, the future blessedness of all the elect, the fall, and the restoration—neither one before, nor another after.”

And Biel further adds that, not even according to our consideration, can such an order of priority and posteriority be conceived in the divine decrees, lest such a consideration be false speculation.

Dominicus Bañez, although he does not utterly reject these signs along with Biel, yet, observing the disagreement among theologians in assigning them, says:

“It must be noted how arbitrarily theologians multiply these moments (*instantiae*) in the matter of predestination and reprobation, and how little they contribute to assigning the reason for the difference between the predestined and the reprobate.”

Let me, therefore, here briefly warn that no one should place too much confidence in, or adhere as to a certain dogma, to any particular order of the divine decrees assigned either by Protestants or Papists, since it is difficult to find even two, whether among our own or among our adversaries, who agree exactly in every respect when describing this series of divine decrees.

Let each person, therefore, beware lest he introduce such a consideration of predestination and reprobation as would be contrary either to divine justice or to free grace; and then it will not matter much in what order of priority and posteriority these decrees—which in reality are altogether simultaneous in God—are distributed and arranged according to our mode of understanding.

Thirdly, because, due to the weakness of our intellect, we are often compelled, in explaining the matter of predestination, to conceive of something as prior and something as posterior (as when we think that God first considered man as fallen before electing him in Christ, or when we affirm that God first destined man to eternal life, before destining him to efficacious grace), we must consider upon what this order of priority and posteriority, which we conceive in the divine acts, is founded. Not in the knowledge or will of God itself, considered in itself; for in divine things, all things are together in duration. Therefore, it (priority) is founded in the very relationship of the things themselves, as one depends upon another. Wherefore, according to our mode of consideration, that is understood as prior in the divine mind and will, upon which another depends according to the order of causality; and that as posterior, which depends upon another. But if one thing stands altogether independently of another, neither is said to be prior or posterior to the other.

Next, it is to be carefully observed that the same thing can be prior to another in one kind of causality, and posterior in another. This will be evident if we compare an efficient or dispositive cause with a final cause. For in the genus of a final cause, health is prior to medicine; for it

moves both the physician to administer it and the patient to receive it. But in the genus of an efficient cause, medicine is prior to health; for by its power and efficacy, the patient is restored to health.

So also in the matter of predestination: the will to give eternal life is conceived as prior to the will to give efficacious grace in the order of a final cause, for from the intention to give life arises the decree to give such grace. But in the order of an efficient cause, the will to give grace is prior, for it is given so that, by its power and efficacy preceding, man may be brought to glory.

This is what the Philosopher (Aristotle) alludes to in Ethics Book 3, Chapter 8, where he teaches that what is last in intention is first in execution, and vice versa. The reason for this distinction is clear: because in the act of willing and intending, that which moves the agent to seek and apply such means is the final cause, desired and loved for its own sake; but in the act of execution, that which promotes the end and works toward its attainment holds the place of an efficient cause.

Thus Bañez says (In I. Gr.):

“The end, which in the intention of the agent holds the place of a cause with respect to the means, when it is placed in execution holds the place of an effect, and the means themselves hold the place of the efficient cause with respect to it.”

This is to be very carefully noted: for although in reality, there is one and the same act of will in God, by which He wills both the means and the end, and the end through the means, and the means for the sake of the end, yet according to our mode of understanding, all these things are distinguished. And hence arise the perplexing questions as to what is prior and what is posterior in the divine will.

To meet these difficulties, one must always consider what order of causality the things themselves have with respect to each other; for they are understood to have the same priority.

Finally, this also must be added: although in the acts of the divine will, as to reality, there is no priority or posteriority, yet God does not will created things confusedly and without order. It is indeed true that in God there are not many volitions, nor is one prior to another; but by a single, most simple act of His will, He has willed that one thing should be for the sake of another, and that one thing should exist dependently upon another. And from this arises that consideration of priority and posteriority, which properly pertains to the things themselves, and is by us attributed to the divine decrees.

Wherefore, whenever it is debated either concerning the knowledge of God—asking, which of two things did He know first?—or concerning the will—asking, which of two things did He decree first?—you must always remember that this priority or posteriority does not truly, formally, or in reality exist in the acts of the divine mind and will, but is considered from the perspective of the things known and decreed by God, among which He willed there to be a certain true and real priority and posteriority.

And let this, according to our design, suffice to have been said on this matter.

Transition to Terms:

Now, let us come to the explanation of the three terms that will repeatedly recur throughout our future disputation.

The first is Election. This term is used in various ways in Sacred Scripture. For sometimes it signifies the separation of a certain nation to partake in the common privilege of the word and the other means by which men are ordinarily led to salvation. Thus, God is said to have elected the nation of the Jews, passing over other nations:

“The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession above all peoples,” etc. (Deuteronomy 7:6).

At other times, this word denotes the separation of some individual person to a particular office or function, whether in the state or in the church. Thus, God is said to have elected Saul as king over the Jews:

“See the one whom the Lord has chosen,” (1 Samuel 10:24).

And Christ likewise is said to have elected the twelve to be apostles:

“Did I not choose you, the twelve?” (John 6:70).

Concerning these types of election, we will not now speak further as the question arises: Even in these (instances of election mentioned earlier) and others of a similar kind, it is always observable that election signifies the separation of some person or persons from among many, for some special end intended by the agent.

Election, therefore, as we are to treat of it, denotes the singular act of the divine will, from eternity separating certain individuals unto the end of glory, or eternal life, while others are passed over. This election, just as also love (dilectio), is presupposed to predestination, as Thomas Aquinas rightly noted. For all the predestined are understood to be elect and beloved: beloved, insofar as God wills them the good of eternal life; elect, insofar as He wills this good for them, which He does not will for others.

Properly and strictly taken, election, therefore, refers only to the end, and is the divine will to confer glory upon certain individuals, with the preterition (passing over) of others. Although it must be admitted that theologians sometimes confuse election with predestination, yet when they are distinguished, election is chiefly and properly referred to the end, as was said; predestination is referred to the means, as will now be shown.

Definition of Predestination:

I come, therefore, to the term Predestination, which, although rarely, is sometimes even taken in a negative sense by theologians, namely, for destination unto death. Thus Augustine, Tractatus 48 in Johannem, says:

"How did He say to them, 'You are not of My sheep'? Because He saw that they were predestined to eternal destruction, not purchased with the price of His blood unto eternal life."

And in De Civitate Dei, Book 15, Chapter 1, he says there are two cities or societies of men:

"One is predestined to reign eternally with God, the other to undergo eternal punishment with the devil."

Similarly, Augustine's disciples, Prosper and Fulgentius, sometimes speak this way. Even the Fathers at the Council of Valence (529 AD) confessed the predestination of the elect unto life and the predestination of the wicked unto death.

However, we—following what has now almost universally prevailed in the theological schools—restrict the terms predestination and the predestined to that special providence of God whereby He has, from eternity, purposed to procure the salvation of those whom He has elected in Christ by effectual means; and, according to this eternal purpose, He effectively and infallibly works their salvation in time.

In predestination, therefore, we can consider two acts:

1. An act of the divine will, which involves:

- Willing salvation for a particular individual,
- Choosing him above others,
- Showing mercy to him and not to others.

(This act, as we previously noted, Aquinas considers as prior to predestination and calls it election.)

2. An act of the divine intellect, which involves:

- Foreknowing,
- And directing these particular persons to the end appointed for them, by infallible means.

And this second act is the one in which the proper and peculiar concept of predestination chiefly consists.

This is supported by Augustine's well-known definition of predestination: "Predestination is nothing else than the foreknowledge and preparation of those benefits of God by which whoever is liberated is most certainly liberated."

We, therefore, always understand predestination as that part of divine providence by which God directs and leads His elect by infallible means to the end of eternal blessedness.

How necessary this predestination is becomes clear from the fact that, since the life of glory is an end that surpasses the power of human nature, it is not sufficient for its attainment that we should simply be chosen unto this end by the gratuitous goodness of God; unless, in addition, there are also provided for us, through divine wisdom and power, suitable and infallible means by which we are guided to that same end.

Aquinas illustrates this well with a not unfitting analogy:

"Just as an arrow, which is first aimed by the archer's intention towards a certain target, is then directed and, so to speak, propelled toward that target by the power of the same archer through the bow; so likewise, each person, who is from eternity destined by the purpose of God toward the goal of eternal life, is in time directed and at length brought to that mark of glory by the power of the same God, through the means of efficacious grace."

And this process of transmitting the elect unto eternal life, insofar as it is understood to exist from all eternity in the divine mind, is called Predestination.

Now, concerning the opposite term Reprobation, we will say a few words.

As to the word itself, in Sacred Scripture, "reprobate" (reprobatus) and "to reprobate" (reprobare) more often refer to the present condition of the wicked than to the eternal ordination of God concerning them.

In Sacred Scripture, one who is called ἀδόκιμος [adokimos – "disqualified," "rejected," "unapproved"], or reprobate, is a person who lives impiously, who does not conduct himself as a son of God, but by his deeds shows himself to be rejected, spurious, and illegitimate. God is said to reject, repel, or reprobate such persons because of their impurity, just as goldsmiths reject counterfeit coins. Even in Augustine (who has treated this subject more fully and clearly than other Fathers), the terms reprobate and reprobation, in the sense in which they are now commonly used in the theological schools, either rarely occur or are altogether absent. Yet, we must know that the thing itself is plainly contained in Sacred Scripture.

First, when those things are affirmed in Scripture from which, by a clear and necessary consequence, the reprobation of some is deduced—as when certain definite persons are said to be elected and predestined by God before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1). For the election of some implies the preterition or rejection of others. Second, when the decree of reprobation is expressed in equivalent words—as when God is said never to have known some, not to have given them to Christ, not to will to have mercy on some, not to have written their

names in the Book of Life, and other such statements, which clearly prove that, in the divine mind and will, there was from eternity a distinction between the elect and the non-elect.

Finally, although Augustine and other Fathers do not often use the term reprobation, they use others that amount to the same thing. For those whom the Schoolmen call reprobates, they call foreknown (praesciti) and predestined to destruction. Augustine himself speaks this way in his *Enchiridion*, chapter 100, and on Matthew 7. But setting aside the term, let us come to the thing itself.

Just as to elect and to predestine denotes that eternal act of the divine will by which He decreed to direct certain persons infallibly to the attainment of blessedness, so to reprobate denotes the opposite act of the divine will by which He decreed to permit certain persons to fall short of and fail to attain this end of blessedness. And this is especially fitting to divine providence, that it should permit some defect to occur in things subject to it. See Aquinas, Part 1, Question 23, Article 6.

In this reprobation, we consider, as it were, two acts of the divine will. The first is the will not to elect to the infallible attainment of blessedness. And as to why this act terminates upon Judas rather than upon Peter, no reason is given from the side of the reprobate, but it must be referred to the freedom of the divine will. Thus Bañez: "Why God chose these and reprobated those has no adequate cause except the divine will." And in the same place, he says that this predestination of some and reprobation of others is a manifestation of the greatest liberty which the divine will has concerning the dispensation of supernatural goods, and that this liberty is a great perfection in God.

This act, which we call preterition or non-election, is called by Bellarmine a negative act of reprobation. But here one thing must be guarded against: that we do not, with Scotus, suppose that God's will with respect to the reprobate, whom He does not elect but passes over, is merely negative. For in this act, which we signify by a negation, there is contained an express and affirmative will of God. It does not imply a negated or suspended act of willing concerning the reprobate's falling away from blessedness. This act of the divine will must therefore be explained and understood affirmatively, and not merely negatively. For preterition or non-election involves these affirmative acts: I will to permit Judas to fall away from eternal life; I will and decree not to give to Judas that special grace, which, if he were to receive it, he would attain eternal life.

This is concerning the first act of reprobation. The second is to destine to punishment. And this act terminates upon the reprobate as foreknown and foreseen to be contaminated with sin—and that by the fault of his own will. This, Scotus calls privative reprobation; Bellarmine, a positive act of reprobation. And it signifies the will to damn the reprobate person.

Moreover, it must be noted that God displays certain effects toward the reprobate which do not flow from their reprobation, such as that they are created, that they are called to the knowledge of the Gospel, that they are enlightened with supernatural knowledge. For these and other such effects are from God's common love and common providence, not from reprobation. But the

proper and true effects of negative reprobation are: the will not to decree the effectual liberation of the person lying in a state of damnation; the will to deny to such a person those efficacious aids by which he would in fact be converted.

The final effect is the eternal punishment of the hardened sinner. This arises not merely from preterition or non-election, but from that other act of reprobation, which may be called pre-condemnation, and it presupposes the foreknowledge of sin and the abandonment of the person in it.

It must also be considered that the effects of reprobation do not have that mutual connection among themselves which the effects of predestination have. For in predestination, the prior effect is usually the cause of the posterior; thus, effectual calling produces faith, faith produces justification, and so on. But in reprobation, the effects are not ordered to one another in this way, though all taken together are ordered to one and the same end, namely, the manifestation of divine justice.

Lastly, and this must be noted against the malicious calumnies of some, although sins such as unbelief, wickedness, obduracy, and the punishments due to these (that is, eternal damnation), follow upon reprobation in fallen man as infallibly as faith, holiness, and perseverance follow upon predestination, yet they do not follow in the same manner. For God, acting from the decree of predestination, produces the former (faith, holiness, perseverance) by the influence of efficacious grace; but from the decree of reprobation, He does nothing by which the reprobate is made worse, nothing by which he is hindered from believing and living holily, nor is he impelled to unbelief or wickedness.

This is to be carefully observed, because both the old Pelagians and the new, when they see that, upon such a reprobation as we have described, none of the reprobate either perseveres in faith or lives holily, immediately cry out that we make God the author of sin and the cause why they do not believe or fall back from faith and holiness. But with the Prophet we answer to every reprobate: "Your destruction is from yourself, though your help is from me alone, O Israel." For reprobation takes nothing away from the power of the reprobate himself, although God does not exert toward him that efficacious power which He could if He willed.

Thus Prosper once said: "God deprives no one of the possibility of good." It is not, therefore, as those objectors suppose, that God takes away repentance from those to whom He does not give it, or casts down those whom He does not lift up. Far otherwise is the case in the causality of reprobation compared to predestination. God, in predestining, works all good in the predestined by the influx of grace and is properly called the efficient cause. But God, in reprobating, works no evil in the reprobate by withdrawing grace; rather, evils burst forth as a consequence from the corruption of nature, for which God is no more the cause than the sun is the cause of darkness when it does not illuminate the air.

This is what I have thought proper to say concerning election, predestination, and reprobation.

Before anyone can be either predestined or reprobated, many believe that the infection of sin must first be presupposed in the subject. According to this view, it is not sufficient that the subject be rational, but it is also necessary that the subject be sinful and stained by sin. I would not have willingly entered into this controversy, but I will briefly state what others think and what I myself hold.

We must necessarily admit that it is not a recently devised opinion, nor one held only by obscure theologians, that posits predestination as prior to the corruption of sin. Indeed, almost all who understand predestination not so much as the preparation of means but as the mere designation to the end itself have philosophized in this way. Scotus, when he assigns the order of "instants" in the divine mind and will, always places the will to give blessedness prior to the foreknowledge of the fall. In Lib. 1, Dist. 41, qu. unica, and in Lib. 3, Dist. 19, qu. 1, he teaches that God, in the first instant, willed the glory of a determined number of elect; in the second, He ordained grace for them; in the third, He foresaw that they would fall in Adam. Now, when I say that Scotus held this view, you understand that many others who wish to be considered Scotists thought the same: Maclatus, Galatinus, Alphonsus Mendoza, and countless others teach that the decree of predestination is prior not only to the decree permitting the fall but even to the decree to create man.

Therefore, these theologians do not think that foreseen sin is a condition or quality of the subject into which the act of predestination must fall. Finally, among the more recent Jesuits, even Suarez follows this view and testifies that it is the common opinion in these words:

"I consider the common opinion of theologians more probable, who assert that the election of predestined men preceded the permission of original sin. That God can elect and reprobate before any foreseen sin is evident from the election and reprobation of angels. For those who stood firm were undoubtedly elect, and those who fell were passed over or reprobated—and this was before any foreseen distinction between standing and falling." (In 3, qu.1, Disp. S., p. 103.)

I demonstrate this in the following way. We must concede that God, before the voluntary decree to create or to save the angels, understood that those whom He would grant such grace would in fact persevere in holiness and attain eternal blessedness; and, on the contrary, He foresaw that those who would perish would infallibly fall if He gave them only the grace He later actually gave them. I ask: Why did He give to the good angels that grace which He knew would lead them to glory? Nothing else can be imagined except that there was a prior will to save them, which we call election or predestination. Likewise, I ask: Why did He give to the evil angels that grace by which He knew they would infallibly perish if they received only it? We must answer: Because there was a prior will to permit them to fall away from blessedness. Otherwise, He both knew and was able to give them, just as much as to the others, a grace that would infallibly have led them to glory.

You see, therefore, that with respect to the angels, God had the will to elect some to glory and not to elect others, not arising after the foreseen standing in the former or the falling in the latter, but rather as the cause of this distinction and different outcome, and thus logically prior.

Therefore, election and preterition do not necessarily, by the nature of these acts themselves, presuppose foreseen sin in the subject; for this is not the case with the angels.

But it also seems that it is not necessary to posit foreseen sin as a condition in the subject, either predestined or reprobated, prior to the decree of predestination and reprobation in the case of men. For (as Thomas rightly noted) the genus of “change” takes its species not from the starting point (terminus a quo) but from the endpoint (terminus ad quem). Just as it is irrelevant to the nature of whitening whether the person whitened was black, pale, or red beforehand, so it is irrelevant to the nature of predestination whether someone is predestined to eternal life from a state of misery or not.

Therefore, according to Thomas, the act of predestination can fall upon a subject not yet implicated in the misery of sin. Indeed, Aquinas seems to incline more toward that opinion which holds that reprobation itself, in fact, preceded the foreknowledge of original sin. For when he says that to reprobate is that part of divine providence which permits some to fall away from the end of blessedness, he implies that the permission to fall away from the means leading to blessedness flows from reprobation and is therefore posterior to it according to our mode of understanding.

If, then, the permission to fall away follows reprobation, much more does the foreknowledge of actual defection or lapse follow it; for this is foreseen only on the hypothesis of permission.

I mention these things not because I adhere to this opinion, but to briefly expose the ignorance—or shall I say the malice?—of those who tear Calvin or Beza apart with slanders, as if they were the primary authors of this view, which is no less accepted among the Scholastics and even the Romanists than the contrary view, which posits man as sinful and subject to sin in predestination. And as to Calvin (as far as I can judge), although he rightly denies that the foreknowledge of sin is the cause of predestination or reprobation, yet he always asserts with Augustine that the consideration of foreseen sin is present to God in predestining or reprobating, as a common condition of the subject.

Clear are those words:

“If all are liable to the judgment of death by their natural condition, those whom the Lord predestines to death are taken from the corrupt mass; it is no wonder if they are subjected to condemnation.” (Institutes, Book 3, Chapter 23, Section 3.)

But hear even clearer words:

“After Paul taught that God, from the ruined mass, chooses and reprobates whom He pleases, why and how this is done is so far beyond our comprehension that he rather bursts forth into that exclamation, ‘O the depth!’” (Treatise on Eternal Predestination of God, p. 711.)

I know that Beza, and Zanchius, and other learned men, spoke somewhat more harshly and altogether postponed the consideration of the corrupted mass to the decree of predestination.

Yet they never thought that the damnation of anyone is decreed except on the presupposition of sin.

But, to briefly explain my judgment on this matter: First, if by predestination one understands merely the designation to the end of glory (as many of the older Scholastics understood it) and by reprobation merely the negation of this act, or the decree itself of passing over and not choosing, I think it is not necessary to suppose that sin was foreseen in the subject so predestined or reprobated, as a prerequisite.

The reason is this: In the acts of the divine mind and will, one is not really prior to another, but all this priority and posteriority is taken from the mutual dependence of things. Where, therefore, there is no causal dependence between the things themselves, there should be no consideration of priority or posteriority in the divine decrees that concern the same things.

Now, sin is altogether irrelevant to the act of divine election or non-election; for it is not the reason for either act (as all agree), nor is it a qualifying condition of the subject without which these acts could not fall upon it—such as rationality, as was demonstrated earlier from the example of the angels.

Therefore, when sin is neither the cause why someone is chosen to glory nor the cause why someone is permitted to fall away from glory, nor a necessary disposition in the subject for either of these acts, it is improper to say that this decree of choosing or not choosing was prior in the divine mind to the foreknowledge of sin; it is likewise improper to say that the foreknowledge of sin was prior to this decree, since among independent things, no priority or posteriority should be posited either in the mind or will of God.

With respect to Scripture, it is customary for predestination to denote not a mere designation to the end of glory, but a destination to glory through means; nor through any means whatsoever, but through the means of efficacious grace derived from Christ, our Head and Mediator. This is evident from such passages as Ephesians 1:4, “He chose us in him, that we should be holy,” and 2 Timothy 1:9, “He saved us according to his purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before eternal times.” From these, and many other passages which could be added, it is clear that the Apostle, by predestination, understands a destination and direction to the end of glory by the infallible means of efficacious grace derived from Christ. It is also well known, beyond need for much proof, that Augustine by predestination signifies the preparation of grace infallibly leading to glory. That famous definition is in *De dono perseverantiae* (lib. 2), “Predestination is the preparation of God’s benefits, by which, most certainly, whoever is delivered is delivered.” From this, Aquinas describes predestination as an act of special providence, ordaining and directing the elect to the end of salvation, not through any means, but through such as will infallibly produce the event. Let this, therefore, be assumed: predestination, as it is used in Scripture, designates not an abstract decree concerning the end alone, but a decree, as it were, complex—concerning both the giving of eternal life and the means of grace in Christ.

As for reprobation, according to the usage of Scripture, it denotes not a mere preterition or non-election, but pre-condemnation, or appointment to destruction, which is inseparably connected with non-election or preterition—at least in regard to the outcome. This is evident from the fact that the reprobate in Scripture are called “vessels fitted unto destruction” (Romans 9:22), and “of old ordained unto condemnation” (Jude 4). Augustine also calls reprobation “predestination unto destruction.” Under the term reprobation, then, we must comprehend not merely the decree of passing over or not choosing certain persons, but also the will to pre-condemn them.

With these points established, I say that such predestination and reprobation cannot rightly be conceived or explained except with the presupposition of sin as a common condition in the subject itself. This can be shown by the following reasons.

First, the predestination of men to eternal life includes in itself the donation of certain individuals to Christ as a Physician and Life-giver, and the exemption of the same individuals from the stock and corruption of the old Adam as a corrupter and destroyer of his descendants. To this end refer those passages of Scripture: “Those whom you have given me, I have kept” (John 17:12); “Behold, I and the children whom you have given me” (Hebrews 2:13); “He chose us in Christ” (Ephesians 1:4); “They that are whole need not a physician” (Luke 5:31); “While we were yet weak, Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6); “If through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many” (Romans 5:15).

From these places we gather that in the decree of predestination, all the elect were given to Christ as their Redeemer, Life-giver, and future Physician. But a Redeemer presupposes a captive; a Life-giver, one who is dead; a Physician, one who is sick. Therefore, those who are predestined in Christ the Redeemer are considered by God as such. For as every act presupposes its object, so such an act presupposes such an object. The act, therefore, of redemption, vivification, and healing—which are all included as future in the act of predestination or our election in Christ—presuppose an object to be redeemed, vivified, and healed, which is nothing other than one corrupted by sin. Hence Augustine says (Serm. 9. de verbis Apostoli), “There was no cause for the coming of Christ the Lord, except to save sinners. Take away diseases, take away wounds, and there is no cause for medicine.” If Christ was incarnate in time to save sinners, then also from eternity those who were given to Christ incarnate to be saved were considered as sinners.

Second, predestination not only signifies the donation of certain individuals to Christ as Redeemer and Deliverer, but also the eternal preparation in the divine mind of those means by which they will most certainly be delivered. But all these means prepared for the elect are of such a nature that they cannot exercise their proper efficacy except upon a subject polluted by sin. Therefore, predestination presupposes such a subject. For, to begin with the efficacious calling to repentance and faith: what, I ask, is the use of repentance except in a sinner? What is the power of faith except to justify a sinner? What does the Spirit of regeneration do, except renew a sinner into the image of divine holiness, lost in Adam? Since, therefore, predestination prepares these and other such means for the elect, it is evident that they are considered by the

predestining God as corrupted by sin, and as to be rescued from this corruption by these efficacious means.

Furthermore, concerning reprobation, it seems to me proved by this single argument that it applies only to man considered as a sinner: namely, because its purpose is to display divine glory in the manner of avenging justice, just as the purpose of predestination is to display divine glory in the manner of sparing mercy. But it does not illustrate the glory of God if we imagine Him destining His creature to eternal punishment before it is worthy of punishment. For however much God, in His absolute freedom, may decree that He will not communicate this or that good to an innocent creature, which He will communicate to others, yet He cannot decree, standing in His justice, to inflict punishment upon an innocent creature.

Since, therefore, reprobation includes the will to inflict punishment on the reprobate, it is necessary that, from this perspective, the reprobate is presented to God as bound and stained with sin. Let the Scriptures speak, which always teach that God's wrath and vengeance are provoked by sin: "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that works evil" (Romans 2:9); "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23); "For which things' sake the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience" (Colossians 3:6).

All the Fathers also carefully warn not to attribute to God a will to punish or damn anyone except as arising from the occasion of preceding sin. Tertullian (*De Resurrectione*) says, "God is good in what is His, just in what is ours." He means vindictive justice. Augustine: "God can deliver without good merits because He is good; but He cannot damn without evil merits because He is just" (*Lib. 3 Contra Julianum, cap. 18*). Prosper says (*Ad Objectiones Vincentii, Resp. 2*), "That many perish is the merit of those who perish; that many are saved is the gift of the Savior." And in *Responsio ad capitula objectionum Gallorum calumniantium*: "To the predestination of God nothing can be referred except what pertains either to the due retribution of justice or to the undeserved largess of grace."

From all that has been argued, I think it is sufficiently clear that not only rational nature but also sinful nature is the common condition of the subject of the divine act, whether of predestination or reprobation—without which neither of these acts could pertain to men in the manner that predestination and reprobation are described in Scripture.

Now, a few things must also be said concerning distinguishing conditions.

I call distinguishing conditions those contrary acts or qualities which, when foreseen and preconsidered in the subject, result in contrary acts being exercised by God concerning the same subject. For example, the good use of free will and the bad use of free will are contrary acts. If, therefore, someone maintains that from the foresight of the good use of free will, according to God's ordinance, men are always predestined, and from the foresight of the bad use, they are reprobated, he makes the good and bad use of free will the distinguishing conditions required in the subject of predestination or reprobation. Likewise, if someone teaches that only those are chosen to glory whom God foresees as adorned with merits or good works unto the end of their lives, and only those are reprobated or not chosen whom He foresees as

persistently adhering to demerits or evil works, he establishes foreseen works, as they are good or bad, as distinguishing conditions, according to which different acts of divine predestination and reprobation apply to different persons. Finally, if someone teaches that God chooses only those whom He foresees will persevere in faith, and passes over and rejects only those whom He foresees will persevere in unbelief, he constitutes faith and unbelief as distinguishing conditions, according to which different acts of predestination and reprobation fall upon different persons.

You now see the great difference between those former conditions of the subject, which we called common, and these latter, which we call distinguishing. For rational nature and subjection to sin are so presupposed in the predestined and reprobate subject that no cause, reason, or occasion for discrimination is found in them. But good works and evil, faith and unbelief, are so set as foreseen conditions in men that, according to them, the very discrimination of men as predestined or reprobated proceeds. Although, therefore, we grant that the former conditions are prerequisites so that the subject may generally and indiscriminately be subject to God as predestining and reprobating, we utterly deny that these latter conditions, which many seek to establish, are presupposed and foreseen by God in the predestining or reprobating of man, or that, according to their difference as foreseen, different acts of predestination and reprobation always tend toward different persons.

To this, I will add that Papist writers, who contend that foreseen good works or sins are conditions considered by God in predestination to glory and in reprobation, frankly also admit that they are causes why some are chosen to glory and others are not; just as they are causes, when it comes to the execution of the decree, why some are admitted into the kingdom of glory and others excluded. But the modern doctors from the Arminian school, who insist that there is no election or reprobation of men except according to the discrimination of foreseen faith or unbelief in them, yet deny that foreseen faith is the cause of election. They say it is the mode according to which God regards the man to be chosen; it is antecedent to election, but they deny that it is the cause of election and simultaneously deny that it is an effect proceeding from election.

But by this tergiversation, they reveal the weakness of their cause. For if they posited faith merely as an antecedent condition without which the election of this or that particular person would not occur, they could plausibly assert that they do not establish faith as the cause of this election. But since they further teach that upon the position of faith, election is posited, and upon the negation of foreseen faith, election is denied, they openly attribute not merely antecedence to faith but also causality. I dare affirm that Augustine and the rest of the Fathers, whenever any human quality or action is so required that, it being posited, some divine benefit follows, and it being absent, it is denied, consider such a quality or action as a cause, a cause (as they put it) in its own way meritorious. For a condition demanded according to God's ordination and performed by man through God's grace has, according to the Fathers, the power and nature of a meritorious motivating cause with respect to the benefit conferred under such a condition. Thus Augustine speaks in Epistle 105, where he says that even the remission of sins is not without some merit if faith obtains it.

By the same reasoning, election to glory will not be without some merit on the part of the elect if faith obtains it. For merit, according to the Fathers, is nothing else but a work obtaining some benefit by God's ordination. If, therefore, from our foreseen act of believing, the benefit of election is conferred upon us, it is not a condition without which it would not occur, but it is a cause—indeed, a merit of the following benefit—in the sense in which the Fathers use this term "merit." For when they dispute against the Pelagians that grace is not given or denied according to the merits of free will, they mean nothing else than that it is not given according to the foreseen condition of the good or bad use of that same free will. For if the Pelagians had proven this, the Fathers would never have denied that it was a true cause of the grace conferred.

Likewise, when our theologians contend against certain Scholastics that God does not predestine men from foreseen congruous merits, they mean nothing else than that those so-called congruous merits are not antecedent and distinguishing conditions according to which all in whom they are foreseen are chosen, and all in whom they are not foreseen are rejected. For if the Scholastics proved that such conditions exist, the matter would be settled, and we would readily admit that they are causes of the discrimination between the elect and the reprobate, in the sense in which the term cause and merit is used.

Therefore, it is mere verbal trickery when they say that foreseen faith and unbelief are not only conditions antecedent to predestination and reprobation considered generally and indiscriminately, but also that from them arises the very distinction between the elect and the reprobate, and yet they deny that these have any causality. For all theologians who have ever disputed concerning the reason or cause of election assume that it has the power of a cause: upon its position and foreknowledge by God, election follows; upon its negation or non-foreknowledge, election does not follow.

And these are the things which I thought necessary to preface by way of introduction. Henceforth, we shall reduce our entire forthcoming disputation to certain theses.

Chapter II: Various Opinions Are Recounted of Those Who Have Taught That Election Depends Upon Our Foreseen Merits

Let us now finally approach the very matter to which we have devoted this work. And first, we will dispute concerning Election or Predestination to salvation and eternal beatitude; then we will turn to the other part of this controversy, concerning Non-election, Passing-by, or Reprobation. The principal question regarding the first part of this future discussion is this: Whether in those who are elected and predestined to glory, there is any act or quality foreseen and preconsidered by God, or anything else whatsoever, which may be a merit, cause, reason, condition, or any antecedent in any way presupposed to the decree of election, such that, upon the position of such a precedent in the divine foreknowledge, election is established, and upon its negation, election is denied.

Let us see what Pelagians, Scholastics, and some more recent Doctors think on this matter. That there is such a precedent upon which the decree of election always rests is what human reason, blinded by self-love, claims—though Scripture protests against it. That British serpent spewed forth this dogma, full of poison and pestilence, namely, that a man by the sole strength of his free will can keep the law of God and attain eternal life. To this, he added another of the same virulence, that God, foreseeing who would live piously by the exercise of their free will, chose all such before the foundation of the world unto glory. Both of these are gathered from Augustine: the former from Epistle 89, where he hurls anathema against the Pelagians for the said heresy—“That which they say, namely, that free will is sufficient for a man to fulfill the Lord’s precepts, is to be anathematized and detested with all execrations.” The latter is from “On the Predestination of the Saints,” Book 1, Chapter 18—“The Pelagian says, ‘He foreknew who would be holy by the freedom of their will; and therefore, He chose them before the foundation of the world, in His very foreknowledge by which He foresaw they would be such.’”

But since all theologians of every sect now reject this venomous doctrine of Pelagius—or at least wish to appear to reject it—I will not burden myself with refuting that which no one dares openly defend. The Semi-Pelagians partially embraced this poison, among whom are counted Faustus of Riez, Cassian the Collator, the Massilians, and all others who, while confessing the necessity of grace for godly living, perseverance in godliness, and the attainment of eternal life, yet maintain that some beginning of effort and striving proceeds from us, which divine grace follows, and in view of which this saving grace is given to us. They also consequently hold that after a man, by striving and laboring, has obtained the grace of God, he perseveres in this grace, faith, and good works—not by any special gift flowing from election, but by his own free will; and from the foreknowledge of such a will, he is chosen to eternal life.

Regarding the initial effort and labor, Faustus writes in Book 1, Chapter 12: “Just as it was the prodigal son’s own fault that he fled the sight of his pious father, so it is by his own devotion that, deliberating and rising by the good implanted in him, he returns to his father’s embrace.” And in Chapter 17: “The Lord lifts the willing, raises the desiring, and upholds the striving.” And in the final chapter: “He awaits the will of him who is to be cleansed.”

Concerning progress and perseverance through the power of free will, not by any special gift emanating from the decree of predestination, he thus philosophizes in Book 3, Section 5: “Man’s salvation is placed not in the predestination of the Maker, but in the working of the servant, the Giver of grace.” And in Chapter 12: “The state of man varies not according to God’s decree but according to the freedom of the will.”

Finally, he openly teaches that our election is based on the foreknowledge of such good will and works of ours, not on any antecedent decree of God, in Book 2, Section 2: “The foreknowledge of God takes its rise from the matter of human actions.” And shortly after: “Foreknowledge is one thing, predestination is another. Foreknowledge foresees what is to be done; afterwards, predestination describes what is to be rewarded. The former regards power; the latter regards justice. Unless foreknowledge has examined, predestination determines nothing.” By these words, he does not remove merits from the grace of predestination but rather places predestination upon foreseen merits.

But the doctrine of these Semi-Pelagians can be most clearly understood from the Epistle of Prosper and Hilary to Augustine, both prefixed to the book Augustine titled “On the Predestination of the Saints.” Concerning these men, Prosper writes: “This is their definition: that God foreknew before the foundation of the world those who would believe and remain in that faith, which would subsequently be aided by the grace of God, and that He predestined such to His kingdom—those whom He foresaw would, having been called by grace, be found worthy of election and depart from this life with a good end.” And Hilary says: “The Massilians say it is useless to preach that some are chosen according to purpose,” and a little later, “They assert that it is by merit, whereby each one is willing and believes, that he can be healed of his disease; and that from his faith’s growth, and from all his sanctity, the effect follows. They think the reason for the compendium of the elect or rejected is to be found in the merit of each one’s will.”

They concede that God does not choose anyone’s works in foreknowledge, which He Himself is about to bestow; but they affirm that He chooses faith in foreknowledge, so that He has chosen the one whom He foreknew would believe, to whom He might give the Holy Spirit so that, by doing good, he might obtain eternal life. Finally, they think no one is given such perseverance that he cannot fall away, and therefore they do not admit that the number of those to be chosen and rejected is definite.

I thought it fitting to recite these things somewhat more fully, so that you might see how closely those who in our age reject Augustine’s doctrine—founded on the sacred Scriptures and long confirmed by the testimony of the Catholic Church—approach the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians.

But let us descend from the Semipelagians to the Scholastics. Among these, some teach that there is a cause of predestination or election, insofar as it applies to this man rather than to that man. Here, some put forward good moral works that precede the grace of justification; others, good works that follow it; others, the foreseen good use of divine grace. However, there is no need for me to dwell on refuting these views, since they are all overthrown by that single blow of the Apostle in Romans 9:11: “Before the children were born, and before they had done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.”

Now, if anyone asks why it is that the Pelagians, the Semipelagians, the Scholastics, and many others are so inclined to assert that election to grace and glory depends on something within us—something we can have or not have, do or not do—the causes of this error are easy to discern.

The first is the innate pride and φιλαυτία [philautía, “self-love”] of the human race, which can hardly endure having every ground for boasting taken away from men.

The second is their crude ignorance of our corruption and of the captivity of the will under the yoke of sin.

The third is that, once some cause of election is placed in us, all those difficulties that would otherwise compel us to refer the matter to a certain inscrutable height are easily resolved—something which greatly offends the curiosity of human reason. For, if election according to the foreknowledge of some human work is assumed, then if it is asked why one person receives grace and another does not, the ready answer is: because one disposed himself to it by his free will, and the other did not. If it is asked why one perseveres in grace and another does not, the answer is: because one wills to persevere, and the other does not. Finally, if it is asked why this man was elected to glory before the foundation of the world, and that one was not, the knot is easily untied: because God foresaw from eternity that one would accept the grace offered and use it well, and would persevere in it by his free will until the end of life, while the other would either reject it from the beginning or would at some point before death cast it away.

The final cause that has led many to reject any election except one based on the foreknowledge of some act of free will is this: they have assumed as a necessary axiom (which is most false) that God would be cruel unless he placed it within the power of every person to recover by themselves the salvation that was lost in Adam.

But leaving aside the ancient Pelagians and Scholastics, let us engage with those who in this present age disturb the Church by trying to interpolate the old errors and impose them upon us under new forms of words. And first, we shall argue against certain Papists; then against the Arminians—both of whom agree in this: that they admit no election to salvation unless it is based on the foreknowledge of human acts elicited by free will, assisted by grace.

Let the Papists come forth first into the arena; and let Vasquez speak on behalf of all those who follow this opinion (for many among the sounder ones do not follow it). He strives to establish this thesis with many arguments in his Disputations on the First Part, Question 23, Article 3, Disputation 89. The thesis is this:

“There is no efficacious election of particular persons to glory from the mere will of God; rather, each person is chosen to glory because of foreseen merits, which they will attain by the grace of God.”

Before I deal with this thesis in detail, I will first briefly clarify certain points to make his position better understood, and then I will present and refute the arguments of our opponents.

First, by efficacious election, Vasquez seems to mean the absolute and particular will of God, which is certainly directed toward blessing specific and individual persons, such as Peter, Paul, and the rest of the elect individually. He calls this “efficacious election” or “efficacious will to give glory” to distinguish it from that common and antecedent will (or simple desire, or affection) by which they say that God wills eternal life for all people in general, even the reprobate.

Second, when he affirms that this efficacious election to glory is from foreseen merits, he does not mean that foreseen human merits are the cause of the divine will itself (for no cause of

God's will is to be sought outside of God), but rather that they are the reason why the divine will freely terminates on this particular person to glorify them.

Third, when he adds "which they will attain by the grace of God," he means to distinguish his view from the Pelagians, who believed that merits or good works arose from free will without the grace of Christ—something that Augustine consistently proved from Scripture to be necessary.

Finally, it should be noted that although this Jesuit defends the view that efficacious election to glory is only from the foreknowledge of merits, he nevertheless willingly concedes that predestination to special grace, which infallibly leads to glory, is not based on any foreseen merits; nor can any cause, beginning, or occasion be conceived on the part of the predestined person as to why God gave him that grace or decreed in his foreknowledge to give it. He affirms this in Part 1, Question 23, Disputation 91, Chapter 11.

So, in this respect, concerning predestination to special grace for individual persons, the Jesuit speaks far more correctly than those who have come forth from the Arminian and Vorstian schools.

But now, let us consider with what arguments they defend the thesis just mentioned. They begin with Scripture, and from there they are accustomed to bring forth these testimonies in favor of election from foreseen works.

First, from those words in Matthew 25:34 and following: "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat," and so on—Vasquez argues thus: In this place, Christ offers the kingdom prepared from the beginning of the world, that is, from eternity, and at the same time gives the reason why they ought to receive this prepared and appointed kingdom. For, if it had been prepared for any other reason and not on account of these very works that are mentioned, the cause that Christ himself here assigns would be empty and altogether pointless. Therefore, he concludes that men are chosen to heavenly glory on account of the foreseen merit of their good works.

But from these words, nothing else can be gathered except that the children of God, predestined from eternity to glory by mere grace, finally arrive at it or are admitted into it, to the exclusion of others, because these alone followed the right and divinely ordained way to that destination. As for Vasquez's insistence that the works mentioned in this passage are named as the causes of the preparation or eternal appointment by God, this is utterly false. For the true cause is implied when they are called the "blessed of the Father." For this reason, indeed, he destined them for the heavenly inheritance—because, from his own goodness, he willed to be their Father in Christ. Their works, whether foreseen or performed in time, were not the cause of their predestination to glory but of their introduction into it; and even these were not meritorious causes but merely subordinate causes—in the same sense as movement along a road is called a cause of arriving at the end of the road.

This, then, is where Vasquez stumbled: he failed to observe that the act of decreeing or predestining to glory may be purely gratuitous in God, not resting on any foreknowledge of human acts; while, nonetheless, the way of arriving at glory, as far as man is concerned, is laborious and requires many acts—without which God has ordained and foreseen that he will never reach the kingdom of glory. Scotus points to this solution in Book 1, Distinction 41, where he writes that this proposition, “God wills to give eternal glory to Peter on account of merits,” is false if the words “on account of merits” are construed with the verb “wills.” For God did not conceive the will to glorify Peter based on foreseen merits. But it is true if those words are construed with the verb “to give”—for he did not will to introduce him into the possession of glory unless he was foreseen to have walked in those good works that God had prescribed and preordained for him.

Bellarmin likewise uses the same response in Book 2, *On Grace and Free Will*, Chapter 13. He says, “This proposition—God predestined from eternity to give the kingdom to men through foreseen good works—can be both true and false. For if ‘through foreseen works’ is referred to the verb ‘predestined,’ it is false; for it would signify that God predestined men because he foresaw their good works. But if it is referred to the verb ‘to give,’ it is true; for it would signify that glorification in the execution is the effect of justification and sanctification, or good works.”

But this argument will be pressed again and somewhat more strongly later, and we will then respond more fully.

Second, those places are urged where election or predestination to glory is expressly joined with foreknowledge. As in Romans 8:29–30: “Whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son,” and so on. And Romans 11:2: “God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew [προέγνω, proegnō].” And 1 Peter 1:2: “Elect exiles according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in sanctification of the Spirit,” and so forth.

From these and similar passages, the adversaries infer that God chose those to glory whom he foreknew would be conformed to the image of his Son—that is, holy and good—so that this foreknowledge of their future goodness or holiness was the cause of their election to glory.

In the cited passages, it is not said that God chose or predestined certain men to glory because he foresaw that they would be conformed to the image of Christ—that is, that they would be holy and good—but it is said that he chose those whom he foreknew and predestined them to be conformed to his image, or that he chose them unto sanctification. Foreknowledge of future holiness, then, was not the cause of predestination, but rather predestination was the cause of foreseen holiness. For God foresees no salvific and spiritual good in men except that which he himself works in them; and he works no good in them except what he has decreed to work. Therefore, the decree to work grace and holiness, which is included in predestination, always precedes the foreknowledge of grace and holiness as it exists in men.

Let us examine the very words a little more closely. The Apostle did not say “those whom he foresaw,” but “those whom he foreknew” (προέγνω, proegnō). Now, this foreknowledge is practical, not merely intuitive; and it is called by theologians the knowledge of approbation. The

meaning, then, is this: Those whom God loved and from eternity, by his good pleasure, set apart from others and approved, those he predestined, and so forth. Nothing is more common in Scripture than for “to know” or “to recognize” to be put for “to love” or “to approve,” just as “not to know” is put for “to hate” and “to disapprove.” “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23); “The Lord knows the way of the righteous” (Psalm 1:6). Hence, Catharinus, on this very passage, says, “What is meant by ‘he foreknew,’ if not ‘he fore-loved’?”

Secondly, the Apostle did not say, “those whom he foreknew would be conformed, he predestined,” but “those whom he foreknew (that is, fore-loved), he predestined to be conformed,” as the Vulgate translation rightly supplied what is lacking in the Greek text. God, therefore, is not said to predestine from a foreknowledge of our works, but to foreknow our good works which he prepared for the predestined. Let us hear Augustine, who in Book 2 of On the Gift of Perseverance, Chapter 14, defined predestination as “the foreknowledge and preparation of the benefits of God, by which, whoever is liberated, is most certainly liberated.” And more plainly, in Chapter 17: “To whomever God gives his holy gifts, he undoubtedly foreknew that he would give them, and he prepared them in his foreknowledge. For in his foreknowledge to arrange his future works—this is altogether, and nothing else but, predestination.” From these words, you can easily see how deceitfully and impiously they act who try to obscure free predestination with foreknowledge of works—since God has foreseen no good works in us, nor foreknown any faith or holiness, except that which he prepared for us in the very decree of predestination. Therefore, he did not predestine us because he foresaw that we would do good works, but rather, he foresaw that we would do good works because, in our predestination, good works were prepared for us that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).

Thirdly, they cite that passage from 1 Corinthians 2:9: “Eye has not seen,” and so forth, “the things which God has prepared for those who love him.” Those words, “for those who love him,” according to common speech, indicate the cause of the preparation itself. For if someone were to say that a king had prepared or appointed a crown for those who scaled the walls of a besieged city, by that statement he would signify that, from foresight of their scaling, this crown was destined for this person or that, and not otherwise.

But those words, “for those who love him,” merely show us what kind of persons all those are to whom he has from eternity prepared glory; but they do not indicate that this love was foreseen as the cause or reason why glory was destined for them. The same love of God which gratuitously destined them to glory also destined them to this love of God, by which they are moved to walk the path that rightly leads to glory. Therefore, our love for God is an effect of that divine love by which he chose and predestined us to salvation; and so it is absurdly supposed to be the cause of our election. This is what the Apostle’s words point to: “We love him because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Augustine rightly says the same thing in Tractate 86 on John: “They defend the foreknowledge of God against the grace of God, who say that we were chosen before the foundation of the world because God foreknew that we would be good. For they were not chosen because they were good; rather, they would not have been good unless they had been chosen.” Why then should we not also say that they defend the foreknowledge of God against the grace of God,

who say that we were chosen because God foreknew that we would love him? For we would never have loved God unless we had been chosen.

Finally, as to the comparison introduced about the earthly king appointing a crown to those scaling the walls of a city—it has a huge dissimilarity in that very point upon which the whole force of the argument depends. For if no one could climb the walls by his own power, and that king had the ability to inspire this power into whomever he wished, the crown would not then have been destined for those to whom he gave this power because of the foreseen scaling, but rather, the foreseen scaling and the power inspired would have been from the prior appointment of the crown.

Now, such is precisely the case between God and men. No one would love God unless God infused charity into him; and he infuses salvific charity into no one unless he had first destined him for salvation. Therefore, he does not appoint eternal life to us from foresight of our election; but from the purpose of election to eternal life, he infuses this love into us.

Let us conclude this reply with the words of Augustine, who, like a hammer, everywhere crushes the Pelagians. Thus he says: "That we might receive the love by which we love, we were loved when we did not yet have it" (On the Grace of Christ against the Pelagians, Chapter 26).

Fourthly, they object with that passage from 2 Timothy 2:21: "If anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, sanctified and useful to the master." Therefore, the vessels of election or mercy are those whom God foresaw and foreknew would cleanse themselves. Election, then, is based on foreseen good works.

It is not to be denied that God foreknows the holiness of those whom he elects to glory—it is impossible that God should not foreknow what he himself is going to do, for he himself works all our good within us. But it is not sufficient, for establishing their cause, to prove that God foresees the good works or holiness of the elect, unless it is further shown that God proceeds to elect them on the basis of this antecedent foreknowledge. This, however, they can never extract from the words of the Apostle. For in that passage, the Apostle does not teach from what cause vessels are elected to glory, but by what mark they are distinguished. He says there are two marks imprinted on them: one, which is perceptible to God alone, namely the seal of eternal adoption, "The Lord knows those who are his." The other is visible to men, namely the fleeing from iniquity and the practice of holiness and righteousness: "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity... if he cleanses himself... he will be a vessel for honorable use."

Add to this that a "vessel for honor" is said in two ways: either according to the eternal purpose of God electing to honor, and in this sense, that someone should be a vessel for honor does not depend on foreseen sanctification, but sanctification afterward flows from this decree; or, according to actual sanctification, and in this sense, someone becomes a vessel for honor when, purified and renewed by the Spirit of God, he begins to serve divine honor among God's chosen servants in a holy life. Thus, it seems that Lyranus understood this passage when he

explains these words, “he will be a vessel for honor,” as meaning “he will be applied to divine worship.”

But however this passage is understood, it does not prove that God elects us to glory based on foreseen holiness; rather, it proves that those elected to glory are endowed with true holiness, and by this mark, they are recognized as vessels destined for honor, and by this holiness, they are actually applied to honorable use.

Fifthly, they argue from 1 Timothy 2:4: “God desires all men to be saved.” From this, they reason as follows: God, from this common will to save all, gives to all sufficient grace by which they may be led to salvation. Therefore, the reason why he elects some to glory and passes over others is that he foresees that some will cooperate with this grace and persevere in holiness, while others either will not cooperate at all or will not persevere in good works and faith. Therefore, there is no election to glory except based on foreseen merits.

The divine will concerning the salvation of all men is not to be conceived otherwise than that which is joined with the instruction of all men, for the Apostle connects them: “God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” But it is most certain, both from the Word of God and from the event itself, that God neither intended nor intends to instruct all men individually, nor to lead all individually to the knowledge of saving truth. “How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?” (Romans 10:14-15). “In past generations, he allowed all nations to walk in their own ways” (Acts 14:16), and he granted the knowledge of the truth only to the nation of the Jews. After Christ’s coming, the light of truth did not immediately shine on all by the will of God. For a time, the Apostles were forbidden to go to the Gentiles (Matthew 10:5). Later, they were prohibited from preaching the word in Asia (Acts 16:6). Even in our own age, how many nations in the newly discovered world have we found, to whom for many centuries not even the slightest breeze of saving truth has reached? Can it be said that God willed those people to come to the knowledge of the truth, to whom he did not will to send preachers of the truth?

Consider Prosper of Aquitaine, in his Answers to the Gaulish Objections, Response 4 and Sentence 4. If, therefore, they understand the Apostle’s words in this way—that God, as far as he is concerned, wills all and every mortal fallen in Adam to be granted the knowledge of saving truth and salvation for the sake of Christ—then either they acknowledge a manifest error in this opinion, or a manifest weakness in the divine will; for he who wills and is able, acts. But some, to defend this view, insist that God, through all ages, willed each individual to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved insofar as they were included in the covenant of God, but not insofar as they had fallen from that covenant in themselves or in their parents. They say that God called all to the knowledge of the truth, either in their own person or at least in the person of their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and so on.

But nothing could be more foolish than this fiction. First, he who, for some antecedent reason, decreed before they were born that countless individuals would never be called to the knowledge of the truth, did not will to call those individuals individually. Second, how far is it from

common sense to say that God willed to call this particular person to the knowledge of saving truth in the person of his grandparents or great-grandparents? Is this the universal and sufficient grace by which they prove that God wills the salvation of all individually? Is every ancestor presumed to be one person with his descendants? Or will God be said to have willed to give something to a grandson personally because he gave it to his wicked and ungrateful grandfather or great-grandfather, who rejected it? He who, in this sense, wishes to defend sufficient grace and God's general will concerning the salvation of all, should not go back to his grandparents or great-grandparents, but to the first parent of the human race. For in Adam, who was the root and sustained the common person of the human race, we may not improperly say that God willed the salvation of all. But to say that God personally willed the salvation of this individual Indian or American, and moreover willed that he be sufficiently called to the knowledge of saving truth, though he never sent him a preacher of saving grace, and to assert this merely because his grandfather or great-grandfather, or whoever it was among his ancestors, five hundred or perhaps a thousand years ago, rejected the gospel by his own fault, and thus by his act excluded his descendants from the covenant of grace—this, I say, is the defense of someone who has nothing else to say; and it is the refutation of someone who has nothing else to do.

But if this view is not satisfactory, what, then, is the true meaning of the Apostle's words? First, it must be observed that the Apostle did not say, "God wills to save all men and to drag them to the knowledge of the truth by the effective preaching of the Word and Spirit," but, "God wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." For to the willing God, no human will stands as a barrier to his saving action, as Augustine rightly says (On Correction and Grace, Chapter 14). These words, therefore, express rather what God desires men to do than what he wills to do in men. God wills that the ministers of the gospel should strive, as far as lies in them, to bring all to salvation and to Christ; he wills that every Christian, by praying and by all other means in his power, should promote the salvation of all men. "It is ours," says Augustine, "since we do not know who belongs to the number of the predestined, to will that all be saved" (Chapter 15). These words, therefore, pertain to God's preceptive will, which directs men; not to his decretive will, which infallibly bestows the good he destines for man.

Secondly, it must be noted that God is said to will something either by a will of affection or by a will of effect, as Thomas Aquinas distinguishes in his Disputed Questions on the Will of God, Article 1. Others put it this way: God is said to will something either approbatively, as that which is good and desirable in itself, or effectively, as that which he has decreed to accomplish in a particular subject for his glory.

The sixth testimony upon which Vásquez relies is found in James 2:5: "Has not God chosen those who are poor in this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him?" This, according to the Jesuit's interpretation, means that God chose those who were poor in this world because they were rich in faith and charity, and he elected them to glory, that is, to the inheritance of the kingdom. Therefore, election to glory is based on the foreknowledge of God, whereby he sees who will ultimately be rich in faith and good works.

The meaning of these words is that the poor are not to be despised by us because, far from being neglected by God, they are, in the dispensation of spiritual things, often preferred above the rich. On the other hand, the rich are not to be overly honored and given preference to the neglect of the poor, because God often sends the rich away empty, while he fills the poor with good things. A similar passage is found in 1 Corinthians 1:26: “Not many of you were wise according to the flesh, not many were powerful, not many were noble; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise...”

The Apostle, therefore, is showing that God has chosen more from the class of the poor, whom he endowed both with faith and with the heavenly inheritance, than from the number of the rich. Hence, he joins these two things together: “rich in faith” and “heirs of the kingdom.” He did not say “elected heirs of the kingdom because they were foreseen to be rich in faith,” but they were elected so that they might become rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.

Beza explains this well. Vásquez, however, frivolously tries to overturn this interpretation with a sophism: “If,” he says, “to choose someone to be rich in faith is to make them rich in faith, then to choose the poor in this world would also mean to make them poor in this world. But James did not mean that God made them poor; rather, he chose those who were poor because they were rich in faith.”

I answer that no absurdity follows if we say that God made them poor in this world, since the very distinction between poor and rich arises from the decree of the divine will. However, we do admit that this is not what the Apostle’s words are pointing to, and this does not oppose our interpretation. This will be made clearer by a similar example. If we say that God chose fishermen to be his apostles, in this way of speaking, “to choose” means the same as “to make an apostle,” but it does not mean “to make a fisherman,” because by his prior will, they were made fishermen before being chosen as apostles. Likewise, when I say that God chose the poor to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, “to choose” means the same as “to make faithful and heirs of the kingdom,” but it does not mean “to make poor,” because they are supposed to be poor when they are given faith and adoption into the heavenly kingdom.

Finally, for a fuller understanding of the words, let this also be considered: although God does not choose men based on foreseen faith, it is still rightly said that he chose them to be rich in faith because he makes all those whom he chose from eternity such in time. Moreover, because he makes them such, he actually and visibly distinguishes them and transfers them from the unbelieving into his peculiar possession. Let us conclude this response with the words of Augustine, who explained this very passage as follows: “God chose the faithful, but that they might become so, not because they already were. By choosing, therefore, he makes them rich in faith, just as he makes them heirs of the kingdom. For it is rightly said that God chooses in them what he has determined to effect in them.” (On the Predestination of the Saints, Book 1, Chapter 17).

Therefore, God did not choose them because he foresaw they would be faithful, but they were foreseen to be faithful because, by choosing them, he makes them such.

The final testimony is drawn from Revelation 3:11: "Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown." From these words, they argue that the crown of glory can be lost through an impious life; therefore, God predestines no one to this crown of glory unless he foresees that they will persevere to the end in piety and faith. For if God were to predestine anyone without this foreknowledge, predestination would be made uncertain, and someone whom God willed to predestine to glory could fall from it by his own weakness or wickedness.

To this, we reply I respond that these words can, with no less probability, be applied to the crown of the ministry than to the crown of heavenly glory—namely, in this sense: "Hold fast what you have," that is, diligently and steadfastly fulfill your episcopal office; "lest another take your crown," that is, lest, if you show yourself negligent, another be substituted in your place after you are rejected. But because the same words can, without inconvenience, and often are, referred by many to the crown of heavenly glory, admitting this sense, I answer:

First, that the elect cannot lose the crown of glory. However, this certainty of obtaining the crown does not arise from a coercing necessity compelling them to eternal life, nor does it rest on God's mere foreknowledge of what they will do by their free will; but it is founded upon that order of causes which a certain special divine providence has infallibly linked together to bring about the salvation of the elect. This certainty is indicated by the Apostle in Romans 8, where he teaches that God has so arranged and governs the order of causes for the promotion of the salvation of the elect that even those things which seem hostile to their salvation nevertheless cooperate for their eternal good (v. 28 and following to the end of the chapter). Hence Augustine infers that if any of the elect were to fall away from God through the mutability of their free will, God would not only be deceived but would be conquered—because God has not only foreseen that the elect will be glorified, but he has decreed to effect this by an unbreakable chain of causes.

"If any of these (that is, the elect) should perish, God is deceived; but none of them perishes, for God is not deceived. If any of these should perish through human vice, God is conquered; but none of them perishes, for God is conquered by nothing." (On Rebuke and Grace, Ch. 7.)

Why would God be conquered if an elect person were to perish through the fault of their own will? Because God has undertaken to instill in all the elect not a mere and feeble possibility, but a firm, certain, and invincible will to persevere. Therefore, although, if we consider the elect according to the infirmity of their own will, they may lose the crown; yet if we consider them as their will is subject to the most effectual direction of God, they cannot lose it.

Secondly, when our adversaries say that God predestines no one to the crown except those whom he foresees will persevere, this is to be admitted as true only in the sense that the same particular persons who are predestined to glory are also foreseen by God as persevering in grace. But insofar as it supposes that this foreknowledge is the cause of predestination, and prior to it according to our way of understanding, it is to be utterly rejected.

Lastly, concerning the form of the words themselves, Augustine rightly says:

“To the saints who are to persevere, such things are spoken as though their perseverance were uncertain; for they ought to hear this in no other way, lest they think too highly of themselves, but rather fear.”

(On Rebuke and Grace, Ch. 13.)

Therefore, such exhortations are directed even to the elect—not because their predestination is uncertain or dependent on the mutability of their will, but because, by this means of exhortations and other methods which God knows to be fitting, he brings it about that they persevere in grace and holiness.

These, then, are the principal testimonies of Scripture which are produced to prove election from foreseen merits. If any others should arise, it will be easy, from what has been explained, to discern their true meaning. Therefore, from testimonies, let us proceed to the arguments of our adversaries.

CHAPTER III — The Arguments of the Adversaries Are Weighed and Refuted

Let us examine the arguments of the opponents.

First, they attempt to prove that no one is elected to glory by the efficacious will of God except on the basis of foreseen merits, by the following argument:

The will to give eternal life, which precedes the foreknowledge of merits, is a certain general and inefficacious will that regards all men equally—both those who perish and those who are predestined. Therefore, the fact that God efficaciously wills to give glory to someone depends on the foreknowledge of merits.

That common will to give eternal life to all (as Bannez rightly notes) is, according to our mode of understanding, conceived as existing prior to the foreknowledge of sin. Therefore, it only proves that God, in upright Adam, willed the salvation of all men in common, and to this end gave Adam sufficient means, which, had he willed to use them, he would have neither ruined himself nor precipitated his posterity into the guilt of eternal death.

But after the fall of the first Adam, I deny that God ever had that common and indifferent will to give eternal life to all in Christ Jesus. With regard to the reprobate, He did not have a will that was immediately directed to their salvation; for those who assert this are forced to add the condition: “If they are willing.” But since God foresees their unwillingness, and can give them the willingness—which in fact He gives to the elect—it is manifest that this will of God is not equally directed toward the salvation of both elect and non-elect.

Moreover, those who attribute this beneplacit (good pleasure) will in God concerning the salvation of all infer from it that He gives to all sufficient helps for attaining salvation. But this can never be proven, either with respect to pagans to whom the name of Christ and the light of the Gospel were never made known, or with respect to the infants of such people who die without baptism (not to mention others).

Augustine expressly teaches that many are damned who could not be justified and saved (*De Natura et Gratia*, chapters 8 and 9). And in Epistle 107, among the twelve statements which he affirms belong to the true and Catholic faith, the fourth is this: “We know that grace is not given to all men, and to those to whom it is given, it is given not only apart from the merit of works, but even apart from the merit of the will to which it is given”—which is especially evident in infants.

And not long after, responding to this very objection, commonly raised concerning the common and indifferent will with regard to the salvation of all, he adds these words—most worthy of our recitation and your attention: “It is clear that those who resist such a plain truth do not understand at all in what sense it is said that God wills all men to be saved, when so many are not saved. It is not because they are unwilling, but because God is unwilling”—which is most clearly manifested in infants.

Therefore, the statement “God wills all men to be saved,” even though He does not will many to be saved, is said because all who are saved are not saved unless He wills it. And even if it could be understood in another way, it still cannot contradict this most manifest truth: that many, though willing themselves, are not saved because God does not will it.

So far Augustine. Vasquez himself, compelled by the clarity of the matter, concedes that for some infants no sufficient remedy through Christ could have been applied by human diligence. I add that neither was it applied by divine providence. Hence, from the outcome we infer that God did not have that common will to save all and each singular person, which some imagine to exist by His good pleasure.

Finally—and this most directly strikes at the core of the opponents’ argument—I deny that the will of God, by which He decreed to give eternal life to the elect before the foreknowledge of merits, was merely this common, ineffectual will, which they call a will of simple affection or complacency. Rather, I affirm that it was a special and most efficacious will.

This is clear from the fact that this very gratuitous will of God, which precedes our merits or good works, is the cause of those merits. How then can we say that this will of God, which is presupposed to the merits, is common, equal, and indifferent to all, when in some it produces the very things called merits, and in others it does not? A difference in effect is manifest; therefore, a difference in cause must also be understood.

Let us again hear Augustine speaking in Epistle 107 (whom we can never hear enough): “The true grace of God is that which is not given according to our merits, but which itself causes merit when it is given. For it precedes the good will of man, and does not find it in anyone’s heart, but creates it.”

Therefore, let this be the conclusion of our reply: That will of God concerning the salvation of all, which precedes the foreknowledge of good works, is neither equal nor indifferent, since in some God wills to produce those works of grace which lead to glory, and in others He does not. Hence, it is wrong to infer that the efficacious will of God to give salvation to the elect begins from the foreknowledge of merits, since it clearly manifests itself in the very will to give those merits—which will precedes the foreknowledge of merits and has ordained those very merits to salvation.

Secondly, Vasquez argues from a distinction between physical and moral means. In physical means, he concedes that an efficacious intention of the end can precede the intention of the means. But whenever the means to some end is moral (as good works are in relation to the attainment of eternal life), he denies that there can be any efficacious will in God to confer such an end before the foreknowledge of the means. Therefore, he concludes that God does not choose anyone to glory except based on the foreknowledge of works (In I, q. 23, art. 3, disp. 89, cap. 9; see also disp. 82, cap. 5).

That there is such a difference between moral and physical means he thinks he can show on this ground: physical means possess in themselves a natural power to cause the end without regard to the will of another. Therefore, although the end may be efficaciously intended before the foreknowledge of such means, nonetheless, by their own power, when applied, they contribute to obtaining the end.

But moral means do not produce the end by any inherent or natural virtue; rather, only through the ordination of another. Thus, unless they are foreseen and accepted by that other (i.e. God) and ordered toward the end before the end is efficaciously intended for anyone, they are of no value for attaining it. Therefore, he says, there is no predestination of anyone to this end of glory unless it is after the foreknowledge of works, which are moral means ordained by God to that same end.

Response

We do not in any way admit this distinction between physical and moral means as Vasquez attempts to establish it. For according to the order of intention (which is what is under dispute here), the end is the cause of both moral and physical means. And from the prior desire for the end, these means are both chosen and applied. There is a well-known rule: Means are employed in relation to the end. Therefore, the intention of the end always precedes the provision of the means. For God would not have destined Paul for efficacious grace unless He had first efficaciously destined to give him glory.

As for the different mode of operation that Vasquez has noted between physical and moral means, we concede that in this respect they differ. But we deny that this harms our cause. First, in his consideration of the matter, he strays from the point of the controversy. For the question is not about the order of execution—in which we freely admit that means, in relation to the end, have the nature of a cause in relation to an effect—but about the order of intention, in which means are compared to the end as effects to a cause.

What he philosophizes about the diversity of operation between physical and moral means pertains to the end, not as it is considered in the will and mind of the agent, but as it is considered to be already in external execution. In that sense, it is evident that means precede the end. But this is irrelevant.

Second, what he insists on—that moral means are of no value for the attainment of the end unless they were foreseen and accepted by God prior to the efficacious intention of the end—we admit that such means receive their power to cause the end, or to operate toward its attainment, from the prior will of God, who ordered and accepted them for that end.

But at the same time, we affirm that these means are known and foreseen by God before the end is intended only as suitable and conducive to the end—as possible and communicable to all those to whom He wills to grant the end—but they are not foreknown and foreseen as things that are actually future in this or that individual before he is efficaciously chosen for glory; that is, before he is predestined to the end.

Finally, in this argument of his, Vasquez crosses over into the camp of the Semi-Pelagians and abandons Augustine, who frequently teaches that men are not chosen to eternal life based on the foreknowledge of faith or good works, but rather that all our good works arise because we were predestined to eternal life.

From this arises faith: “They are not chosen because they have believed, but they are chosen so that they may believe” (De Praedestinatione Sanctorum, book 1, chapter 17).

From this arises holiness: “It is certain and manifest that we shall be holy because God has chosen us, predestining us to be such by grace” (ibid., chapter 18).

From this arises perseverance: “To the saints predestined to the kingdom of God, perseverance itself is given” (De Correptione et Gratia, chapter 12).

Therefore, all our good works are foreseen after election, because they proceed from that very election.

In the divine will, the order of acts is not considered in itself, but is viewed by a kind of analogy to human will. Hence, according to our way of understanding, we affirm that something is willed or foreseen by God earlier and something later. On this basis, Vasquez contends the following: just as when a king proposes a reward for those who compete well, on the condition that no one receives it unless he is victorious, he never decrees to give that reward to anyone—no matter how beloved—before seeing that he has achieved victory; so too, he says, we should think of God: that He never decrees to give the reward of eternal glory to anyone—which He has promised as a crown to those who compete lawfully—except after the foresight of victory, that is, perseverance in good works.

Now, since God foreknows all future things, He foresaw from eternity who would obtain victory and thus from eternity decreed, based on that foreknowledge, to give them glory—just as a prince, seeing that someone has won, then decides to assign the reward to him.

We concede the premise, namely, that there is no order of priority or posteriority in the acts of the divine will or mind. Rather, this order is drawn from analogy to the human will, and from the dependency of the objects among themselves.

To the comparison introduced, we respond first: we are able to give a clear reason why an earthly prince does not designate any individual for a reward except after previously seeing his victory, and yet why God, on the contrary, can first, out of sheer grace, destine someone individually for the crown, and then prepare and give him those gifts through which he is foreseen to be brought to the crown. The reason is this: because it is not within the power of a mortal king to inspire and infuse that will and those powers by which this particular person, more than others, may infallibly achieve victory. If he could do this, nothing would prevent him from choosing to intend and decree to give that reward to any of his friends from a primary and gracious will—so long as he reached it according to the law laid down, namely, by winning—and that by the strength inspired in him through the power of that primary intention. If things were so with an earthly prince, he would not be said to have chosen his friend for the reward based on foreseen merits, but from an antecedent purpose and intention of giving the reward, he would have given the merits, and in that act of giving he would have foreseen. But it is admitted that God does precisely this with all who will be glorified.

Secondly, what Vasquez assumes—that a prince cannot efficaciously intend for someone to receive a reward unless he first sees his merits—is not so certain as he supposes. For an efficacious intention of the end is what moves an agent to efficaciously apply all the means in his power to the attainment of that end, even if he cannot with certainty foresee the outcome or infallibly bring about the end. A prince, then, can out of special benevolence seriously and efficaciously intend to give a reward to his friend before seeing his victory, and from this intention not only desire but, as far as lies within him, prepare and provide all that contributes to victory—although as judge and arbiter of the contest, he cannot actually crown him without seeing that the victory has been achieved.

Therefore, God—who can will and do all things equally—can far more efficaciously intend to give Peter or Paul the crown of eternal glory, and by the force of that intention prepare and give them all those things which are called merits of the crown; and in this predestination of His, He may from eternity foresee their merits, and finally, upon the vision of the noble fight being accomplished, place the crown destined for them upon their heads.

Lastly, we say this is precisely the view which Augustine everywhere defends against the Pelagians: namely, that men are chosen freely and before any foreknowledge of merits, not only to the gifts of grace, but even to the kingdom of glory—even though they are brought to that kingdom through the path of good works or merits, as the ancient Fathers are accustomed to say.

I will cite only one passage, which is as follows:

"Out of the damnable mass of the human race, God, foreseeing not merits but mercy, predestined by grace those whom He elected to life." (Contra Pelagianos Hypognosticon, book 6).

Here you see that the foreknowledge upon which predestination to life rests is not of our merits, but of divine mercy—by which He decreed to choose us out of the damnable mass for participation in eternal life, and to adorn us with merits.

It is just, therefore, that we affirm that God designates men to glory in the best way. But the best way is not by foreseeing merits first, as if glory is decreed as a "crown of justice." Instead, it is rather that God chooses them first by mercy, and from that intention gives the gifts that lead to glory.

God does all things in the best way—no one but the worst would dare deny that. But we deny that the best way of electing men to eternal life is that which depends on foreknowledge of merits. That is not the best way, because it does not best serve to illustrate the glory of God's pure mercy toward the elect. For it removes what Augustine repeatedly emphasizes: "Let the whole be attributed to God." It also removes that saying of Cyprian, so highly praised by Augustine: "Let no one glory in anything, because nothing is ours."

Moreover, it is not the best way of electing because it puffs up man with pride, when he supposes that by his own works he has distinguished himself from the non-elect. I further add that it is so far from being the best way, that it is not even possible in this state of sin. For in man, corrupted by sin, no merits conducive to eternal life can be foreseen, unless God has freely given them. But God gives such merits to no one except those to whom He has decreed to give them from eternity. He has decreed to give efficacious grace unto salvation to none except those whom He has predestined to salvation. Therefore, from the first to the last, the merits of such persons cannot be foreseen in any who are not already elected to eternal life. Therefore, they are not chosen unto life from a prior foreknowledge of their merits.

But we may also add this: that this Jesuit [Vasquez] disagrees with other Roman Catholics, who teach that the Virgin Mary, the blessed Apostles, and others of exceptional holiness were predestined to glory absolutely, before any foreknowledge of merits. And it is most likely that the best were predestined in the best way. Concerning these exceptionally holy persons, Valentia writes as follows: "Such persons are predestined to eternal life before God's consideration of their actual cooperation," in I, q. 23.

But let us leave aside the self-contradicting Jesuits and finally reply that men may be chosen freely unto eternal life, even though the crown of eternal life is decreed to be given to the elect as a reward for a life commendably and justly lived. For God's will to bring someone to the reward through works of holiness does not overturn the gratuitous and merciful election unto eternal life, which arises from the primary purpose and mere good pleasure of the one choosing. For when God decrees to bring someone to glory through such works, the primary decree of giving glory does not arise from the foreknowledge of those works, but from this decree flows

the will to give efficacious grace for performing such works of righteousness. Therefore, the foreknowledge of those works is subsequent to election.

If God were to choose some to glory before the foreknowledge of merits and pass over others, He would be an acceptor of persons. For a just and reasonable election presupposes some difference between the elect and the non-elect, and a prudent person always chooses what is better. Since, therefore, no difference can be imagined between men apart from this foreknowledge of merits in some which are not foreseen in others, it follows that we must say that God's election is always based on such foreknowledge of human merits.

This argument was commonly urged by the ancient Pelagians, as is clear from Augustine in many places: Against the Two Letters of the Pelagians, book 2, chapter 7; and Letter 105 to Sixtus; and Hypognosticon against the Pelagians, book 6, and elsewhere. Indeed, Faustus of Riez, the chief among the Semi-Pelagians, argues in this way in book 2, chapter 4: "If both are alike in nature, then justice is endangered in the one who is unworthy and chosen without merit."

But we reply with the very learned Bañez that God can, without any injustice or sinful acceptance of persons, not only choose one of two men who are completely equal and pass over the other, but even choose the one whom He foreknew would be entangled in more and graver sins, while leaving the one whom He foresaw would commit fewer and lighter sins, in I, q. 23, a. 5. The reason for this may be given: because by loving and electing, God makes those whom He loves and elects more worthy and better. Human election, which cannot cause a difference in worth among those chosen, is bound to tend toward the object in which greater worth is already presumed. But for establishing the justice and wisdom of divine election, it is sufficient that, since all men are most unworthy of this benefit of election, God by choosing makes those whom He elects to glory more worthy and fit to share in the inheritance of the saints in light, Colossians 1:12.

This is what Thomas noted: "It is necessary to say that God loves some more than others. For since the love of God is the cause of the goodness of things, one thing would not be better than another unless God willed a greater good for one than for another," Part 1, q. 20, a. 3. And in his commentary on Romans 9, he writes, "Election does not regard some good in man, but it causes it." This he learned from Augustine, who, in Against Julian the Pelagian, book 5, chapter 3, teaches that "God did not choose those whom He foresaw would be worthy, but by choosing made them worthy." Both drew this doctrine from the Apostle, who says that God "chose us that we should be holy," not "because He foresaw we would be holy."

Furthermore, there is no unjust acceptance of persons where someone, out of mere generosity, gives unequally to equals, but rather where in the distribution of things owed, someone favors one over another due to some circumstance of the person that is unrelated to merit. For example, if a prelate in granting a benefice prefers a rich man or a relative over more learned and virtuous men, he is an acceptor of persons, because he regards circumstances that have nothing to do with the merit or worthiness of such a reward.

But God, in choosing one person over another for the kingdom of glory, does not act out of the debt of justice, but out of the gift of liberality. Nor does He regard nobility, riches, intellect, or any other external quality from which the name “respecter of persons” (προσωποληψία) arises. Rather, He regards His own freedom and goodness, according to that saying in Matthew 20:15, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?” See Augustine, Letter 106, and On the Gift of Perseverance, book 2, chapter 8, and also Against the Two Letters of the Pelagians, chapter 3, book 2.

In all the works of God, mercy cooperates with justice. Therefore, we ought to posit some suitability or congruity on the part of the elect, which was not present on the part of the reprobate; otherwise, no trace of justice will appear in this election. Therefore, He elected on the basis of foreknowledge and not by the mere good pleasure of His will. This is the argument of Javellus in the Questions appended to the First Part of Thomas Aquinas.

But I reply: if Javellus understands by justice anything other than that which consists in this—that God acts in a way that accords with His goodness and faithfulness—then I deny that such justice is found in all those actions by which God deals graciously with miserable men. Since, therefore, Javellus understands the justice of God in such a way that God is said to act justly in the benefit of election only when He regards some congruent merit in man, then in that sense I not only say that mercy does not always concur with justice in every action toward men, but that it is impossible.

For, as Aquinas very rightly says in Part 1, Question 22, Article 4, “Every work of divine justice always presupposes a work of mercy upon which it is founded.”

Unless we are willing to proceed into infinity, we must necessarily arrive at something first which depends solely upon the mercy and goodness of the divine will. But what else can this be except that gratuitous adoption and predestination of the elect unto eternal life?

To this first benefit, therefore, in order that some ratio of justice may appear in it, we must not require any foreseen congruity in the elect; rather, it is just insofar as it agrees with the will and goodness of God to act in this way. According to that saying, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy” (Romans 9:15 [Ἐλεήσω ὃν ἂν ἐλεῶ]); not, “I will have mercy on those in whom I have foreseen some fitting merits so that I may do this justly.”

If God predestines to glory by the mere good pleasure of His will and not by foreknowledge of works, then He would predestine all equally, because all are equally disposed to receive that gift. For if God does not choose men insofar as they are foreseen to act well and persevere in good works, then it follows that they are chosen insofar as they are foreseen to be men or sinners. But this applies to all. Therefore, all would be chosen.

This argument is found in Gregory of Valencia, In I, q. 23.

The consequence of the major premise wavers. For it does not follow that, wherever God acts by His mere good pleasure, He must always act equally with equals. On the contrary, precisely

because He acts from good pleasure, He may make distinctions in the distribution of His benefits where there is no distinction in the qualities or condition of persons.

Now, what is first brought forward in support of the major—namely, that with the exclusion of the foreknowledge of works, all are equally disposed to receive the gift of election—is falsely and ignorantly asserted by Gregory. He ought rather to have said that all are utterly indisposed to receive glory and disposed instead to undergo the punishments of hell. For what disposition unto being elected to glory can be found in him who is by nature a child of wrath and stained with original sin?

Thus, just as this argument would be absurd: “If Christ, acting on earth, raised dead Lazarus to life by His mere good pleasure and not from foresight of any cooperation on Lazarus’s part, then He would have raised all the dead equally, since all were equally disposed to receive the gift of resurrection”—in the same way, the earlier argument of Gregory is invalid and absurd. For it supposes an obligation in God to act equally with equals whenever He acts from good pleasure, and it presumes a common disposition in all men to receive the gift of election, who are actually commonly disposed to receive the punishment of damnation.

As for the latter part of the confirmation, where Gregory infers, “If men are not chosen to glory insofar as they are foreseen to act well, then they are chosen insofar as they are foreseen to be men or sinners, which applies to all—therefore, election would also apply to all,”—this too is a frivolous argument. For, as philosophers rightly state, “What belongs to a thing as such belongs to all things of that kind,” it is clear that the election of God does not fall upon a man as a man, nor upon a sinner as a sinner, since it is evident from the outcome that not all men, nor all sinners, are elected.

We therefore reject that dilemma—either God elects men insofar as they are foreseen to cooperate with His grace, or insofar as they are foreseen as men or as sinners—and we say that God elects men insofar as they were freely loved by Him above others. And if someone further asks, “Why were these freely loved above others?”—it is a ridiculous question. For the first cause of the divine will in the distribution of its goods is the will itself, whose further cause is not to be sought.

Not poorly does Aquinas say in Part 1, Question 23, Article 4: “The predestination of some to eternal salvation presupposes, according to reason, that God wills their salvation. To which pertain both election and love: love, inasmuch as He wills this good of eternal salvation to them; election, inasmuch as He wills this good to them above others. And this will of God, by which He wills a good to someone in loving them, is the cause of that good being had by them above others. And thus it is clear that love is presupposed to election, and election to predestination.”

So far Aquinas.

From these things you see that it is not the foreknowledge of human cooperation, but only the gratuitous love of God, that is presupposed as the antecedent of election and predestination of individual persons. The Apostle illustrated this in the well-known example of Jacob and Esau,

set forth in Romans 9:12, and also explicitly stated it in Ephesians 1:5: “Who predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” [κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ].

And so the argument is satisfied.

If God were to predestine apart from the foreknowledge of our works, He would at least have predestined the greater part of men to life, since He is by nature good, and His mercy is over all His works. But few are saved. Therefore, God does not predestine except according to the foreknowledge of works, whether of good or evil use of free will.

From the fact that God is by nature good, it is rightly inferred that He wills good for all His creatures; but it is not rightly inferred that He wills every good for every creature, or equal and identical goods for equal creatures. For even in the distribution of the so-called goods of nature or fortune, God is not bound either to dispense them based on foreseen good use or to bestow them on the greater part of men.

Indeed, we see that neither bodily strength, nor mental sharpness, nor beauty of form, nor abundance of riches is given based on the foreknowledge of good use. On the contrary, they are mostly given to those who abuse them most—toward injury, fraud, lust, and luxury. And yet these same goods are granted only to a few.

Furthermore, we must note that we are speaking of the election to life of those who are all most worthy of eternal death. Though we may admit that God, from the goodness of His nature, wills to all men—considered before the fall, adorned with righteousness and holiness—the gift of eternal life, there is nevertheless no reason that compels us to say that, from among corrupted men buried in the damnable mass, God must out of His goodness elect either all or the greater part to glory.

Finally, as to what is urged—that His mercy is over all His works—this is not relevant. For first, God may show mercy to every man (which He indeed does), and yet not this special and exceptional mercy, namely, to adopt him as an heir of eternal life. Second, the greatness of divine mercy is not to be weighed by the number of individuals upon whom it is bestowed, but by the greatness of the benefits given and the unworthiness of those to whom they are given.

For that God should will to deliver from among His enemies—most stained with the filth of sin and most worthy of eternal death—even a few, and to destine them for the heavenly kingdom by the death of His most beloved Son, is a more glorious display of mercy than would be that justice whereby He might righteously leave the whole ungodly world to destruction.

Lastly, as to why God, who could have predestined all, chose instead to predestine only a few in comparison to the multitude rejected, two reasons are given by Augustine—so that there may be no need to flee to the foreknowledge of good and evil works.

Thus he says: “God willed this—that by the very multitude of the rejected it might be shown how little weight numbers have before God when it comes to the just damnation of the wicked; and

furthermore, that those who are redeemed from among the damned might understand that this was what the whole mass deserved, seeing that so great a part of it receives the due reward," Epistle 157.

If the glory of some depends on the sins of others, then that glory cannot be decreed except from the foreknowledge of those sins. For example, because the glory of Stephen somehow depended on the impiety of the Jews who were to stone him, God could not decree glory to him—at least not in that degree of glory appropriate for so glorious a martyr—except by foreseeing the sin of the Jews which gave occasion for his martyrdom, and at the same time foreseeing Stephen's patience and faith, by which he acquired the exceptional glory of martyrdom from their cruelty.

If not for all, then at least for some, glory is therefore predestined based on the foreknowledge of merits.

It is one thing to consider the glory destined for the elect before the foundation of the world according to God's intention; it is another to consider that same glory as actually conferred upon them in time by the execution of that same decree.

In God's intention itself, glory—and such great glory for Stephen—was predestined before any foreknowledge of his patience and faith. Indeed, in the decree of predestination, God had prepared for him such faith and patience because He had elected him to such great glory.

But in the execution of this decree, God foresaw the cruelty of the Jews—permitted by Himself—which would provide Stephen the occasion for martyrdom. At the same time, He foresaw Stephen, armed with such faith and steadfastness, eagerly and joyfully suffering death for Christ. He foresaw, finally, that after this conflict had been nobly fought, He Himself would grant a most excellent crown of glory to this most valiant soldier.

Stephen's faith and patience were thus foreseen as antecedents to the actual reception of the crown, but not as antecedents to the destining of that crown. For God's foreknowledge of that measure of grace which He granted to Stephen—and which Stephen would so gloriously exercise—was founded upon the prior decree of election, and not the decree of election upon foreknowledge of that faith, which Stephen was going to receive from God and afterwards exercise in the trial.

Therefore, what was assumed in the argument is false—namely, that a glory which in some way depends on the sins of others cannot be decreed except on the basis of such foreknowledge. For it can be decreed, or destined, even though it cannot be actually conferred without such foreknowledge going before.

If God, without any regard for merits, had by His own good pleasure decreed to bless certain individuals—say, Paul and Peter—then good works would have no effect at all toward obtaining glory. Suppose Peter walks in good works; nevertheless, glory would not be granted to him out of any regard for such works. Suppose instead he entirely neglects good works; still, God, by the power of His good pleasure, would give him the destined glory.

But this is utterly absurd and tends toward the error of the Predestinarians, whom Sigebert shows in his Chronicle to have taught: that good works are of no benefit to those who live piously if they are not predestined, and that no wickedness harms those who live wickedly if they are among the predestined.

This argument is pressed by Gregory of Valencia, and Vasquez uses the same line of reasoning. Even the ancient Pelagians used this argument to attack the Catholics. So Faustus of Riez said: "For those who are foreordained to life, prayer will not be necessary; for those appointed to death, it cannot be beneficial. In the one it will be judged superfluous, in the other, useless" (Book 1, On Free Will, Chapter 4).

What he said about prayer could be concluded by the same line of reasoning about all other good works—that they are, indeed, superfluous, granted the supposition of an antecedent and gratuitous decree of divine election.

Therefore, election must be posited from the foreknowledge of works.

The consequence of the previously stated argument is plainly null. For although we rightly affirm that the decree to grant glory is gratuitous, and even that it is prior—according to our manner of understanding—to the decree to give grace or good works (since the former appoints the end, and the latter ordains the means to that end), we nevertheless rightly deny that God's grace or the good works which are the effects of grace do nothing toward the attainment of glory.

The reason is clear: when we posit an absolute and efficacious divine decree concerning any future event, we simultaneously understand that God, because of this intention, wills to apply and make use of the means by which such an effect is brought about. Therefore, in the antecedent decree to give glory is virtually included the consequent decree to give good works and other means which serve as the path to the kingdom of glory.

These means, then, operate toward the attainment of the end in their own way, even though the end was not destined to this particular person based on any antecedent foreknowledge of them. Let me make this clearer by adding an example:

Suppose that God, by an antecedent and gratuitous decree, has determined to grant us an abundant harvest in the coming year. If someone were to infer from this, "Therefore good weather, timely rain, and the labor of farmers will contribute nothing toward the production of that harvest," he would draw a ridiculous conclusion. For in that prior decree to give fruitfulness, there is no exclusion of the will to effect it through means, but rather the will to do so is included as dependent upon that decree.

Think the same, then, regarding the divine absolute and efficacious decree concerning Peter's glorification, and the means of grace and good works through which he is brought to glory. The most learned Bañez sees this and rejects such conclusions. He says:

"In such conclusions, from the priority of our reason according to our manner of understanding in one kind of cause, there is drawn—without any appearance of truth—a real priority in things

themselves, or an independence of one thing from another in the order established by God. As if someone were to say, ‘The form was willed by God before the matter,’ and thus conclude that even if matter were never to exist, the form would nevertheless be made.”

Thus he writes, In Iam, q. 23, a. 2. Such is the foolishness of those who argue: “Glory was willed for Peter before grace, or before the good works that flow from grace were foreseen; therefore, even if Peter remained without grace and good works, he would still obtain glory.” Away with such nonsense!

For although God does not will glory to this particular person from an antecedent regard for his works, but rather from the gratuitous good pleasure of His will, He nevertheless wills that glory to him with a view to his future good conduct—as a necessary mode by which God Himself has ordained that man should proceed to the attainment of this end.

Therefore, the heresy of the Predestinarians has nothing to do with us, who openly teach that works of piety are profitable for the attainment of glory—and that even the sins of the predestined themselves are such a hindrance that unless they are cast off through repentance and renewal of life, they cannot reach the kingdom of glory. But the same heavenly Father who gratuitously destined glory for them has also infallibly prepared for them that repentance and newness of life.

“God rejects only from a foreknowledge of sin.” For rejection or reprobation is, by its nature, a work of divine justice, which always presupposes that the man is defiled with sin.

Therefore, one cannot argue: “God does not elect unless from foreknowledge of good works, since he who is not rejected is by that very fact elected.”

We must recall what was said in the Prolegomena concerning the twofold act of reprobation—namely, that reprobation involves these two acts: one negative, which may be called preterition or non-election; the other affirmative, which we may term predamnation or appointment unto punishment.

I answer, therefore: if by reprobation one understands the former act, then although we may suppose sin in the reprobated subject, we must not think that God, by reason of that sin, decreed within Himself not to elect or not to deliver this particular person. For the same sin is also foreseen in those whom He willed to elect and to save.

But if by reprobation one understands the act of predamnation, or appointment unto destruction, then I freely admit that this divine act is based upon the foreknowledge of human sin. Yet even then, I assert there is not the same kind of reasoning in election unto glory as in appointment unto punishment. For God can destine an undeserving person to glory from the mere good pleasure of His will, because He is good; but He cannot destine an undeserving person to punishment without a view to sin, because He is just.

This distinction was observed by Augustine, *Contra Julianum*, book 3, chapter 18: "God is good, God is just: He can, without good merits, deliver, because He is good; He cannot, without evil merits, damn, because He is just."

Let us illustrate what has just been said with the following example: Suppose two men are guilty of robbery or treason against their prince. The prince sees both equally guilty. Yet he wills to subject one of them to capital punishment, while he not only pardons the other but receives him into his service and heaps him with honors. If someone were to argue, "The king condemned the one because of the crime committed (since he was a robber and traitor), therefore he chose the other for honors because of his innocence or virtue, as though he were good and just," he would reason falsely and ridiculously.

Likewise, those are mistaken who argue from the view of sin in God's will to damn, to a view of merit in His will to save and elect to glory.

Moreover, I add this: if one asks, "Why did this miserable man undergo the sentence of death?" it is rightly answered, "Because he was a robber and traitor." But if one then asks, "Why did the king not likewise pardon him as he did the other, who was in the same situation? Why did he not bestow the same honors?" we cannot properly respond, "Because he was guilty of robbery and treason," since the other was also guilty. Rather, the answer must be, "Because it pleased the king, according to his good pleasure, to have mercy on one and not on the other." The reason for this distinction lies hidden in the royal breast and is not founded upon differing merits of the persons.

I seal this reply with the saying of Augustine: "Let him who is able search out why He liberates this one rather than that one, or does not liberate that one, and search the deep abyss of His judgments. But let him beware of falling headlong." (Epistle 105)

But when we come to our second thesis on Reprobation, we will explain these matters more thoroughly.

Now, the objection arises: If we posit that God efficaciously elects certain persons to glory from the mere good pleasure of His will and not from the foreknowledge of their merits, then free will is plainly destroyed. For since no one can resist the efficacious will of God, it would no longer be within the power of the elect to lose glory. Thus, if such an antecedent will of God concerning the salvation of Peter and Paul be posited, then there would be in them an absolute necessity of doing those things necessary to salvation—namely, believing, living piously, persevering in faith and godliness, and therefore attaining salvation itself—or else God's efficacious decree would be made void. But both alternatives are absurd and impossible.

Therefore, we ought not to posit that anyone is efficaciously elected to glory unless it be on the basis of foreknowledge of merits which arise from free will, prevented by the grace of God.

It was an old refrain of the Pelagians to accuse those who affirm the absolute and efficacious predestination of certain persons before the foreknowledge of merits of introducing fate and destroying free will. This can be seen in Prosper, who writes that the Pelagians defamed

Augustine, saying he utterly removed free will and, under the name of grace, preached a fatal necessity (*De libero arbitrio*, p. 223). The same objection appears in his *Responses to the Articles of the Gauls*, objection 6. Furthermore, Faustus of Riez, the chief of the Semipelagians, indirectly attacks Augustine and calls him a destroyer of free will, who pronounces that all things, in either direction, are fixed and defined by predestination (*De libero arbitrio*, book 1, section 31). And he claims that under the word “grace” Augustine hides a fatal decree. Finally, Augustine himself is often compelled to clear himself from this most unjust slander, as in *Contra duas Epistolas Pelagianorum*, book 2, chapter 7, and in *De bono perseverantiae*, book 2, chapter 12, and elsewhere repeatedly.

I wanted to preface our reply with these points so you may understand from what poisoned wells nearly all of the adversaries’ arguments are drawn. Now to the matter.

I deny that, once the antecedent will of God concerning the eternal salvation of Peter is posited, his free will concerning the attainment of salvation is thereby taken away or hindered. And yet I assert at the same time that, under this hypothesis, it is not possible for him to fall away from salvation—and therefore, the divine decree cannot be rendered void.

As to the first point: the efficacious will of God not only brings about everything that God wills, but also in the manner and by the means which He wills. Therefore, from the efficacious and antecedent decree to save Peter, God is not obliged to use coercive means or those that necessitate the human will. It suffices that He use those which divine wisdom knows to be able, efficaciously, infallibly, and yet freely, to move and incline the will.

Indeed, I add this: when God, from the antecedent decree of salvation, moves the free will of the elect toward obtaining salvation, far from destroying free will, He rather strengthens and perfects it. As Bañez rightly says (on *Prima Pars*, question 23, article 5), “The free will of the creature receives participatory liberty from the divine free will moving it powerfully and sweetly, according to the mode of its nature.”

Let us also hear Augustine: “When God wills something to be done that ought to be done only by willing men, their hearts are inclined to will this by Him who works in us in a wondrous and ineffable way both to will and to do” (*De praedestinatione sanctorum*, book 1, chapter 20). Therefore, the Jesuit’s first assumption is false: namely, that if the efficacious will of God concerning the salvation of the elect is posited, then they necessarily and not freely will and do the things by which they are brought to salvation. For they act freely, because it is God Himself who inspires in them a most free and entirely voluntary will to act in this way.

Now I turn to the Jesuit’s second claim: that the elect may fall from salvation, and the decree of God may be rendered void, if we say that, after God’s efficacious decree, the elect act freely in attaining salvation. For, they argue, whoever perseveres freely can fail to persevere, and thus may not be saved; and so it would follow, impossibly, that the decree of God could be made void.

I respond: these statements—"He who acts freely can fail to act," "He who is freely saved can fail to be saved," from which it is inferred that the efficacious decree of God could be rendered void—if they refer to the possibility of not acting or not attaining salvation in view of human frailty, considered in itself, then we acknowledge that even the elect bear within themselves a possibility of perishing and falling away from eternal life.

But if they refer to the possibility of not acting or perishing in such a way that, despite divine preservation, this weakness of the elect could come to actual realization—and thus they could in fact fail to persevere in faith and holiness, and fail to attain eternal life—we absolutely deny that, once God's efficacious decree for their salvation is posited, such a possibility of perishing applies to them.

Augustine declared this through the example of Peter: he could, as a man weak and mutable, fall away from faith and holiness and from salvation. But once it is posited that God had decreed, on account of Christ's intercession, to inspire in him a most free, most strong, most invincible, and most persevering will in faith, then from that hypothesis he could perish, but he could not fail to persevere freely (*De correptione et gratia*, chapter 8; *De dono perseverantiae*, book 2, chapter 7).

It is therefore the hand of God, not ours, that we do not depart from Him. And the hand of God leads and directs the elect to eternal life with such efficacy that His decree stands most firmly, and with such sweetness and liberty that their will is rendered most free in doing good.

Valencia acknowledges that these things can stand together (*Prima Pars*, question 23, disputation 1, point 4), where he shows that the most ancient and learned scholastics held this opinion. Ambrosius Catharinus also affirms that, granted such a justification from which the predestined cannot fall, free will is not taken away but rather more firmly established and strengthened by the certainty of enlightenment and the added strength of fortitude (*In Epistolam ad Romanos*, chapter 8).

Indeed, the ability to fall from faith, to fall from holiness, to sin and perish—in a word, the possibility of sin—is not liberty, nor a part of liberty, but rather a sickness or infirmity of free will. Therefore, when a contrary will is given—one that is most strong and most persevering—such that this weakness cannot actually come to be, free will is not destroyed but rather confirmed in good. For the will is all the more free, the less it is able to serve sin, as Augustine well says (*De praedestinatione sanctorum*, book 1, chapter 15).

Therefore, the Jesuit's argument is worth nothing: "The antecedent decree of God causes the elect to be unable to fall from salvation; therefore it destroys their free will."

A related argument is the one which the ancient Pelagians were also accustomed to hurl at Augustine (see *De bono perseverantiae*, book 2, chapters 16, 17, and 23, and nearly the whole book *De correptione et gratia*). Namely, that this doctrine of the absolute election of particular persons before the foreknowledge of merits renders exhortation and correction useless, makes prayers pointless, extinguishes all human effort, and finally induces despair in men. These

accusations are evident as well from the letters of Hilary and Prosper, found in volume 7 of Augustine's works, which show that all these things were maliciously alleged against Augustine by the Pelagians. The same charges are also found in Faustus of Riez, book 1, sections 4 and 10, and throughout that book full of venom and pestilence. The sum of all these charges is this: that from our doctrine, salvation must be granted to the elect whether they do nothing or even act wickedly, and denied to the non-elect however much they strive and live piously.

All of these are refuted by Augustine in the locations just cited.

I answer nevertheless: this doctrine of election stirs up and enkindles in all the godly the industry of living well. But if the impious and profane draw from it an occasion for sloth or despair, this happens by their own fault and innate perversity, not from the doctrine itself. And indeed, Augustine shows that a similar occasion could be drawn from the doctrine of divine foreknowledge (which yet no one but an atheist or someone utterly ignorant rejects) in *De bono perseverantiae*, book 2, chapter 15.

But more directly to the point: I say that by this doctrine of free election, exhortations and corrections are established, and the wills of men are inflamed to live piously. For we preach the hidden will of God regarding whom He will elect, but at the same time we do not keep silent about His revealed will, by which He has decreed that these elect are to be brought to the destined end only through the means which He has ordained. Among these means, exhortations, corrections, prayers, and the like are counted by all as part of those which divine wisdom has ordered for promoting the salvation of the elect.

Nor do we cast despair upon any mortal who desires to believe and live piously; rather, we offer to such persons the most certain assurance that they belong to the number of the elect and saved. For we preach free election in such a way that we also teach that no one can receive either comfort or fruit from it apart from faith and holiness; and that anyone living faithfully and holily can and ought to count himself among the elect.

Therefore, this doctrine of election removes from man every occasion of boasting or pride in his own works, but it does not remove the pursuit of good works itself. Rather, it stirs it up—since it teaches that no one has or can have any certainty of his election outside the path of holiness, nor ever attain the goal of election (that is, eternal life) except by the way of holiness.

Finally, they argue from the conformity between the decree of divine election itself and the temporal execution of that same decree in this way: God decreed from eternity that things should be carried out in time in the very order in which they are executed. For it pertains to the immutability of the divine will that God does not act in time otherwise than He decreed from all eternity that He would act. Therefore, since in the temporal execution of the salvation of the elect, God brings no one to glory except in view of good works and final perseverance, it follows that He could not from eternity have chosen them to glory except in view of the same. For if, before the foundation of the world, He chose them to glory freely and not based on foreseen works, and yet when it comes to execution He is unwilling to grant glory to them except based on works, then He has changed His will—which is most unworthy of divine wisdom.

All the Papists who contend that election is made on the basis of foreseen works greatly rely on this argument, and boast that it is their Achilles' heel.

To properly resolve this argument, a distinction must be made between the very act of God electing unto eternal life and the thing to which He elects, namely eternal life itself. For something can have the force of a dispositive cause in producing a thing, though it had no force as a moving cause with respect to the intention of the one electing. We do not deny that good works—or a holy and pious life—do in some manner serve as means for attaining eternal life, and that God from eternity foresaw this holy life of the elect as something antecedent to their entrance into the heavenly kingdom. But here the adversaries err in supposing that those things which are antecedent to eternal life (to which men are elected) must also necessarily be conceived as antecedent to the act or intention of the one electing—that is, to the divine decree by which they are elected.

For that internal and eternal act of the divine will by which He elects, and the glory or heavenly joy to which He elects, are quite distinct. From this it follows that we can rightly affirm something of the object which we could only falsely affirm of the act or intention of God whereby that object is destined to a particular person.

For example: This statement is true of the object—Paul's calling, justification, and holy life or conduct are seen by God as antecedent to his glorification. But the same statement is false if applied to the act of God, thus: Paul's calling, justification, and holy life or conduct are seen by God as antecedent to His intention of glorifying Paul.

Therefore, we concede that God, in the same order in which He commands things to be executed in time, also decreed from eternity and foresaw that they would be commanded. But we deny that in the order by which He commands execution or decrees that it be commanded, He also intended. For since in the acts of God's will and mind there is no priority or posteriority in themselves, then according to our mode of understanding and the relation of the things themselves, the order in divine execution and in divine intention must be conceived not as the same, but as entirely opposite.

The decree of execution always proceeds from what is most remote from the end and so advances step by step toward the bringing about of the end. In this sense, God decreed to call Paul before justifying him, and to justify and adorn him with good works before glorifying him. For since the decree of execution (or the will of execution) regards the external and actual bringing about of a thing, that which contributes earlier to the actual effect must necessarily be referred earlier to this will.

But in contrast, the intention of the will always begins from the end itself and moves from the end to the means, such that He always wills first that which is closest to the end. Because these matters are rather thorny, we will illustrate them with a fitting example.

Suppose I intend to send my servant to France: I will this first before deciding anything about preparing a ship. For I never would have resolved or even considered preparing a vessel for him

unless I had first resolved to send him to France. But when it comes to execution, I want first to prepare the ship before sending him. For I understand that this passage cannot happen without a ship. Now, if someone were to object that I have changed my will—since at the beginning I intended first the sending, and now I will first to place him on the ship before sending—who would not laugh at such sophistry? Since in the one will, the earlier and later are considered according to the internal order of volition, while in the other, they are considered according to the external order of execution.

Let us now apply this to our case: God intends to bring Peter to heaven. He wills this first, before He decrees to give him efficacious and infallible means. For He never would have resolved to supply such means unless He had first efficaciously decreed to grant Peter heavenly glory. But now, as execution proceeds, God wills that Peter first become a partaker of grace, then work well by grace, and then persevere in good works to the end—before he arrives at the harbor of heavenly glory.

Now, if some Jesuitical debater were to rise up and cry out that God has changed His will—because at the beginning He intended Peter's glory before his grace or perseverance in good works, and now He wills, contrariwise, that Peter first be imbued with grace and persevere in good works before attaining glory—I will laugh at the man's foolishness and say that this different consideration in regard to intention and production of the same thing does not posit in God a different or mutable will, but only a different relation of the same will to the same thing under different aspects.

This is, for the most part, what the Papists argue in favor of election from foreseen works. Now we must come to the disciples of Arminius.

CHAPTER IV.

The Arminian doctrine is explained and the arguments refuted.

Having now refuted and rejected the arguments of the Papists, we must next deal with those who have adulterated this controversy by changing certain terms and modes of expression, while still retaining the very foundations of the errors. Chief among these is Jacobus Arminius—a learned man with a sharp mind, but one who gave little weight to the judgment of the ancient Church and none to that of the Reformed.

In order not to appear crude or ignorant in his defense, Arminius did not want to assert, as some Jesuits do, that anyone is predestined on the basis of foreseen works or merits; rather, he maintained it was on the basis of foreseen faith. Nor did he wish to affirm of this faith what those others had affirmed of works—namely, that it is the cause of our predestination to glory. Instead, using more softened language, he teaches that faith is only a condition or something decently antecedent.

However, if we look at the substance of the matter, both opinions come to the same conclusion: namely, that anyone's predestination to eternal life (or lack thereof) depends on some prior human act. Nor do I believe that the ancient Fathers and the Scholastics attached any different meaning to the term "cause" or even "merit" in this controversy, than this: that any good act, performed by man through the power of divine grace, is something in view of which God grants any benefit by His decree or ordination.

Therefore, if God predestines someone in view of his faith, and does not predestine someone in view of his unbelief, then Arminius ought not to have denied that he places faith as the reason or even the meritorious cause of predestination—at least, if we go by the phraseology and meaning of the ancients. But let this be noted in passing.

On this basis of foreseen faith, then, Arminius and his followers establish a twofold decree of predestination. The first is general: that God has decreed to receive all believers into His grace for the sake of Christ, and to grant eternal life to those who persevere in faith. The second is particular: it is limited to specific persons and names—namely, that God has decreed to give eternal glory to Peter, Paul, John, and others whom He foresaw would believe and persevere in faith.

What is worth observing is that the first, general decree—which designates no individual person for salvation—is nonetheless the one that Arminius most eagerly presses, and he insists that this is the predestination commended to us in sacred Scripture.

Thus, in his Response to the Articles, article 4, he says: "This decree" (speaking of the general and indeterminate one) "I call the foundation of the Christian religion, of salvation, and of assurance of salvation," and claims that this is what is being taught in Romans 9, 10, 11 and in the first chapter of Ephesians.

He teaches the same thing in his Epistle to Hippolytus, in which he passes over that form of predestination by which God is said to have decreed to save particular persons and to give them faith, as though it were a thing of little consequence and as though it lacked foundation in Holy Scripture.

Likewise, the Remonstrants at the Synod of The Hague, entirely forgetting any particular decree, direct all their arguments toward proving this one decree: that God, indiscriminately, has determined to save all who persevere in faith, and to pour out His wrath upon all unbelievers. This, they claim, is the whole and complete decree of predestination (cf. page 62).

But we assert the contrary: that neither this general decree of God—formulated as "I will save all who persevere in faith"—nor the singular decree dependent on foreknowledge—"I will give eternal life to Peter, Paul, and John, whom I foresee will believe and persevere"—is the predestination of which the Apostle speaks in the Epistle to the Romans, or of which the sacred Scriptures testify.

As for the latter decree, as far as I know, our adversaries do not usually fight strongly for it; it is enough for them to assert it with words. But for the former, they contend vehemently.

We will first respond to their arguments, and then confirm our own position, while simultaneously refuting the opposing one. And since, in the Synod of The Hague, the arguments scattered in various other places have been collected as though into a single bundle, we will respond directly to the objections presented by those disputants.

Argument 1.

The will of God regarding the salvation and destruction of men, as revealed in the Gospel, is the entire and complete decree of predestination. But to will the salvation of those who persevere in faith, and to will the punishment of unbelievers and the impenitent, is the will of God regarding the salvation and destruction of men revealed in the Gospel. Therefore, to will the salvation of those who persevere in faith, and to will the punishment of unbelievers, is the entire and complete decree of predestination.

They claim the major premise is self-evident and needs no proof. The minor, they say, is expressly grounded in these places of Scripture: John 3:36 – “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; but whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” And John 6:40 – “This is the will of Him who sent me: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life.”

Before we proceed to the solution of the argument, it must be noted that since our opponents are continually playing games with us over the very word predestination, something must first be said about it.

First, it must be observed that in a broad sense, any decree of God regarding any future thing can indeed be called a decree of predestination. The reason is clear: all of God’s decrees are conceived from eternity in the Divine mind and proceed according to the determined purpose of His will.

However, since the usage of language in sacred theology has restricted this term predestination to a more specific meaning, it is not the mark of an honest theologian to take advantage of the general notion of the word in order to mislead his audience.

Secondly, it must be considered that in the present controversy, theologians have never understood the term decree of predestination to refer to any and every expression of God’s will regarding the salvation or destruction of men, under whatever form it may be conceived or revealed in the Word.

For if the term is to be twisted in that direction, then the very decree of predestination would be contained in the words of Matthew 25: “Then the King shall say to those on his right, ‘Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...’” and likewise, “Then he shall say to those on the left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...’”

It would also be expressed in Romans 2:6–8: “God will render to each one according to his works: to those who by perseverance in good works seek glory, honor, and immortality, eternal

life; but to those who are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation," etc.

Now in these and similar passages, God's will concerning the salvation and destruction of men is clearly made known. But to claim that such decrees contain that lofty and inscrutable predestination which Paul so greatly exalts and marvels at is completely alien to the sense and meaning of Scripture and of all sound theologians.

Third, we must understand that the decree of predestination, strictly taken, does not signify a universal law showing to all alike how or by what means salvation is to be obtained or destruction incurred—such as those expressions: "Whoever believes will be saved," "Whoever perseveres in godliness will be saved," and the converse: "Whoever does not believe," "Whoever does not exercise works of piety will be condemned."

Rather, predestination denotes a practical decree of God, by which He has eternally determined to infallibly bestow on certain specific persons particular goods—namely, efficacious grace and eternal life.

Thus Paul speaks of predestination in Romans 8, when he restricts it to certain definite persons and inseparably joins it with glorification. So too the scholastic theologians define it as "the preparation of grace in the present life and of glory in the future."

Therefore, those decrees which merely state in general terms what kind of persons will be granted eternal life, and what kind will suffer eternal death—while in the meantime nothing is determined regarding the bestowal of grace and glory on any particular individuals—such decrees, I say, do not express the nature or force of predestination.

With these points established, I come now to the argument proposed and reply as follows:

As for the major premise, which they proclaim to be self-evidently true, it is either manifestly false or at best particular, and therefore any conclusion drawn from it universally will be unsound.

If the major is taken universally, in this form: "Every will of God concerning the salvation or destruction of men revealed in the Gospel is the entire and complete decree of predestination," then it is plainly false.

For God has indeed revealed His will concerning the qualities that must characterize all who are to be partakers of eternal life, and He has revealed His will concerning the acts that must be performed by all who would enter into eternal life. But these publicly revealed requirements for mankind do not constitute the formal decree of Divine predestination.

Rather, that decree is found in the hidden intention or will of God, by which He infallibly and efficaciously wills to bestow upon certain elect persons those very qualities and acts which are unto eternal life, along with eternal life itself.

Indeed, the whole of God's will concerning the salvation of men is not contained in this one revealed decree: "He who believes shall have eternal life." For in the sacred Scriptures, God has also made known that He wills, from His mere good pleasure, to show mercy to some above others; to give them a calling according to His purpose; and from that calling to produce repentance, faith, justification, sanctification, and finally glorification—all of these infallibly.

This will of God is truly and properly the predestinating will, and it is revealed in the Gospel with respect to its substance, even if the individual persons are not there named explicitly.

As for the minor premise, which is grounded in certain express passages of Scripture, let this one response suffice: it is entirely true that God has revealed in the Gospel His will to save all those who persevere in faith and to condemn unbelievers; but it is extremely weak to infer from this that such a declaration constitutes the decree of predestination, or that it is the whole and complete decree of our predestination.

When we come to our own arguments, we will utterly dispel this Arminian dream.

Secondly, they argue from the words of the Apostle in Hebrews 11:6: "Without faith it is impossible to please God." From this they construct the following argument:

Without that which is necessary to please God, it is impossible for anyone to be elected by God to salvation.

But without faith it is impossible to please God.

Therefore, without faith it is impossible for anyone to be elected by God to salvation.

They declare the major premise to be certain, since to be elected unto salvation is, they say, the highest act of love which God can show to man—indeed, His supreme goodwill toward man (eudokia).

To the very words of the Apostle, we respond first: They are most poorly and perversely twisted into a meaning completely foreign to the Apostle's intent.

For faith in this passage does not signify a foreseen faith of a person not yet existing, but actual faith already being exercised. This is clear from the verb εύαρεστήσαι (to please), which the Apostle borrows from the Septuagint. In Genesis 5:24, the Septuagint says, "Enoch pleased God," whereas the Hebrew says, "He walked with God." That is: he did not imitate the wickedness of his generation, but served God continually with a sincere heart and worshiped Him in purity.

Thus, the Apostle's meaning is nothing more than this: no one can live a godly and God-pleasing life without faith—a point he confirms by the example of Enoch.

The Remonstrants are therefore remarkably inventive in trying to extract from this a doctrine of election based on the foresight of faith.

But let us examine their syllogism. The major premise—

“Without that by which it is impossible to please God, it is also impossible to be elected by God unto salvation”

—is full of ambiguities. The phrase “without which” can be understood in two ways:

1. Without which, as a foreseen and pre-considered condition antecedent to election, no one can be elected to salvation by God.
2. Without which, as a means prepared and ordained by God, no one can be elected to salvation.

In the first sense, the statement touches upon causality—but it is manifestly false.

In the second sense, it concerns the means—and even then, it is not absolutely true.

For indeed, there are those in whom God does not foresee faith at all (much less as antecedent), yet who are still pleasing to Him unto eternal life. For example, those elect infants who die before they are able—by age—to believe or persevere in faith. What will never come to be is not foreseen by God, since the object of divine foreknowledge is something infallibly future.

Further, the phrase “pleasing God” does not have a single meaning. In Paul’s usage, it signifies performing works that are pleasing to God, or—as we noted from the original text—walking with God.

Now consider how absurd it is to say that no one could ever be elected by God unless he first had all those things without which our works cannot be pleasing to God. In truth, without actual faith—and I would add, without charity—no one can in this way please God (i.e., as Enoch did) or walk with God.

If there were any force to this argument, then all election would be temporal and would follow justification and sanctification.

Moreover, we rightly affirm that some people are pleasing to God above others as those destined for faith and eternal life; and others are pleasing to God as those already adopted, sanctified, and accepted to the right of eternal life.

But in the former sense (which we must attend to in this controversy), not only is it possible that someone may be pleasing to God before he possesses or exercises faith—but indeed, the contrary is plainly impossible.

The Council of Orange expresses this beautifully in Canon 25: “We were loved while displeasing, so that there might be wrought in us that which would make us pleasing.” For if we could receive no benefit from God unless we had first pleased Him—and we cannot please Him

unless we already have faith—then either the gift of faith is from us and not from God, or we will be trapped in an infinite regress.

We must therefore understand that the reason for God's initial delight or love toward a fallen creature is not to be sought in any good quality antecedent in man, but must be traced back to the very source of Divine love itself.

For love is the first gift, in which all other gifts are included. And the love of God has this unique property: it does not find its object lovable, but makes it so. As it is written in Deuteronomy 7:7–8, “The Lord your God chose you to be His special people... because He loved you, not because you were more numerous than other peoples.”

Lastly, regarding the supposed confirmation of the major premise—that to elect someone to salvation is the effect of the highest love, and therefore no one can be elected by God unless he is already pleasing and acceptable to Him through at least foreseen faith—we reply that this is easily refuted and dismantled.

For election is indeed the effect of love—but not the love of friendship, which is meant in the phrase “Enoch pleased God.” Rather, it is the effect of that love which the schoolmen call the love of eternal benevolence.

The effects of the former kind of love are directed only to the faithful and godly; but the effects of the latter reach even to the impious and unbelieving, in that God thereby inspires them with faith and holiness—even to those not yet born, whom He destines for eternal life.

That there is a kind of divine love which is exercised toward the ungodly even before faith and conversion—even the Remonstrants themselves cannot deny. Yet by admitting this, they completely destroy the force of their own argument.

Look at what they themselves write about antecedent and consequent love in the Hague Conference, page 183 of Bertius's edition.

Argument 3:

The good pleasure of God concerning human salvation is itself predestination unto salvation.

To will to save those who believe is God's good pleasure concerning the salvation of men.

Therefore, the decree to save believers is itself the very election unto salvation.

They claim the major premise is clearly true, because the very term “election” signifies nothing else than God's good pleasure regarding the salvation of the elect person. The minor, they say, is grounded in the Apostle's own words, 1 Corinthians 1:21, “It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe.” They further illustrate this by its contrary: because God has no pleasure in those who do not believe, but His soul loathes them, and He swears they will not enter into His rest (1 Corinthians 10:5; Hebrews 3:18).

This argument is nearly the same as the first, and suffers from the same defect. But again, we respond: in the major proposition, the terms are poorly and ignorantly arranged. For “the good pleasure of God concerning human salvation” is something broader and more general than predestination. It should therefore have occupied the place of the predicate, not the subject, in a proposition like this:

“Predestination is the good pleasure of God concerning human salvation.

To will to save believers is the good pleasure of God concerning human salvation.

Therefore, to will to save believers is itself predestination.”

But had they constructed the major proposition this way, they would have been compelled to use only affirmatives in the second figure, and so preferred to offer a backward formulation rather than commit a manifest logical fallacy. Still, let us permit them to proceed in their own fashion. I say that unless the major proposition is universal, nothing follows from two particulars. If it is universal in this sense—“every good pleasure of God concerning human salvation is itself predestination to salvation”—then it is manifestly false.

For not every declared good pleasure of God concerning human salvation immediately expresses or contains the formal decree of predestination. God has indeed declared in His Word the good pleasure of His will concerning the qualities and acts of men to be brought to salvation, concerning the means they must use, and finally concerning the whole order by which predestination is executed. Yet in these declarations the decree of election is not contained, because they apply equally to all and are proposed in the manner of law.

That good pleasure, therefore, in which predestination is actually included, is that eternal and secret will of God by which He has determined within Himself to bring certain persons, chosen from the same mass of perdition, to glory through effectual grace purely out of mercy, while leaving others in their just desert of destruction.

Now I turn to the minor, which they support with the Apostle’s words: “It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe.” Who denies it? It is indeed the good pleasure of God concerning the means and instrument without which no one of adult age can be brought to salvation. But it does not express that eternal good pleasure by which certain individuals are elected to salvation and to the means of salvation, while others are passed over.

In a word: the Apostle said, “It pleased God to save those who believe through the foolishness of preaching.” He therefore requires preaching and faith as means antecedently appointed by God to bring about salvation. He did not say, “It pleased God to elect those who believe through the foolishness of preaching.” So this does not require faith or preaching as foreseen or antecedent conditions to the eternal act of election.

Nor are the texts from 1 Corinthians 10 and Hebrews 3 of any use here. Those passages do not prove that God elects or passes over men from eternity based on a foreseen antecedent faith or unbelief in them, but rather that in the execution of His eternal decree He finally brings into His

rest those whom He has made faithful by effectual calling according to purpose, and excludes those who remain unbelieving through the perverse corruption of their own hearts.

Why He has had mercy on these and not on others—do not inquire, unless you wish to err. Let this suffice: “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Romans 9:15).

Argument 4:

Another argument is drawn from Ephesians 1:4: “As He chose us in Him,” that is, in Christ.

They argue thus:

The election by which God chose us in Christ is only of believers.

But the election made before the foundation of the world was made in Christ.

Therefore, it is only the election of believers.

They claim the major is evident because no one can be chosen in Christ unless he is in Christ—and only believers are in Christ. This same argument is pressed by Arminius in his *Examen Praedestinationis Perkinsi*, pp. 31–32, where he says that, according to the Apostle, Christ is not only the means by which the salvation of the elect, already prepared, is obtained, but also the meritorious cause with reference to which the election was made, and for whose sake that grace was prepared.

God, he says, loves no one unto eternal life except in Christ. From this it seems to follow that since no one is considered by God as being in Christ unless he is grafted into Him by faith, election is proper only to the faithful. Thus argues Arminius.

Let us begin our response with the conclusion itself. We say, therefore, that what has been concluded is not what is actually in controversy. The question is not whether election is only of those who will be believers—or, what amounts to the same, of those whom God foresees will believe before the foundation of the world—but whether that eternal act of divine election requires this foreknowledge as a cause, or at least as an antecedent condition. This we deny, and our adversaries are by no means able to prove.

We grant to them that election is indeed only of believers—but not believers as foreseen in the divine prescience prior to election itself, but believers as foreseen subsequently in God’s prescience, by virtue of the grace prepared and appointed for them in election. As Augustine says in *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*, chapter 18: “We were going to be such as He chose that we should be by grace.” And in chapter 10: “By predestination God foreknew what He Himself would do.” Similar things are said in chapter 17. Whoever consults these passages of Augustine will find both the best solution to this Arminian argument and the best explanation of the Pauline text in question.

But passing over the conclusion, let us turn to the major premise, which was this: "The election by which God chose us in Christ is only of believers." If this refers to temporal election—by which certain persons are distinguished from the mass of the ungodly through effectual calling—we acknowledge that such election is indeed only of believers, and specifically of those already believing. But we are disputing about the eternal act of divine election, not the temporal effect of the same. If, therefore, this premise refers to that eternal election (which is the one at stake in this controversy), we say that this election is not "of believers" in the sense that certain men are considered by God, while still outside Christ, as foreseen believers, and then, on the basis of this foreseen faith, are elected. Rather, it is "of believers" because God foresees that He will give the gift of faith to those whom He decreed, in the eternal counsel of election, to give to His Son Christ.

To this point apply Christ's words in John 6:37: "All that the Father gives me shall come to me." This "giving" designates God's eternal election; the "coming" refers to the production of faith in human hearts in time. The giving is indicated as the cause antecedent to the coming—that is, to believing. Faith is not a foreseen cause antecedent to the giving (that is, to election).

As for what they add to confirm the major premise—that God cannot elect anyone "in Christ" who is not in Christ, and that only believers are in Christ, and therefore only believers are elected—this whole argument rests on a false interpretation of the Apostle's words, "He chose us in Christ." For those words, "in Christ," are to be referred not to the state of the elect person, but to the act of the electing God. The Arminians interpret it as follows: "He chose us in Christ," that is, "us being in Christ," or "us considered and foreseen as believers in Christ and grafted into Him by faith—these God afterwards elected." But this way of speaking, "in Christ," whenever it is joined to some divine act, does not always imply that the subject of that act is to be considered as already in Christ antecedently.

For example, in Ephesians 1:3, "God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ." But among these spiritual blessings is the very first gift of faith and repentance, which are not given to those already in Christ, but to those alienated from Christ, so that they may be brought to Christ and grafted into Him. Thus also God is said to have reconciled the world to Himself "in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:18), and to have created us "in Christ Jesus" unto good works (Ephesians 2:10). Finally, even the Remonstrants themselves teach that God regenerates men "in Christ" (Collatio, p. 9). In all these instances, the words "in Christ" cannot be interpreted—except absurdly—as referring to persons already existing in Christ antecedently.

Therefore, "to elect in Christ" means nothing other than that in election, God looks to Christ the Mediator and Head of the Church, and appoints certain members to be joined to Him by grace and to be glorified through Him.

As for what Arminius presses—that God loves no one unto eternal life except in Christ, meaning (as he interprets it) except as considered faithful and already grafted into Christ, and therefore that God elects no one except as already faithful—this is true with respect to actual introduction into eternal life, but it is false with respect to predestination. For God loves unto eternal life all those whom He decreed, before the foundation of the world, to give to Christ to be made alive

and to be saved. And those who are thus given to be made alive are not considered by God as already alive and faithful, but as dead in sins and still unbelieving.

To conclude in a word: God is said to have chosen us in Christ, not because He considered us as already existing in Christ through our faith before choosing us, but because all who are predestined to eternal life are predestined with respect to Christ the Mediator.

Those whom God has destined to adoption [εἰς υἱοθεσίαν, “unto adoption”] through Jesus Christ, and whom He makes acceptable in Christ as the Beloved [έχαριτωσεν, “graciously accepted”], are considered as believers. But all whom God elected unto salvation, according to Ephesians 1:5–6, He destined to adoption through Christ and graciously accepted in Christ as the Beloved. Therefore, all whom He elected to salvation He considered as believers.

The major premise is supported by the claim that there is no adoption as sons except through faith, as in John 1:12, “As many as received Him...” and Galatians 3:26, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

The major premise is false. For although the completed, temporal adoption involves faith either as a preceding condition or at least as concurrent in the very moment of adoption—so that no one can be considered as actually adopted unless he is at the same time considered as a believer—yet the adoption, or destination unto adoption [εἰς υἱοθεσίαν], in the divine mind before the foundation of the world, can and must be considered without reference to faith in us as a condition antecedently fulfilled.

And it contributes nothing to confirm the major premise to say that there is no adoption except through faith. For although no one is adopted except through faith, yet there is an eternal designation of certain persons unto adoption [εἰς υἱοθεσίαν], “according to the good pleasure of His will” [κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ] (Ephesians 1:4), and not according to the foreknowledge of our faith. For the faith of believers, by which they are distinguished from unbelievers, is not considered as the antecedent of this divine good pleasure [εὐδοκίας], but as its effect, as seen in Matthew 11:26.

One should consult Augustine in *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*, chapters 18 and 19, where he carefully explains these very Pauline phrases which are pressed by the Remonstrants, and where he almost completely expounds the entire first chapter of Ephesians. I will add only a few of his statements: “The election which the Lord signified when He said, ‘You did not choose me, but I chose you,’ is not preceded even by faith. For it is not because we believed, but so that we might believe that He chose us, lest we should say we had chosen Him first.”

It is, therefore, a dangerous error to confuse the adoption destined in the eternal act of divine election with the adoption actually accomplished in the temporal effect of effectual calling. Faith may precede or at least accompany the actual adoption in the elect themselves—but it cannot (at least according to our mode of consideration) precede the adoption in the mind of God, which He eternally decreed and destined to certain persons. For saving faith is preceded by effectual calling (according to purpose); and such calling is preceded by predestination or

election unto glory. From this it is clear that no one is considered or foreseen as a believer except by the antecedent decree of predestination, since effectual calling, true faith, and real adoption flow from that decree.

Furthermore, their assertion that God makes no one acceptable in Christ or favorable to Himself except the faithful, cannot be upheld. For I ask: Whence arises God's effectual purpose to inspire saving faith and repentance in human hearts? It is in that very purpose itself—which concerns persons still unbelieving and impenitent—that one must acknowledge a singular and special love of God. For so great is God's love for His only begotten Son that, in view of Him, He embraces with eternal benevolence all those whom He chose in Him—even while they are still considered in the state of sin and unbelief—and for that reason He is always careful by special grace to rescue them from that state.

The Council of Arausica (Orange) speaks admirably to this point: "We were displeasing, and yet we were loved, so that there might be produced in us that by which we would become pleasing" (canon 25). Add to this, that Christ is a head of such infinite power, and His merit of such great efficacy, that He can exert influence even on members not yet united to Him, but only destined to be, and by that influence make them actually united. This is what Scotus rightly observed in Book 3, Distinction 19: "Christ merited that those not yet joined to Him should be joined," and in this principally His merit consists.

If the merit of Christ extends to the non-joined—that is, to the unbelieving—and brings it about that they are joined, then there must also be a corresponding divine acceptance or gracious favor extended to them. To summarize more briefly: a man can be said to be acceptable to God in Christ or for Christ's sake in two ways.

In one way, when God embraces him with a kind of present friendship and admits him to the throne of grace as a member of His household, blessing him with a sense of His favor. In this sense, only the faithful are acceptable to God in Christ.

In another sense, however, someone can be understood to be more acceptable or pleasing to God than others, namely, when God embraces him with the love of eternal benevolence as one predestined to be a member of His Son. For although God has not yet poured out the effects of His paternal love on such a person, He nonetheless intends to pour them out in Christ and for Christ's sake at the proper time. And in this sense, God has made many even as yet unbelieving and unconverted persons acceptable to Himself in Christ—not as if they were already placed in Christ, but as destined by special favor to be placed in Him, because they were eternally chosen in Christ.

As for the minor premise, which is composed of explicit Scripture, there is no need to say much. From what has been said it may easily be understood that those texts do not prove that faith must be considered in election as a foreseen condition or as something antecedent to election, but only as a means appointed and bestowed upon those whom God elected and destined for adoption.

Another argument is taken from the constant use of the term “elect” whenever it is used in reference to salvation.

Argument 6. Romans 8: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” and Romans 11: “The elect obtained it,” and Matthew 22: “Many are called, but few are chosen.” From these and other similar passages, they argue as follows:

The term “elect,” whenever salvation is in view, is always used in Scripture to refer to believers; therefore, there is no election unto salvation except of believers.

Whenever the Holy Scriptures speak of certain persons as “elect,” they apply this word only to believers, because we have no certainty about the secret election except from what follows after, that is, from the effects of faith and sanctification. Hence the Apostle frequently designates believers by the name of “elect.”

But from this it does not follow either that the elect and believers ought to be confused, or that election should be suspended on foreseen faith as a condition preceding it. For although we cannot rightly call someone elect whom we see to be unbelieving, it is nonetheless certain that many who are impenitent and unbelieving are yet, in the meantime, elect. This was true of Paul—and therefore of all the elect—prior to their effectual conversion.

Indeed, since the terms “predestination” and “election” are used interchangeably throughout this debate, it is plain that the word “predestined,” when salvation is in view, is also used of the unbelieving. For when the Apostle says in Romans 8:30, “Whom He predestined, He also called; and whom He called, He also justified,” he clearly places certain persons as predestined prior to their calling, faith, and justification.

Add to this: in all those passages where the name of “elect” is attributed to believers, it always denotes actual faith—not that faith which, before the foundation of the world, was merely considered in the prescience of God, as the Remonstrants claim. Therefore, it is not rightly concluded: “The elect and the believer are the same subject according to the phraseology of Scripture; therefore, election is from foreseen faith.” But rather: “To all the elect is given saving faith in due time.”

I could easily reverse this argument and turn it against the adversaries in this way, if it had any strength:

“The word ‘believers,’ when used of those who are saved, is always understood to refer to the elect; therefore, there is no faith unto salvation except that of the elect; therefore, faith arises from antecedent election.”

But from such a use of terms, nothing more should be concluded than that faith and election have a certain connection between them. Whether they are connected such that foreseen faith precedes election as a prerequisite condition in choosing (as the Remonstrants claim), or such that faith follows election as a disposition to be produced in all the elect at the appropriate

time—this is not shown from the cited Scripture passages. Therefore, it is not necessary to examine each of them individually.

Argument 7. The [προορισμός, proeismos] (predetermination or predestination), according to which the Lord God shows His mercy in some and His justice in others, is the true and only predestination. But the decree to save believers on the one hand, and to condemn unbelievers on the other, is such a [προορισμός]; therefore, this decree is the true and only predestination.

They say the major premise is admitted by the Contra-Remonstrants themselves. The minor they prove from Romans 9:22, where the “vessels of mercy” and “vessels of wrath” are understood to mean believers and unbelievers.

In the Divine mind, we must conceive of a double preordination with respect to the elect: one that pertains to the order of intention, and another that pertains to the order of execution. Both, however, serve to declare the mercy and justice of God.

For example: that God, before the foundation of the world, decreed to love Jacob and Peter, and to show mercy to them in the giving of special grace and eternal life; but to pass over Esau and Judas in this designation toward the infallible attainment of life and grace, and to assign them—hardened in their sins—to just condemnation. In these decrees, I say, there is contained a certain abyss of mercy and justice, which no power of human intellect is sufficient to penetrate.

Now indeed, that the same God has revealed in His Word that He has decreed to save all who believe and to condemn all who do not believe, and that (on the day of judgment), when execution has come, He will in fact condemn Esau and Judas, and save Jacob and Peter—this too expresses a noble and singular manifestation of Divine mercy and justice.

Therefore, since in both forms of preordination the mercy and justice of God shine forth—namely, both in that by which God decreed to make certain persons believers, and in that by which He promises and bestows eternal life upon those believers; and both in that by which He decreed not to show mercy to certain persons, nor to soften them or inspire them with faith, and in that by which He condemns them, hardened and unbelieving—the adversaries ought not to have confined the entire and complete rationale of predestination to the latter προορισμός [preordination], which is most properly found in the former.

With these things prefaced, I say that the major premise of the proposed syllogism is not universal. For not every προορισμός [preordination] in which the mercy of God toward some and His justice toward others is manifest, is that one unique predestination whose inscrutable depth the Scriptures and theologians so greatly celebrate; although in predestination properly so called—by which some are ordained to life through special grace, and others are left to death by their own merit—mercy and justice do most gloriously play their roles.

I come now to the minor premise, in which it is affirmed that the decree to save believers and condemn unbelievers is that preordination according to which God declares His mercy toward some and His justice toward others. We admit that according to this decree, mercy toward some

and justice toward others are observed and declared in the outcome. But mercy reveals itself in a far higher manner in the decree of predestination, and justice in the decree of reprobation.

This decree, "I will save believers, I will condemn unbelievers," considered in itself, equally exhibits and effects mercy to all, and equally exhibits and effects justice to all. It promises or bestows nothing on Jacob and Peter that is not, under the same conditions, promised or offered to Esau and Judas; it denies nothing to Esau or Judas that is not, under the same conditions, denied to Jacob and Peter. For that Jacob and Peter become partakers of mercy and eternal life, and Esau and Judas do not, this difference did not arise from a diversity of decrees with respect to the persons themselves, but from a diversity in the operations of the persons.

But that mercy which reveals itself in the decree of predestination decrees, prepares, and bestows upon some singular predestined person what it in no way decrees, prepares, or bestows upon one not predestined. Likewise, that justice which is considered in the decree of reprobation decrees something to be denied to the reprobate which it decrees is not to be denied to the predestined.

Therefore, it is not sufficient for constituting the decree of predestination properly so called that, according to it, Divine mercy is exercised upon some and Divine justice upon others through the differing acts of human free will. Rather, what is required is such a decree which, from the primary intention and special operation of the decreeing God, includes the mercy to be exhibited to these persons, and, from the most free and most just will of God, implies that the same special mercy is to be denied to others.

They argue from the order of execution in this way: "Those and such as God saves and condemns in time, He also from eternity decreed to save and condemn as such." But God saves only those who persevere in faith, as such, in time; and condemns unbelievers, as such. Therefore, God from eternity decreed to save only the faithful as such.

They attempt to prove the major premise by appeal to the immutability of God, and the minor premise from the perpetual voice of the Gospel, which promises life to believers and threatens death to unbelievers.

We say that the conclusion does not directly contradict our position. For the proper conclusion should have been: "Therefore God chose only the faithful, as such, to glory, based on foreseen faith." However, the conclusion they give—"Therefore God from eternity decreed to save only the faithful, as such"—asserts that faith is a prior condition only with respect to the outward conferral of the decreed salvation, which we do not deny. But they fail to prove that faith is a prior condition with respect to the internal decree of God that determines salvation, which is what they needed to prove.

But let us approach an examination of the major premise. I say that in it two terms are conjoined and confused with deceptive intent: one refers to the destination to salvation in the Divine mind; the other refers to the actual execution of salvation externally. The word "He decreed" refers to

the eternal and internal act of the Divine will; the word “He saves” refers to the external and temporal effect.

Now the internal act of God does not have the same causes nor does it require the same prior conditions as the external effect of the salvation decreed. God does not save Peter unless preceded by his faith; but He decrees to save Peter from the mere good pleasure of His eternal will—not with that faith preceding as a condition for the decree itself, but as a condition for the fitting and timely execution of the thing decreed.

Therefore, the root of the error lies in this: that the quality of faith, as a prior condition which ought to be joined with the thing decreed and placed before it only in the execution, is instead wrongly joined with the act of God’s decree, and is put forward as a prior motive for the decree itself.

We will illustrate this with an example, and show that some conditions may be required as prior for Peter to be saved or to enter the heavenly kingdom, which are not required as prior for him to be elected or destined to eternal life by God.

Let us suppose that a king, upon seeing a beggar clothed in rags and foul with ulcers, nevertheless decrees—by his own mere good pleasure—to adopt him and raise him to the royal crown. Moreover, he also orders that before being crowned, the beggar must be clothed in royal garments and cleansed of his filth, and that he shall not be crowned unless he is first so purified and clothed.

Who does not see that these fine garments and the cleansing were decreed and required as prior conditions for the act of crowning—but not required as prior conditions or motives for the original decision to adopt and crown?

Let a syllogism be made after the example proposed by the Remonstrants, and its absurdity will immediately appear: “He and such a one as the king crowned in time, he and such a one he decreed from the beginning to crown. But he crowned him in time as one beautifully clothed and purified of filth; therefore, from the beginning, he decreed to adopt and crown him based on the foreseen condition of fine garments.” Nonsense.

For the king’s first will to adopt and crown did not arise from prior consideration or foreseen condition of fine clothing; rather, the act of crowning required these garments and this cleansing beforehand, and that by the decree of the king arranging the external execution of the matter.

Let us apply this to our present case. God wills to adopt Peter, Paul, or any elect person—corrupted in the mass of Adam and diseased by sin—and to give him eternal life, by the mere good pleasure of His will. But He also decrees—and in the Gospel proclaims this decree—that He wills the person to be first purified by faith and cleansed from the filth of sins before being brought into possession of the kingdom.

Therefore, Peter’s being considered as faithful and cleansed from sins will be antecedent to the execution of the thing willed, namely, the acquisition of salvation—and that by God’s decree. But

it will not be antecedent to the will of God itself in saving Peter, who decreed both to save Peter and, before saving him, to give him faith.

Nor does it undermine the immutability of the Divine nature that something is posited as a prior condition for the actual production of the thing decreed, which is not a prior condition for the internal will of God concerning the production of that thing. The reason is clear: the effect of salvation in the predestined subject and the decree to give salvation in the predestining will are distinct things, and do not require the same prior causes or conditions.

As for the minor premise, I say only this: many things are required in order that someone may be saved in time, which were not prerequisites for being elected to salvation from eternity, but rather are means afterward granted to the predestined in order that they might be led to salvation.

Argument 9: That decree of God concerning human salvation whose foundation is Christ is the very same election unto salvation. But the decree of God to save believers is that decree of salvation whose foundation is Christ. Therefore, the decree to save believers is the very same election unto salvation.

They say the major premise is obvious, since there is no salvation or blessing unto salvation except in Christ. They claim the minor is equally clear, because that one decree is the foundation of Christianity, salvation, and assurance of salvation.

Of Christianity, because in it Christ is constituted by God as Savior and Head of those who are to become partakers of salvation.

Of salvation, because it is the decree of the good pleasure of God in Christ, to which our whole salvation is referred.

Of assurance of salvation, because our entire certainty rests on this support: “Believers shall be saved; I believe; therefore I shall be saved.”

It must be observed that in none of the Remonstrants’ arguments does the proper conclusion follow. For it is one thing to conclude, “Therefore, the decree to save believers is the very same election unto salvation,” and another thing entirely to conclude, “Therefore, the very election unto salvation is from foreseen faith as a preceding condition.” This latter conclusion we have waited for in vain, for it has not dared to appear anywhere. But let us examine the argument just presented, such as it is.

The major premise very inadequately explains the nature of election, and it is not universally true, if it is to be understood as it must be—universally—unless they wish to impose upon us a ἀσύλλογιστον [a non-syllogism]. Let it, then, be made universal in this form: “Every decree of God concerning human salvation whose foundation is Christ is the very same election of individual persons unto salvation.” Let the minor be added: “But the decree to save believers (i.e., any persons, if they believe) is that decree of salvation whose foundation is Christ.” Therefore, this decree to save believers is the very election of individual persons unto salvation.

To expose the errors in this reasoning, we must know that different decrees concerning human salvation can be brought under our consideration, all of which have Christ as their foundation, and yet in none of them is the very essence of election found.

There are, first, decrees that are publicly known and universally proclaimed, which express and contain the conditions or means by which men are to be brought to salvation. Such decrees are: "I will save all who repent," "who believe in the Messiah," "who persevere in this faith and newness of life until the end." In such decrees, all mortals are indiscriminately taught under what conditions they may expect salvation. Yet, in these decrees, no particular persons are set apart or predestined to salvation by God over others.

Christ is the foundation of those decrees because God never deigned to engage with corrupt and rebellious man under such conditions, or to promise eternal life to the one who believes and repents, except by the intervention of the Mediator of the New Covenant, in whom all the promises of God are "Yea and Amen."

But in these decrees the essence of election is not included. For even if such decrees, offering life promiscuously to all sinners on the condition of faith and repentance, were granted, unless there were also another decree of pure mercy, no one would be saved—for no one would believe.

Second, there is another kind of decree by which, in the eternal mind and will of God, certain individual persons are designated to be infallibly brought to salvation. These individuals are not named in the book of Scripture, yet they are inscribed by name in the book of life (Phil. 4:3; Luke 10:20, "Rejoice," etc.). Concerning them are those Scripture passages: "The Lord knows those who are His" (2 Tim. 2:19), "He calls His sheep by name" (John 10:3), and "I know whom I have chosen" (John 13:18).

Third, there is always connected with this decree concerning persons another decree: that of giving to those individual persons all the efficacious means of grace by which they are to be brought to salvation. This corresponds to the Apostle's words in Romans 8:30: "Those whom He predestined, He also called; those whom He called, He also justified," etc.; and Ephesians 1:3–4: "God blessed us with every spiritual blessing, just as He chose us before the foundation of the world." Election before all ages is the measure, as it were, of all spiritual blessings (namely, faith, holiness, perseverance) which are given in time—not the other way around, as the Remonstrants would have it, where foreseen faith and perseverance are made the measure of election.

These decrees, by which individual persons are predestined to life and are prepared with saving grace, also have Christ as their foundation. For in Him they are chosen as members to be joined in time to Christ their Head; and through Him and for His sake these particular persons are endowed with special grace.

Therefore, the major premise proposed is false and must be rejected on two counts.

First, because it assumes that Christ is only the foundation of that universal decree, “I will save all who believe,” whereas He is also the foundation of that particular decree, “I will give eternal life to Peter, to Paul,” and so on with each of the elect: “I will give to these individuals faith, perseverance, in short, grace that effectively leads to salvation.”

Second, the major is false because it supposes that election is formally constituted in that universal decree, whereas in fact it manifests itself in the second decree—by which individual persons are elected unto life—and in the third—by which they are designated to partake of the efficacious means above others—according to the celebrated definition of predestination found among the theologians: “Predestination is the preparation of grace in the present and glory in the future.”

But no one has ever defined predestination or election as: “Election is God’s decree to save any man who is willing to believe and persevere.” Yet the Remonstrants place the entire essence of predestination in that one decree alone.

As for the minor, it is enough to respond briefly: Christ is indeed the foundation of that general decree about saving any who believe; but He is not the foundation of that decree alone. He is also the foundation of the other decrees—by which individual persons, given to Christ by the Father before the foundation of the world, will be given grace and glory in due time.

The Remonstrants ought not to have buried these latter decrees in stubborn silence, nor remained fixed upon the first universal one, unless they suppose that there never was in the Divine mind any decree concerning particular persons to be endowed with efficacious grace, and through that grace to be led to glory.

Let us proceed and carefully weigh the things that have been brought forward to confirm each proposition.

They claim the major is self-evident, because there is no salvation or blessing unto salvation except in Christ. This is a frivolous proof. For does it follow that because no benefit is decreed to be conferred upon us except in Christ, therefore every decree that pertains to our salvation, whose foundation is Christ, must be the very same as our election? That holds together as well as sand without mortar.

They also say the minor is clear, because that one decree—“I will save all who believe”—is the foundation of Christianity, of salvation, and of assurance of salvation.

I reply: that general decree is not the foundation of Christianity. There are other foundations of Christianity, and among them is this chief foundation: namely, that faith, perseverance, and whatever infallibly leads to heaven are special gifts of grace, not contingent effects arising from the will of man not yet elected, nor the motives of divine election.

Furthermore, the foundation we assert proves much more effectively that Christ is constituted by God as Savior and Head of those who shall be saved than that general decree urged by the opponents. For in that general decree, “All who believe shall be saved,” a covenant of salvation

is shown to be established with the human race for Christ's sake—but a covenant which will remain ineffective unless the condition of believing is fulfilled by us; about which nothing is determined in that decree.

But when we defend that God has further decreed, for Christ's sake, to give grace, faith, and life to all the elect, and actually to pour out from His fullness this efficacious and saving grace upon them—not merely by promise, but in fact—we then make Christ truly the Savior and Head of all who become partakers of salvation.

Moreover, that general decree, "All who believe shall be saved," is not the decree of eudokia [good pleasure], upon which our entire salvation depends. For that decree is, so to speak, declarative and doctrinal; but the salvation of particular persons must rest on a decree of God that is practical and operative.

We would be most miserable if our entire salvation depended on that conditional promise: "If you believe, you will be saved," and there were no other decree of God's will to give us faith, and to save us effectually.

Finally, that general decree, "All who believe shall be saved," cannot be for any individual person a sufficient foundation of assurance concerning his own salvation. For that decree saves no one by its own virtue. Indeed, many will be damned who know and believe that all who believe and repent will be saved.

Therefore, in order to attain certainty, there must be added the efficacy of another decree—namely, that I believe, that I will persevere to the end.

But whence comes this certainty of my faith and perseverance? Not from my contingent free will; therefore, from some immutable divine decree.

If we look at the thing itself, the assurance of salvation concerning this or that individual person must rest upon some decree of God that is practical, infallibly determining and effecting the salvation of that person.

And if we look at knowledge of the thing as it pertains to us, the assurance of our salvation must rest on some revelation of the same decree—by the Spirit of adoption, and by the effects of the same in the hearts of individuals. For that Spirit testifies to our spirit that we are the children of God—those whom He has destined for eternal life, and whom He has sanctified in this age, so that He might glorify them in the age to come.

But in that universal decree promulgated in the manner of a law—"Whoever believes shall be saved"—neither a certain salvation of any individual person can be grounded, nor any certain knowledge of one's own salvation infallibly to come.

And thus we have considered all those arguments by which our interlocutors have tried to establish the election of individual men from the preceding condition of foreseen faith. All of which, as they say, are taken from the writings of Arminius.

CHAPTER V

Some Arminian objections omitted by the Collocutors are here stated and refuted.

There are, in fact, several other arguments found in Arminius which were not introduced in the Hague Conference. We will also bring these forward and examine them one by one. A great number of such arguments are presented in the Examen of Perkins' Predestination, and some appear elsewhere. We will analyze them as they come to us.

Objection 1:

Election is love unto salvation.

But God cannot love a sinner unto salvation unless He is reconciled to him.

However, God is not reconciled to anyone unless He sees him as a believer in Christ.

Therefore, God elects no one except from the foresight of antecedent faith.

Response:

Election is the eternal purpose or decree of God to assume certain men—passing over others—unto the efficacious and infallible attainment of grace and glory. In this sense, it is rightly called love unto salvation. But it is not love in the sense of an outward effect already poured out on the elect, but rather love enclosed in the eternal counsel of the one electing.

Thus, God embraced Paul—when he was neither born, nor converted, nor believing—with His secret love, having within Himself an eternal and unchangeable purpose to impart to him both grace and glory.

So then, let the first proposition stand: that election is love unto salvation. But the following assertions—that God cannot in this way love anyone unto salvation unless already reconciled to Him, and that He cannot be reconciled to anyone except through the foresight of antecedent faith—are extremely shaky, indeed manifestly false.

For in that love which is understood to be latent in the decree of election, God loves one who is not yet reconciled, in such a way that He determines to reconcile him to Himself. He loves one not yet believing, in such a way that He decrees to grant him faith. Though He does not yet love in the same way as He does His adopted, reconciled, and believing sons.

Even Arminius himself, if he would remain consistent, could not deny that God, by this love of election or predestination, embraces the elect and predestined even before any foresight of faith in them.

For in his Public Disputations, Thesis 15 On Predestination, page 153, he defines predestination as: "The decree of the good pleasure of God in Christ, whereby He determined from eternity to justify, adopt, and give eternal life to the faithful, whom He decreed to grant faith."

And in the Examen of Perkins' Predestination, he concedes that "God does not foresee men as believers before He predestines them to believe" (p. 32). And he adds this reason, which is indeed quite sound and strong: "He foresaw," he says, "that they would believe by His gift, which was prepared for them in predestination" (p. 37).

Moreover, in his Theological Disputations, Log. 15, p. [missing], he says that the matter of predestination consists of two things: divine blessings (which are contained under the name of spiritual blessings), and the persons to whom their communication is predestined.

So I ask: how can God elect and predestine based on foreseen faith in men, if in predestination itself the gift of faith is already decreed and prepared for them?

It is ridiculous to say that God, in election, decrees and prepares faith for certain men, and yet chooses these same men on account of the foresight of that very faith which, supposedly, precedes the election itself. As if God were only then deciding to give the gift of faith to this or that particular person after He first saw that they would believe!

To avoid this absurdity, Arminius argues that there are two distinct decrees: one in which God says, "I will give eternal life to the believer," and another, "I will give faith to this person." But if they are distinct decrees (which we do not dispute), why did Arminius himself include both in his definition of predestination?

Moreover, even if they are distinct (which we grant), since predestination or election is of certain persons unto faith, it necessarily follows that this election precedes any foresight of faith in the elect. It must arise from a love in the One who destines this for them, which is not given to others.

Finally, since God chooses particular persons unto faith, while passing over others, it is clear He does not do this ignorantly, as if unaware that this faith would infallibly lead to eternal life. Rather, He ordained and gave the gift of faith to them for this very end.

Therefore, love unto salvation reveals itself toward those not yet believing, by predestining and preparing for them the gift of faith, through which they will believe, and by believing, attain eternal life.

And so you see that this first Arminian objection has no strength at all.

Objection 2:

The actual giving of eternal life is no more restricted than the will to give it.

But the actual giving is restricted to the faithful and presupposes antecedent faith.

Therefore, the will to give eternal life—which is nothing other than election—is also based on foreseen faith. (Examen, p. 35)

Response:

Arminius and nearly all who follow him build many arguments on this principle, but they are unstable and invalid.

Sound philosophy teaches that more things are required as preceding instruments for the production of a work in its outward effect than are required as antecedent motives for the intention or internal determination of the same work in the mind and will of the agent. Suppose someone were to argue like this:

The actual construction of a house is no more restricted than the will to build it.

But the actual building is restricted by the prior fitting together of timber and stones.

Therefore, the will to build is also restricted to these same things and arises from the foresight of them.

What a foolish conclusion! The initial will to build a house did not arise from the foresight of stones and timber already fitted together. Rather, the fitting together of stones and timber followed from the will to build.

In the same way, eternal life in its outward effect—produced and granted to Peter or Paul—presupposes many things, which eternal life, as ordained in God's secret will, does not require beforehand.

To destine someone to eternal life is an immanent act in the mind of God. But to give life or to bring someone to it is a transient act directed outward toward the creature. The former is perfected and completed by the will of God alone; the latter is not perfected except through the many actions of the creature which are prerequisites ordained by God.

It is therefore a gross error to think that this first and eternal predestination of a particular person to life is bound by the same laws as their temporal attainment of that life.

The same God who gave the law to man, “If you believe, I will give you life” or “You will be saved,” never imposed such a law upon Himself: “If you first believe, then I may predestine you to life—otherwise, I may not.”

Objection 3:

Whoever, in their present state, receives eternal life, was also considered by God to be such a person when He predestined them to receive it.

But only the faithful receive it, and no one else.

Therefore, only the faithful, as foreseen to be faithful, are predestined to receive eternal life.
(Examen, p. 37)

Response:

The major premise is quite ambiguous. If it is taken to mean that every person predestined to life existed in the mind of God—as the same person they would be when actually receiving eternal life—even prior to the decree of predestination, then it must be absolutely rejected.

But if the meaning is this: that when God destines the elect to life, He simultaneously from eternity foresees and considers what sort of persons He will make them before bringing them to eternal life, and that He contemplates them as such—namely, as those whom He will make fit to enter into possession of eternal life—then this is most true and cannot be denied, unless one is willing to deny that God foreknows what He Himself is going to do.

But if this is granted, it does not establish election based on the foresight of antecedent faith. Rather, it implies that God's certain foresight of the elect's faith follows from antecedent election, as in the famous saying in Acts 13:48: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

Hence, it is rightly said that God foresees all those who will believe—even before they receive eternal life—as those whom He ordained by the decree of predestination to receive that life.

Therefore, what Prosper said of charity we confidently affirm of faith as well:

"No one is found worthy of so great and ineffable a good; but everyone who is elected by God is made worthy." (De Libero Arbitrio, p. 125)

This learned Father—the scourge of the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians—did not say, "Whoever was foreseen and considered by God as possessing the gift of charity or faith, he was afterward elected by God." Rather, he said: "Whoever was elected by God, he was afterward made a partaker of faith and charity."

So then, whoever is going to receive eternal life was indeed foreseen by God as one who would become faithful—and this before the actual reception of eternal life. But he was not foreseen as being faithful prior to the destination of eternal life itself.

Let us explain the matter with an analogy. Suppose a man of great means, upon seeing a poor and destitute infant, immediately resolves in his heart to adopt him and give him a rich inheritance—but with the condition that he will not actually receive this inheritance until he reaches maturity and becomes well-educated and virtuous.

We would rightly say that the inheritance was destined for this person as considered unlearned, undeveloped, and an infant. Yet it was given to the same person as considered mature,

educated, and refined—and this was done according to the predetermined purpose of the adopter.

If we think similarly regarding the destination and bestowal of eternal inheritance, we can easily see the weakness of the arguments previously stated.

I add no more here, because this same argument—although slightly altered—was also raised at the Hague Conference and has already been refuted by us.

If God predestines certain individuals to life without the foreseen condition of faith, then He must also will to save them without the satisfaction of His justice; and in that case, He would love them more than His own justice. But these conclusions are false. Therefore, so is the premise from which they follow—namely, that God predestines anyone prior to the foreknowledge of faith, which applies Christ's satisfaction to particular persons for salvation.

Response: Not everything that concurs with the will to save someone in the external act also concurs with the eternal will to save as it is enclosed in the secret counsel of election.

Therefore, we deny the consequence of the major premise, and we say that God has never willed to save anyone without the satisfaction of His justice. Yet He has willed to give certain persons to Christ, to give them faith, through which this union is brought about, and through which, by means of this faith, satisfaction is effectively made to God for them through Christ's death. And all of this was willed prior to the foreknowledge of faith as certainly and infallibly existing in them—not, however, without foreknowledge, nor excluding the foreknowledge of faith to be infallibly imparted to them by God's grace.

Such arguments attempt to deceive us by inferring absurd consequences from the absolute denial or exclusion of the foreknowledge of faith, when in truth we only deny that it is a condition antecedent to election itself.

Objection 5:

A predestination not based on the foreknowledge of faith contradicts the nature of eternal life and the titles given to it in Scripture. It is called the inheritance of sons (but only believers are sons), a reward, a prize, a crown of righteousness. Therefore, no one is predestined apart from all consideration and foreknowledge of faith and obedience.

Response:

The nature or condition of eternal life is such that no one can enter into it unless he has first been made a son of God by the Spirit of adoption. But it is not such that no one can be predestined to it unless he has first been made an adopted son. Predestination includes the purpose to adopt. Therefore, it pertains to one who is by nature a child of wrath, whom God, by predestining, makes a vessel of mercy in respect to His purpose; and by justifying, sanctifying, and glorifying him, He makes him a vessel of mercy in act.

So it is rightly required that faith be antecedent, or at least concomitant, for the actual constitution of someone as an adopted son. But it is wrongly required that faith be antecedent to the decree of God to adopt a specific person and destine him for the inheritance.

As for the titles: Eternal life is called a reward or crown of faith and obedience. But predestination to life is never called a reward or crown either of our faith or of our obedience. Eternal life is said to be the reward of faith and good works because it is finally given to believers and to those who live in holiness by divine promise or stipulation. But the benefit of predestination is never shown to have been promised under any condition of antecedent faith or obedience. So it is in vain that these are confused.

Objection 6:

If election is not from foreseen faith, then Christ is excluded from the decree of election, and men are predestined to be saved before Christ is predestined to save them. For those who do not yet believe are still outside of Christ. But Christ was predestined to be the Savior only of the faithful and of those united to Him by faith. Therefore, predestination must be from foreseen faith—or else Christ (which is an impiety to say) is excluded from the decree of election.

The consequence of the major premise wavers. For although the decree of election is directed toward man who is dead and lying in the mass of perdition, nevertheless it is directed in such a way that life is not decreed for him except insofar as he is considered, according to the good pleasure of the divine will, as one to be united to Christ as a member and to be made alive through Christ. And in this sense, they are said to be elected “in Christ,” even though they are not yet considered as ingrafted into Christ through faith. For Christ, the Head of the Church, was so predestined together with all His members that He holds the priority of causality in relation to all the rest, and that from Him and for His sake the outflow of every gracious good is derived to others—not only after they are ingrafted into Christ by faith, but also in such a way that even the benefit of being destined to be ingrafted into Him by faith must be drawn from Him and conferred upon us in Him.

Therefore, what they say—that Christ is predestined to be the Savior of the faithful alone—is indeed true, in the sense that He brings none of the elect to salvation except through faith. But it is not true in the sense that He found faith already present in them prior to the decree of election.

I add, finally, that if election were based on foreseen faith, as Arminius reasons, then the very absurdity he tries to charge us with would in fact follow. For if there were such a law as this: “Whoever believes shall be elected to life,” then it would be manifest that men, not considered in the divine purpose as being in Christ, but as entirely outside of Christ, would merit election by believing—or at least obtain it by covenant. In such an election, the free will of each individual is placed as the foundation rather than Christ—especially when moving from a universal law to the actual election of particular persons.

Objection 7:

If election is not placed upon the condition of foreseen faith, then the whole gospel is overturned. For since the gospel first commands faith and then promises salvation upon the condition of faith, the doctrine of those who oppose Arminius places God as first ordaining salvation for some particular person, and only afterward ordaining faith. The gospel says, “Believe, and you shall live”; but this doctrine says, “Because I will to give you life, therefore I will to give you faith”—which is the very overturning of the gospel. Therefore, either election must be conceded to be from the condition of foreseen faith, or the doctrine of the gospel must be rejected.

Response to Objection 7:

I respond: Let it only be granted that hidden decree of God, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,” and “whom He will He hardens” (Romans 9), that He loved Jacob and hated Esau—this decree made before any consideration of good or evil in them—and we will not concern ourselves in the least about the order of priority or posteriority in the decree of eternal life and of efficacious grace with respect to the elect. For we know that in God there is, in reality, no earlier or later decree. But in the manner of our consideration and in the relation of things to each other, the same decree, compared to another, may be said to be earlier or later, according to a different order of causes.

Thus, the decree to give faith is, in the order of efficient cause, prior to the decree to give life. But the decree to give life is, in the order of final cause, prior to the decree to give faith. For indeed, as Biel rightly says, the end is loved before the means, because the love of the end is in some way the cause of the love of all those things which are for the sake of the end. Since faith is the gift of God, which brings eternal life to the believer, who would dare to say that this gift was prepared and given to Peter or Paul, while eternal life had not yet been destined for them? As though God would bestow a benefit arising from His gift, but had not determined to give that same benefit to the one He willed to enrich with the gift above others.

Let us come closer to the proposed reasoning. We deny that, according to our view, the Gospel is inverted or that anything contrary to the Gospel is contained in it. The Gospel says, “Whoever believes shall be saved.” We say that God, out of His special mercy, has decreed to lead certain persons infallibly to life, and that He infuses steadfast faith into their hearts. The Gospel first commands faith, and then under the condition of faith promises salvation. We teach that God first ordains some particular person to life and then infuses faith into that person’s heart.

I see no conflict or contradiction here. The voice of the Evangelist prescribes to individuals the means by which they may attain eternal life. It therefore sets forth the means under condition, and promises the end through those means. But the decree of the electing God ordains for certain persons both the means and the end—the end through the means, and the means for the sake of the end. Hence, He is said to regard the end first and more principally, because in view of its infallible attainment He purposes to prepare such grace for such a person.

Augustine, who well knew this to be the doctrine of the Gospel, found no contradiction here. The Gospel says, “He who perseveres to the end shall be saved,” and yet he also taught that

perseverance itself is prepared and given to the saints predestined to the kingdom of God before the foundation of the world. To conclude briefly, there is no conflict in these two statements: God first demands the duty of faith from us and then promises the benefit of life; and, because God by His special mercy has chosen some to partake of the benefit of eternal life, He therefore wills to give them faith effectively, that they may fulfill this duty.

Objection 8:

Whoever cannot be saved according to the will of God apart from faith is not predestined to be saved without faith. For there is no hidden will of God that contradicts the revealed will. The revealed will says, "I do not will to save Peter without faith." Therefore, there is no hidden will which decrees to save the same Peter without faith. And so election unto salvation must be based on foreseen faith.

Response to Objection 8:

We answer: It is true that there is no hidden will in God that contradicts the revealed will. But it is false to suppose that to deny foreseen faith as a condition of predestination is to assert that God decrees to save anyone without faith. We do not say that Peter is predestined to salvation without faith, but that he is predestined to be given faith, and through that faith, to salvation.

God has never had a will to save anyone without the satisfaction of His justice; but He has willed to give some to Christ, to grant them faith by which that union would be accomplished, and through which satisfaction would be efficaciously made to God on their behalf by the death of Christ. And all of this is antecedent to the foreknowledge of faith as actually existing in them. Not, however, without foreknowledge altogether, nor by excluding the foreknowledge of that faith which He would infallibly bestow on them by His grace.

Therefore, they try to deceive us with such arguments by deducing those absurdities which would indeed follow from a total exclusion or simple negation of the foreknowledge of faith, but which do not follow from a denial of foreknowledge of faith as an antecedent condition to election.

We acknowledge that no adult can be saved without faith, and that this is so because the divine will has so ordained it—an ordination of His will which He has revealed and proclaimed in the Gospel. We also concede that no adult is predestined to be saved without faith. But this can be taken ambiguously; it therefore requires a clear distinction.

Since to predestine denotes an internal act within the secret counsel of the divine mind, and to save denotes an external effect accomplished in man, we say that no one is predestined to be saved without the foreconsideration of faith insofar as faith is regarded under the notion of a means for producing that external effect. But we deny that no one is predestined to be saved without the foreconsideration of faith under the notion of a motive for producing that internal act.

God saves through faith, and God decrees to save through faith; yet this must be understood in such a way that faith has the relation of a cause or antecedent condition—not with respect to

the decree itself, but with respect to the thing decreed. An effect of the divine will can proceed from some cause which God has eternally foreknown, and He has willed that this order from cause to effect should take place. And this is called a cause of what is willed, not a cause of the willing itself.

Nor does this distinction of ours pit the secret will of God against the revealed. The revealed will does indeed say, "I do not will to save Peter without faith," that is, without faith preceding as the means ordained for effecting his salvation. But the revealed will does not say, "I do not will to save Peter without faith preceding as the motive or condition for forming my eternal good pleasure regarding his salvation."

Therefore, from the revealed will of God it is not rightly inferred that Peter was elected to salvation, but rather that Peter was brought to salvation by a faith that preceded as the appointed means.

Indeed, from the revealed Word of God it is rightly inferred that both faith and perseverance in faith depend upon a prior election or ordination to life. To this pertain those passages: Acts 13:48, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed," and Matthew 24:24, "[The deceivers] would lead even the elect into apostasy, if that were possible." Therefore, that some believe and that believers do not fall away from the faith flows from antecedent election—not, as Arminius claims, because they were foreseen to believe and to persevere in the faith, and were therefore elected above others.

We will not pile up more objections from the writings of Arminius, for once these are refuted, it becomes easy to dissolve all the rest, which are of the same kind.

We shall now proceed at last to present our own defense and confirm it with arguments.

Chapter VI

The orthodox view is explained and confirmed.

You have heard the arguments of the adversaries for that election which is based on antecedent faith. Let our own position now be set forth, which will demonstrate that election or predestination of particular persons to the infallible attainment of eternal life flows from the mere good pleasure of God's mercy.

Nor am I unaware that the Remonstrants everywhere claim that the election they defend rests upon the grace and mercy of God alone, and not upon any merits or worthiness of men. But since they refer the whole difference between the elect and the non-elect to foreseen faith and unbelief, it is manifest that this difference is traced back to the worthiness or unworthiness of men. For the faith of Peter and his perseverance in faith carries with it a certain moral worthiness, just as the unbelief of Judas and his hardening therein carries moral unworthiness.

This becomes even clearer when it is understood that Peter's very faith and perseverance are not presupposed as something prepared for him out of any special good pleasure of God, or granted by any special bounty, but only offered in the sufficient administration of means—just as it was offered also to those who remained unbelieving. Peter, by the good use of his own free will, is said to have acquired and retained it; from which his election followed.

According to their view, therefore, if one were to ask: Why did these believe, and those not believe? Why did these persevere, and those not persevere? Why were these predestined to eternal life, and those not?—all such questions are resolved by the will and choice of human free will.

But according to our view, we must ascend higher. And though we attribute to the wickedness and destruction of the unbelieving the blame of their ruin, we nevertheless consider the faith of believers, their perseverance, and even their very predestination to eternal life as to be derived from the special good pleasure of God, and from the special operation answering to that good pleasure.

Nor is it necessary here to dispute curiously whether God first decrees eternal life for the elect, and then efficacious grace, or the other way around. It suffices to show that certain particular persons, known only to God, are predestined, prepared for, and given both efficacious grace and glory.

For the Remonstrants say and defend that the decree of predestination or election does not apply to anyone whom God has not foreseen and considered as one who believes and perseveres in faith to the very end of life. But we say that predestination precedes this foreknowledge; so that only those are foreseen and considered by God as believing and persevering who have already been decreed by God, according to His antecedent purpose of election, to be made such and to be led to eternal life.

We therefore reject those axioms of Faustus the Semi-Pelagian, which do not differ much from the views of the Remonstrants, such as: "The salvation of men is not placed in the predestination of the Maker, but in the operation of the servant's will"; "There was no special bounty of God concerning believers"; "Predestination is not the cause of good works, but pertains to justice"; and "Unless foreknowledge has examined beforehand, predestination decrees nothing."

To all these we oppose this statement of ours: that predestination of particular persons unto life arises from the mere good pleasure of God and not from any foreseen operations of the human will. Indeed, we affirm that the grace of election is the prior cause and fountain of all good works which lead to eternal life, not their reward or consequence.

Let us now proceed to the arguments and demonstrate that the first distinction between the elect and the passed-by is made by the mere good pleasure of God, not by foreseen faith on the one hand and unbelief on the other.

First argument: We derive it from various definitions of predestination. Augustine defines it this way: "Predestination is the foreknowledge and preparation of the benefits of God, by which whomever He liberates are most certainly liberated" [praedestinatio est praescientia et praeparatio beneficiorum Dei, quibus certissime liberantur quicunque liberantur].

Here it must be noted that God foreknows those benefits or gifts of grace, by the application of which He will liberate certain particular persons whom He has elected; then, He prepares all these things for them, and finally, just as He foreknew and prepared them, He bestows them in due time.

What could possibly be conceived here that does not flow from the mere good pleasure of God, preceding every act of the human will? For God foreknew in the elect those gifts of grace which He predestined and prepared for them according to His free benevolence, when He chose them in Christ.

As is clearly gathered also from the Apostle in Ephesians 1:3–4, and elsewhere. If anyone here, in order to obscure the pure mercy of God, brings forth foreseen faith as a cause or antecedent condition, he is speaking nonsense, since faith is one of the chief of those benefits which, according to the decree of predestination, are prepared for the elect.

But setting aside Augustine's definition, let us hear the Schoolmen themselves. Aquinas says that predestination is nothing other than the preparation of grace in the present and of glory in the future. But for man, corrupted and lost in the mass [of perdition], we cannot even suspect that this grace and glory is prepared for him based on any antecedent consideration of persevering faith in that same man. For it would be ridiculous to say that God decrees and prepares that very grace for a man which He first considered as already had and possessed by that man.

The same Aquinas elsewhere says: "Predestination is a certain rational order of some to eternal salvation, existing in the Divine mind" [praedestinatio est quaedam ratio ordinis aliquorum in salutem aeternam in mente divina existens]. And he immediately adds: "The execution of this order is passive in the predestined, and active in God." If predestination is the ordaining of certain persons to salvation, then we should not imagine that men were first ordained to life through persevering faith—even placed, so to speak, at the threshold of heaven—before they are elected or predestined by God.

But let us hear even the Jesuits, the most bitter enemies of our defense. Thus Vasquez says: "Predestination is the eternal purpose of God by which He prepares grace for someone unto eternal life." The purpose which prepares grace that infallibly leads to eternal life cannot depend on foreseen human faith, since that very faith is the grace of which we are speaking. Therefore it must be referred to the mere good pleasure ["eudokia"] of God.

This truth is so clear that it drew from the Jesuit the candid confession: "The distinction between the predestined and the reprobate begins before their consent is foreseen absolutely; therefore,

before foreseen faith or any other merits, which cannot even be conceived without the consent of the human will."

Finally, let even Arminius himself be heard: "Predestination," he says, "is the decree of God's good pleasure in Christ, by which He determined from eternity to give eternal life to the faithful, whom He had decreed to give faith to." Here there are two decrees involved in predestination: one—"I will give life to every believer"; the other—"I will give faith to these certain persons." Both are from God's good pleasure and pure mercy, and neither depends on foreseen faith or any human work.

Therefore it is in vain that they premise the condition of foreseen faith to predestination, which all the theologians acknowledge—even in the very definition of predestination itself—to be gratuitous and the source of faith and all saving grace.

And so this forms our first argument, drawn from the common consensus of the theologians in defining predestination itself.

Argument II. The second argument is taken from the nature of special, liberating grace—and specifically from the grace which in fact saves. For as Augustine rightly observed, predestination is not the preparation of just any kind of grace, but of such grace that is in fact saving. This kind of grace, namely the one that actually saves, is the effect of predestination.

If therefore this grace brings about faith in the hearts of the elect—rather than finding it already there—then even more must the election itself, which is the cause of this grace being given, be purely gratuitous and dependent on no prior act of the human will, but solely on the Divine good pleasure.

Thus the Apostle says: "He saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace" (2 Timothy 1:9). This grace is not excluded by any evil merits, nor obtained by any good ones (Prosper, Response to the Gauls, ch. 8).

This grace makes us willing, makes us act, makes us believe. This grace works good wills in men (Augustine, On the Grace of Christ, ch. 24). In a word—as Augustine most excellently states in On the Gift of Perseverance, ch. 15—this grace precedes faith, precedes the will, precedes all our obedience. And all these things it works in the one to whom it is given, and in whom it precedes all these very effects.

To all this I add what the adversaries will not dare to deny: that such grace is given by God with this intention—that all these effects be produced in the elect, and in those called according to His purpose.

Therefore, since this special and efficacious grace, which produces faith and conversion, does not require any antecedent condition of our faith, but is given to some and not to others according to the most free will of the Giver or Withholder, it is clear that predestination itself—which is the cause of such grace being prepared and given—is not bound to any antecedent acts of human free will, but is established in the free and gratuitous good pleasure of

God Himself, according to the Apostle: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" (Romans 9:15).

Argument III.

We argue thirdly from the authority of the Scriptures, both affirmatively and negatively, in this way: The Scriptures frequently mention the will or good pleasure [beneplacitum] of God as the cause of our predestination. But they never state that foreseen faith is the cause, condition, or antecedent of predestination. Therefore, we must not transfer this ineffable benefit of predestination from the pure good pleasure of God to foreseen faith.

The following passages are to the point: Romans 9:11 – "When the children had not yet done either good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand..."; and Ephesians 1:11 – "In whom we were also chosen, being predestinated according to His purpose," and other similar passages.

On the other hand, the adversaries cannot produce even a single jot of Scripture that suggests men were elected above others on account of the condition of foreseen faith in them. But if the decree of predestination presupposes the condition of faith, and election follows upon the fulfillment of that condition, then this stipulation must be demonstrated from the Holy Scriptures. For to invent promises or covenants outside the Word of God is the height of rashness.

I therefore ask: where is this promise found—"If you believe, you will be predestinated"? Or: "Whoever shall believe will be predestinated"? There is indeed the promise: "Whoever believes shall be saved," because God requires the condition of faith as an antecedent for the salvation decreed. But no such promise exists—"Whoever believes," or "Whoever is foreseen to believe," "shall be predestinated"—because God does not require faith as an antecedent to His decree.

But the delegates at the Hague Colloquy reply: First, that they never posit foreseen faith as the cause of election, and therefore they do not contradict the Scriptures, which affirm that God's eudokia or good pleasure alone is its cause. Indeed, they even profess in explicit words that the cause why God elected any particular person unto salvation was not that person's faith, but solely His good pleasure, grace—indeed, His mere grace.

But all of this is merely a verbal game. For whoever posits the act of persevering faith as a condition required by God, which He always considers in electing and whose absence is the reason He passes by others—he ascribes to faith a causal, indeed meritorious, power. This is true in the same sense in which the term merit is used by Augustine and the other theologians in their disputes against the Pelagians.

Thus Augustine says, "Who would say that he who has already begun to believe merits nothing from Him in whom he believes?" Nor does Augustine merely argue that such a benefit is given on the basis of merit when it is given due to a prior condition of faith—but what is especially noteworthy is that all who have suspended election to life on the condition of faith have thereby acknowledged a dignity and antecedent merit in the elect.

So Prosper, in his Epistle to Augustine, where he explains the view of those who were called remnants of the Pelagians, says: "As far as God is concerned, they say that eternal life is prepared for all; but as far as the liberty of the will is concerned, it is attained only by those who believe in God of their own accord, and who, on account of the merit of their belief, receive the help of grace."

Likewise, Hilary, writing to Augustine on the same subject, shows that those who rejected election according to God's purpose and introduced election based on the foreknowledge of faith and repentance, also acknowledged in this faith and conversion the merit and cause of election. He writes: "By that merit by which they were willing to be healed and believed they could be healed of their sickness," etc. And a little later: "If any kind of sorrow arises, they say this very sorrow is the cause why one is chosen and another rejected."

Finally, Faustus of Riez, who very diligently defended the opinion of the Semi-Pelagians, not only posits election based on foreseen faith, but also does not deny that this election is made on account of merit. "Foreknowledge," he says, "sees beforehand what will happen; afterwards predestination assigns reward. The former foresees merits, the latter preordains rewards."

Therefore, the Remonstrants are overly subtle and depart from their forebears when they say that God elects men according to the foreknowledge of faith and yet deny that foreseen faith is the cause of election.

Secondly, they respond: Even if it is not found in so many words in the Scriptures that "God has elected us on the condition that we believe in Him," it nevertheless cannot be concluded from this that God did not regard faith in His act of election.

But we reply: Not only is it not found in so many words, but there are no equivalent expressions, nor any from which such a statement could rightly be deduced in Scripture. Yet we do not deny every kind of respect or reference to faith in the one electing. For He regards and considers faith as something to be generated by Himself in the elect, as the means by which one attains eternal life—not as a condition that is previously supplied or to be supplied by men, by which they attain election itself.

Lastly, the Remonstrants say that we are mistaken when we oppose God's good pleasure or mere grace to foreseen faith in the matter of predestination, as if they were contraries—to choose "from mere grace and good pleasure" and to choose "from foreseen faith." For the Apostle concludes from the fact that the inheritance is by faith, that it is therefore by grace (Romans 4:16).

But there is not the same relationship between predestination or election and the attaining of the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom. In the matter of election, to be "of faith" and to be "of grace" are contraries, because this faith is presupposed by election, which is unto the first grace and is the fountain of all saving grace. But in the case of attaining eternal life, they are not contraries, because this faith is itself a gift of pure grace—and thus the reward of life given to the believer is grace for grace.

Moreover, since God proposed to mankind a twofold way of attaining salvation—one through the works of the Law, “Do this and you shall live,” and the other through faith in the Mediator, “Believe and you shall be saved”—it is rightly said that what is given through faith is given from grace, just as what is given through works is given from the Law. For it was the singular benefit of the Evangelical grace to save sinners by faith, with the legal covenant having been relaxed.

But now, on the other hand, the Remonstrants will never be able to prove that God ordained a twofold method of predestinating men: one according to works, and the other according to faith. Therefore, if certain men were elected because they performed the act of believing, and others were not elected because they omitted that same act, this distinction would arise not from any special covenant or act of divine grace, but from the differing acts of human wills.

In that case, Peter’s predestination would not arise from any special grace of God, but from a special work of Peter—because believing would be considered here as a work of free will, though prevented by grace, set in contrast to the contrary act of disbelieving—not as a work of some Evangelical covenant, opposed to a Legal covenant, since in the case of predestination there are no such covenants extant on either side.

Argument 4

We argue, fourthly, from the distinction in Divine calling, which even the Jesuits and Arminians are forced to acknowledge. Our reasoning is as follows:

If God calls certain people with a particular kind of calling—which the Apostle in Romans 8:28 calls “a calling according to purpose”; which Prosper refers to as “a special calling” (On the Calling of the Gentiles, 2.23); which Augustine calls “a calling by which one becomes a believer” (On the Predestination of the Saints, ch. 16), and “a calling according to purpose, by which God fulfills what He predestinated” (ch. 17), and also “a hidden grace which no hardened heart resists” (ch. 8); and which the Jesuits themselves refer to as “congruous and high calling”—if, I say, there exists such a calling, proper to the elect and to them alone, then it is clear that God predestined them with a will that precedes the foreknowledge of their faith.

For the administration of means corresponds to the intention of obtaining an end by those means. In this calling, God administers to the elect—and to the elect alone—means that He knows will be infallibly effective, and He administers them in such a way that they are infallibly effective. And this He does before any foreknowledge of faith or conversion in them.

That such means are prepared for certain individuals by the mere good pleasure of God and not from foreseen faith is evident, since the infallible production of faith and repentance follows from such a calling as an effect from its cause. For if such means had been prepared and administered in the same way to men—even the most hardened—they too would have believed and been converted.

Thus Augustine, disputing concerning the predestined and the non-elect from the passage “Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me” (John 6:45), says: “These are the men whom God teaches to come to Christ; these are all those whom He wills to be

saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For if He had willed to teach even those to whom the word of the cross is foolishness, so that they would come to Christ, without doubt they too would come.”

In this special calling, therefore, we must acknowledge a special and antecedent will to save those who are thus called. About this Augustine also says: “To God willing to save, no human will resists.” But “to God willing to save on condition that men are willing to believe, the will of many resists.” Therefore, He wills to save certain people by an absolute good pleasure that goes before and causes their faith—not one that presupposes it.

This very consideration drove Arminius to admit that God does not operate equally for the conversion and salvation of all men (Examen, p. 209). But he who works prudently directs and governs the manner of his operation by the intention of the end. Therefore, there was a special will and intention to save certain individuals before the foreknowledge of their faith. From this proceeded that special divine calling and operation which generated faith in their hearts.

Indeed, even Vorstius, having considered this special calling of certain persons, concedes that God exercises toward some an extraordinary kind of mercy, which is free and absolute with respect to any promise. And concerning this, that statement is true: “He has mercy on whom He wills” (Romans 9:15), as cited in Piscator’s Responsio Apologetica, p. 17.

I summarize this reasoning as follows:

There is a certain special calling of mercy, administered to some men—not because they were considered as believers, but because they were predestined to become believers. This calling flows from an antecedent will which destined them infallibly to eternal life.

This calling is not common to all, but belongs only to the elect.

Therefore, election depends on the good pleasure of God—not on the acts of men.

Therefore, election is unto faith, not from faith.

For by this calling, the will of any predestined person is stirred effectually so that he believes, even if that same will was formerly so averse to faith that he persecuted those who believed, as Augustine says in Against the Two Epistles of the Pelagians, Book 1, Chapter 19.

Argument 5

We prove, from the inseparable adjunct of election or predestination, that it depends not on our faith but on the mere good pleasure of God.

For election implies certainty of salvation with respect to the elect person—and this not merely the certainty of knowledge (for God, from all eternity, has the most certain knowledge even of those things that are most contingent), but the certainty of causality, by which the grace of predestination so works that it certainly leads the predestined person to eternal life.

Hence that saying in Matthew 24:24: "So as to deceive, if it were possible, even the elect." And Romans 11:5: "A remnant according to the election of grace." And Ephesians 1:11: "In whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his will."

Thus, with respect to God, the salvation of the elect is certain, because He has determined by the decree of election to act in marvelous ways within their hearts so as to bring them to faith and repentance, to preserve them in faith and newness of life, and finally to cause them to die in the same.

But in that Arminian predestination, where foreseen faith draws election after it, there is no certainty of salvation from a God who specifically causes it—but only from a God who foresees it. For in the four decrees of Arminius, by which he describes the nature of predestination, there is none which brings certainty of salvation to any particular person by the mode of a cause that works infallibly. Rather, he leaves the salvation of the elect as certain to God only in the mode of an observer.

First, he posits a decree of giving a Mediator.

Second, he adds another, about saving those who believe and persevere because of that Mediator.

Third, about administering the means necessary for faith.

Fourth, about saving those whom He foresees will believe and persevere by the help of those means.

In the first three, it is manifest that there is no certainty of causality, since these are granted indiscriminately to all, and yet few are saved. In the last decree, there arises a certainty of salvation with respect to individuals—but one that comes from God's infinite knowledge, which grasps future contingents with present and certain vision, not from any special will or divine efficiency preordaining or causing the thing to be so.

For God, by foreknowing, did not cause the elect to persevere above others and thus obtain eternal life; rather, the elect, by persevering, caused God to foreknow it. And so, according to the law He had established, He was bound to decree for them the crown of life.

In such a predestination, which by its own nature gives no certainty of salvation to any individual person, I find nothing that has the flavor of true predestination.

Argument 6

We argue, sixthly, from the event, in this way:

That general decree by which God determined to save any men under a certain condition—along with another decree to supply sufficient grace to all men for the fulfillment of that condition—will never actually save anyone.

We therefore cannot base the nature of predestination on such decrees, which not only look to the order toward an end but also to the event and outcome of that order—and that outcome must be infallible and unfrustratable, as Thomas rightly noted (*De Praedestinatione*, Art. 1, q. 12).

This is illustrated by the example of our first parents, who were in some way ordained to eternal life under the condition of obedience, and were most fully equipped to fulfill that condition—yet, under that ordination, they fell into the guilt of death.

Whatever may be said about a feeble possibility, it is certain in terms of outcome that the human will always fails, unless it is upheld and directed by a special grace flowing from a special decree of election.

Therefore, no election of individual persons will ever follow from those general decrees alone, since God never foresaw any individual person as persevering to the end to whom He had not already, by a prior decree of election, destined the gift of perseverance.

The reason for this was brought forward by Prosper in *On the Calling of the Gentiles*, Book 1, Chapter 6: namely, that even amidst the very helps of divine grace, human nature is always inclined toward the worse.

And hence Augustine does not make God—like the Arminians do—first the observer of our perseverance and then the predestinator, but rather first the predestinator and then the giver of perseverance. “To the saints predestinated by the grace of God for the kingdom of God,” he says, “the perseverance itself is also given—not only so that without this gift they would be unable to persevere, but also so that by this gift they would infallibly persevere.”

Indeed, so far is it from being the case that the election of any particular person follows from that general decree—“Whoever believes shall be saved”—with God’s providence administering the means of sufficient grace indiscriminately to all and leaving the outcome to human free will, that to leave it to that free will is nothing other than to abandon it.

Let me sum up all of this.

These are not true and formal decrees of predestination—decrees in which, even when all are posited, no one is decreed, no one is foreseen as saved. For when those Arminian decrees are posited—namely, of giving life under the condition of faith and persevering obedience; of supplying sufficient means to bring about faith and perseverance; and of God observing what each individual will do after these means have been administered—still, no one is as yet decreed to be saved, no one foreseen, as is evident from the example of the apostate angels, of our first parents, and thus of all mortals who, under however great or small a help of sufficient

grace, were left to their own free will and were not predestined by the gratuitous good pleasure of God either to life or to the means of obtaining life.

For it is the constant opinion of all the theologians—excepting the ancient and modern Pelagians—that neither any angel nor any man ever actually obtained, or ever will obtain, beatitude by that grace which is called “sufficient” and is claimed to be administered to all.

Argument 7

Seventh, we argue from the absurdity or contradiction which burdens the opinion of those who suspend the divine act of election upon the prior act of human faith and perseverance.

For from this it would follow that neither the formal nor the material number of the elect would be certain or definite according to any decree of the divine good pleasure—but that these particular persons, in this particular number, should be saved would have happened merely by accident, namely, from the contingent act of human free will, foreseen by God but not foreordained.

The ancient Semi-Pelagians saw that this necessarily followed from the aforementioned opinion, and therefore they openly taught this, as if it contained nothing absurd in itself.

Thus Faustus, *On Free Will*, Book 1: “The state of man may vary in different ways, not by God’s appointment, but by the freedom of the will.”

And in Book 2, Chapter 2: “What God ought to foreknow and foreordain concerning us depends on the future progress or failure of man.”

But the remnants of the Pelagians stated it even more openly in their letters to Augustine, as seen in Prosper and Hilary.

Thus Prosper: “They do not acquiesce in the idea of a predestined number of the elect that can neither be increased nor diminished.”

And Hilary: “They do not accept that there should be a fixed number of those to be chosen and rejected.”

Among more recent Jesuits, Lessius—who treated this matter more explicitly—confidently asserts: “There is little or no mention of complete predestination in the Scriptures, because it does not depend on the bare good pleasure of God, but on human perseverance.” (*On Predestination and Reprobation*, p. 367).

Indeed, he even teaches that “God’s intention concerning the number of the saved was not absolute before the foreknowledge of the end of the world.”

If these things were so, there would be no difference between the elect and the passed-over arising from divine operation, but only from human activity. Peter would not have been more

ordained by God to eternal life than Judas. Rather, because Peter, by believing and persevering, satisfied this universal decree—"Whoever perseveres in faith shall be saved"—and Judas did not satisfy it, therefore Peter was received into the number of the elect, and Judas was excluded.

But all these things are plainly absurd and contrary to the Scriptures, which teach that some are "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and blameless," Ephesians 1:4—not because they were granted faith above others, but because they were ordained by God from sheer mercy unto life above others, as in Matthew 11:25–26, Acts 13:48, John 6:36, and elsewhere in many places.

Argument 8

Eighth, we argue as follows: No one has ever been foreseen as having persevering faith to whom God had not already decreed to impart this exceptional gift. But if God has already decreed to give perseverance to Peter, Paul, or any particular individual, then it is evident that this person has already been elected and ordained by God unto life. For, as Augustine writes *On the Gift of Perseverance*, in the gift of perseverance itself lies the infallible ordination unto eternal life.

It is, therefore, more consistent with reason that God should elect particular persons unto life on the basis of the foreknowledge of His own gift—one which He never gave or decreed to give except to those whom He had already predestined unto eternal life.

I see nothing in this argument that could in any way be shaken or cast into doubt. For, first, if anyone were to say that persevering faith could be foreseen in some to whom God had not yet decreed to grant perseverance, he would be deriving so great a good not from the divine gift but from human free will. But all of Scripture cries out against this, showing that the perseverance of the saints flows from the gift of God.

"I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" (Jer. 32:40). "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil" (2 Thess. 3:3).

And Augustine, following the Scriptures, clearly taught that both the possibility and the will to persevere are given by the bounty of divine grace to the saints predestined unto the kingdom of God, and not given to others. Therefore, the statement of Aquinas is entirely true: "The will of God by which He wills this good to someone in loving him is the cause that this good is had by him rather than by others" (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 23, a. 4).

Second, since perseverance is neither given nor destined except to those elect and appointed unto eternal life, it is clear that, from an agent who understands the power and efficacy of the means, means that are infallibly effective in attaining the end are never prepared or bestowed upon anyone except from the intention and purpose of that end.

To this pertains Peter's statement: "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Pet. 1:5). God inspires faith in our hearts, and preserves that inspired faith so that it

is not extinguished; and for this reason He does so—that through faith we may be brought to salvation. Therefore, the salvation of all those to whom He has decreed to give persevering faith was most certain with God.

This argument has strongly tormented both the Arminians and the Jesuits. While the Arminians do not dare openly to deny that persevering faith is a gift of God, yet they timidly deny that the act by which God gives faith is always effective and invincible. And further they teach that, when God gives men the power to come to Him, faith is already prepared for them as a gift—provided they continue in this grace. Without doubt they hold the same view concerning perseverance, namely, that this gift is nothing other than that sufficient grace by which is given to men the power to persevere if they are willing.

But such a gift does not indicate any antecedent predestination unto eternal life; for in this way faith and perseverance would be given to those who never have had, nor ever will have, either faith, or perseverance, or eternal life. But these ideas cohere little—neither with one another nor with the Scriptures.

They do not cohere with one another: for faith or perseverance given to a particular person on God's part implies that it has been obtained and possessed on man's part. Some gifts are of such a nature that they involve the very reception of them; without such reception, they cannot even be understood as having been given. Such a gift is the good will of the believer and the one who perseveres, which has never been given by God to any man who did not receive it.

Therefore, when they say that when the power to believe or to persevere (for the case is the same) is given, faith and perseverance are already prepared as gifts for men—they stray far from the purpose of the question under consideration. For the question is not about a gift prepared and offered and conditionally to be given to certain persons—or not to be given—but about a gift truly and actually bestowed upon certain persons.

Furthermore, this Arminian interpretation of faith and perseverance as gifts clashes with the Scriptures. For Scripture says that faith is given to those to whom it is granted actually to believe, not to those to whom it is only granted to be able to believe (Phil. 1:29). Likewise, perseverance is pronounced to be given not to those who could have persevered but fell away, but to those who were so strengthened and supported by divine grace that they actually persevered.

Augustine proves this at length in *On the Gift of Perseverance*, chapters 11 and 12, where he shows that now all the predestined in Christ are given that which was not given to Adam—namely, such an aid that through it they may not only be able to persevere if they will, but also that they may will and truly persevere.

From this gift, specially prepared and given to certain persons, we conclude that eternal life was antecedently destined for those same persons.

Vásquez the Jesuit, when pressed on the absolute and gratuitous predestination of certain persons to faith and perseverance, responded by admitting that it is indeed most true that

predestination to receive grace does not depend on foreseen merits or actions of ours—but he asserted that election unto glory does depend on such foreseen merits, and that this is the perpetual doctrine of the Scriptures and of Augustine.

But the Jesuit strives in vain to separate what both Scripture and Augustine—the best interpreter of Scripture in this matter—taught to be most intimately joined. For Scripture acknowledges no other election or predestination unto effectual grace than that which is connected with the efficacious will to give glory. And this will, according to our manner of conceiving things, is prior to the will of giving effectual grace and is itself the cause and rule of that will.

Hence we are said to be predestined unto the adoption of sons (Eph. 1:5), which clearly denotes not only the destination to grace but also to glory, that is, to the heavenly inheritance.

Likewise, Christ speaking of the predestined says in Luke 12:32, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Here, the will to give the kingdom is asserted as the peculiar cause of that providence which God exercises toward the elect—namely, that He preserves them and causes them to persevere despite dangers and temptations.

Therefore, the will to give glory—that is, election unto life—is the reason why some persevere rather than others; not foreseen perseverance as the reason why some were elected above others.

Augustine derives predestination to grace from the will to give glory, and he presents this will as just as gratuitous in God as the other. I will show this with a few testimonies because Vásquez so confidently asserts that Augustine never even hinted that election to glory could be anything but based on foreseen human merits.

First, Prosper affirms that this was Augustine’s position when he writes to him: “Be pleased to explain to us how, by this preaching of the purpose of God, by which those are made faithful who were preordained unto eternal life, none of those who are to be exhorted are hindered, etc.” Augustine had therefore taught that the gratuitous election of some to eternal life did not arise from foreseen faith, but rather that from this election proceeds both faith and all efficacious grace.

Second, Augustine himself clearly professes in these words: “Those who are not predestined to His kingdom and glory are only temporary [believers], and will not persevere in obedience to the end” (De bono perseverantiae, ch. 22). From this it is clear that Augustine understood predestination to mean the efficacious will of God to bestow glory, and he simultaneously affirms that the perseverance of the saints flows from this antecedent will—not that this will of predestining unto glory comes from the foresight of their perseverance.

Third, in *De Corruptione et Gratia*, he frequently speaks of election and predestination unto the kingdom—not as suspended on foreseen human merits, but as the cause and source of efficacious grace, faith, and perseverance that flows from it. In chapter 7 he writes: “They are

elected by the election of grace, not by any preceding merits of their own, because all merit is of grace to them." And shortly thereafter, "They are elected to reign with Christ." And again in chapter 12: "To the saints predestined unto the kingdom of God by grace is given perseverance itself."

Finally, Prosper, that most learned disciple of Augustine, holds the same opinion. For he writes: "With God there is a certain and definite number of the predestined people unto eternal life, and they are the elect according to the purpose of the One who calls" (*De libero arbitrio*, pp. 125–126). He therefore affirms predestination not only unto suitable or efficacious grace—as Vásquez wishes—but unto eternal life itself. And he declares this election unto life to be plainly gratuitous, arising from the purpose of Him who calls, not from the foreseen merits of those who are called.

To complete the argument, then: the Jesuit has departed from the mind of Scripture and Augustine, and he has been deceived in this—namely, that he clumsily confuses and conflates the very introduction into eternal life with election or destination unto eternal life. For the elect are not introduced into eternal life unless preceded by merits (as the Fathers speak), that is, by faith and holy obedience. But they are predestined unto life, and unto this very faith and obedience, according to the gratuitous purpose of God, and not by the foresight of any merits whatsoever.

Argument 9. There is a single and uniform basis for predestination—both in regard to the Head and to the members, and also among the members themselves. That is: if the predestination of Christ to the office of Mediator and Savior was gratuitous and not on account of any foreseen merits, then much more should our predestination unto the benefit of salvation be considered gratuitous. Further: if it is manifest that some members of Christ were predestined to eternal life without any regard to the condition of foreseen faith or perseverance, then the same must be affirmed of all the rest. For it is beyond doubt that predestination—whether it includes or excludes prerequisite conditions—is uniform.

Concerning the first point: if one asks, How was Christ predestined to be the Savior?—was it according to God's gratuitous good pleasure, or according to a foreseen merit of works?—then listen to Augustine himself: "There is also the most illustrious light of predestination and grace, namely, the Savior Himself, the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus: what preceding merits of works or of faith did that human nature which is in Him have, that it might attain to this?" (*De praedestinatione sanctorum*, ch. 15).

Now, regarding the second point, namely the uniformity of predestination among Christ's members: it is clear that many members of Christ have been predestined to eternal life without any antecedent consideration of their faith or perseverance in it. For since persevering faith is only considered in those who make use of reason and free will, it follows necessarily that all who die in infancy and are saved were predestined to salvation without regard to such faith. Yet many die at that age concerning whose salvation the Church has never doubted. Therefore, many have been both elected and saved in whom this foresight of faith and perseverance could have no place.

From this argument about elect infants, Augustine repeatedly silences the Pelagians—who established predestination unto life on the basis of foreseen merits—in works such as *De praedestinatione et gratia*, ch. 7; *De bono perseverantiae*, chs. 8 and 12; *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*, book 1, ch. 21; and *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum*, book 2, ch. 7.

Prosper supports him in *De libero arbitrio*, pp. 125–126: “In infants there is neither preceding nor future devotion that is chosen. I speak of those who, as soon as they are born, are reborn and taken from this life, are appointed to eternal blessedness.” Grevinchovius, caught by this argument in his *Disputation on Election from Foreseen Faith*, p. 143, finally sinks so far as to call into doubt whether there is any election of infants at all.

But to whom eternal life belongs, to them election unto eternal life undoubtedly belongs as well, since the number of the glorified does not exceed the number of the predestined or elect. For “those whom He predestined, He also glorified,” and no others—as Augustine rightly explained in his exposition of that place from the Apostle (*De libero arbitrio*, loc. cit.).

So too Saint Prosper: “None shall come to share the inheritance of Christ except those who were elected and predestined and foreordained before the foundation of the world, according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (p. 126b).

If, then, some infants are granted the heavenly inheritance, it follows that some are also predestined or elected. But perhaps Grevinchovius meant that all infants are saved indiscriminately, and therefore that there is no distinct election of infants. But to this one unsound disputant I oppose the judgment of the Catholic Church, which has always held that all infants are born children of wrath, but not all are reborn—only those whom God, by His undeserved grace, is pleased to regenerate.

In sum: Christ was not predestined on the basis of any foreseen merit; nor were Christian infants. Therefore, neither are the rest of the faithful, whose election is of one and the same kind, and of the same nature, as the election of their Head and of one another.

In the comparative election and rejection of men, there lies a certain unfathomable abyss—an arcane mystery that must not be pried into by any human curiosity. For if it were to be reduced to the calculations of human reason, it would carry the appearance of injustice: namely, that out of two persons altogether equal, one is appointed to life by the gracious good pleasure of God, and the other is left aside.

This is clearly shown by the Apostle in Romans 9, where, after declaring the gratuitous election of Jacob and the passing over of Esau, he immediately addresses the objection which human reason raises—namely, that if such a good pleasure be posited, whereby before the children were born and had done nothing good or evil, one is loved and the other hated, then there must be some injustice with God (verse 14). This objection he does not resolve by a solution, but teaches that it must be referred to the unfathomable depth of divine wisdom and judgment (chapter 10, verses 33–34).

All the Orthodox have acknowledged such a mystery in the matter of predestination and reprobation, and they reject predestination based on foreseen human acts by this very argument: that it removes the mystery. For if Peter were predestined because he was foreseen by God as one who would believe and persevere in faith, and Judas was passed over because he was foreseen as one who would die in unbelief, then the reason for predestination and non-predestination would already be publicly known, and there would be no mystery left in it.

But Saint Augustine takes a very different view in *Contra duas Epistolas Pelagianorum*, book 4, chapter 6: "Why God makes these men sheep and not those, when there is no respect of persons with Him, is a question that belongs to that deep mystery."

So too Prosper, in *De vocatione gentium*, book 1, chapter 22: "In vain do they attempt to open the depth of inscrutable grace through free will, who place the cause of election in the merits of those who are elected." And again, in the final chapter: "The depth of that question, which we confess according to the Apostle's admiration to be impenetrable, is not solved by the willing and not-willing of free will."

What was rightly said long ago by the Catholics against the Semi-Pelagians, we likewise press against the Arminians who posit election from the foresight of faith and final perseverance: If these things are so, then "the judgments of God" that you claim to believe are actually "comprehended" by you. But we, believing and demonstrating that God's judgments are incomprehensible, say that from one mass of perdition, some are saved by the goodness and grace of God, while others are justly and secretly left behind—so said Peter the Deacon in *De Incarnatione*, chapter 7.

Therefore, the opinion of all those must be rejected who so easily give a ready explanation of why some are elected and others rejected—an explanation that neither the orthodox Fathers nor the Apostle himself, who was caught up into the third heaven, could offer.

That doctrine fails to explain rightly predestination or election, because it acknowledges no fruit or efficacy of election in terms of directing the elect along the path of salvation, preserving them, and finally bringing them to the goal itself.

But the Holy Scriptures denote a special operation and providence of God flowing from the decree of election, which delivers the elect from all evils that would otherwise impede their salvation. Toward this point tend the words of Christ the Savior in Matthew 24: "So that, if it were possible, even the elect would be deceived," and "For the sake of the elect those days shall be shortened."

Such is the decree of election, that on account of it, God takes upon Himself the task of removing every obstacle that would hinder the salvation of the elect, and of providing for them the means which will infallibly bring about that salvation.

To this also pertains the Apostle's statement in Romans 8:28, "All things work together for good to those who are predestined and called according to purpose"—namely, because by the special

providence of God, all things are so directed that even those which seem most hostile to their salvation nevertheless promote it.

Now let us directly oppose that kind of election which the Arminians imagine, namely election from the foreknowledge of antecedent persevering faith. Such an election removes all operative power from the decree of election concerning the elect being preserved or advanced along the way of salvation. For if one is not chosen unto life except by reason of a foresight of persevering faith maintained to the very last breath, then election has contributed nothing to bring about this course and consummation in faith and holiness. All such individuals are understood to have already overcome every difficulty and arrived at the very threshold of heaven before they are predestined by God to eternal life or the heavenly kingdom. And it would be utterly horrendous—and altogether intolerable to Christian ears who gladly receive the Apostle's words, "Those whom He predestined, He also called; those whom He called, He also justified; those whom He justified, He also glorified" (Romans 8:30)—to say that all who are to be saved have already persevered in the way of faith and holiness, advanced directly to the kingdom of heaven, and were almost within its gates before they were predestined by God unto life or received any special grace from God by virtue of their predestination.

If we had no other argument, this one alone would be sufficient to shatter and overturn the Arminian notion of predestination—that men are only predestined to eternal life when, having overcome all difficulties and dangers, they have already arrived there. Such a view would more rightly be called post-destination than predestination.

But the true decree of election is a segregation of particular persons, whom God, passing over others, has by special mercy infallibly appointed to obtain salvation. The very word "to elect" implies this, for in its formal signification it denotes the choosing of one and the rejecting of another.

Yet in the decree of Arminian election, which says, "Whoever believes will obtain eternal life; whoever remains unbelieving will perish," there is no segregation of individual persons from others, no passing over or rejection of others, since God by such a decree promises salvation to every man equally and threatens damnation to every man equally.

The Remonstrants respond to this argument in the Hague Conference (page 83) by saying that the segregation of believers is a segregation of individual persons, since believers are individual persons (page 81). But if we are to understand that election extends to certain individuals as individuals, apart from any qualities considered in them—and specifically apart from consideration of faith—then the Remonstrants themselves deny that election thus regards individual persons.

But these claims are easily refuted. We admit that believers are individual persons, for every action is of individual persons. But under this decree—"Whoever believes will be saved"—we deny that God segregates certain individual persons to faith or to life while passing by others.

First, because this decree would stand firm and immovable even if no one believed and no one were saved—or, on the contrary, even if all believed and all were saved. Therefore, by such a decree given in the manner of a law or edict, it is declared what duties must be performed in order for anyone to enter eternal life, and what neglect excludes them from it. But in the meantime, no one is by this decree practically or operatively segregated or elected above others; no one is passed over or left behind.

For if Judas believes and perseveres, he will be saved by virtue of this decree; if Peter does not believe and persevere, he will be damned by the same. Nothing is decreed for Peter that is not, under the same condition, decreed for Judas. Nothing is denied to Judas that is not, under the same condition, denied to Peter. By equal law and condition, if we hold to this decree, all are destined to salvation, and all are excluded from salvation. Therefore, there is in this decree no segregation of individual persons or election of some with others passed over.

Second, we grant—according to the terms of the aforementioned decree—that Peter is separated unto eternal life after he has persevered in faith. But this separation follows from a consequent and contingent act of Peter himself; it does not arise from a segregating decree of God Himself. For he was separated unto salvation by his own act after he was foreseen to have believed and persevered. But by the decree in question, he was not individually segregated either unto faith or unto salvation.

This may be illustrated similarly: If a king issues such a decree, “Whoever climbs the walls of a besieged city shall become a knight; whoever flees shall be put to death,” individual persons are indeed those who climb the walls, and individual persons are those who flee. Yet by such a decree the king is not said to have elected certain individual persons to the honor of knighthood and to have passed over others, but rather to have bestowed this honor on individuals, while destining that dignity equally for all—either to be obtained if they conduct themselves well, or to be forfeited if otherwise. Such is the Arminian election in every respect and thus contains no true and real separation of individual persons.

Third, to the response in which it is denied that election regards individuals as individuals, we reply: We do not affirm that this decree regards individuals as individuals, but as those singularly beloved by God out of sheer gratuitous benevolence. Thomas rightly says in *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 23, a. 4: “The predestination of certain persons to eternal salvation presupposes that God wills their salvation. And this pertains to election and love: love, inasmuch as He wills this good of eternal salvation to them; election, inasmuch as He wills this good to some above others. And this love is presupposed to election.”

Finally, when they say that election does not tend toward individual persons apart from consideration of foreseen faith in them, we admit that election never occurs without any consideration of good qualities—namely faith and holiness—because these are considered as virtues which, by the power of election, are prepared and given to all the elect. But they are not considered as presupposed to the decree of election, as causes, conditions, or occasions of election itself, as the Arminians falsely suppose.

For predestination or election does indeed regard that which is on our part—namely our faith and obedience—not as that which inclines the will of God to will, but as that toward the production of which the divine will has ordained grace. For any good quality or work whatsoever considered in man is not the reason for predestination but its end or goal, as Thomas well says in his Commentary on Romans 8.

Therefore, let faith be considered in election—but as its effect, not as the reason or condition of election.

Argument 13

Our final argument is of this kind: we ought not to introduce such an election as overthrows the pure grace of God and reduces the distinction between the elect and the reprobate to the good use of free will. But the election based on foreseen faith, and the non-election based on foreseen unbelief, does precisely this.

As for the major premise, it is so clear that even the adversaries themselves are ashamed to assert openly that this special grace of election depends on anything other than the mere and sole good pleasure of God. Augustine wisely considered this and judged that such gratuitous grace could not be established unless this absolute predestination—utterly independent of the operations of human free will—were simultaneously established. In *De bono perseverantiae*, chapter 2, he says: “Predestination ought to be preached so that the true grace of God may be upheld—that is, the grace which is not given according to our merits—and so that it may be defended by an invincible fortification.” But by predestination, he means not the Arminian version (arising from the foreknowledge of human faith and perseverance), but the Pauline one, which prepares faith and perseverance for the elect from eternity and bestows them at the appropriate time. Without this predestination, which Augustine defends throughout that entire book, he judged that the true grace of God could not be defended.

Moreover, even the more sober Scholastics, who are typically more inclined to attribute too much to human free will, do not dare to reduce the distinction between the elect and the reprobate to the good or bad use of free will in embracing or rejecting grace. Thus, Thomas Aquinas, in *Quaestiones disputatae de praedestinatione*, article 2, says: “Even the very will to accept grace is from divine predestination.” And Durandus (p. 250) writes: “Every good that is done by anyone, or which helps him in attaining a supernatural end—whether by cause or occasion—falls under the effect of predestination.”

Let us now turn to the minor. We therefore say that this kind of election and reprobation, which they claim is made according to foreseen faith and unbelief, suspends the grace of God on the merit of the human will.

First, grace properly understood is that favor or eternal benevolence of God by which He wills to bestow eternal life upon this particular person. But this love or favor of God—which is the first gift in which all other gifts are included—is, according to the Remonstrants, given or withheld according as men have first used their free will well or poorly in accepting or rejecting that

sufficient grace which they claim is offered to all. This is equivalent to saying that God begins to love a man unto eternal life because that man's free will applied itself to grace.

Second, the grace of God refers to those supernatural gifts by which the Holy Spirit imbues, renews, and gives life to our souls—such as faith, charity, and all the other gifts with which the regenerate are endowed. Yet even this grace, according to the opinion of Arminius, is given or not given according to the various merits of human wills. For if election follows upon foreseen faith, I ask: from whence was this faith foreseen in Peter rather than in Judas? They cannot claim that special grace was prepared for Peter in predestination as the cause why he believed—because they reject this kind of predestination and hold that faith precedes predestination.

They must therefore fall back on a special act of free will in Peter, by which he uniquely accommodated himself to those means which God supplied for generating faith—means which, they claim, were supplied no less to Judas than to Peter. But what is this, except to admit that the grace which advises or moves the human will is offered promiscuously to all by God's mere mercy, while the grace that quickens the will is given according to the different merits of individuals in how they receive or reject that former grace?

I know the disciples of Arminius deny this. But whether they will or not, once this predestination of men based on foreseen faith is admitted, they cannot acknowledge any grace other than that which Pelagius himself finally admitted—nor can they accept the kind of grace which Augustine persistently urged and confessed everywhere.

But what kind of grace did Pelagius admit? Augustine tells us: "God works in us the will for what is good and holy, by stirring up our will—devoted as it is to earthly desires—through the greatness of future glory and the promise of Christ's rewards; by awakening the will from its stupor through the revelation of wisdom; by advising us concerning all that is good." These, surely, are the very means which, once administered, Arminius imagines God to be watching closely to see who will believe and who will not—and so to choose for life those whom He foresees using these means rightly, and to pass over those whom He foresees abusing them.

But what does Augustine say to this? "We," he says, "do not want that kind of grace." Let Pelagius admit that kind of grace "by which not only is the greatness of future glory promised, but also believed and hoped in; not only is wisdom revealed, but also loved; not only is all that is good advised, but also persuaded." But the kind of grace that pours in faith, hope, and love—that makes us do what is good—that is the grace which the Catholics insisted is not given on account of any merit, that is, not due to any prior good use of free will, but from the mere mercy of God.

Thus, in the Council of Diospolis, Pelagius is commanded to confess that the grace of God is not given according to our merits. And the reason is added: "That grace may truly be grace—that is, freely given by the mercy of Him who said, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.'"

To sum it up in a word: since this opinion of the election of individual persons to life based on foreseen faith involves two elements especially hostile to the grace of God—namely, first, that the love of God by which He destines individuals to life arises from the good use of free will under prevenient grace, and second, that faith itself is not infused into certain persons as a special gift, but arises from a special act of free will in certain persons—it must be rejected by all the orthodox. On the contrary, we must affirm that the right use of grace foreseen by God was not the cause that moved Him to choose this man rather than that man to life, but rather was itself a special benefit, for the production of which God prepared special grace for those whom He chose to life in Christ.

And let this suffice for the refutation of that conditional election which Arminius defends as based on foreseen faith, and the Jesuits likewise maintain as based on foreseen merits.

Chapter VII— Some Prolegomena on Reprobation Together with the Arminian Opinion

Having first offered a few preliminary remarks, I now proceed to the second part of the disputation, namely, concerning preterition, or non-election, that is, the reprobation of those persons whom God, by that special and eminent mercy which infallibly leads to life, has not deigned to elect.

And here, if anywhere, that Pauline admonition should prevail: Romans 12:3, “Μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν” [“not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think soberly”]. For idle curiosity will learn as little as it pleases to inquire—so Tertullian wisely says at the end of *De Anima*.

In this subject, then, there are two rocks which must be avoided with all caution. The first is a stumbling against the divine goodness—such as those seem to commit who teach that God, by an absolute and primary will (one that precedes any consideration of sin), created some in order to destroy them; and that from this will to destroy flows everything that God does with respect to the non-elect.

But with Prosper we believe it is better to say: “There is a different cause of birth than of destruction. That men are born is the benefit of the Creator; that they perish is the merit of the transgressor.” For God indeed creates those whom He foresaw would never be partakers of eternal life. He creates those whom He decreed by His own free will to permit—without the aid of special grace. He creates those whom He decreed, on account of their sins, to subject justly to damnation.

Nevertheless, this destruction or damnation should not be considered the end or goal of creation, but rather the reward of transgression—as the word of God ever remains true in Hosea 13:9, “Your destruction, O Israel, is from yourself.”

Moreover, the high and secret decree of non-election or reprobation is not to be intrusively forced into all of God's actions, as if God does nothing with the non-elect except what arises from this decree of non-election. For although God did not will to have mercy upon certain individuals to the extent of determining to bring them infallibly to eternal life, and did will, with the intervention of their sin, to destine them to destruction—yet while they live on earth, and especially within the visible bounds of the Church, God does many things with them, both in conferring bodily and spiritual benefits, and those which, by their very nature, tend toward salvation.

He acts with them out of common love or philanthropy [φιλανθρωπία] by which He shows kindness to the whole human race; and out of the covenant by which, according to His own ordinance, He bestows certain supernatural blessings upon all members of the visible Church.

These gifts of God, in their eventual outcome, become harmful and destructive to the reprobate. Yet it must not be said or thought that God, because of the decree of reprobation, intends the abuse of His gifts, or supplies them to the non-elect with a hostile purpose—that they might misuse them and thus be justly punished and damned.

Rather, we should embrace Paul's teaching, who shows that God does many things with the non-elect from that overflowing kindness which extends to all men, though not to all in equal degree or measure. To this belong those words in Romans 2:4–5: “Do you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But after your hardness and impenitent heart you are storing up for yourself wrath...” and in Titus 2:11–13: “The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age, looking for the blessed hope...”

Now, on the opposite side, some are careful enough to avoid the first danger, yet they fall into another no less destructive. These, in explaining the decree of reprobation, are so intent on defending God's goodness that they completely obscure the special mercy that flows from God's gracious good pleasure in the decree of election. As if that Pauline statement in Romans 9:18, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,” meant nothing other than: “I will have mercy on him whom I shall find to be righteous, whose prompt faith I shall observe, whom I shall see obeying my commandments.” Thus Faustus the Semi-Pelagian interpreted—or rather corrupted—those words in *De Libero Arbitrio*, book 1, chapter 13.

What the poet sang of Jupiter—“King Jupiter is the same to all”—these men likewise affirm of the true God: namely, that He equally wills eternal life for all men; and that, after administering sufficient means for this purpose, He elects some to glory when He foresees they will use these means rightly, and passes over others when He foresees they will abuse them.

From this it follows that no special mercy of God is exercised in election, nor is the freedom of the divine will displayed in reprobation, nor—finally—in that comparative consideration of why this one is elected and that one passed over, is any depth to be found. Instead, the whole distinction between the elect and the non-elect is referred back to the liberty of human wills.

Spalato rightly admits this when he states that those who hold to predestination and reprobation based on foreknowledge must place the efficacy of grace in the will of man, and that the means necessary for human salvation are to be regarded as prepared by God for all—but not predestined for any in particular (De Republica Ecclesiastica, book 7, chapter 11, number 178).

But we, just as we have taught that the benefit of election depends on the free good pleasure of God and not on any antecedent good act of man, so we derive the negation of this same benefit—which we customarily call non-election, preterition, or negative reprobation—from that same most free will of God, who does what He wills with what is His own.

In this, Episcopius (though mistaken in many things) reasons not badly. In his Theses, disputation 22 on justification, thesis 3, he writes: “It is one thing not to will to punish; another thing to will to bestow the highest good.” We similarly say: “It is one thing to will to punish someone; another to not will to bestow the highest good.”

The former will (that is, to punish) in God cannot and should not be considered except in relation to the antecedent guilt of the person to be punished, as a deserving cause. But the latter will—of passing over, or, so to speak, of not willing to predestine—can be considered without any antecedent regard to the sin of the person not elected.

The reason for this difference is that punishment is an act of vindictive justice, and therefore presupposes fault worthy of punishment. But non-election or negative reprobation is not a punishment, but a denial of gratuitous benefit, which God is under no obligation to bestow—and thus, by its very nature, does not require antecedent guilt.

Here it must be noted that the term reprobation is taken in three different senses by theologians, as most learned Junius rightly observed (Colleg. Theol., p. 72).

1. First, it is taken for preterition and damnation together. In this sense, the reprobate are called such not only because God decreed to deny them efficacious grace and so permit them to fall short of blessedness, but also because He further destined them to eternal punishment. Those who, under a single term “reprobation,” include both of these acts of divine will—preterition and predamnation—will never be able to affirm anything certain about reprobation. For what is antecedent to the act of predamnation is not always antecedent to the act of preterition. What serves as a motivating cause for predamnation does not immediately serve as a motivating or deserving cause for preterition.
2. Second, the term reprobation is taken by some to refer only to the decree of damnation. In this sense, to be reprobated is nothing other than to be destined to eternal torments. Those who understand the word in this way do rightly make sin the cause of such a destination. Yet they err in this: they fail to recognize anything deeper in the decree of election and rejection.
3. Lastly, the term reprobation, as that which stands in contradictory opposition to election, is taken for preterition alone, or non-election. It denotes the eternal ordination in the

divine mind to deny certain persons that efficacious grace which in fact leads to glory.

Now, such reprobation can be understood without any antecedent view of the sins of the reprobate as motivating causes of that preterition. For only once such preterition is presupposed are men foreseen to die in sin and to be punished on account of that sin.

Therefore, God from eternity willed to consign these passed-over, non-elect, or reprobate individuals to eternal punishment—not because they were passed over, but because they were evil and worthy of damnation. Nor did He will to punish them at the first moment of reason in which He did not will to glorify them, but in that later moment in which He saw them as sinners who would never be freed from their sins.

Our position, then, is this: the foreknowledge of demerits is not the cause of preterition, non-election, or reprobation strictly and properly understood. Just as it depends on the mere good pleasure of God that certain persons are, by special providence (which we call predestination), infallibly ordained to grace and glory, so it likewise depends on God's mere freedom that other persons are not thus ordained, but are left destitute of this efficacious grace and permitted to fall short of glory.

If anyone, then, asks us why God could most easily and justly have left both Paul and Judas to their native hardness and consigned them to eternal misery—who also could have just as easily softened both and brought them to eternal glory—if, I say, this is asked, why God did not prepare for Judas the efficacious grace by which he would have been softened and saved, but did prepare it for Paul, why He did not infallibly ordain Judas to glory, but did so for Paul, we do not take refuge in Paul's foreseen faith or merits, nor in Judas's foreseen unbelief or demerits. We simply say: God has mercy on whom He wills, by softening; and He wills not to have mercy on whom He wills, by permissively hardening.

Nor do we assign any other cause of this diverse providence toward these persons than the will of God, which is the first rule of righteousness.

And thus, you have our doctrine.

CHAPTER VIII. The Arguments of the Opponents are Proposed and Refuted

Let us now proceed to the arguments of the opponents, who contend that the sins in which the reprobate are foreseen to depart from this life were the meritorious and motivating cause of divine reprobation.

But before these reasons are brought forward, it must first be established that the question is not about reprobation insofar as it denotes, in the language of some theologians, God's will to

damn or punish the reprobate. For it ought to be beyond dispute that this will of God always regards sin as the meritorious cause of the punishment decreed.

Rather, the question concerns reprobation insofar as it denotes that absolute and eternal decree of God by which He denied from eternity to Cain and Judas the efficacious grace which He could have prepared and bestowed upon them, if it had so pleased Him. Those to whom God in His eternal decree denied such grace and such an ordination unto glory, He did not elect but passed over—and, as the theologians say, reprobated.

It should also be added: we do not deny that in all persons upon whom the act of divine reprobation falls, some fitting demerit (*demeritum congruum*) may be found, either as accompanying (*comitans*) or inherently adhering (*subjecto adhærens*). But we deny that this preterition or non-election—which we call negative reprobation—flows from a view of this demerit.

For God sees original demerit in both the elect and the reprobate alike, and yet, not on account of this as a discriminating cause, but according to His own good pleasure, He wills to elect Jacob and not to elect—indeed to reprobate—Esau.

As for actual demerits arising from final perseverance in sins or unbelief, it is certain that these too are foreseen as future in all the reprobate—but only as concomitant or consequent to the divine act of preterition, not as causal or antecedent to it.

Cain and Judas would not have been foreseen by God as dying in their wickedness and unbelief, unless there were first presupposed the antecedent divine will not to grant them that special grace by which they would be softened and converted to faith and repentance. And this very negation of special grace—this non-election or reprobation—is manifest proof of the point.

For who would be so impiously foolish as to say that God is unable to convert the evil wills of men, whenever, wherever, and however He pleases? As Augustine rightly says in *Enchiridion*, chapter 98.

But let us now hear their arguments.

Argument 1:

They attempt first to prove that reprobation flows from the foreseen demerits of men by citing those places in Scripture where God is said by no means to will the death of men. This, they argue, would not be true if God, by His will alone—and not on account of sins—reprobated such a vast multitude of men.

To this end, they cite:

- Ezekiel 18:23: “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God”

[Greek: “μὴ θέλειν με θέλω τὸν θάνατον τοῦ ἀσεβοῦς;”]

- Hosea 13:9: “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself”

[Vulgate: “Perditio tua ex te, Israel”]

- 1 Timothy 2:4: “God wills that all men be saved”

[Greek: “ὅς πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι”]

- Matthew 11:28: “Come unto me, all ye that labour”

[Greek: “Δεῦτε πρός με πάντες οἱ κοπιῶντες”]

And many other passages of the same kind, which it is neither necessary to enumerate one by one nor to examine in detail at this moment.

If the opponents mean that God, setting aside the foreknowledge and antecedent consideration of human demerits, wills the salvation of all men equally, we deny that this can be concluded from the cited passages.

Indeed, it does follow from those texts that God by a will of simple complacency [voluntate simplicis complacentiæ] wills that all believe, that all repent, that no one perish, that no one be damned. But it does not follow that God by a predestinating will [voluntate prædestinante] equally wills to act in all, prior to the foreseen demerits, so that they may believe, repent, and not perish or be condemned.

Nor does it follow that by a reprobating will [voluntate reprobante], God has not decreed to deny some men efficacious grace and infallible ordination unto glory.

For these two things can coexist: God wills that all should believe and that no one should perish, namely by a will of complacency; and yet God wills to permit that certain ones persist in their voluntary unbelief and fall away from eternal salvation.

Therefore, the opponents err in assuming these two things to be equivalent: not to elect or to pass over, and to will to destroy or to inflict eternal death. For non-election or preterition can pertain even to a creature who remains upright, as is manifest in the case of the angels; but the will to destroy or to subject to eternal death can only fall upon a corrupted creature.

For non-election is a mere negation of a gratuitous benefit, while death or perdition is the wages of committed sin.

It is most certainly true that all the non-elect will infallibly fall into eternal death; it is also clear that all the non-elect are, from eternity, by God's positive will, appointed to this death. Yet this appointment unto death is not to be conceived as carried out in the same logical moment

[eodem signo rationis] in which non-election is established, but in a later one, namely, when the final perseverance of the non-elect in a state of sin is foreseen.

Thus, from the fact that God does not will anyone to perish without an antecedent consideration of their demerits, it does not follow that God does not will to pass over or not elect anyone without such an antecedent consideration.

Even Vasquez the Jesuit, who is by no means favorable to our position, supports us on this matter. He says: "From that peculiar and efficacious grace which belongs properly to the predestined, God has undoubtedly excluded all the reprobate by His own antecedent will, without any occasion taken from them whatsoever." For, he adds, "the denial of this grace wholly precedes our liberty."

This is for us just as if he had said: God, by His own antecedent will and without any occasion taken from the demerits of those persons, has passed over or reprobated all the reprobate.

Argument 2:

Secondly, they attempt to demonstrate that foreseen demerits are the cause of reprobation (which may seem surprising to some) from the whole disputation of the Apostle in Romans chapter 9, where, in fact, it seems to us he establishes the opposite view.

First, from the fact that the Apostle calls this reprobation "hatred" [odium], as in "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" [Romans 9:13]. But God hates no one except for the cause of sin.

I answer first that they directly strike against the mind and clear words of the Apostle with this line of reasoning. For Paul's aim in this passage is to teach that the election and rejection of individual persons does not depend on their different or contrary actions, but on the different good pleasure of God—of Him who wills to have mercy on one and not on the other.

And for this reason, Paul removes not only good actions but also evil ones, saying, "when they were not yet born and had done neither good nor evil." As for those who argue that God did not look at the deeds they had done, but at those He foresaw they would do, and that from this foresight He loved Jacob and hated Esau—they are, evidently, more perceptive than the Apostle himself, who could not come up with such a reply. I will not attempt to refute them, but will let them enjoy their own delusion.

I will only urge them to listen patiently to Augustine, who, irritated by this foolish evasion, bursts out with these words: "You certainly speak foolishly, who, when truth itself says, 'not of works but of him who calls,' assert that it was because of foreseen works, which God foresaw that he [Jacob] would do, that Jacob was loved," (Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, book 2, chapter 7).

Further, it must be noted that we willingly acknowledge that in the person rejected there resides that contagion and unworthiness which may sufficiently remove from God, as the reprobating agent, any suspicion not only of cruelty or injustice, but even of the faintest hint of it. For to

whomever this special mercy is denied, it is certain that he had no right to have it prepared or given to him. And what is denied without any obligation is denied reasonably, as Thomas rightly says in his Disputation on Predestination.

To this it may be added that such a one not only has no right to such a benefit, but is by his inborn corruption almost disposed and prepared to incur God's vengeance. Augustine has excellently explained this in Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, book 2, chapter 7, where he writes: "There is no respect of persons, because one is honored in such a way that the other is not defrauded of anything due to him." A little later, he says, "He has mercy on whom he wills, and whom he wills he hardens—he who makes one vessel for honor and another for dishonor. The good is given undeservedly and freely, for it is given to one from the same mass; but evil is rendered deservedly and as a debt, for in the mass of perdition, evil is not repaid with evil unjustly."

For the state of the entire human race, as presented before God who elects and passes over, is a state of sin, of death, and of deserved condemnation. It is true that this state is common to all and involves Jacob no less than Esau, and so it may serve as a fitting reason why God could justly pass over both—but it cannot suitably be presented as the motivating cause for why He rejected Esau while electing Jacob, who was in the same condition.

And thus Dionysius Carthusian rightly affirms that it is scarcely tolerable to say that the foreknowledge of demerits is the reason for reprobation.

Finally—and this directly cuts the nerve of the argument—I say that God can be said to have "hated" Esau in two respects: either as to punishment and vengeance, namely the infliction of eternal death, and so He hated Esau only as a sinner and because of sin itself, as the motivating and meritorious cause of this hatred; or He can be said to have hated Esau as to the denial of a special and undeserved benefit, that is, to have loved him less, and so He may be said to have hated Esau simply because He willed not to love him.

It is in this latter sense that God is said by the Apostle to have loved Jacob and hated Esau, because according to the free purpose of His will, He willed to soften Jacob by special grace but did not will to bestow this great benefit upon Esau.

If it is asked why He elected Jacob to this special grace and not Esau, the answer is: because God so willed. If it is asked why He so willed, the question is foolish, since in the distribution of His own good gifts the divine will is the cause of itself and has no further cause beyond its own good pleasure [eudokia].

Indeed, that the word "hated" is used to indicate merely the denial of special love in the conferring of a special benefit is not denied even by the Jesuits themselves. Vasquez, commenting on these very words of the Apostle, says: "To hate' means the same as 'to have loved less.' For one acts as a hater who does not grant to another a gift which he grants to one." In this sense, hatred does not require sin as its cause.

In this way, Jacob is said to have hated Leah in Genesis 29:31.

Argument 3.

The Apostle calls reprobation a “will to harden”: “He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills, He hardens.” But this will to harden presupposes the sins of the reprobate in which he is hardened. Therefore, the sins of the reprobate, with which they depart from this life, are the motivating or meritorious cause of their reprobation.

Response.

We respond that this will to harden, which the Apostle commemorates in this passage, designates a particular act of the divine will, according to which He denies to certain individuals that singular grace by which their hearts would be softened.

For, as Augustine rightly teaches, God does not harden by imparting malice, but by not imparting mercy. Just as the sun, when it sets and withdraws its rays, is said to darken the air—not by some positive influx that causes darkness, but by the removal of that influx by which, if present, the darkness would be dispelled.

Since this hardening, therefore, takes place by permission and by the denial of special mercy, it is evident that no one can be considered and foreseen by God as finally hardened in his sins and dying in them, unless there has first been a decree of this permissive hardening—that is, a denial of that special mercy by which God knows that such final persistence in sin would have been prevented, had it been granted.

Therefore, what was assumed in the argument—that this will to harden (which designates reprobation) presupposes the sins of the reprobate in which he will persist until the end of life as the cause of this reprobation or hardening—is not only false, but contrary to reason and common sense. For a cause precedes its effect; but this final persistence of the reprobate in his sins follows the decree of not having mercy, or of hardening.

For if God has mercy, man will not remain hardened, since it belongs to that special mercy to effectually soften the heart. Hence Augustine says: “If God willed to have mercy on them, He could call them in such a way (as was fitting for them) that they would be moved, would understand, and would follow.” A little later he adds: “God does not have mercy in vain.” Finally, he concludes: “God’s hardening is nothing other than His unwillingness to show mercy,” namely, by the withholding of that grace which would infallibly and effectually soften and convert man.

Therefore, since no one’s final persistence in contracted or committed sins can be assumed unless it is preceded by God’s will not to soften them, the foreseen perseverance of the reprobate in their sins cannot be the cause of the denial of this mercy or softening.

It is true, indeed, that in the daily course of their lives, the reprobate extinguish the light which God has kindled in their hearts, repel divine motions, and foully yield to vile lusts—thus meriting that subsequent blinding, abandonment, and being given over to a reprobate mind. But all of these things presuppose that divine permission, or rather, that denial of special grace, which may be called permissive hardening and which flows from reprobation—without which, and

apart from the absolutely free will of God, the reprobate would not have fallen into that final rebellion and hardness, for by the benefit of that special and undeserved mercy, they would have been delivered from such rebellion and hardness.

Argument 4.

The Apostle says that when God reprobates, He wills to show wrath and vengeance, etc. (Romans 9:22). But the will to inflict vengeance presupposes that man is considered by God as bound in sin. Therefore, the sins of the reprobate, in which they die, are the cause of reprobation.

If we are speaking of that negative reprobation, by which God firmly decreed not to show mercy to a particular person—say, Cain or Judas—in such a way that He willed not to effectively rescue him from the state of sin and misery, and at the same time decreed to permit his final hardening in sin, I deny that this was done by God for the purpose of fulfilling a design to punish or damn him.

Cajetan philosophizes well on this point in his commentary on the Summa of Thomas, Question 23, Article 5, where he says that “God does not permit sins in order to punish, but He permits and punishes them in order to make His justice shine forth.”

Moreover, the Apostle himself, in the cited passage, has shown us that God denies this special mercy to some and thus permits them to be hardened (in which consists this negative reprobation), not with the primary intention of damning those thus passed over, but rather to manifest the riches of His mercy toward the elect, as in Romans 9:23.

For it is only then that the elect truly understand that they have been saved by God's pure and free mercy—when it is clear that that same calling according to purpose which was given to them by God's gratuitous good pleasure was denied to others; when it is manifest that they were in no way better than those passed over, in terms of their corrupt natural condition, in which that special mercy found them; and finally, when it is evident that they too would have been no less hardened than the reprobate, had they not been softened by that special grace out of God's mere favor.

Therefore, it is true that God wills to display His wrath and vengeance upon all the reprobate—but this will to inflict vengeance is not immediately joined to that negative reprobation or non-election about which we are disputing. Rather, it arises from the foreseen intervention of final perseverance in sin, which is infallibly foreseen by God in all the reprobate as the consequence of negative reprobation, not as a cause antecedent to it.

Hence, the argument—“God reprobates men, and therefore wills to punish them; therefore the cause of negative reprobation is foreseen sin”—is weak and unsound.

They attempt to demonstrate again from the same Apostle that perseverance in unbelief is the cause of reprobation, because he attributes the reprobation of the Jews to their unbelief as a cause, in Romans 9:31–32: “Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, did not attain to the law

of righteousness. Why? Because it was not by faith." Here they think the Apostle is giving the reason for the Jews' reprobation, and this is confirmed by Romans 11:19–20: "You will say, 'Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.' Well said: they were broken off because of unbelief, but you stand by faith," etc.

Summary of the argument:

The Jews were reprobated because of their final perseverance in unbelief.

Therefore, this perseverance in unbelief is the cause of divine reprobation.

Response:

To the first testimony, taken from Romans 9, I respond that the Apostle is not giving a reason why the Jews were reprobated, but why they did not attain to true righteousness before God, even though they seemed to be the most zealous pursuers of righteousness. And the Apostle says this happened because they sought righteousness through their own works and the strict observance of the law, rejecting justification by faith. Since it is plainly impossible for a man weakened and corrupted by sin to be justified by works of the law, every sinner must necessarily flee to faith to be justified before God.

This interpretation is followed not only by our theologians but also explicitly by William Estius, the Roman Catholic professor at Douai, in his commentary on this very passage. Among other things, he writes: "Know that in this place the reason why the Jews were reprobated is not given, but rather why they did not attain righteousness." Therefore, the first testimony is plainly irrelevant to the point.

Nor does the second passage, which is brought in to confirm the argument, make any real contribution. The Apostle is not speaking of individual persons either elected or reprobated, but of the entire body of Jews and Gentiles considered indefinitely and without distinction. Nor is he teaching anything about eternal election or reprobation, such that some individual was cut off and, as it were, erased from the number of the elect because of unbelief, and then later grafted back in by faith.

Rather, he is explaining that the Jews, as a people, by their unbelief, ceased to be the covenant people of God, and that the Gentiles, by embracing the faith of the Gospel, succeeded them in that status. And to remove all occasion for boasting from the Gentiles, he says that the Jews—if they believe in Christ and cease to persist in their unbelief—will be grafted in, that is, received into the covenant people of God. And the Gentiles, who now rejoice in being called the Church and the people of God, if they fall away from faith in Christ, will likewise be cut off and cast out of the body of the Church.

This threatening has taken effect in many Gentiles, who, falling away from the faith of Christ into the superstition of Muhammad, are now seen to be torn away from the body of the Church—that is, from the covenant people of God. But in the meantime, what do all these things contribute toward proving that the eternal reprobation of individual persons has flowed from the

consideration of their future unbelief as a motivating cause? Truly, nothing at all. For the Apostle is not speaking about the eternal election or reprobation of individual persons, but about the visible grafting in and breaking off of the Gentiles.

This grafting in and breaking off, of which he speaks, does not signify the eternal election or reprobation of particular persons, but a temporal admission or rejection of a certain people from the status of the covenant people—one that occurs through faith, and the other through unbelief. For it is wholly contrary to sound theology to assert that the reprobate may become elect or that the elect may become reprobate. Yet the Apostle explicitly teaches that those who are grafted in may be broken off, and those who are broken off may again be grafted in.

To all this we may add that when a certain people—for example, the Jews—have been broken off from the body of the Church due to unbelief, nevertheless, none of the elect are cut off. For, according to the same Apostle, “ἡ ἐκλογὴ ἐπέτυχεν, οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ ἐπωρώθησαν” [“The election obtained it, but the rest were hardened”], Romans 11:7. And finally, the fact that some are not broken off, while others from the same people fall away and perish, happens not because the former were elect due to foreseen faith, but because faith was given to them from the eternal good pleasure of God, and a “remnant according to the election of grace” was preserved, Romans 11:5.

Likewise, the fact that some are broken off by means of their unbelief and perish does not prove that God reprobated them from eternity on account of foreseen unbelief. Rather, it shows that they, being reprobated and left to their hardness of heart, brought forth unbelief as the natural offspring of that hardened heart, and by it were broken off from the body of the Church and perished justly.

Objection 6: The reprobate are warned always to acknowledge God’s justice in their reprobation, by which, on account of their sins, they were justly reprobated. Therefore, they are reprobated based on the foreknowledge of their demerits, in which they are foreseen to end their lives.

In support of this, many testimonies are offered from the Fathers, especially from Augustine. One such is from *On the Gift of Perseverance*, chapter 6: “By his own will each one deserts God, so that he is justly deserted by God.” Also from *On Grace and Free Will*, chapter 21: “When you read in the Scriptures that men’s hearts are hardened, do not doubt that their evil merits preceded, so that they justly suffered this.” Again in chapter 23: “When you hear the Lord saying, ‘He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He wills He hardens,’ believe that in the one whom He permits to be hardened there are evil merits; and in the one on whom He has mercy, recognize without doubt the grace of God repaying good for evil.”

And most clearly in *Epistle 105*: “We seek the merit of hardening, and we find it. For by the merit of sin, the entire mass was condemned. Those to whom God does not impart mercy deserve not to receive it.”

Many such statements occur frequently in Augustine and other Fathers, from which the adversaries conclude that the foreseen demerits, along with the final persistence in them, are the motivating cause of divine reprobation.

Response:

To refute all of this, we must first recall that we are speaking about the kind of reprobation which theologians call negative, which Scotus calls permissive, in *Sentences*, Book 1, Distinction 41, Question 1—not that which may be called positive or punitive.

The former, considered in itself, signifies nothing more than God's eternal purpose not to give to certain individual persons some gratuitous, unowed, and special benefit—by which, if it were given, they would be softened, converted, and infallibly led to eternal life.

The latter refers to God's eternal purpose to punish certain persons with eternal death because of those sins which they will commit and from which He foresees they will not be delivered.

If the adversaries refer to this later decree—namely, the punitive decree of damnation—we freely grant that this eternal decree of predamnation concerns no one except insofar as he is bound by the guilt of sin. For although God wills to save the miserable without any merits of their own, because He is good, yet He does not will to damn or punish the innocent without any demerit, because He is just.

Secondly, when Augustine affirms that in reprobation we must acknowledge the just judgment of God, this should not be referred to the foreseen actual sins of individuals but to the common debt of original sin. Therefore, this does not help those who try to derive reprobation from the foresight of final perseverance in actual sins.

Moreover, we concede the consideration of original sin in this negative reprobation only insofar as it is a property adhering to the reprobate subject, not as a motivating cause moving the Divine will to this act of reprobation. We must therefore acknowledge that this act of negative reprobation, by which special grace is denied to a person stained only with original sin, is exercised not unjustly, and certainly not contrary to justice. For (as was noted earlier) what is not owed in justice may be justly denied. Yet it must still be held that this denial depends not on retributive and vindictive justice but on the liberty of the Divine will, who “will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He wills He passes over”—so that from the common guilt of original sin, some are decreed to be effectively delivered, and others, by the denial of special grace, are left in that state.

Thirdly, if the adversaries contend that this negative reprobation arises from the foreknowledge of final impenitence in actual sins, we reply that this is not only false but wholly implausible. For the very decree of permitting this final hardening, in which reprobation consists, precedes the absolute foreknowledge of that hardening. Thus, Peter Lombard (*Sentences*, Book 1, Distinction 40) says that reprobation is a foreknowledge of malice not to be ended in some. But this foreknowledge is founded upon the decree of denying that special grace which, in fact, would soften any heart, no matter how hard.

Therefore, it is vain to claim that the foreseen final persistence in sin is the cause of reprobation, since this final persistence presupposes that Divine permission which arises from the prior decree of reprobation.

This covers the argument in general. Now I will respond individually to the testimonies of Augustine that were cited:

To the first: When Augustine says that men first forsake God and thereby deserve to be forsaken by Him, he is not speaking of the denial of that grace which we call special and efficacious, and in the denial of which reprobation or preterition properly consists. Rather, he refers to the withdrawal of more common and stirring grace, which we admit is removed from men on account of demerits—yet in such a way that, had the prior preparation of special grace preceded, they would not have fallen into the demerit of such contumacy.

To the second and third: When Augustine tells us to believe that the evil merits of the one whom God permits to be hardened are not lacking or have gone before, he is not speaking of that eternal will of not having mercy or not softening—which contains reprobation itself—but of that hardening in which the sinner, justly forsaken by God, contracts a kind of stony hardness. This we do not deny to be the reward of preceding sins. But it must be carefully noted: although this hardening, considered as increased and advanced—a bad disposition of the hardened man—arises from the demerit of preceding sins, nevertheless that first permissive hardening, considered merely as the denial of softening from God's side, cannot arise from the same foreseen demerit. For to suppose that God's will not to have mercy or not to soften arises from the foresight of man's hardening is as absurd as saying that the long absence of the sun among the Cimmerians arises from the prior long darkness of the air.

To the final testimony, where Augustine teaches that we can easily find in ourselves the merit of hardening but cannot find the merit of Divine mercy, I respond: he is not speaking of the foreseen actual sins of those who persist in them until the end of life, but of original sin, which is a kind of common demerit in all the sons of Adam, and can be cited as a sufficient reason why Divine mercy may be denied to anyone without any appearance of cruelty. Yet it cannot be cited as the cause why God was unwilling to prepare and apply to this or that individual an effective remedy by which this native hardness might be subdued.

Therefore, the consideration of original sin is valid to show the equity of damnation, but not valid to show the cause of negative reprobation.

Finally, all the reprobate—especially those who have reached the use of free will—are said to merit their hardening: first, in a negative sense, because they do not merit softening; they do not merit that special mercy. Then, in a positive sense, because by their daily sins they deserve that further hardening and being given over “to a reprobate mind,” as the Apostle says in Romans 1:28.

But in the meantime, that decree of reprobation, according to which they are permitted to become thus hardened, depends on the most free will of God, not on the foresight of their final

hardness—which indeed could not be foreseen except on the presupposition of this decree of permission.

Argument 7:

The sins of the reprobate are the cause of all the effects of reprobation itself; therefore, they are also the cause of Divine reprobation, insofar as it regards those effects.

As for the first effect—namely, hardening or the subtraction of particular grace—it is clear that it arises from the demerits of preceding sins, as shown in Romans 1, 2 Thessalonians 2, and Exodus 9.

As for the final effect, namely eternal damnation, it is evident that its cause is human demerit, as shown by the very form of the sentence pronounced in the final judgment.

We do not deny that the sins of the ungodly are the cause of their damnation. And if the adversaries who contend that the motivating cause of reprobation is the sins in which the reprobate are foreseen to end their lives, by reprobation mean nothing more than damnation or the purpose to damn, then thus far we agree with them.

But we are disputing about negative reprobation, which is not itself damnation, nor the cause of damnation, but something antecedent to it. For no one is damned because he is reprobated, but because he is guilty; nor is eternal death the wages of reprobation, but of transgression.

Let us therefore set aside damnation, which is quite improperly called an effect of this reprobation, and let us examine the rest.

First, when it is argued, “The sins of the reprobate are the cause of all the effects of reprobation; therefore, also of reprobation itself, i.e., of the Divine decree of reprobating them as it regards those effects,” this consequence is clearly slippery and weak, if all the evils that follow from it are called “effects.”

For something can be the cause of a permitted event which was not the cause of the permission of that event.

For example: I see two drunken men rashly wandering here and there; I foresee that both will fall into a ditch and die of hunger there unless someone intervenes. I resolve in my mind to warn and draw back one of them, and to rescue him effectively from this danger; but not to warn the other, or at least not to warn and draw him back in such a way as to actually rescue him. The latter then falls into the ditch, is tormented for a long time by hunger, and finally perishes.

Now, if one asks the cause of the evil that was permitted in all these events—namely the fall, the prolonged misery, and the final death—I would truly say that the drunkenness, blindness, and recklessness of that man were the cause of them all.

But if one asks the reason for my permission, or for the decree by which I permitted that man not to be effectively rescued, then one must look not to his blindness or recklessness, but to the liberty of my own will.

In the same way, God sees all mortals as drunk with original sin; He foresees that they will all rush into sin and destruction unless a special grace intervenes. He has decreed from eternity to effectively prevent, move, and transform some by His special grace, so that the fog of their mind is lifted, they return to Him, and are saved.

He has also decreed not to bestow this same potent, peculiar, and efficacious grace on others. These latter plunge into vile lusts, add sin to sin, are hardened in sin, die hardened, and are damned.

If one asks the cause of their rebellion, hardening, and destruction considered in themselves, we can truly answer: their corrupt nature and voluntary sins were the cause and origin of all these evils.

But if one asks the cause of the decree that permitted all this, then we must look to the most free good pleasure of the Divine will—not to the sins which were permitted.

Therefore, the consequence “The sins of the reprobate are the cause of all the effects of reprobation; therefore, they are also the cause of reprobation itself or of the decree of reprobation,” is unfounded and unstable.

Second, the adversaries seem in this argument to assume that the hardness or obduracy—which is a sinful disposition or perverse act of the reprobate—is an effect of Divine reprobation. But this is utterly false. For although it is a consequent event, it is not properly called an effect of reprobation.

For although, as Cajetan rightly noted, “whatever orders the predestined unto eternal life is an effect of predestination,” yet in the case of reprobation there is something that leads to death (namely, whatever has the nature of guilt or sin—such as the aforementioned obduracy and hardness), and this is entirely outside the effect of reprobation.

Thus Thomas Aquinas teaches in *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 23, a. 5. Nor (as some theologians dangerously err) are the means and causes of damnation connected with the decree of reprobation in the same way as the means and causes of salvation are connected with the decree of predestination.

The reason for this distinction is ready at hand: the means and causes of salvation are certain spiritual goods. But a good is subject to the providence of God as something intended, caused, and ordained by it. However, the means and causes that lead to damnation are spiritual evils. And such an evil is subject to Divine providence not as something intended and caused, but only as something foreseen, permitted, and ordered.

Thus Dionysius the Carthusian says, in Book I, Distinction 40, page 580: when that hardness or obduration—which is man's vice or sin—is supposed to be an effect of reprobation, it is only a consequence, and is improperly (if not falsely) called an effect.

Moreover, the obduration referred to by the Apostle in Romans 1, where he says, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind" [Romans 1:28], and again in 2 Thessalonians 2:10–12, "Because they did not receive the love of the truth... therefore God shall send them strong delusion... that they all might be damned," does not refer to the negation of the first efficacious grace—which, if granted, such obduration could never have occurred—but rather refers to the withdrawal of a grace already granted, due to its abuse. And we do not deny that such withdrawal occurs because of men's demerits, and that the resulting obduration is both a sin and a punishment for previous sin.

As for what is said of Pharaoh in Exodus 9, "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart," this either refers to the initial and permissive obduration through the negation of special grace, and in that case, this will of hardening (i.e., of not-softening) must be understood as the negation of a gratuitous act on God's part—which could not have arisen from foreseen demerits, because it logically precedes such foresight—or we must fall back upon the Apostle's declaration: "He has mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardens" [Romans 9:18].

Alternatively, those words may refer to a further obduration, in which Pharaoh—by voluntary stubbornness—hardened his own heart, while God outwardly and inwardly presented him with occasions which, by their nature, should have softened him, but which God foreknew would instead result in greater hardening.

Thus, God is said to harden a wicked man because of his demerits when, being provoked by that man's impiety, He takes occasion to withdraw granted grace and to do certain things through which He knows that this man will grow worse.

But God is also said to harden without any regard to final demerits, simply because He wills—when He has not prepared or given to a man, considered as part of the common mass [massa communis], that special mercy which He decreed to give and did give to another in the same miserable condition. And this is the obduration which implies reprobation, and which does not depend upon any foreseen final perseverance in sin.

Hence, the argument proceeds from an equivocation. Some argue:

Argument 8:

If God were to reprobate men not because of their sins but from His own will and initiative, then fewer would be reprobated than predestined. For God is far more inclined by nature to have mercy and do good to mankind than to forsake, destroy, and damn them—according to the Psalmist: "The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works" [Psalm 145:9].

This reasoning Gregory of Valencia (from whom many of the previous arguments are taken) declares to be the strongest in his judgment, and he confesses to having borrowed it from Johann Eck.

We have already answered this same argument, earlier proposed by Gregory, in the question of predestination. For in that controversy, he attempted to prove that predestination was from the foreknowledge of works, because few are elect compared to the many rejected. Now he likewise argues that reprobation depends on the foresight of final demerits, because many are reprobated compared to the few who are chosen.

I reply, then, that the consequence holds in neither case.

As for reprobation, since it is (as stated before) not a punishment but the negation of a gratuitous and undeserved benefit, nothing compels us to admit that God, acting from His mere good pleasure, cannot choose to grant such a benefit to fewer and to deny it to more. We see, even among the angels, that this benefit of election was denied to many, and that without respect to any foreseen demerit. Whether it was denied to more than it was granted, I dare not determine. Yet if there were anything in the thing itself that were incongruous or unworthy of God, He could not have denied this benefit of election not only to more, but even to fewer—indeed, not even to one—apart from consideration of foreseen sin.

Thus, this single example [i.e., of the angels] weakens the force of the argument entirely.

But let us descend from angels to men.

I say, therefore, that among men the equity of this matter can be perceived even more clearly than among angels. For since the whole mass of the human race has flowed into a state of deserved damnation through the disobedience of our first parent, if God, without any further regard to actual sins, chooses to pass over and reject many in the preparation and bestowal of special grace, He passes over and rejects those in whom He finds nothing worthy to be chosen for such an extraordinary benefit—and in whom He finds many things on account of which they may be deemed most unworthy of it.

Nothing more remains to be said here except what Augustine states: “Let the one who is delivered love grace; let the one who is not delivered acknowledge his due” (De Bono Perseverantiae, c. 8). And again, the Apostle says in Romans 9:20: “O man, who are you who replies against God? Shall the thing formed say...” etc.

It is said: God is more inclined in Himself to show mercy and do good to men than to forsake, destroy, and damn them. This we grant.

But—as Augustine says in Epistle 157 and in the Enchiridion, chapter 99—He who is most inclined to show mercy and to do good does not usually impart extraordinary and peculiar benefits to all or to most. It is sufficient to demonstrate this Divine inclination toward mercy that He shows compassion to all in many effects of His mercy—even if, with regard to this special

effect, namely the preparation of special grace and the infallible ordaining unto eternal life, He shows mercy neither to all nor to most.

Moreover, to pass over or reprobate is not the same as to forsake and destroy. Indeed, all the reprobate, or non-elect, are eventually forsaken and destroyed. But the fact that they were passed over or not elected to special grace arose from God's mere will; whereas the fact that they were afterward forsaken and destroyed arose from the intervening demerit of their own.

Thus far we have addressed the arguments used by Gregory of Valencia, in Prima Pars Aquinatis, question 23, on reprobation.

From among the older scholastics, Thomas of Argentina confesses that he holds the common opinion of the theologians, yet he attempts to prove the following contrary conclusion:

Argument 9:

The cause of reprobation, with respect to adults, is the evil use of free will continuing until the end of life, foreseen from eternity by God.

This opinion differs in words, but not in sense, from the Jesuit and Arminian view.

Let us now hear Thomas of Argentina's reasons. He says:

"To eternal punishment, no one is appointed by a just Judge without the prior knowledge of a cause. But every reprobate is appointed to punishment by God, the just Judge. Therefore, no one is reprobated except on account of a foreseen evil use of free will lasting until the end."

This is the same as saying, along with the Jesuits and Arminians, that no one is reprobated except because of foreseen unbelief and disobedience, and final perseverance in the same.

Response:

We understand reprobation to be that part of Divine providence by which God wills to deny certain persons special grace, and to permit them to fall short of the end of beatitude—just as by predestination we understand that other part of Divine providence by which He willed to prepare and bestow this special grace upon certain persons, and to bring them infallibly to glory and beatitude.

Given this, we deny that reprobation is a deputation or adjudication unto punishment. It is indeed the denial of an undeserved benefit, proceeding from the free will of God; but it is not the infliction of an undeserved punishment proceeding from His imperious will alone.

It is true that in all the reprobate there follows both an ordination unto punishment and the imposition of punishment. And both of these are rightly said to regard persons as ordered to punishment on account of their final perseverance in sin. But in the formal act of reprobation itself, the ordination of the reprobated person to eternal death is not yet contained.

Therefore, they attempt to deceive us with such arguments—by supposing that things which apply to the same subject must arise from the same causes. As if, because every reprobate is also ordained to punishment, therefore this reprobation and ordination to punishment must come from the same source.

But we maintain: although the same persons who are reprobated are always also appointed to punishment, reprobation itself proceeds from the free will of God, while the ordination to punishment has its origin in God's foresight of their sin.

God is likened to a sun, as it were, who everywhere diffuses the rays of spiritual grace. Therefore, so far as it depends on Him, He imparts spiritual grace to all—unless they themselves place an obstacle to the diffusion of grace's light. And so, when He leaves certain persons destitute of grace and reprobates them, it happens because He foresaw from eternity that these persons would place obstacles to His grace. Reprobation, then, is from this foreseen evil use of free will.

This comparison fails in many ways.

First, although God may be fittingly called a spiritual sun, yet He does not diffuse His rays by natural necessity, but by voluntary dispensation. Therefore, as far as it lies in Him, He does not diffuse them equally and uniformly to all.

Second, even if we grant that God diffuses some rays of spiritual grace to all and each (a matter which we will not dispute here), yet we will never concede that He gives this special and extraordinary ray of special mercy, as far as it lies in Him, promiscuously to all and each.

Third, where it is assumed that God wills to deny this special mercy to no one—that mercy which is proper to election—and that therefore He reprobates no one except the one whom He foresaw placing an obstacle to divine grace by a perverse use of his free will, Thomas of Argentina fails to see that this exception about placing an obstacle applies to all persons considered in a state of sin.

For it has been prudently observed by Aquinas that “what is commonly said—that it is in the power of free will to offer no impediment to grace—can only truly be said of those in whom natural power remains whole. But if someone, through prior disorder, has inclined to evil, then it will not be entirely in his power to offer no impediment.” (Contra Gentiles, Book 3, chapter 100.)

Therefore, since all mortals are by nature inclined to place obstacles, and in fact place many of them, if God reprobated on the basis of such foresight, He would have reprobated every one of us, without a single exception.

Hence the very nature of predestination and reprobation is revealed in this: that although obstacles are placed by all, God, out of the abundance of His mercy, decreed to soften some who would place such impediments, and to convert them to faith and repentance by efficacious and wondrous means. But He also decreed not to soften others, who would in the same way resist His grace, but to leave them hardened in their obstinacy and stubbornness.

Finally, what is inferred from the above—that God from eternity foresaw some as making a good use of their free will, and others as making a bad use of the same to the end, and that by a decree subsequent to this foresight He chose the former and reprobated the latter—cannot possibly stand.

For a good and holy use of free will, persevering to the end, flows only from the grace of election; therefore, it presupposes antecedent election. Conversely, a bad use of free will enduring to the final breath is not foreseen unless God's will to deny that special grace (to which no heart, however hard, can resist) is already presupposed.

But that will of God is the will to reprobate.

Therefore, the foresight of a heart finally hardened is something subsequent to reprobation, and thus cannot be the reason or cause from which reprobation is derived.

Objection:

If God elects some from eternity and reprobates others without any cause present on the part of men, then He is a respecter of persons. For it seems to be respect of persons (*προσωποληψία*) when, two being equal, one is given something which is denied to the other. But this *προσωποληψία* is removed from God, as stated in Acts 10:34.

Response:

This was, in fact, the ancient objection of the Pelagians, as is frequently found in Augustine, especially in Epistle 105, where he says that those who believe God is a respecter of persons if He shows mercy on whom He will and calls whom He pleases and makes whomever He wills religious—without any preceding merits—fail to consider this:

That to the damned, a just punishment is repaid; but to the delivered, undeserved grace is granted. So that neither may the one complain of unworthiness, nor may the other boast of deserving. And in that very fact no respect of persons is made, since the entire mass is involved in guilt and offense. Therefore, he who is delivered learns from the one not delivered that he too deserved punishment, unless grace intervened.

Augustine repels the same objection in Epistle 106 and in Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, book 1, chapter 2, section 7.

Thus, Augustine's answer returns to this: that it does not pertain to respect of persons when someone does what he will with what is his own. For although mercy is given to the elect, justice is not denied to the reprobate. The elect is honored with a free gift, but the reprobate is not defrauded of anything owed to him.

The scholastics respond more concisely: It is not unjust or blameworthy to give unequal things to equals where the gift is from mere liberality, but only where it is owed.

Thus Durandus (Book 1, Distinction 42, Question 2, Response to Objection 1) says the same.

Likewise, Thomas affirms: "There is no iniquity in God if He prepares unequal things for equals. For it would contradict the nature of justice if the effect of predestination were a due reward and not a gift." From those things which are given by grace, one may give more or less as he pleases, provided that he withholds from no one what is due (Part 1, Question 23, Article 5, Response to Objection 3).

Finally, Gerson affirms in his Moral Rules: "There is no respect of persons unless what is owed is at stake and parity exists on both sides. For in the bestowal of grace, to accept one and dismiss another is not respect of persons."

From these things it is clear that the major premise of the foregoing argument has no force, because in predestination God does not give what is due to the predestined, but rather what is undeserved grace. Likewise, in reprobation, He does not deny what is owed to the reprobate, but rather withholds an undeserved benefit.

As for those words of Peter, "Truly I understand that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him" (Acts 10:34–35), these concern the favor of God which, by promise and covenant, is now quasi-due—not that eternal and gratuitous favor which is bound by no promise or covenant.

For if God, after promising His favor to those who fear Him and live holily, were to reject a poor or lowly man who faithfully serves Him, and embrace a rich or noble man instead; or if He were to favor a religious Jew and neglect a Gentile who lives justly, soberly, and godly—then God would indeed be a προσωπολήπτης (respecter of persons). This sort of respect of persons is what the Apostle teaches must be far from God.

But in predestination and preterition, God is not bound by any promise or covenant. Moreover, in predestining or passing over, He does not regard any external circumstance, such as nation, nobility, or anything like that, but acts according to the mere good pleasure of His will.

Finally, those whom He passes over cannot claim that they feared God and lived justly; rather, they are compelled to acknowledge themselves as children of wrath, most unworthy of even the smallest favor of God.

This passage of Scripture, therefore, does not prove that predestination or reprobation proceeds from any cause in man, nor does it prove that God is to be accused of προσωποληψία.

Objection:

God is rich in mercy. But if He reprobates some by His mere will and not because of foreseen sin, then no mercy at all would appear in such an act. Therefore, He reprobates based on the foresight of demerit, or of the foreseen evil use of free will, lasting unto the end.

First, it must always be maintained that when we deny that reprobation has its origin in the foreknowledge of human demerits, we are speaking of reprobation insofar as it signifies the denial of the preparation of efficacious grace to certain persons, not insofar as it denotes the preparation of eternal punishment for those same persons. For, as we readily concede with Aquinas, although the foreknowledge of merits cannot in any way be a reason for predestination—since those very merits foreseen fall under predestination—yet the foreknowledge of sins can be some reason for reprobation, insofar as it pertains to the punishment that is prepared for the reprobate, inasmuch as God proposes to punish the wicked on account of sins which they have from themselves, not from God. Thomas says this in his Commentary on Romans 9, near the end.

Second, it must also be noted that all those who are reprobated by God are regarded by Him as bound by the guilt of original sin and liable to damnation, though this is not absolutely necessary to vindicate God from injustice or cruelty with respect to negative reprobation, as is evident in the case of the angels. But among men, since all those who are reprobated are in themselves damnable and worthy of hatred, God—although He is rich in mercy—can most justly, according to the freedom of His will, choose some from among them and reprobate others, all of whom have been rendered hateful (and, if it may be so said) reprobable by original sin.

Finally, when the objection is made: “If God were to reprobate apart from the foreknowledge of final and actual demerits, then no mercy would appear in such an act,” this objection seems to rest on a certain rule commonly received among the scholastics—namely, that in all the works of God, both mercy and justice concur. But the meaning of this rule is not that every act of God is formally an act of justice or mercy, but that it is an effect of Divine providence, ordered to the manifestation of justice, or of mercy, or of both. And so, this reprobation, which we suppose to be made from the mere will of God, is ordained to the manifestation of justice in the damned, and to the manifestation of greater mercy toward the predestined.

Moreover, a certain mercy appears even toward the reprobate themselves, although not that special and eminent mercy which, by efficacious grace, infallibly orders one unto glory. For the reprobate are often granted many benefits of Divine grace and mercy, which are not withdrawn except on account of their own abuse and voluntary rebellion against God. Finally, even in the very damnation of these reprobates, God’s mercy appears—not indeed in fully relaxing, but in somewhat alleviating—since He punishes them less than they deserve, as Thomas rightly says in Part 1, Question 21, Article 4: no just judge intends punitive justice for its own sake, but only upon the supposition of a punishable fault. But in reprobating, God intends to exercise His punitive and vindictive justice. Therefore, He reprobates on the basis of the foreknowledge of the evil and demeritorious use of free will.

Negative reprobation, which says nothing other than God’s eternal purpose of not giving to certain persons that special grace by which their hearts would be softened, and by the benefit of which they would be infallibly directed unto eternal life, does not proceed from punitive justice nor from the will to condemn, but from that aspect of Divine providence by which God judged it fitting to His wisdom to permit some, through their own fault, to fall short of beatitude.

Once this will of God is posited, He foresees the future sins of the reprobate, and their final perseverance in those sins. At the same time, He understands that the manifestation of His glory will arise from the punishment of these sinners. Therefore, God intends to exercise punitive justice upon the reprobate on account of the sins in which they are foreseen to end their lives. But this intention and foreknowledge follow the act of the aforementioned reprobation, just as the final state of the sinner in his sins does.

Indeed, we can truly say that there has always been in God a will to punish sins—if they occur—but we cannot posit in God an absolute and express will to punish, directed toward this or that individual, unless the permission of God is first presupposed—that they would occur, and that this person would finally remain under the guilt of them and be destined for punishment.

This permission, which contains the act of negative reprobation, is prior to the absolute foreknowledge of the evil use of free will enduring to the end of life in this or that individual. Therefore, it cannot depend on that foreknowledge as its cause. It is mistaken, then, to derive the decrees of reprobating and punishing or condemning from the same causes.

Up to this point, we have examined the arguments of the Jesuits and the Scholastics. There are also some additional arguments pressed by Corvinus in his Defense of the Arminian Position Against Tilenus, which we will answer, especially if anything new arises.

We must exert ourselves all the more to refer the negative act of reprobation—which we may call passing over or non-election—to the mere freedom of the Divine will. For all who deduce this reprobation from the foreknowledge of evil acts likewise suspend election upon the foreknowledge of good acts. Moreover, Augustine—than whom no one has treated this matter more learnedly or more piously—denies as clearly that the foreseen evil deeds of Esau were the cause of his reprobation by God, as he denies that the foreseen good deeds of Jacob were the cause of his election. See Enchiridion ad Laurentium, chapter 98; Ad Simplicianum, book 1, question 2; and Epistle 105, where he equally rejects the opinion of those who claim that God loved the one and hated the other because He foresaw their future works. And in Epistle 206 he openly teaches that God makes a distinction by loving those whom no merit distinguishes. Therefore, just as he does not admit that the foreknowledge of good merits is the cause of election, so he does not concede that the foreknowledge of evil deeds is the reason for reprobation. For when, on one side, good acts such as believing, obeying, and persevering are considered, and on the other side, evil acts opposed to these, it is clear that these are regarded as meritorious distinctions.

But let us now turn to Corvinus' view. He therefore, along with Arminius, holds that God always reprobates particular persons because of their personal and proper rejection of the grace offered to them—so that in the decree of reprobation, God has rejected or passed over no one unless he was considered as actually unbelieving and impenitent against the God who calls; nor, even in Adam's fall, has He passed over anyone by His absolute ordination or decreed to damn anyone solely on account of original sin.

To this view, if we are speaking only of adults, we may grant to Arminius and Corvinus that some kind of personal and proper unworthiness, arising from voluntary rebellion, was foreseen in all those whom God reprobated from eternity. But we deny that the decree of reprobation issued from this foreseen actual and final rebellion as from an antecedent and moving cause. Rather, we affirm that in the Divine will, we must conceive the decree of permissive hardening—or reprobation, of which the Apostle speaks, “He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills, He hardens”—prior to our conceiving in the Divine mind any such foreknowledge related to a particular person, whereby from eternity God foresees that person as resisting His grace and persistently rejecting and scorning that grace unto the very end of their life.

Moreover, when they establish their position by saying that God, in the decree of reprobation, considers men as actually unbelieving and impenitent against the God who is calling them, they are forced to abuse terms contrary to the accepted and sacred usage of Scripture and nearly all theologians. For if we wish to speak according to the usage of Scripture and sound theology, infidelity denotes the rejection of the gospel, and the terms “grace” and “calling” presuppose the revelation of the gospel. But according to Arminius and Corvinus, men are reprobated on account of foreseen unbelief, though the gospel was never announced to them; and they are said to have rejected grace and calling, though the grace of Christ was never offered to them.

Finally, what they teach concerning original sin—that it makes no man guilty of eternal death and that no one is damned solely on account of it—is clearly as foreign to the doctrine of the Catholic Church as it is necessarily linked and connected with Arminian theology.

But let us now proceed to set forth and refute their arguments.

Chapter IX— Section A: Corvinus’s Arguments Are Presented and Refuted

The opponents commonly argue from the decree of damnation itself to the act or decree of reprobation in the following way:

“As God considers men when He damns them in time, so He decreed to damn and reprobate them from eternity. But God damns men as disobedient to the Gospel—that is, as finally impenitent and unbelieving. Therefore, He also reprobated them from eternity as such.”

They think the major premise is evident because the relation that sin has to damnation should also be the same relation it has to reprobation. Therefore, just as sin is acknowledged to be a meritorious and moving cause for God to damn a particular person, so too, they argue, it must also be the case in reprobation. To this they add that it is contrary to divine wisdom to will to reprobate a sinner without any regard for his evil merits, and yet in time not to will to condemn him except on account of those merits.

Answer 1:

Jesuits and Arminians use a similar argument in the case of predestination, which we have already answered above.

The main error in this argument lies in the assumption that reprobation—or the decree to reprobate—is entirely the same as the decree to damn. But for us, the decree to damn designates the peremptory sentence conceived in the mind of God the Judge from eternity and confirmed by the decree of His will, whereby He determines to punish a man foreseen and considered as guilty of sin at the end of his life with death on account of that sin.

However, the decree to reprobate denotes the eternal good pleasure of God—not as Judge, but as the most free Agent—whereby He determines not to bestow upon certain persons that special and undeserved grace which would soften their hearts, convert them, and infallibly lead them to eternal life.

There is a wide difference between these two decrees. The former proceeds from vindictive justice and therefore regards the final guilt of the sinner as the moving cause of the punishment appointed. The latter proceeds from God's liberty as one who does what He wills, and therefore, just as when God determines to give a special benefit to some particular person, it does not follow that He regarded the merits of that person as the moving cause of that benefit, so also, when He determines not to give the same special benefit to another, it is not rightly concluded that He regarded that person's future demerits as the moving cause of the benefit being withheld.

Therefore, we assert that the major proposition and its supporting rationale are invalid, because the consideration is not uniform, nor is the relation of sin to the decree of reprobation the same as its relation to the decree of damnation.

Nor is it at all contrary to divine wisdom—indeed, it agrees perfectly with it—that He does not will to condemn anyone except on account of the demerit of sin as the antecedent and moving cause of the punishment determined, and yet He does will to reprobate some persons (that is, to pass over them in the preparation of special grace and in the infallible ordination to eternal life) out of the mere liberty of His will, and not out of any antecedent reason of final unbelief or impenitence.

Rightly does Bañez say: "This passing over or reprobation of some persons while others are chosen is a most manifest demonstration of the freedom which the divine will has in dispensing supernatural goods." (In I, q. 22, a. 5, p. 293). It is also not foreign to divine wisdom—as with His other attributes—that He should display this attribute of liberty in the dispensing of the highest good to mankind.

Thus, Lombard rightly says (Book I, Distinction 41): "God reprobated whom He willed, not because of future merits which He foresaw, and yet in the most upright truth and in a way hidden from our senses."

So much for the major premise.

Let us now turn to the minor, which is not true if taken universally. For many are damned who were not considered by God as disobedient to the gospel. For example, the infants of the pagans, who are born children of wrath and are not reborn in Christ. Likewise, among adults, those to whom the gospel never came and to whom Christ was never revealed. Even Arminius concedes that many are damned solely by the Law and not because they rejected the gospel (Examen Praedest. Perkins).

But we need not labor further over the minor. For whether men are damned on account of the contempt of the gospel or the contempt of the law, nevertheless, the reason why they are reprobated must be sought elsewhere.

Finally, we grant that men are not reprobated without some consideration of the law or the gospel being rejected, since God cannot but consider and eternally behold whatever is to come in time. But we deny that this consideration or foreknowledge was regarded by God under the aspect of a moving cause or as a distinguishing condition in relation to the act of reprobating.

This should have been conceded—indeed, it is conceded—that from eternity there is foreknowledge of future faith in some, and a pre-consideration of future sin in others. But it does not follow from this that those things were the causes of either election or reprobation. For many things are foreseen by God in the elect or the reprobate which do not have the nature of a moving cause for the act of electing or reprobating.

They argue as follows concerning the remission of sin to all from Adam's sin:

"God does not will to act by strict justice with any man lying in the common sin of Adam, such that he would be left in condemnation without any hope of mercy. But if He were to reprobate certain persons solely as lying in the common fall of Adam, and not on account of their actual and personal rebellion against God, then He would be dealing with them by strict and ultimate justice."

They try to confirm the major premise of this syllogism in two ways:

First, by the fact that pardon was given to Adam himself. For it seems unjust that God would exclude others from eternal life on account of Adam's sin—which is reckoned to us only by imputation—while receiving Adam himself back into grace, who actually committed that sin.

Second, they try to prove the same from the fact that Christ has obtained redemption and reconciliation with the Father for all men. It seems incongruent that those for whom Christ procured reconciliation should be left to perish by a decree of reprobation—when nothing hinders them from partaking in that reconciliation except their own impenitence. Therefore, no one is reprobated except on account of foreseen final impenitence or rebellion, as a moving cause with respect to the act of reprobation.

Response:

The major premise of the syllogism, when applied to pagan infants—who are not considered within the covenant and are not regenerated in Christ—is plainly false. For if condemning someone on account of original sin alone is to act by strict justice, then it is evident that with such persons God does indeed act by strict justice. And hence Augustine, in agreement with the judgment of the Catholic Church, plainly declares that:

“The whole human race is damned in the root of Adam by the just judgment of God, so that even if no one were delivered from that condemnation, no one could rightly accuse God of injustice. And those who are delivered are delivered in such a way that it might be shown in those left behind what the entire mass deserved, and where the judgment of God would have led even those who are saved, unless His undeserved mercy had intervened.” (Enchiridion, chapter 99)

Even Vasquez the Jesuit, though he vigorously defends predestination based on foreseen merits, is nevertheless compelled to admit:

“If we speak of that reprobation by which someone is rejected from God’s grace, then in the case of reprobate infants there was absolutely no cause for their reprobation. And if we speak of the reprobation by which someone is excluded from blessedness, those infants who—by the disposition of divine providence—could not be helped by any human effort, are excluded from the kingdom of heaven by the decree of God after the foreknowledge that they would contract original sin.” (In I, q. 23, a. 6, disp. 95, cap. 6, p. 703)

The Arminians therefore go further in the defense of their error than even the Jesuits do.

But let us set aside the case of infants and examine the major premise as it pertains to adults—those with the use of reason and free will. Concerning such, if “to act by strict justice” means that God determines to damn someone and to inflict eternal death without consideration of actual sin, then we admit that God does not act with such sinners by strict justice. For He neither damns them nor destines them to damnation unless on account of foreseen sins and final impenitence in those sins.

However, if by “to act by strict justice” Corvinus means “not to prepare that special grace by which, once applied, God knows and has determined that such a person will be delivered,” or “to pass over such a man and not ordain him—by a decree of special providence which we call predestination—to attain eternal life, but rather to leave him to his own deficiency,” then we affirm that God indeed acts this way with many, out of the sheer liberty of His will. And if this is what it means to “act by strict justice,” then God acts by strict justice with all the reprobate.

Furthermore, the assumption attached to the major premise—that certain people are left in this condemnation without any hope of mercy—is wrongly attributed to the decree of reprobation. For just as the decree of predestination, so too the decree of reprobation is a secret decree, not known to any mortal—neither with respect to himself nor with respect to others—as far as individual distinction is concerned.

Just as the predestined do not yet have the hope of mercy merely from being predestined, so also the reprobate are not merely from being reprobate left without any hope of mercy. For just as Paul, though predestined, could not conceive hope of mercy except through conversion and faith in Christ, so also Judas, though reprobate, is not without hope of mercy except through his own unbelief and impiety against Christ.

Finally, if the Arminians argue that because of the infallibility of the outcome and the immutability of God's decree, every reprobate person is necessarily without hope of mercy—then this difficulty presses their view as much as ours. For they themselves acknowledge that Judas—and indeed every reprobate individual—was from eternity reprobated by a fixed and peremptory sentence of God. So that, according to their own opinion, it was just as certain, infallible, and definite in God's mind that Judas would never obtain pardon and eternal life as it is in ours.

Therefore, if under Arminian reprobation Judas is not left without all hope of mercy, neither is he left so under the reprobation taught by the orthodox.

See Augustine on this topic: *De Bono Perseverantiae*, chapters 2, 15, and 22.

Now let us consider the confirmation of the major premise.

First, they say it is repugnant to the divine goodness that Adam—who actually committed the sin—should go unpunished, while others are punished who are guilty merely by imputation.

This confirmation suffers from many faults.

First, the argument is not about punishing men, but about reprobating them. For reprobation is one thing, and damnation or punishment is another, as we have often insisted. So these words miss the point of the question.

Next, they excessively minimize original sin when they say that it is “ours” merely by God's reckoning, and that we are guilty not otherwise than by mere imputation. See Augustine *Contra Julianum*, Book 4, Chapter 6. For original sin is ours not by mere imputation, but by corrupt propagation; and we are guilty not only by God's estimation but by the damnable corruption contracted in all the faculties of our soul.

Furthermore, it does not contradict divine equity or goodness for Adam, having repented, to be saved, while others who die in original sin alone are punished. For the acts Adam performed in the state of integrity, he did as the root of the human race, and so he did them for us as well as for himself, to the extent that he is said to have sinned and fallen not for himself alone but for all his descendants. But what he did in the fallen state, he did for himself and not for his descendants—for he is said to have regained divine grace and favor by repenting for himself, not for all and each of his descendants.

Lastly, it is not unjust that God prepared and gave to Adam true and sincere repentance out of sheer mercy, while to many of his descendants He neither prepared nor gave the same saving

repentance. By what law is God more obligated to give to all Adam's descendants what He gave to Adam, than He is to give to Judas what He gave to Paul or Peter purely from mercy?

Second, they contend that no one is reprobated as considered only in the common sin of Adam, because Christ has obtained reconciliation for all, and nothing can prevent someone from partaking of that reconciliation except their own impenitence.

But they themselves undo the very principle they are trying to establish. For if Christ's offering had, by its very application, actually obtained redemption and reconciliation for all and each individually, there would be something of substance in this argument. But just as that reconciliation is not applied to adults except by actual faith and repentance, so it is not applied to infants except through supernatural regeneration.

Now I ask: where has God promised to prepare and give to all and each adult that faith and repentance by which they are effectively and actually reconciled to God? Or where has He entered into a covenant with all infants, such that, notwithstanding original sin, He is obligated to regard them as reconciled, and to adopt them by supernatural regeneration as sons and heirs of eternal life?

If God neither does this nor is bound to do so, then He passes over—or reprobates—some who lie in original sin alone, and in this He does no injustice, but acts according to His free right. And so you see that neither is the major proposition in itself solid, nor are the proofs added to it firmly established.

As for the minor, I deny even this: that God, in reprobating, acts by strict or highest justice with the reprobate if He reprobates them as lying in original sin alone. For if He acted by highest justice with the reprobate, He could, the moment they are born, cast them into hell as guilty of eternal death. If He acted by strict justice, He could deprive them of all the gifts of His grace.

But in fact, He often bestows on them many benefits—both bodily and spiritual—by which they are improved; and He withholds from them nothing that is owed, nor does He infuse into them anything by which they are made worse. Therefore, He does not act with them by strict justice.

But our opponents argue this case as if there were no middle ground between acting out of supreme mercy and acting out of strict or highest justice.

We admit that God acts with the elect alone out of supreme mercy. But we also affirm that He does not act with the non-elect or reprobate out of highest justice, but out of φιλανθρωπία (philanthropy), out of an admirable goodness and gentleness. So that they are convicted in their own consciences that they were not driven to death by God's decree of reprobation, but rather fell into most just condemnation either by inherited corruption or by willful rebellion—or by both.

God wills that the saving grace of the Gospel be offered to all men without distinction.

This will of His is made clear in many passages of Scripture:

Matthew 28:19: "Go therefore and teach all nations," etc.

Mark 16:15: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

And again the Apostle in Colossians 1:28: "We proclaim Christ, warning every man, and teaching every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ."

This affection of God toward the salvation of all men seems to imply that no one is reprobated by Him except after the consideration of rejected grace—or, what amounts to the same thing, except from the foreknowledge of final unbelief and impenitence.

From those commands of Christ—"Teach all nations," "Preach to every creature"—it is rightly concluded that to those disciples was entrusted apostolic authority, that is, authority not fixed to any one particular church or nation, but extending to the entire world.

It is also rightly inferred that the wall of separation which had divided the Gentiles from the Church of God was torn down, and that the Gospel was to be preached not to the nation of the Jews only, but to both Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and barbarians, the wise and the unwise, as Paul says in Romans 1.

Finally, it is rightly deduced that the aim and labor of the ministers of the Gospel ought to tend—and indeed Paul's labor did tend—toward bringing to Christ all and each individual to whom the Gospel was preached.

For, as Augustine piously and wisely says: "Since we do not know who belongs to the number of the predestined and who does not, we ought to be so affected by charity as to will all men to be saved" (De correptione et gratia, chapter 15).

But, all these things being admitted, we deny that conclusion which the opponents try to extract from such testimonies—namely, that those to whom Christ ordered the Gospel to be preached were not reprobated except by foresight of their own demerits.

For to reprobate is, by a decree of God's will, to permit some to fall short of blessedness—not by ordaining or preparing for them that special grace by which they would in fact be brought to faith and eternal life—but rather by not ordaining such grace for them.

Just as to elect is to infallibly and unfailingly ordain some to obtain blessedness, by predestining, preparing, and giving to them that special grace by which God eternally determined and foresaw they would be softened, converted, and actually saved.

Now, we are commanded to preach the Gospel to many whom God, in this infallible ordination to grace and glory, willed to pass over by His mere good pleasure.

Therefore, the command to evangelize does not conflict with the will to reprobate.

Moreover, He willed to pass them over with regard to the preparation of this special and effectually saving grace, by a will that precedes their final hardness, and not from any foresight of that final hardness and unbelief.

For (as has often been said), the final impenitence and unbelief of any individual person is not foreseen or considered by God as absolutely and certainly future, except by His decree of reprobation concerning that person already established—by which God has determined not to have mercy on that person in such a way as to effectively soften and convert them; and by which He has also determined to permit them, by their own fault, to reject any grace offered, and to remain hardened in heart until the end of their life.

This is the meaning of the words of the Savior in Matthew 11:25: “I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.”

And again in Matthew 13:11: “To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but to them it is not given.”

Finally, also that statement of the Apostle, which must be continually emphasized against all who oppose special grace: “He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens” (Romans 9:18).

All these passages speak about those to whom the Word of God was preached; and yet in all of them is implied the antecedent good pleasure of God, according to which effectual grace was prepared for some and not for others.

To sum up briefly: just as from the fact that God wills all doctors, according to their strength, to do those things which are conducive to the life of each patient they take on, it does not rightly follow that God does not will to permit anyone to die of disease unless He foresaw them to be obstinate rejecters of medicine—so also from the fact that God commands the ministers of the Gospel (which is the medicine of souls) to preach to all and to labor with all their might to deliver all and each one from death, it does not follow that God Himself has decreed to effectually deliver all from death, or that He has not decreed to permit some, through their own hardness, to perish—those whom, unless He had reprobated them, He both could and would have softened by His special mercy.

Therefore, it is vain to argue from the commanding will of God—which is to govern human actions—to the predestining or reprobating will of God, which determines, either by infallible divine action to bring about an effect, or by withholding that action, not to bring it about.

The objection is pressed even more strongly: God Himself, on His part, is prepared to give to all sufficient and necessary means for believing and converting, and He will undoubtedly give them—unless they themselves place an obstacle. But this seems to conflict with the idea that God, by His antecedent will, has reprobated anyone, while at the same time being ready to provide him all things necessary for salvation. Therefore, no one has been reprobated except by

a consequent will, on account of the foreseen final impenitence, unbelief, and rejection of divine grace by that same person.

Answer 1. That postulate about sufficient grace being prepared and administered to all is very slippery and has not yet been fully or firmly approved even among the defenders of universal grace. Vasquez, as we noted earlier, is forced by the sheer evidence of the matter to concede that there are some infants for whom the sufficient means of salvation could not have been applied by any human providence, nor were applied by divine providence (cf. *In Iam partem Aquinatis*, disp. 95, cap. 6).

We may therefore turn this argument back upon them, concerning those infants who perish in original sin in this way. To such infants, sufficient means were neither prepared nor administered. Thus: those infants to whom sufficient means were neither prepared nor administered were rejected without any consideration of actual unbelief or final impenitence. But there are such infants—for example, those born of two unbelieving and idolatrous parents, ignorant of Christ, worshiping the devil—of the sort the Apostle himself indicates as “unclean” in 1 Corinthians 7:14. Therefore, in such cases they are forced to acknowledge a rejection without reference to the foreseen unbelief of the reprobated person.

But putting aside infants, who by divine providence are born and die outside the Church, Vasquez himself also grants that, even concerning adults who are rational and have free will, there has been some reprobation and rejection by God predestined prior to the foresight of sins (*ibid.* cap. 2). He understands this reprobation as rejection from that special grace, which, if withheld, always results in hardening and rushing into destruction (*ibid.* cap. 5).

If Arminius, Corvinus, and their followers would concede even this much to us, it would follow that the provision of sufficient grace does not exclude antecedent reprobation—but rather, that the preparation of efficacious grace truly excludes reprobation, and in fact implies election.

So let it be assumed: that to all adults sufficient grace is administered by God. Still, as you see—even by the Jesuit’s own judgment—it does not follow from this that they were not reprobated before the foresight of final demerits.

This truth is plainly evident in the case of the fallen angels. God was not only ready to give them sufficient and necessary means to stand and persevere in divine obedience—He actually gave them such means. And yet all theologians admit that among the angels, some were elect and some non-elect or reprobate.

If, therefore, the opponents could prove that to all and each individual human being sufficient grace is given, even so it would not rightly follow that no one was reprobated except from foresight of final unbelief. For just as, when sufficient grace is present in a given person, it does not follow that there was antecedent predestination; so also, when the same sufficient grace is present in a person, it does not follow that there was no antecedent reprobation. The reasoning is the same in both cases: because predestination does not imply just any ordering to a supernatural end by means that are merely sufficient, but rather an ordering connected with the

outcome and infallible result; and reprobation does not deny every kind of ordering to a supernatural end, but only that unfailing ordering by divine intention and special operation, which actually produces the outcome of salvation.

Lastly, that sufficient means to salvation are given to all is not proven with the same ease with which it is asserted. I will not now enter into that dispute, for it is not necessary for answering the proposed argument, as you've already seen. I will only note this: Bellarmine, who defends the view of sufficient grace, first concedes to us that there would be no injustice in God if He denied this sufficient grace to some or to all (cf. *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, lib. 2, cap. 4). From this we gather that God is under no obligation, by pact or promise, to do this. How, then, can the opponents dare to promise sufficient grace to all and each, which God Himself has not promised?

Secondly, Bellarmine is forced to retreat to the distinction of mediate or immediate administration of sufficient grace, and he does not dare to affirm that sufficient grace is given immediately to all infants. But how obscure is the idea that to this infant, born among the Indians or Americans, in his parents was exhibited some kind of sufficient help—when no one can explain what kind of help that was!

Furthermore, if in defending sufficient grace it is permissible to appeal to ancestors, it would be much safer and more certain to ascend all the way to our first parents, concerning whom there is no question that in them their descendants received sufficient grace—whereas in other ancestors of ours, it will remain uncertain whether they received such sufficient grace on behalf of their children or did not.

Finally, even among adults, many (as Bellarmine admits, *ibid. cap. 8*) are not granted sufficient help for believing immediately, but only in this sense: they can, through the creatures, recognize that God exists; they can be stirred by God to believe that He exists and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him; and they can be stirred by such faith to pray to God. In this way—though lacking the preaching of the Gospel—they may obtain illumination in the knowledge of the faith, whether from God Himself, or from an angel, or from some man.

How miserable is this defense, which, when the question is posed about what is, answers only about what could be—I don't doubt you all understand. I have only briefly touched on it, so that you might see how poorly founded this proposition is, that sufficient grace is given to all and each individual—which our disputants lay down as the most solid foundation of their case. I will add no more, since even if it is granted, it still does not make for a solid proof of their position, as we demonstrated from the outset.

They dispute about the evangelical calling as follows: If God, by an antecedent and absolute decree, elected some and reprobated others, then He would be acting disingenuously by offering grace indiscriminately to all men through evangelical ministers. For it cannot be precisely commanded to the elect that they believe in order to obtain salvation, since no one expects under a condition what he knows has been absolutely ordained for him. Nor can it be commanded to the reprobate that they believe—for in that case God would be requiring them to

believe what is false, namely, that Christ suffered and died for them and obtained for them life and reconciliation.

Therefore, it must be held that no one is reprobated except from the consideration and foresight of spurned grace and a final persistence in hardness of heart and unbelief.

Here we must recall—something we are continually forced to repeat—that by reprobation, which we ground in the mere will of God and not in foreseen human demerits, we understand not a peremptory decree of damning or condemning to eternal death any particular person, but rather a fixed decree of not imparting that special and efficacious grace (or calling according to purpose), without which God sees that this particular person will remain in his hardness, impenitence, and unbelief, and has decreed to permit that.

It is indeed most certain to God that, from such a withholding of grace, the rejected person will die in his sins. It is also most firmly decreed by God that the same person will be condemned for those sins in which he dies. Yet it is not obscure that the withholding of such grace (in which we hold the essence of reprobation lies) depends on the mere freedom of the divine will, while the damnation of such a person arises from his sin.

Having prefaced these things, I answer: God, without any dissimulation, notwithstanding such a decree of reprobation, can propose to all men indiscriminately, through evangelical ministers, the remission of sins and eternal life under the condition: "if they believe in Christ." Nor does God dissimulate when He promises salvation under this condition promiscuously to all men, because to every man who fulfills the condition, He will faithfully give the promised benefit.

If the decree of reprobation were conceived in this form: "Even if Judas believes, he shall not obtain remission of sins or eternal life," that would indeed be a manifest illusion in the preaching of the Gospel toward the reprobate. But that decree contains only this: "I will not give to Judas that special grace by which, if given, he would in fact fulfill the condition proposed."

If they want to accuse God of dissimulation, they must show that God has promised through evangelical ministers to give this special grace to some person whom He nevertheless, by an antecedent decree of reprobation, has rejected from it. If they can do that—which they never can—we would (God forbid) allow them to accuse God of false dealing.

Let the Remonstrants, then, understand—who are constantly pressing this point—that it is one thing to will seriously the salvation of any person if he believes, and another thing to decree to operate in each person so that he believes. God can will the former without any dissimulation, even though concerning some He has decreed the latter not to be done, in their reprobation.

However, it will not be out of place here, in passing, to note that when we say that God wills to save any man if he believes, we denote nothing else by this conditional will than that eternal and inviolable divine ordination concerning the indissoluble connection between faith and salvation. Because of this connection, the promise is verified concerning any person—whether elect or not: "If you believe, you will be saved."

Meanwhile, the will of God is not understood to be suspended or uncertain regarding the salvation of a non-elect person. Rather, these kinds of statements simply affirm that if the condition of faith were found in the subject, there would also be in God an actual will to save that person—which is sufficient to exclude any charge of dissimulation, which they try to pin on God.

See also Vorstius, *Amica Duplex*, p. 5, 6, 7, etc.

Furthermore, as to what was asserted in the argument—that to the elect or reprobate, considered precisely or absolutely, it cannot be commanded that they believe—if they mean “precisely and absolutely elect to salvation” in such a sense as to exclude the use of means, as though God had decreed to lead some to salvation even if they reject the means of salvation, or to damn others even if they believe in Christ—then they are imputing to our doctrine absurdities of their own invention.

We say that Peter, Paul, and others were absolutely predestined to eternal life—not that they knew this decree of God absolutely before they believed, nor that they attain eternal life without fulfilling the condition of faith—but that they were chosen by God absolutely and graciously not only to eternal life itself, but to the entire series of means by which they are led to it.

Therefore, although in the execution of the end everything depends upon the conditional use of means, yet in God predestining Peter, Paul, or any individual person, the will concerning the end was not conditional, but absolutely conjoined with the will concerning the means—so that by one and the same most simple act, by which God willed glory for Peter or Paul, He also willed their faith and everything else by the use of which glory is conditionally promised.

In a word, God did not decree to save Peter apart from the condition of faith; rather, He decreed to give faith to Peter just as absolutely and precisely as He decreed to give him salvation. And this is what is commonly said: predestination is the preparation of grace in the present and of glory in the future.

Now as for the reprobate: notwithstanding their eternal, antecedent reprobation, it is just as possible to command them to believe as it was truly possible to command the non-elect or reprobate angels to obey God. It is just as possible to offer salvation to them under the condition “if they believe” as it was to promise beatitude to the angels under the condition “if they had persevered in obedience to God.” For just as Peter’s predestination does not cancel the truth of the negative conditional “if you do not believe, you will not be saved,” so also the reprobation of Judas does not nullify the truth of the affirmative conditional “if you believe, you will be saved.” It only implies this: given the indissoluble concatenation between faith and salvation, that God does not give Judas that efficacious grace by which he would in fact fulfill the condition.

Lastly, as to the objection that our view requires the reprobate to believe something false—namely, that Christ by His death obtained life and reconciliation for them—we simply deny it. For life and reconciliation are not applied to particular individuals by Christ’s death under the secret condition “if they are predestined,” but under the revealed condition “if they believe.”

Nor is application denied to any particular person to whom it is preached except under this condition: "if he is unbelieving," as is clearly gathered from John 3:15, 16, etc.

In this, then, the secret decree of election and reprobation shows itself: the death of Christ, which by God's ordination would suffice for the reconciliation and life of any man, if he were to believe, nevertheless actually profits only the elect—those to whom alone, by a special mercy, God gives that grace by which they are able and willing to fulfill the said condition efficaciously and in fact.

Those who posit absolute reprobation not arising from the foresight of final impenitence say that the cause of damnation lies not in the evil of the reprobate themselves, but in a defect of divine grace. But this is unworthy of God, who is always prepared to add further grace if man makes good use of the grace received. Therefore, it does not arise from reprobation but from man's voluntary neglect that he is without grace or does not receive more of it—namely, because he has made himself unworthy of eternal life (Acts 13:46), because he held down the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18), because he did not receive the love of the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10–11).

We deny that the reprobation we posit makes God the cause of human perdition or of a defect in divine grace—unless "cause" is used improperly and abusively. The true cause of perdition or damnation is that which justly deserves damnation, or the one who performs works worthy of damnation. Thus, the sinner himself with his sins is the true and sole cause of his own perdition. To be reprobated or passed over in the preparation of special grace and mercy does not merit or bring about human perdition. The reprobation we teach, then, does not place the cause of damnation in a defect of divine grace, but rather attributes the denial of efficacious and special grace to the freedom of the divine will.

The will of God is the determining cause why some are not delivered from perdition by efficacious and unfailing grace, while others are delivered by such grace. But the proper malice of the reprobate is the operative and meritorious cause why they perish and are condemned.

An equivocation on the word "cause" has misled our opponents, or at least given them the opportunity to mislead others. For something is said to be the cause of an event or effect in two ways: truly, directly, and properly—by way of influence to produce the effect; or abusively, indirectly, and improperly—by way of not acting to prevent the effect. Just as the rising of the sun is truly and properly the cause of why the air is illuminated, so its setting is improperly and abusively said to be the cause of darkness, in the sense that its presence would have driven the darkness away.

In this way, because the bestowal of special grace is the productive cause of human salvation, some are led to think that the denial or lack of such grace is the cause of human perdition, since its presence would have prevented that perdition. But the Philosopher himself (Aristotle) speaks more accurately on this matter in Metaphysics, Book 4, Chapter 2: "That which, when present, is the cause of something, we sometimes say, when absent, is the cause of the opposite." We must note the Philosopher's words: "we sometimes say." He does not say that its absence is the

cause of the opposite, but that we regard or treat it as if it were the cause—and that only sometimes.

Therefore, the influence of special grace, denied by divine decree to certain men, may be thought or represented by the unlearned as the cause of their sin and perdition, since its bestowal would have preserved them. But it is falsely so represented—unless it can be proven either that God was obligated to bestow such grace, or that the sins and perdition of the wicked did not proceed from their own innate corruption and voluntary rebellion as their true and positive causes.

Moreover, the claim that God is always prepared to add further grace to anyone if they make good use of what was given—and thus that no one is reprobated except on the basis of foreseen antecedent contempt of grace, that is, final impenitence and unbelief—has no force against our defense.

First, just as election posits not a hypothetical but an absolute and infallible bestowal of grace, so also reprobation does not deny a hypothetical bestowal of grace (namely, under the condition “if someone were to do this or that”), but it denies that efficacious grace will in fact be given. Therefore, it does not follow: “If Judas had done this or that, he would have obtained further grace; therefore, he was not absolutely rejected from special grace by the decree of reprobation.”

Second, contempt of whatever kind of grace is given can rightly be assigned as the reason why that same grace is withdrawn or why more abundant grace is not administered, and this is proved from the passages of Scripture already cited. But it cannot, except absurdly, be cited as the cause or reason why that special mercy and efficacious calling according to God’s purpose—which always removes contempt of grace—was not prepared and given to this or that person. In fact, to seize upon that contempt as a reason for denying further grace is itself a manifest argument of non-election or antecedent reprobation.

For those whom God has not reprobated—though they place many obstacles and by their multiple negligence and resistance merit the withdrawal of grace—yet God, out of undeserved and special mercy, presses them again and again and does not cease until He has regenerated them and subdued them to His grace.

Third, the rule that “to him who uses grace well—i.e., as Corvinus explains on p. 157, ‘to the one who does whatever he can do with the grace given to him’—further grace will always be given,” does not undermine the absolute decree of reprobation. For I ask: What mortal has ever done, or will ever do, whatever he can do with the grace given to him? The angels did not do so. The first parents did not. Not even any of the elect do so after receiving the grace of regeneration—much less could it be expected from the unregenerate, equipped only with exciting grace, which Corvinus scarcely distinguishes from the light of nature.

Far better is the reasoning of Thomas [Aquinas], who teaches in *Contra Gentiles* Book 3, Chapter 160, that in free will, inclined toward evil by preceding disorder, there is not found the

capacity to present no obstacle to divine grace. Then he adds in Chapter 161 that nevertheless, God, out of the abundance of His goodness, sometimes turns even those who present an obstacle to grace away from evil and converts them to good.

Finally, he adds this: that this is done only in those in whom He wills His mercy to appear, so that in all others the order of justice might be manifest. But the reason for this distinction—why God converts some who place obstacles, and not others—is not to be sought, because it depends on His simple will. Therefore, it is in vain that Corvinus opposes reprobation on the basis that God is ready to give more abundant grace to all who use the grace they have received in such a way as to do whatever they can do with it—since no one does this—and since this very fact, of not ultimately resisting divine grace, flows from election and does not precede it.

See Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Praedestinatione*, response to article 1 and 11, article 20.

If antecedent reprobation is posited, and not reprobation based on foreseen future impenitence and unbelief, then it will follow that this impenitence and unbelief, for which the reprobate are condemned, flows from the decree of reprobation. But it is unjust to damn someone for that which follows from antecedent reprobation (which is purely a divine act). In the Hague Conference this was pressed by the Remonstrants, who seem to believe that if we assume reprobation to be constituted otherwise than from foreseen unbelief, the consequence must be that this very unbelief is the fruit of said reprobation.

Hence the argument: if unbelief follows reprobation unto destruction, then God cannot, with His justice intact, destroy the reprobate because of their unbelief, since that unbelief necessarily follows from His decree of reprobation (which is His own work). Therefore, reprobation must be posited as arising from the foresight of final unbelief.

To this I first reply: we by no means deny that God, in reprobating, foresaw all the reprobate as impenitent and unbelieving from eternity. But we do deny that this foreseen unbelief was considered by God as the antecedent and motivating cause of His reprobation. Nor will we concede that this unbelief sprouts from the decree of reprobation as its fruit or effect, but it sprouts as an evil fruit from the wicked and perverse heart of the reprobate.

Therefore, when they object: if unbelief follows from reprobation, then men are unjustly condemned because of that unbelief which follows from God's decree of reprobation—if they understand the sequence in terms of order or time, we deny the consequence; if they mean it as a causal sequence, we deny that unbelief follows from reprobation as an effect from a cause. For although God chooses some to be believers, and by the grace of election makes them believers, yet He is not to be said to reprobate men so that they might be unbelievers, or to have made them unbelievers by reprobating them.

For the common judgment of the theologians, which the Master of the Sentences recorded in Book 1, Distinction 40, Letter D, is this: “For just as He prepared the saints for the reception of

righteousness, He did not in the same way prepare the wicked for the loss of righteousness; for He is never the preparer of wickedness." And even more plainly in Distinction 41, Letter E: "It is asked whether, just as it is said that God chose some to become good and faithful, so it should be conceded that He reprobated others to become evil and unbelieving, and hardened them to sin." This must by no means be conceded. For reprobation is not the cause of evil in the same way that predestination is the cause of good; nor does hardening make a man evil in the way that mercy makes him good.

But how is it, then, that all the reprobate always turn out to be unbelieving and impenitent, if this unbelief and impenitence are not fruits or effects of antecedent reprobation? I answer with Augustine, *Ad Simplicianum*, Book 1, Question 2: "It is not that God, by reprobating, imposes something by which the man is made worse, but only that He does not bestow what would make him better." Therefore, it does not follow that God took away repentance from those to whom He did not give it, or that He cast down those whom He did not lift up.

And as Prosper says well, *Ad Objectiones Vincentii*, Response 15, and elsewhere, *Ad Capitula Gallorum*, Response 14: "The unbelief of those who do not believe the Gospel does not arise from God's predestination; but all the non-predestined perish by voluntary, not coerced, unbelief."

For to all the children of Adam, rebellion, impenitence, and unbelief are born as natural; so that there is no need to invoke divine reprobation as the cause of such effects—for all these things burst forth from a corrupted heart, even amidst the many remedies and helps of divine grace, unless they are healed and firmly established in good by the benefit of special mercy flowing from the decree of election.

In the argument just proposed, the chief error lies in assuming that God, in reprobating, provides the means by which the reprobate are afterward brought to eternal death in the same way as He, in predestining, provides the means by which the elect are brought to eternal life. And from this, because it is evident that God, in predestining, by His own special operation, brings about in the predestined faith, holiness, perseverance, and all the other things by which they are led to life as through means, they suppose it necessarily follows that, if God antecedently reprobates some, He also brings about in them unbelief, impenitence, and all the other things by which they afterward plunge into death.

But the matter stands far otherwise. To reprobate is to permit, by denying special grace, that some should fall away from the end of blessedness—not to infuse spiritual wickedness into them or to hurl them by force into the abyss of misery.

Added to this is the fact that the means by which the predestined are brought to life are certain supernatural goods and therefore must be sought from the Fountain of all good. It belongs to God, then, in predestining, to provide effective means by whose intervention the predestined are saved. But the means by which the reprobate rush into death are spiritual evils; they are defective and depraved actions. Therefore, they must not be attributed to the supreme Good or to God as an efficient cause, but to our own innate evil and to a deficient cause.

It is thus both absurd and impious to think that, because of the antecedent decree of reprobation, it belongs to God to produce in the reprobate unbelief, impenitence, and such things by whose intervention they are damned.

Finally, we must also note that unbelief, impenitence, and whatever else falls under the category of sin can be called means by which the reprobate procures death for himself. But with respect to the Reprobating God, these are not means effected and applied by Him for the damnation of the reprobate, but rather matter that the reprobate generates from himself, which God foresees, permits, and in regard to which He exercises His vindictory justice.

Just as theft or murder does not precede the execution of the thief or murderer as means applied by the judge for that end, but only as something presupposed, so the sins of the reprobate precede their damnation. Therefore, God can most justly condemn all unbelievers and impenitent sinners, because, although unbelief follows from reprobation, it is outside the whole effect of reprobation and is born from the heart of the reprobate—not as something operated, effected, or produced by God, but foreseen, permitted, and not hindered by special merciful grace, because God is under no obligation to hinder it.

See Cajetan on *Summa Theologiae*, I, question 23, article 5.

Those who hold that God, by His mere will and not by foresight of actual sins or final perseverance in them, has reprobated certain persons, assert that God deals more harshly with certain men than with the devils themselves. For while the devils are excluded from life because of sins which they committed by their own malice, some reprobated men are said to be rejected not on account of their own sins, committed personally, but only because they are reckoned guilty of Adam's sin by divine imputation.

A certain Borraeus tried to prove by this argument that no one is condemned because of original sin, and therefore that all infants of the Gentiles dying before the commission of actual sins are saved—as can be seen in Arminius's Response to Articles 13 and 14. And that Arminius himself was of this opinion, and that the Arminians now defend the same, is evident. Corvinus, who was among Arminius's closest advisors, writes on page 391: "Indeed, Arminius held that no one is damned for original sin alone." And the Remonstrants cited at the Synod of Dort, in a public document submitted by the common agreement of them all, plainly said: "No infants, as being not yet capable of disobedience or rebellion, are to be punished with eternal punishment."

I answer first: we can construct a not dissimilar argument from the Arminians' own concessions—though they would undoubtedly affirm that it carries no weight. For it should be noted that, although they confidently deny that anyone is damned on account of original sin, yet when pressed, they admit that the guilt of death is derived to all infants as well, from the imputation of that actual sin which Adam committed.

Given this admission alone, we are allowed to argue as follows: Those who assert that God considers all humans—both infants and adults—liable to eternal death simply because a certain actual sin not committed in the person of each individual is imputed to them, but rather one

committed by Adam, thereby make God act more harshly toward men than toward devils. For no devil is considered guilty except for sin committed by his own person and from his own malice, whereas men, according to Arminius's position, are considered liable to eternal death solely by being reckoned guilty of Adam's alien sin by divine imputation.

Whatever answer they may give us, we could return the same to them.

But, as is commonly said, "to argue in return is not to resolve," and so, secondly, we reply: when the question is asked whether greater rigor of justice is shown in the reprobation of men or of demons, the comparison is wholly inappropriate—if it is established that strict justice is not exercised in the reprobation of either. Since reprobation is the denial of an unowed benefit (namely, the infallible ordination to eternal life through the preparation and bestowal of special grace), surely the reprobation of neither humans nor angels was an act of strict justice—indeed, not of justice properly and formally so called; although it was not against justice (just as no act of God is), and in that sense it is rightly called most just.

Therefore, it is foolish to weigh the degrees of strict justice in reprobation, since mere reprobation—whether of humans or demons—is not an act of assigning punishment (in which rigor might be considered), but an act of denying a benefit, in which only God's liberty should be observed.

Thirdly, the very foundation on which the whole argument rests is rotten. For they seem to take for granted that the devils were reprobated based on the foreseen actuality of their sins. But we, on the contrary, say that the blessed angels were elected before the foundation of the world—not on account of their foreseen merits, but from the pure grace of the one who elects. Likewise, the damned angels were from eternity passed over—not elected, or reprobated—not on account of foreseen rebellion and final obduracy in it, but from the mere will or liberty of God who willed not to give them grace.

If therefore the Arminians want to argue from the reprobation of devils that humans could not have been reprobated except from antecedent foresight and consideration of actual sins, they ought first to confirm this regarding the reprobation of demons by some solid argument, rather than draw consequences about human reprobation from it.

Finally, this argument errs by slipping from reprobation to damnation and trying to mix and confuse these two, which we have shown depend on different causes. Nevertheless, even if we grant the hypothesis—which has always been approved by the judgment of the Catholic Church—that some are damned for original sin alone, it does not follow that God acts more harshly toward such persons than toward the devils.

For we do not say that a judge acts more harshly toward a petty thief than toward a vile traitor, simply because both are condemned—unless he who is guilty of the lesser offense is punished equally or more severely. Now, even if God were to damn infants contaminated and bound only by original sin, and also damn the devils guilty of actual and heinous rebellion, there remains an enormous difference in the degree and mode of the punishment inflicted.

For infants, as Augustine rightly says (On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sin, Book 1, Chapter 16), will be in the mildest damnation of all; demons will be in the most bitter damnation by far.

No acuteness of human intellect can discern how many degrees of punishment there may be within the same eternal damnation. Therefore, the argument is inconsequential: "Infants are damned for original sin; demons only for actual sin. Therefore, infants are treated more harshly." That does not follow.

If "creation" is taken to mean that particular act of creation whereby each individual receives his being from God (which is as it were the continuation of the first creation), then those who assert that reprobation is not made on the basis of foresight of final unbelief make it clash diametrically with creation. For creation, by its nature, is a communication of good in accordance with the natural goodness of God. But if creation is so framed as to be ordered with the intention of being a means by which reprobation—already decreed—reaches its end, then it is no longer the communication of good, but a means subordinated to damnation.

Such a means is proposed by those who assert that predestination and reprobation depend solely on the will of God, and not on the foresight of faith and unbelief.

We deny the consequence of the major premise. For God's eternal decree not to elect or to reprobate certain men can no more be said to conflict with their temporal creation than the creation of angels conflicted with the non-election or passing over of some of them, which was established by the mere liberty of the Divine will from eternity. Indeed, the difficulty seems greater in the case of angels than in the case of men. For men, either elected or passed over from eternity, were presented to the Divine mind as corrupted and depraved in the mass, and thus reprobable; but God beheld the angels in the very integrity and perfection in which He later created them.

If, therefore, the eternal reprobation of some angels, arising from Divine good pleasure and not from foreseen sin, did not conflict with their creation, then no conflict can rightly be conceived between the reprobation and creation of men, who are presented to God the Reprobator as tainted and slain by Adam's sin.

As for the angels, we even have the Jesuits agreeing with us. Suarez, in his Opuscule on the Concurrence of God, book 2, chapter 5, says: "In angels, there was no mass of perdition or infected nature, and yet God elected some and not others; He destined some for glory, and left others to become vessels of dishonor." The same Suarez also states that, concerning men, the same must be affirmed: if the discussion concerns non-election—which some call negative reprobation—then it is true that the sole cause of it is the will of God, without any cause being awaited from the side of man.

Even Vasquez, who favors us less in this controversy, nonetheless freely admits that demons were reprobated before any sin was foreseen and were permitted to fall into sin. He calls this "reprobation from grace," "a decree not to show mercy," and so forth, in his Disputations on Aquinas, 45th disputation, chapters 3 and 5. If the Jesuits were able to understand how the

temporal creation of individual angels did not conflict with the eternal decree of reprobation for some, constituted solely by God's will, then they ought to be able to understand the same concerning men. Let Corvinus apply his mind to this, and he will easily understand the same.

But he thinks he can confirm the consequence with the following argument: "Creation, by its nature, is a communication of good. But if such a reprobation as we assert precedes, then it will be, in a certain sense, a path through which the already-made reprobation reaches its goal; it will be a means subordinated to the damnation of the non-elect man, and thus it will not be a communication of good, since good must be judged from the mind of the giver and from the end for which it is given."

But these things are poorly argued. First, the creation of individual men follows both the election and the reprobation of those same men. Just as the creation of Peter would be improperly called a means subordinated to his election, so also the creation of Judas is improperly and falsely said to be a means subordinated either to his reprobation or his damnation. If there are any who dare to maintain that the creation of men is a means subordinated to their damnation, I dissent from them and embrace the view of Augustine and Prosper, who universally reject this idea. See Augustine's Response to the Articles Falsely Attributed to Him, Response 3, and Prosper's Response to the Chapters of the Gauls, Response 13.

Furthermore, it must be observed that God is rightly said to act for an intended end when He gives things such a nature that they are directed toward that end. But in creating Judas, God did not give him a nature ordered toward damnation. Therefore it is falsely asserted that the creation of reprobate Judas had this intention—that it be a means leading to damnation. For it is one thing to create a man who is reprobate and who will be damned for his own demerits; it is another thing to create in order to damn. Just as it is one thing to feed, clothe, and comfort a condemned thief, and another thing to do these things in order to condemn him.

So God creates in time those whom He did not from eternity predestine to blessedness—those whom He foresaw would, by their own fault, fall into eternal misery, those whom He decreed to permit to fall into this misery. Yet in the meantime, the creation of these men—which in the order of decree precedes all these things—had its own proper end: the glory of God in the diffusion and communication of good, not their damnation, which must be regarded as a consequent event following the creation of the reprobate, not as the intended purpose of the Creator.

Finally, if there are passages of Scripture that seem to imply that God created some for dishonor and destruction, they are, in my judgment, to be interpreted permissively. For God creates each day those whom, according to His decree of non-election or reprobation, He permits to become vessels of dishonor by not giving them that special grace which would make them vessels of honor.

If we suppose that election and reprobation depend on the mere liberty of the Divine will and not on the distinct acts of the elect and reprobate (for example, the repentance of the former, the impenitence of the latter, the persevering faith of some, and the final unbelief of others), then the preaching of the Gospel, as regards the reprobate, will be from the proximate and precise

intention of God a ministry of condemnation. It will not be proposed to them with the primary intention of obtaining their salvation, but as a means subordinated to the execution of the decree of reprobation and damnation.

But this directly conflicts with the ministry of the Gospel, which from its primary intention is a ministry of life.

We reply that the consequence of the major premise is invalid, and in this the adversaries err, as we affirm in *Sol. De Libero Arbitrio*, p. 126, by assuming that, if the decree of absolute reprobation is posited, then as a consequence everything else that happens with respect to these non-elect or reprobate individuals flows from that decree. But Vasquez rightly observed the contrary: "Neither in the predestined nor in the reprobate is every effect of divine providence to be attributed to predestination or reprobation, but some are effects of common providence" (In 1a, q. 23, art. 4, cap. 4, disp. 93).

We indeed concede that God knows the preaching of the gospel and all His other benefits will be harmful to these reprobates. We also concede that there is no reprobate whose will is so wild and intractable that God could not soften it to faith and repentance—that is, to the effect of obedience. And finally, we concede that God has decreed within Himself not to apply to these reprobates that special and efficacious grace by which they would be softened. But even with all these things admitted, we deny that either the preaching of the gospel or the bestowal of that more restrained and common grace proceeds from a primary and proximate intention of God to damn, or that these are to be judged as means subordinated to damnation.

For we ought not to infer God's primary intention or the subordination of means to such an event from His foreknowledge, permission, or the subsequent outcome. For example, God foresaw that certain angels, furnished with excellent gifts, would choose to abuse them in pride and rebellion. He decreed to permit this, and because of that rebellion, to punish them with eternal torments. Yet no one would say that those gifts were subordinated to their ruin and damnation by the primary and proper intention of God, but rather to their obedience and blessedness.

For (as we previously noted), God's intention regarding means is always to be judged according to the nature of the means, not from the evil outcome that God foresees will happen and does not will to prevent.

Therefore, the same judgment must be made concerning the preaching of the gospel and other gifts of divine grace granted to the reprobate.

The Remonstrants themselves understand that, as far as it concerns their position, the preaching of the gospel does not arise from some absolute decree to save or to damn all and each individual to whom it is preached, but rather from a more general principle of providence, which they call the wise, merciful, and just government of Christ (*Collatio Hagiensis*, p. 95). Let them then allow us also to subscribe to this view, with this addition: that the preaching of the gospel flows from the decree of predestination with respect to those in whom God has decreed, by His special mercy, to work repentance, faith, and salvation infallibly through that instrument.

However, with respect to those in whom God has decreed to permit the opposite effect to occur because of their own fault, the preaching of the gospel flows from a more general principle of providence. But we in no way concede that, with respect to these latter, it flows from the decree of reprobation or that it is subordinated as a means to their damnation by the primary intention of God.

Indeed, the Scriptures themselves teach quite differently concerning the preaching of the gospel: that it becomes to some “the aroma of death unto death” (2 Corinthians 2:15–16), but not from the primary intention of God, rather from their own willful rebellion. As it says in Hebrews 2:3, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” Acts 13:38 says, “To you is announced the forgiveness of sins through Christ,” and in verse 46, “Since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life...” And in Colossians 1:28, “We proclaim Christ, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone perfect in Christ Jesus.”

Therefore, the gospel is not administered by God to any man with the proximate and precise intention of damning him, but rather, through his neglect and contempt, the merit of damnation arises in the one who despises it—something that God foresaw would happen and did not will to prevent in all the reprobates.

Finally, so that the flaw in the denied consequence may appear more clearly, we add this one thing: that we speak of God intending something in two ways. First, when by providence He arranges suitable means for the production of some end. In this sense we say that God willed and intended that Adam should stand and persevere in obedience to the divine command, because He granted him the suitable means to stand and persevere.

Secondly and more specifically, when from the decree of predestination He supplies such means by which He knows and has decreed that the end itself will be certainly obtained. In this sense we say that God has willed and intended the faith, perseverance, and salvation of all the elect.

Now, that third mode which the Arminians attempt to fabricate—namely, that God should be said by His primary intention to will that evil should arise through the preaching of the gospel, or through any benefit granted to men, because through such benefit, by the intervening malice of the reprobate (which God does not will to prevent), such evil arises—this, I say, is a notion plainly unheard of and ought to be utterly rejected.

Therefore, the means of salvation offered to the reprobate are not effects of predestination—for then they would attain their end—nor do they arise from the decree of reprobation as means subordinated by God to procure the damnation of the reprobate; for it does not belong to God to provide means that lead the reprobate to eternal death. Such means spring abundantly from themselves, if God does not oppose them with special grace.

Rather, they flow from that *philanthrōpia* [love for mankind] and more general providence, which so disposes the means to some end, that in the meantime it permits the second cause to fail of attaining the end through its own fault.

This distinction between predestination and providence has been well explained by Thomas Aquinas in the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Praedestinatione*, article 1. And even Vasquez acknowledges it explicitly, in In 1a, q. 22, disp. 87, cap. 4, at the very end of the chapter.

Those who assert that predestination and reprobation depend absolutely on the most free will of God—and not on the foreseen faith or unbelief of the predestined and reprobate—make baptism, as administered to many infants, from God's primary intention, to be useless and to signify nothing, and that too without any fault in the infants to whom it is administered. For if we suppose many infants of believers to be absolutely reprobated, it is most certain that nothing is signified to them in baptism.

Solution: That absolute predestination and reprobation, which we assert to depend on the most free will of God, designates nothing else than that eternal decree of God by which He has determined, by His mere good pleasure and out of the riches of His mercy, to bring some infallibly to glory through the means of special grace, and, by the same liberty of His will, to deny this highest mercy—that is, the grace that prepares for glory—to others. Upon this denial, God foresees that they will remain bound in the guilt of sin, and for that guilt He determines to punish them.

This premise established, I ask: why should it be judged, according to our opinion, that baptism administered to many infants is useless and signifies nothing, rather than according to the opinion of our opponents? Is it because God has decreed from all eternity to damn the reprobate? But they themselves do not dare deny this. Is it because to be reprobated by the decree of God and to be baptized by the command of God are contrary? But they also acknowledge that all born within the Church ought to be baptized by divine command, and that many of these, nevertheless, were reprobated by the eternal decree of God before they were born. Or is it finally because they ground damnation in the eternal, certain, and infallible knowledge of God, by which He saw, as it were before His eyes, man bound by the guilt of sin? But we too profess the same.

It remains, then, that because we say special grace—actually bringing to glory—is prepared and given to some by God's mere good pleasure, and is neither prepared nor given to others, therefore we are judged to make baptism, with respect to these latter, entirely useless.

We deny this consequence, and we can say no less than the Arminians themselves, that baptism signifies to every infant the remission of original sin (which alone binds the infant age); it also signifies the remission of actual sins prepared in the blood of Christ for those who repent and believe when they reach the age of discretion and fall into actual sins. It also signifies regeneration and renewal to be brought about by the incorruptible seed of the Word and the Spirit in all who believe after they have reached an age capable of receiving the Divine Word.

Concerning the remission of original sin, we have Augustine everywhere agreeing with us, for instance *On the Merits and Remission of Sin*, Book 1, chapter 28, and Book 2, chapter 4. Prosper also embraces the same view in *To the Gallican Chapters, Response 2*. Finally, the Council of Valence, chapter 5, teaches this must be most firmly held.

Moreover, concerning the remission of actual sins to be obtained under the condition of the new covenant, the same must be asserted: for this is most firmly signified to every baptized person, not only with respect to the very moment of baptism, but with respect to the entire course of his life. For whoever is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ—if he sins after baptism—has prepared for him in the blood of the same Christ, by faith, the expiation of his sins, as in 1 John 1:9.

Finally, concerning the actual renewal or regeneration of adults, which occurs when one is converted by the power of the Word and the Spirit and is justified through believing, Augustine writes as follows: “In baptized infants, the sacrament of regeneration precedes, and if they hold to Christian piety, then also follows conversion of the heart, of which the mystery went before in the body,” *Contra Donatistas*, Book 4, chapter 24.

Therefore, we affirm with Fulgentius concerning all baptized infants: “The sacrament of faith, which is holy baptism, is sufficient for them unto salvation as long as they cannot yet be capable of the age of reason,” *On Faith to Peter the Deacon*, chapter 30.

Nor do we reject what Thomas Aquinas says on this matter: “Because infants do not have the capacity to turn themselves to the justifying cause, the justifying cause itself, that is, the passion of Christ, is applied to them through the sacrament of baptism,” *Disputed Questions on Justification*, article 3.

That lofty mystery, then, of predestination and reprobation does not hinder us from acknowledging all these things in the same sense that Arminius himself may acknowledge them. It therefore does not make baptism vain or useless.

For the opponents, even when assuming Arminian reprobation, cannot show that anything is signified in the baptism of infants reprobated before the foundation of the world which we, according to our view, do not equally grant is signified to them in the same way.

For, as Prosper rightly says, *To the Gallican Chapters, Response 2*: “The sacrament of baptism, by which all sins are washed away, is true even in those who will not remain in the truth and who, on this account, are not predestined unto true life.”

Argument 12: Those do not rightly explain the doctrine of reprobation who posit such a reprobation as would prevent public prayers from being offered to God with proper faith and confidence that they will be beneficial to all who hear the Word of God. But those who assert that many are present in ecclesiastical assemblies whom God, by an eternal will that precedes all causes, has willed to damn, introduce such a reprobation.

They attempt to confirm the minor premise from this: that no one can, with faith, pray for the salvation of someone whom God precisely does not will to save. The Apostle himself seems to suggest this when he gives the reason why prayers should be made for all: namely, because "God wills all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." To all this, they add a certain tempering qualification of conditional limitation, in this manner: That we indeed ought to believe our prayers are beneficial to all for salvation—but not absolutely, rather with this exception: unless they render themselves unworthy of divine grace for which the congregation of the faithful prays. Likewise, that we ought to believe God wills all to be saved, but in such a way that He wills to save no one except under this condition: if they believe. Finally, that we ought to believe in our prayers that God wills to bring all men to the knowledge of the truth and to convert them—but again, not absolutely, but if by their own obstinacy they do not hinder themselves.

But if, even in this way, God desires the salvation of all and wills that we pray for all, then no one is reprobated by a precise antecedent will of God unto damnation. For it is contradictory to will someone's salvation under condition of faith, and yet by an absolute will to have reprobated that same person from salvation.

Solution: In order for prayers for other people to be rightly conceived, it is not required that we be persuaded by the certainty of faith that our prayers will be beneficial to their salvation. For nothing false or contingent can fall under faith, but whether they will in fact benefit from our prayers is clearly contingent and uncertain—even our opponents admit this—since it depends on a contingent condition, which we will address shortly.

It is sufficient, therefore, to ground our prayers for all men on this: that God has commanded us to embrace all men with love, and to exercise acts of charity toward all. Among these, one of the chief is this duty of praying for others—even for enemies. Meanwhile, we must leave to God the matter of whom our prayers will benefit and whom they will not. The one who prays does not need a certain confidence in this matter.

This is well known among the theologians of the Schools, who commonly say that four conditions are required for a prayer to have the certainty of being granted, one of which is that the person prays for himself. For although a prayer may be pious, persevering, and concerned with things pertaining to salvation, if it is offered for another person, it does not always obtain its effect.

Therefore, the major premise, as you see, is weak—it falsely assumes that prayers cannot rightly be offered for others unless there is certain faith that they will be effective for them. Nor can our doctrine of reprobation be refuted on the ground that, once posited, public prayers cannot be offered to God with faith that the Word of God will benefit all who hear it.

Let us now proceed to the minor premise, in which they assert that our doctrine of reprobation prevents prayers from being offered to God with proper confidence. We deny this, and we say that for due confidence it is sufficient that we are certain this duty of praying for others is

pleasing to God and that we shall obtain for them whatever God sees fit and what accords with His divine glory.

This confidence can stand just as well with our doctrine as with the Arminian one. For even they do not dare to deny that the decree of reprobation is eternal and irrevocable, although they say it is based on the eternal foreknowledge of human unbelief. It is therefore certain that Judas, once reprobated from eternity, cannot be brought to salvation by the prayers of others—even according to the reprobation affirmed by Arminius.

But here they fall back on those conditional limitations by which they plainly weaken their argument. For when they say they do not require absolute confidence, but conditional confidence—namely, that we believe our prayers will benefit others if they believe, if their own obstinacy does not hinder them, unless they render themselves unworthy of divine grace—in one word, unless they make themselves unworthy—this we can affirm in the same words.

For notwithstanding the decree of reprobation, we certainly believe that the Church's prayers will benefit all and each one who hears the Word of God, if they believe, if their own obstinacy does not hinder them, and if they do not make themselves unworthy of divine grace.

But we add this—something they obstinately wish to conceal: that God, who wills to save all who hear the Gospel if they believe and if their own obstinacy does not hinder them, nevertheless does not will to have mercy on all to the extent that they will be softened, believe, and not hinder themselves. He wills this only for the elect. And He wills to permit others to become hardened by their own fault and to remain in their voluntary obstinacy.

And since it is unknown to us whom He wills to have mercy on and whom He wills to leave to their own hardness, it is our duty to pray for all, that they may be converted, and to regard no one in particular as reprobate.

Yet they still press the objection: Who can bring himself to pray for the salvation of someone whom God precisely does not will to save, since the Apostle exhorts us to pray for all on the ground that God wills all to be saved?

I respond first: God does not ordinarily reveal this secret of election and reprobation to men. Therefore, our actions cannot and ought not to be conformed to a rule that is unknown.

Secondly, in the decree of absolute or precise reprobation—as they speak—God does not decree thus: I will damn Judas, whether he believes or not, but rather: I will not have mercy on Judas to such an extent that he will be softened, believe, and actually be converted and saved. Just as, in the decree of absolute predestination, God does not say: I will save Peter whether he believes or not, but: I will so have mercy on Peter that he will believe, repent, and be saved.

If, therefore, by precise and absolute predestination and reprobation they think we mean some severing of the means from the end, they are attacking a chimera of their own invention, not our position.

Moreover, they think our decree of reprobation contradicts the apostolic statement, God wills all to be saved. But they are gravely mistaken in this opinion. For (without entering into a lengthy explanation of the words, about which we said much at the beginning of this disputation), the Apostle's statement, God wills all to be saved, neither denies nor overturns the reprobation of many that we assert.

Just as election does not lie in the affirmation, I will that this man be saved, but in I will to save this man, so also non-election or reprobation does not lie in the negation, I do not will this man to be saved, but in I do not will to save this man.

Let us grant, then, the Arminian's interpretation: that God wills all to be saved—that is, He wills to save them under this condition: if they believe and persevere. I say this conditional will to save can stand alongside the absolute decree to reprobate, because it does not denote an act of the divine will terminating on a particular person to be saved, but rather a decree of the divine will concerning the universal and perpetual connection between two things—namely, faith and salvation.

From this we rightly infer that, if persevering faith were found in any particular person, there would also be in God the will to save that person. But we do not rightly infer from this that, in the decree preparing efficacious grace and ordaining infallibly unto life, no one was antecedently passed over by God.

To conclude the matter in a word: just as there is no contradiction between these two statements—God predestined Paul to eternal life, and God would damn Paul if he did not believe and persevere—so neither is there a contradiction between these: God did not predestine Judas, or God passed over and rejected Judas, and God would save Judas if he believed and persevered. For to will to save someone under a condition neither proves election nor denies reprobation.

Corvinus says: "Our doctrine of the reprobation of certain persons from the mere liberty of the divine will—and not from foreseen final demerits in the reprobates themselves—makes God's ministers lazy in their ministry, since it follows from this that their diligence cannot benefit anyone except those whom God absolutely wills to save, and who cannot perish; and that their negligence likewise cannot harm anyone except those whom God absolutely wills to damn, and who cannot be saved. Therefore, by necessity, if this doctrine is admitted, ministers of the Word are made inert and sluggish."

I respond: even if some ministers were rendered sluggish by this, it does not therefore follow that the doctrine itself is false or evil. From Paul's doctrine, some people took occasion for licentiousness, saying, "Let us do evil that good may come." From the doctrine of divine foreknowledge, there was a certain monk (as Augustine relates), who, when his brethren rebuked him for doing what should not be done and neglecting what should be done, would always reply: "Whatever I am now, that I shall be in the future—just as God foresaw I would be." That monk spoke the truth, and yet that truth did not lead to good but to evil.

Therefore, because of such objections, the truths concerning predestination and reprobation ought neither to be denied nor to be concealed.

Furthermore, Arminius's own view of reprobation makes ministers just as sluggish as ours. For although he posits predestination based on foreseen faith and reprobation based on foreseen unbelief, he nonetheless acknowledges this foreknowledge to be eternal—and that an eternal, fixed, and immutable decree of either election or reprobation for each individual was established before the foundation of the world. Thus, a minister cannot hope that his diligence might bring someone to eternal life who has been reprobated from eternity, unless he also believes he can cause divine foreknowledge to be mistaken and revoke the eternal decree of God.

Therefore, whether reprobation is posited as flowing from the mere liberty of the divine will, preceding all extrinsic causes, or as following the consideration of foreseen unbelief, the result is the same: for there will not be a single hearer who has not already, from eternity, been predestined in one direction or the other—and who will never be transferred from that path to the opposite.

But this must not hinder or delay the work of ministers, because, as Augustine says piously and wisely (On Correction and Grace, chapters 15 and 16), since we do not know who belongs to the number of the predestined and who does not, we ought to be so moved by the affection of charity that we will all to be saved. Therefore, as far as it concerns us—since we are not able to distinguish the predestined from the non-predestined—correction must be applied to all, so that none perish or cause others to perish.

But let us now approach the matter a bit more closely. Suppose that the diligence of ministers could benefit only those whom God absolutely wills to save, and who cannot perish—even then, there is no room for laziness or carelessness. First, because the very act of benefiting by one's ministry those whom God has loved with special love, and whom He has absolutely decreed to save before the foundation of the world, is highly honorable and desirable. For who, possessing even a drop of piety, if he knew for certain that an infant had been predestined by God, would not strive all the more earnestly to be a fellow worker with God in promoting that infant's salvation? (1 Corinthians 3:9)

Thus Paul was motivated, who says that he endured all things for the sake of the elect (2 Timothy 2:10).

Moreover, even this can shake ministers out of sloth: that although God will not allow any of the elect to perish, yet ministers themselves, by neglecting their duty, incur guilt worthy of condemnation, according to the Apostle's statement: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Finally, although no one is so impious or theologically ignorant as to think that the laziness of ministers could cause any of the predestined to become non-predestined or to fall from the glory prepared for the predestined, yet no one is so imprudent as not to understand that the laziness of ministers can in various ways harm the predestined. For although the eternal decree of

predestination can neither be brought about nor helped nor hindered by any human act, yet the effects of predestination—or the benefits prepared in predestination for men—can and should be promoted by the diligence of ministers.

Hence Thomas Aquinas says (Part 1, Question 23, Article 8): “Predestination does not take away secondary causes, but so provides the effect that even the order of secondary causes falls under providence.”

Ministers, therefore, ought to know that their diligence is subordinated by God to the promotion of the salvation of the elect.

And the opponents gain nothing by their repeated emphasis on the word absolute or precise.

For God is said to have absolutely predestined and absolutely willed to save the predestined—not because He wills to save them without employing any means or without any conditions to be fulfilled on the part of men—but because, out of His supreme mercy, He has provided for both the means and the end. And He has so provided for both that, although the order of predestination is certain and—granted that a person is predestined—it is impossible for him to perish and be damned, yet the effects of predestination are brought about according to the condition of the subject and according to the nature of the proximate causes which Divine Providence has ordained for such effects (as Aquinas says in the same article, *Summa Theologiae*, I.23.6), that is, freely and contingently.

Hence Paul, in Romans 8:38, who understood with respect to divine love and ordination that he could not fall from salvation, was nevertheless no less diligent in promoting his own salvation, but he disciplined his body and brought it into subjection, lest after preaching to others he himself should become a castaway (1 Corinthians 9:27). Therefore, the firmness of divine election does not render human diligence superfluous, whether in regard to oneself or others.

Thus far we have responded concerning the elect. Now, as to what they object concerning the reprobate—that according to our position, the negligence of ministers cannot harm any but those whom God absolutely wills to destroy, and who cannot be saved—this is firstly false. For it can also harm, and often does harm, the elect, when it allows them to slumber in their sins for a time, and by such security provokes the wrath of God and various scourges against them.

Next, there is no one among the reprobate whom God absolutely wills to destroy—meaning (as the opponents seem to understand it) regardless of whether they repent or not, whether they believe or not, whether they die in their sins or not. Rather, there are many to whom God does not extend such mercy as to prepare for them special and efficacious grace that would cause them to believe, to repent, and to cease hardening their hearts.

But since it is unknown to ministers whom God wills to show mercy to and whom He wills to harden, they ought, with all gentleness, to correct those who are of a contrary mind, in case God might perhaps grant them repentance, etc. (2 Timothy 2:25).

Furthermore, even if it were true that the negligence of ministers could harm only those whom God absolutely wills to destroy, still this would not exempt negligent ministers from either guilt or capital punishment—just as a prison guard would not be exempt from blame if he killed a thief with a sword or extinguished the means of his survival, even if the judge had in his own mind absolutely decreed that the thief should be condemned and executed.

Finally, what they allege—that once things have been absolutely and precisely decreed by God, any subsequent concern or solicitude about those things by men is in vain—is plainly that lazy argument (*argos logos*) which, if we followed it, would leave nothing at all for us to do in life, as Cicero says in *De Fato*. For the absolute or precise decrees of God do not exclude the means from the destined end, but rather they subordinate both means and end to the order of an infallible providence.

Nor does this infallibility of the decreed matter remove the natural possibility of the contrary outcome, but only the actual contrary outcome. Nor does it imply either that the effect is produced without secondary causes, or that the proper operation of secondary causes is impaired.

Therefore, the eternal and secret decree of predestination and reprobation gives no one a cause for sloth, although the impious and slothful may falsely use it as a pretext for their laziness.

Argument 14

The position of those who deny that predestination and reprobation depend on the foreknowledge of faith and unbelief undermines the foundation of the Christian religion. For the foundation of religion rests on the double love of God—namely, both toward justice, from which arises the hatred of sin, and toward man; and in this there is a mutual relationship, namely, that God loves His own justice more than the creature, and loves the creature only insofar as love for justice permits. And this means that love toward justice can restrict love toward the creature and vice versa.

Assuming this, they try to show that our position undermines this foundation of religion in two ways.

First, because it posits that God, without any regard for obedience, has absolutely chosen some to salvation. From this it follows that God loved those men more than His own justice. And if that be so, then the necessity of rendering obedience is removed, and all concern for religion is taken away.

Second, because (as they say) it posits that God has predestined some men to damnation without any regard for disobedience. From this it again follows that God hated His creature without any necessity arising from His love for justice. And if that be so, then all hope in God is removed. For someone who is convinced that he has been reprobated apart from any

consideration of sin will believe that nothing can help him, no matter how much he strives to avoid sin.

They contend that both these consequences follow from our view because we teach that God has so loved certain sinners that He willed to save them absolutely, even before He had satisfied His love for justice in Christ, or before He regarded them as believing in Christ. And, on the contrary, that God willed to damn certain sinners without any consideration of their impenitence, even though He had satisfied His justice in Christ.

This is indeed a grave accusation made against us. For if our doctrine undermines the foundations of the Christian religion, then it must be uprooted from its very foundations. Let us therefore weigh how true this charge is.

And first of all, we do not intend to raise any dispute with our opponents about that twofold love in which they place the foundation of religion; rather, we deny that our doctrine contradicts this love. They insist that we maintain that God has chosen some precisely unto salvation without any regard for their obedience. They believe this opinion is beset by two difficulties.

The first is that it posits that God loves those thus predestined more than His own justice, because He wills to save them before He has satisfied His love for justice in Christ or foreseen them as believing in Christ.

The second is that it removes all necessity for faith and obedience and thus all concern for religion, since we say that such persons were loved by God unto salvation before and apart from any foreseen faith and obedience in them.

I respond: the difference between our position and that of the Arminians does not lie in this—that they claim the elect cannot be saved without fulfilling the condition of faith and obedience, while we supposedly think they can be saved even if they remain unbelieving and rebellious toward God. Rather, the difference is that they make the condition of faith and obedience the antecedent motive of election and suspend the act of believing on the free will, stirred by God's grace and brought, as it were, into a kind of equilibrium—yet determining itself before election and thus procuring the divine election.

We, on the other hand—although we judge the condition of faith and obedience (when speaking of adults) to be truly necessary for attaining eternal life, according to God's fixed decree—nonetheless acknowledge that this faith and obedience was not foreseen in any particular person as arising from their free will stirred by common grace and thereby drawing after it the benefit of election. Rather, it was considered as a special gift, prepared from eternity in the decree of predestination for this or that particular person, to be produced from their human will by a special operation dependent on that same decree. It was thus foreseen from eternity in all the elect—not as a motive by which, being prior, they obtain their election, but as a means by which, being prior, they obtain the kingdom of heaven to which they were elected.

With this premise, our doctrine is not entangled in those two supposed difficulties. Not in the first: for God is not accused of loving Peter or Paul more than His own justice simply because

He elected and designated them from eternity for the infallible participation in Christ, in faith, and in salvation, before He foresaw their free will as, through the offer of sufficient grace, effectively and perseveringly inclined to embrace Christ, conceive faith, and pursue the way of salvation.

Indeed, this rather indicates the highest love of justice in God: that He did not will to bring Peter and Paul—whom He loved with special mercy unto salvation—to that salvation except by such means whereby His justice might first be satisfied.

To put our response concisely, I say: The love of justice requires that no one be loved unto salvation in Christ unless he has apprehended Christ by faith; but in the sense that he is not to be loved unto actual and fruitful participation in salvation until he has persevered in faith. Nevertheless, he can be loved unto the eternal preparation of salvation in the mind and will of God before he is regarded as a believer and one persevering in that faith.

For the very preparation of faith and perseverance are proofs of divine love—and these are prepared before they are foreseen as infallibly existing in Peter. And these saving gifts are prepared to be infallibly conferred upon particular persons only from a love directed toward their salvation. In this preparation, God is not to be thought of as violating the laws of His justice, but rather as displaying the riches of His special mercy.

But another scruple must here be removed. Arminius insists that we posit that God not only loves some unto salvation before the foreknowledge of their faith and obedience, but even before Christ was appointed to expiate their sins by His obedience. For we teach that Christ was given as Mediator because God had decreed to save the elect—which, he claims, is equivalent to saying that God loved sinful men more than His justice.

This argument draws us into a very difficult speculation and one ill-suited to the foundation of dogmatic theology.

The argument relies on considering the priority and posteriority between those two divine decrees of the will—namely, the decree to give a Mediator and the decree to save the elect—both of which were conceived and established from eternity. As far as I am concerned, I know that the order of execution, according to which God willed the benefits to reach men, can easily be outlined. But the order in which God eternally retained these benefits in His mind and will—let him alone presume to describe it who also dares to assert that he has been present with God in His secret and eternal counsels.

We therefore confess that God, from eternity, ordained that Christ would be proposed first in order to all who are to be saved, then would be apprehended by faith, then their justification would follow, then sanctification, and finally glorification. But if someone is not content with this order of execution and wishes also to describe to us a sequence of divine decrees distinguished according to the order of conception in the mind and will of God—and urges with Arminius that divine justice is undermined unless it is considered as prior—he seems to me to trust too much in his own intellect.

Therefore, the objection that God's justice is undermined if we posit that God first elected certain individuals to life before He ordained Christ to atone for sins, can be answered in several ways.

First, one may respond with the subtle Doctor [Vasquez], that although Christ and Christ's merits toward men were ordained after predestination, yet in execution, the merit of Christ is the cause of every effect flowing from predestination. Hence, there is nothing contrary to God's justice in the salvation of the elect. For to intend, from mere eudokia [good pleasure], the salvation of a certain sinner, and from that intention to provide such means that this should not take place unless justice is first satisfied, is not to love the sinner more than justice, but rather to will to exercise gratuitous mercy toward the sinner rather than to exact due justice.

Secondly, this knot can be untied if one follows Biel in asserting that these priorities in such divine decrees are not to be posited—just as there are not to be posited pluralities of ordaining acts. Therefore, if someone wants to consider such an order of these decrees so as to place the incarnation of Christ as prior to election—or the reverse—this consideration is a false speculation. Thus Biel, in *Sentences*, Book 3, Distinction 2, Question, Doubt 3.

Finally, if, in order to support the weakness of our intellect, we distinguish these decrees of God in terms of earlier and later, by referring to their respective objects (which are various and distinct), then I judge we are best able to conceive in God: (1) a general will to redeem the human race on the condition of faith, through our incarnate Savior and Mediator Jesus Christ—as expressed in John 3:16: “God so loved the world,” etc.; and (2) a special eudokia, according to which Christ is ordained by the Father as Mediator and constituted Head of all the predestined, in whom and through whom, whatever is necessary for infallibly attaining grace and glory is decreed to be prepared and given to them.

With this granted, the above objection disappears. For Christ is conceived as ordained Mediator and given as the Head of the Church—that is, of all the elect—before they are considered as ordained unto the effectual participation of either grace or glory.

I now come to the second part of the objection—namely, that our position extinguishes all necessity of obedience and all concern for religion, because it asserts that God has ordained some persons unto salvation absolutely, without any prior consideration of their faith or obedience. From this, they argue, someone who is elect might conclude that there is no need to be concerned with offering obedience. But nothing more perverse could be said or imagined.

Our position indeed denies that faith or obedience is necessary in the sense of being foreseen in us as a motive for the act of election from God's side. But it absolutely requires faith and obedience on our part as the condition by which the fruit of election—namely, eternal life—is to be obtained. Those who teach that God has predestined certain people to life in such a way that they are brought to it only through faith and holiness do not thereby deny the necessity of faith. Rather, they acknowledge that God has shown a special mercy in preparing and giving this faith to certain persons.

Furthermore, since the decree of election is completely unknown to men a priori and is revealed only to the elect through its effects and by the testimony of the Spirit, it is not only false but irrational and contrary to common sense for the Arminians to assert that such elect persons can conclude within themselves that they have no need to be concerned about offering obedience. For the elect themselves cannot have even the slightest knowledge of their own election before they feel in themselves this earnest desire to obey God and to lead a religious life. Nor will the Spirit of God condescend to give this testimony to a man who wallows in the mire of the most shameful lusts.

How, then, will a man conclude from an apprehension of his election that he has no need of a holy life, when he can only conclude himself to be elect from the effects of the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies? Finally, the entire practice of the saints testifies against Arminius: the more certain they were of their election and of eternal life, the more zealous they were in godliness and true obedience. The holy patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—the blessed among women, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, Peter, Paul, and the rest of the apostles serve as examples. Indeed, everyone who has this hope in himself purifies himself, just as He is pure, as John says in chapter 3, verse 3.

Therefore, it is profane men—those who foolishly presume and idly chatter about their predestination—who become less concerned with the worship of God. But the hearts of the godly, who deeply sense that this benefit pertains to them, are thereby inflamed with an incredible love for God and an intense zeal for piety. So says Bernard in his 107th epistle: “Who is righteous, if not he who returns love to the God who loves him? Which does not happen except when the Spirit reveals through faith to man the eternal purpose of God concerning his future salvation.”

Thus far we have spoken about predestination. Now let us come to that part of the objection which concerns reprobation. We respond briefly: according to our view, no one is appointed to damnation except with a view to preceding sin—whether original, actual, or both. God does not hate anyone unto damnation without consideration of sin. He no more hates men than He hates sin, and He would never have hated men unless it were because of sin.

Finally, there is no mortal whom our doctrine of reprobation could drive to despair, provided he strives to avoid sin and to obey God. For this very striving, in our judgment, is the surest sign (*tekmerion*) of election. Nor should those despair who do not yet feel such striving in themselves, but they should make use of the means which God has granted to them, not doubting that God will show mercy to those who thus act.

Chapter X. Our Doctrine of Reprobation Is Explained and Confirmed

Thus far, we have examined the opinion and arguments of our opponents. Now let us consider what our own doctrine of reprobation is, and by what supports it is upheld. Here again, to avoid the slanders of the malicious, we are compelled to repeat that our Church rejects just as strongly the monstrous opinions of those who depict the decree of reprobation in such a way that they make God the cause of human unbelief and impenitence—and thus refer the very perdition and damnation of men to God's absolute and antecedent will—as it rejects the errors of the Arminians, which are drawn from the dregs of Pelagianism.

These Arminians present the decrees of predestination and reprobation in such a way that, after determining to administer a sufficient grace to all, they place each person in the role of the artisan of his own fortune with respect to eternal and gratuitous goods, while God waits and observes what each person will do, and elects or rejects him based on whether He foresees that he will believe or not. This sort of predestination and reprobation, in which the human will leads the Divine, we consider unworthy of God and contrary to Holy Scripture.

To the contrary, as we have already shown, predestination is not the election of particular persons to eternal life on the basis of foreseen faith and perseverance, but rather the preparation of efficacious grace for certain persons out of God's mere mercy, and the preparation of eternal glory for the same persons out of the same mercy. So too, we affirm that non-election, or negative reprobation (that is, preterition), is not the damnation of particular persons on account of the foreseen final state of their unbelief and impenitence—although we do acknowledge that such a decree exists—but rather the denial, from God's mere will, of that special mercy which removes unbelief and impenitence by softening the heart and establishing and preserving one in faith and holiness unto eternal life.

Or more briefly, as our Bradwardine—who rightly earned the name “Doctor Profundus”—put it: “Predestination is the eternal preparation, by the Divine will, of final grace in this life and of eternal blessedness in the life to come for certain rational creatures” (Book 1, chapter 45, p. 421). And reprobation is “the eternal will of God not to confer such grace on certain persons” (*ibid.*, p. 426).

With the Apostle we defend that this election is “not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy” (Romans 9:16), and that this non-election—this reprobation or eternal “not-willing”—does not arise from foreseen unbelief or impenitence in men, but from the mere liberty of Him who “has mercy on whom He wills, and hardens whom He wills” (Romans 9:18). According to Augustine's interpretation, this is as if the Apostle had said: “He has mercy on whom He wills, and does not have mercy on whom He does not will” (*De Praedestinatione et Gratia*, ch. 6).

Therefore, in disputing this decree of reprobation, we will aim to show one thing: that the eternal distinction between elect and non-elect in the mind and will of God did not have its origin,

occasion, or motive in any antecedent foreknowledge of good works in the persons of the elect—such as repentance, faith, and perseverance in Peter and Paul—or in any foreknowledge of the opposite qualities in the non-elect—namely, impenitence, unbelief, and final obstinacy in Cain, Judas, and the rest—but in the mere will of God, who first divided men into those appointed infallibly to partake of grace and glory, and those passed over with respect to such an appointment.

To this the entire controversy returns: If, in the eternal decree of election and reprobation, certain persons were foreseen by God as more worthy, better, or holier than others, and were therefore infallibly predestined to life—and, conversely, others were foreseen as more unworthy, worse, or more wicked, and therefore excluded from predestination to life—then Arminius wins and we lose the cause.

But if, on the contrary, all who were predestined to life before the foundation of the world were considered by God as sinners, deserving of eternal destruction, but were nevertheless infallibly granted faith, repentance, perseverance, and salvation by the special mercy of God and by a unique calling according to His purpose—not because they were foreseen to determine themselves by the right use of free will, aided by offered grace, to conceive faith and persevere in it—and if, likewise, the non-elect, or the passed over and reprobated, were also considered by God as sinners worthy of death, yet not worse than the elect in themselves, but simply not favored by the same special mercy and efficacious calling which was prepared for the elect and worked in them to bring about their faith, repentance, and salvation—then Arminius falls, and we prevail.

As for predestination, it has already been shown by many reasons that it depends on God's most free good pleasure and not on any antecedent consideration of human acts. What remains is to demonstrate the same for non-election or reprobation. And this will involve nothing more than gathering together and organizing the arguments that previously appeared only scattered and dispersed, either in support of our position or in response to our opponents' arguments.

Argument I.

First, we may argue from those definitions or descriptions of reprobation which repeatedly occur among our opponents themselves. From these, one can clearly conclude that the absolute foreknowledge of final impenitence and unbelief concerning this or that individual person is subsequent to the decree of reprobation—and that, therefore, this decree does not arise from that foreknowledge.

Gregory of Valencia depicts reprobation in this way (on Aquinas, Summa, q. 23, de reprobatione, pt. 1):

“Reprobation is an act of the Divine intellect, by which God firmly decrees to permit the sins of the reprobate, not giving them that particular grace by which they would be delivered, and to exclude them from the heavenly kingdom and to punish them eternally because of those sins.”

But this firm decree of the Divine intellect and will—to permit the sins of certain persons and to withhold from them the grace by which they might be freed—must presuppose the foreseen impenitence, unbelief, and obstinacy of those persons, since these would not be foreseen as absolutely future unless they were permitted. Therefore, we obtain this result: although the will to punish a particular person—say Judas or Cain—follows the foreknowledge of sin, the will to permit their unbelief and impenitence, and the will to withhold the special grace by which they would be effectively drawn to faith and repentance, precedes the absolute foreknowledge of their final wickedness.

And that is sufficient for us—since we understand a reprobate to be one to whom God willed from eternity to deny that particular grace by which he would be delivered, and whom He willed to permit to harden himself in sin by his own fault. Just as, conversely, we say that one is predestined whom God willed from eternity to prepare that special grace by which he would be delivered—and whom He did not will to permit to harden himself in sin unto the end.

For, as Augustine says in *De Bono Perseverantiae*, ch. 8:

“He who is able to turn the hearts of whomever He wills—whether they are averse or adverse—and who has from eternity decreed to do this in some and not in others, chooses and passes over, has mercy and does not have mercy, not according to a foreseen difference in human wills, but according to the mere good pleasure of His own will.”

Now let Vasquez be heard (in Book 1, disp. 95, ch. 5, p. 701):

“If reprobation is understood as the act by which someone is rejected by God, or the act by which one is rejected from the grace of God, or from the kingdom of heaven—if we are speaking of the first of these—it must be affirmed that there is no cause on the part of the one rejected other than the sin of the first parent.”

Although, therefore, no one is excluded from heaven or cast into hell by the judgment of God except because of his sins, nevertheless, even this Jesuit freely confesses that all the reprobate are rejected from the grace of the predestined by the liberty of God doing what He wills with His own—and not because of any foreseen final unbelief or impenitence, but inasmuch as they are considered as lying in the common sin of Adam.

Moreover, even Arminius himself, in his Collation with Junius, argues that it is not final unbelief or impenitence, but rather that sin in which all are commonly conceived, which must be presupposed to election and preterition. He does not even dare to assert that this sin is the cause why God passes over some, but only that it is the reason why He could pass over some (Collation, p. 96).

In his *Examination of Perkins' Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 57ff, he also admits—based on the mind of Augustine, Scripture, and “common sense” (as he puts it)—that to certain men, according to the decree of Providence, is administered only sufficient grace, along with the certain foreknowledge of God that it will be rejected by man’s free will. But to others, according to the decree of predestination, not only sufficient grace is given, but also efficacious grace, with

the certain foreknowledge of God that, by the benefit of this grace, they will actually will, believe, and be converted—those to whom it is applied and administered.

Shortly thereafter he adds:

“God has decreed, by the decree of reprobation, not to give this efficacious grace to some.”

You see what our opponents themselves confess. From this let us conclude that there is in the preparation or non-preparation of efficacious grace a certain hidden and inscrutable good pleasure of God—one which does not follow the foreknowledge of faith and accepted grace in the elect, nor the foreknowledge of unbelief and finally rejected grace in the reprobate, but precedes both.

For it would be absurd to say that, by the decree of Providence, God prepares only sufficient grace for certain persons, with the certain foreknowledge that it will be rejected—and that, by the decree of reprobation, He denies to the same persons that efficacious grace which no hard heart ever resists—and then to teach that all this is done because God foresaw that these persons would reject His grace and perish in their unbelief and obstinacy.

Those who earlier do not dare deny this should not later so confidently affirm it.

Argument II.

If the decree of reprobation depended upon the foreseen final impenitence and unbelief of the reprobate, then no one would be reprobated unless considered by God as dying—indeed, as already dead. The reason is clear: because while one is still living, neither the final perseverance of anyone in faith nor the final obstinacy in unbelief is yet completed. For whatever comes before the end is merely a step by which one ascends to the summit, not the goal by which the highest point is already attained. But to say that election and reprobation regard men as dead, or at least as placed in their final moments, is unheard of, and plainly contrary both to Sacred Scripture and to reason.

The Scriptures portray for us the election and rejection of Jacob and Esau, not as something to be considered after the span of this life had run its course for each, but rather when they were not yet born, and had done nothing either good or evil (Romans 9:11–13). But if one of these is elected without regard to any good previously performed by him, and the other is rejected without regard to any actual sin previously committed by him, then it is plainly evident that neither of them was either elected or rejected on the basis of this Arminian foresight.

I know that some are unwilling to concede that the Apostle’s words refer to the eternal predestination and reprobation of Jacob and Esau, but only to that purpose by which God determined, according to His good pleasure, to honor Jacob and to subject Esau—at least in their descendants. Let it be so. Nevertheless, from the consensus of the theologians and from the entire discourse of the Apostle, it is clear that this example was introduced by Paul in Romans 9 at least to represent the mystery of eternal predestination and reprobation, and to show by argument from the type to the thing typified that neither the election of men unto eternal

salvation nor their reprobation rests upon opposite merits of works, but that God, from the sole good pleasure of His will, elects some to salvation and reprobates others.

But we confirm the minor premise even more clearly—namely, that reprobation does not fall upon men only after they are considered to have persisted in their sins until their final breath. For many consequences of reprobation affect the reprobate while they are still in the course of this life—such as the denial of efficacious grace (or of the calling according to purpose), the permission that the wicked go on in their sins without punishment, the giving over of such persons to a reprobate mind. These and other such things are acts subsequent to reprobation, and yet prior to the final hardness and unbelief of the reprobate. Therefore, reprobation does not result from the foreseen final unbelief of this or that person, but rather precedes this foreknowledge.

This can be readily gathered from Christ's words: "You do not believe because you are not of my sheep" (John 10:26) [Greek: οὐ γὰρ ἔστε ἐκ τῶν προβάτων τῶν ἐμῶν]. In these words, not being a sheep is considered as the antecedent of not believing. But what else is it to not be a sheep than to not be predestined, or to be rejected from the grace of the predestined? As Augustine explained these words in Tractate 48 on the Gospel of John: "Why then did He say to these, 'You are not of my sheep'? Because He saw that they were predestined to eternal destruction, not to eternal life purchased by the price of His blood."

Argument 3

If God passed over or reprobated no one except by the foresight of His sufficient grace being finally spurned and despised—or, what amounts to the same, by the foresight of final impenitence and unbelief—then it would follow that it lies within the power of each individual, at his own discretion, to be reprobated or not, to be elect or not-elect. Indeed, the entire distinction between the elect and the reprobate would arise not from different decrees of the Divine will, but from different acts of human wills.

This follows necessarily because, for whoever holds in his power the necessary antecedent, the consequent—which infallibly depends on that antecedent—must also be within his power. Therefore, if believing and embracing the offered grace is the necessary antecedent to election, and not believing or finally rejecting the offered grace is the necessary antecedent to reprobation, and both of these depend upon the free act of the human will when stirred by sufficient grace, what could be clearer than that it lies in each one's power to be reprobated or not reprobated? For no middle term can be assigned between these contradictory outcomes.

Those who speak more openly about this case acknowledge the force of this consequence, but do not regard it as absurd that what they call complete election and reprobation should depend upon human choices. So reasons the Jesuit Lessius.

But since the Apostle clearly and openly attributes both election and reprobation to the antecedent will of God—who shows mercy and withholds it according to His good pleasure—others are compelled to respond differently. Vasquez, therefore, in Prima Pars,

question 22, disputation 95, chapter 9, seeks refuge in the term “reprobation” and replies that it lies in the power of each person to be reprobated or not, if we speak of reprobation as beginning from the decree of condemnation.

But we (as we have often forewarned) by “reprobation” do not understand the destination of some particular person to punishment or the pre-damnation of that person, but rather the denial of the preparation of that grace which would have effectively upheld a creature in a state of integrity and led it to glory—as is evident in the case of the non-elect angels—or the denial of that grace which would have effectively raised up a fallen creature and brought it to eternal life, as is seen in the case of non-elect or reprobate men.

And in this matter we have a confessor (though he is an opponent to us in other matters)—the Jesuit himself, whose words I will now present: “Since to be predestined is to have that grace prepared for us which God knows will have its effect in us, and not to be predestined is to have that grace not prepared for us—and since neither of these lies in our power—it follows that to be predestined or not predestined does not lie within our power. Therefore, on this basis we have said that it is not within our power to be reprobated, if reprobation is understood as the denial of grace.” (Ibid., p. 709)

Therefore, the opinion of those is not agreeable to the truth who, under the pretext of foresight of faith and unbelief, completely strip God of the liberty of election and reprobation—and who teach that the distinction of men into elect and reprobate, as regards particular persons, has occurred contingently from antecedent and differing acts of men. But we, if in anything, then especially in this matter of election and passing by, say with the Apostle: God works all things according to the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11).

Argument 4

That Christ is given or not given occurs through predestination or reprobation—that is, by being ordained or not ordained to eternal life. But this distinction between those to whom Christ is given and those to whom He is not given precedes our believing or not believing, persevering or not persevering. Therefore, election or predestination and passing by or reprobation do not depend on the antecedent foresight of faith and perseverance in some, or of unbelief and obstinacy in others, but precede such foresight.

The truth of the major premise is shown by the following testimonies of Scripture: John 10:28–29, No one shall snatch my sheep out of my hand. My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of the Father’s hand.

I ask, what is the meaning of these words: “The Father gave Christ certain sheep, whom no force can snatch from His hand,” unless it is this—that God the Father, in electing, gave to Christ certain individual persons, whom He decreed to protect against all the assaults and snares of the flesh, the world, and the devil, and finally to bring infallibly to the enjoyment of eternal life?

And conversely, what does it mean for someone not to be given to Christ by the Father, if not that such a person is not ordained by a gracious decree to infallibly obtain eternal life in Christ and through Christ?

To this also refer those words in John 17:9: "I do not pray for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours." There are, then, some who are not given to Christ—not numbered among the possession of God the Father; that is, they were not elected before the foundation of the world was laid, not predestined unto the adoption of sons according to the good pleasure of the Divine will (Ephesians 1:4–5, etc.).

Augustine was always pleased with this interpretation of the aforementioned words. He writes: "They are understood to be given to Christ who have been ordained to eternal life. They are the predestined and called according to His purpose, of whom none shall perish" (On Correction and Grace, ch. 9). And again, in Tractate 106 on the Gospel of John: "Those whom God the Son chose from the world with the Father, the same the Son as man received from the Father. For the Father would not have given them to the Son unless He had chosen them."

You see, then, that according to Augustine's view, those "given" to Christ mean nothing other than the elect or predestined. And conversely, those "not given" must be understood as the reprobate—that is, the passed over and not predestined—which is equally acknowledged by the same Augustine.

Hence in Tractate 107 on John, commenting on the words "I do not pray for the world, but for those whom you have given me," he writes: "By 'the world' He means those who live according to the lust of the world, and who are not in that kind of grace by which they would be chosen out of the world." And again in Tractate 111: "They were not given to Him to whom He will not give eternal life." But who are they to whom Christ will not give eternal life, if not those, and only those, whom we call the passed over, the non-elect, or the reprobate? For He will certainly give eternal life to all the elect.

Let us now come to the minor premise, and show that this distinction between those given and not given to Christ precedes human faith and perseverance, and even precedes the absolute foreknowledge of human unbelief and obstinacy.

That it precedes faith and perseverance is gathered from these words: "All that the Father gives me shall come to me, and him who comes to me I will not cast out" (John 6:37). It is clear from these words that coming to Christ and remaining in Christ—that is, believing in Christ and persevering in faith—depends upon this giving of the Father as its antecedent cause.

The same is clear from John 17:6, where Christ says that He has manifested the name of the Father to the men whom the Father gave Him out of the world. And in verse 15, He prays specifically for them, that they may be kept from the evil one and brought to eternal glory (verse 24).

To this also pertain those words in Matthew 13:11: "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given." In all these passages, the order must be carefully observed:

First, certain persons are given to Christ to be made alive and saved, from the special good pleasure of God the Father.

Then Christ, by the special operation of His Spirit, opens the hearts of these persons so that they may conceive saving knowledge of God and faith.

Finally, those who are enlightened and converted are so governed and sustained that they are not led by any temptations of the devil into destruction.

Therefore, God does not speculate about who will, by their own free will stirred by grace, believe and persevere—and then elect them on the basis of such foreknowledge over others whom He passes by. Rather, He elects certain persons from His mere good pleasure, gives them to Christ, and Christ inspires them with faith so that they may come to God, and grants them perseverance so that they may not fall away from Him.

Let us hear again Augustine, whom we previously cited. In Tractate 105 on John, he writes: "Thus does the Son glorify the Father, by making Him known to all those whom you have given Him." It is therefore prior to know God or believe unto eternal life that one is given to Christ by the Father—that is, elected.

And again in Tractate 107: "By the fact that the Father has already given them to Him, it has come about that they are not part of that world for which Christ does not pray." As if he had said: By antecedent election it came about that they are believers—not by antecedent faith that they are elect.

Now let us consider the other part of the minor premise, namely: that not believing, or falling away from received faith, follows upon this divine non-giving or non-election in Christ—and that, therefore, non-election or reprobation does not arise from such foreknowledge as from an antecedent motive.

Concerning unbelief, that is clearly shown by the testimony we previously cited, John 10:26: "You do not believe, because you are not of my sheep."

Likewise, concerning apostasy from received faith, it is clearly stated in 1 John 2:19: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."

Let Arminius or Corvinus show us what it means not to be of Christ's sheep, if it does not mean not to be of the elect. And if that is true, then not being elect is something prior—at least in the order of consideration—to being an unbeliever.

Let it also be explained what it means that apostates, even when they are among us, are yet not of us. Truly, they will find nothing else in which they can rest their case, except that they were not given to Christ by the Father—that is, they were passed over, they were reprobated, and not written in the book of life or in the catalog of divine election. Therefore, to be reprobated or not elected is, in order of consideration, prior to being foreseen as one who falls into apostasy and persists in it.

This was rightly observed by Augustine in *De correptione et gratia*, chapter 7, in these words: “Those who are not going to persevere are not separated from that mass of perdition by the foreknowledge and predestination of God, and therefore are not called according to His purpose, and hence are not elected.” Augustine does not say, “Because they were foreseen not to persevere, therefore they were not elected,” but teaches that they will not persevere because they were not antecedently elected and separated from the mass of perdition.

But lest anyone take from this an occasion for error from what was said—that not being given to Christ or not being elected is to be considered as prior on the part of God the reprobator to the absolute foreknowledge of unbelief or lack of perseverance on the part of the reprobate person—I warn that this is not to be understood as if God or any divine decree were the productive cause of unbelief, apostasy, or human obstinacy (for all these arise from the innate corruption of men), but rather because faith and perseverance are gifts of a merciful God, which He could bestow upon all, in the very act of reprobating He decrees not to effect in some what He will effect in others—and what He could have effected in all.

For, as Augustine truly says (*De correptione et gratia*, chapter 14), “No human will resists the God who wills to save” (that is, by a will which decrees or predestinates). Therefore, that very resistance—or rather, the persistence in unbelief—which is foreseen in all the reprobate, clearly proves that He, who has the most omnipotent power to incline human hearts in whatever direction He pleases, as Augustine also says there, did not have this effective will to save them. Which is nothing other than to say that He did not choose them, that is, that He reprobated them.

Fifthly, the argument is made from that divine dominion which is to be ascribed to God not only over future things but also over non-future things. For, as Bradwardine rightly states (Book 3, chapter 33), “God has dominion not only over beings but also over non-beings.” This being granted, since it is certain and determined from eternity by God that in certain men there will never be repentance, faith, or perseverance, I ask: How are we to reduce the dominion over these non-future things to the divine will?

We cannot affirm that God’s eternal will or some divine decree produces or generates in these men unbelief, impenitence, and apostasy—for God is not the author of that of which He is the avenger. Nor is it sufficient to say that God from eternity foreknew that such men, having been granted sufficient grace for repentance, faith, and perseverance, would—by their own wickedness—remain impenitent, unbelieving, or apostate. For this indeed attributes to God an infallible foreknowledge of future or non-future things, but meanwhile ascribes to the human will the principal determination of their future existence or non-existence.

Therefore, we must finally return to the conclusion that we must admit that the principal determination of both future and non-future things belongs to God. Insofar as God has decreed to apply His efficacious operation to produce good acts, insofar as He has decreed not to hinder the evil acts which will be produced by wicked men, and finally, insofar as He has decreed not to give efficacious grace for those good acts which will be omitted by the same. Thus, the will of God is the predominant and predetermining cause with respect to the non-being of things that will not come to pass, since although He could make them future if He so willed, yet He does not will to do what He could.

Now, not to will from eternity to cause Cain to repent, Judas to believe, or Hymenaeus to persevere—though He could—this is a firm demonstration of antecedent non-election. Just as to will to cause Peter to repent, or Paul to believe and persevere, is a clear proof of antecedent election.

This decree of reprobation, which includes the determined act of the divine will not to give faith, repentance, and perseverance to certain persons, must precede their unbelief, impenitence, and foreseen and certainly future wickedness. Therefore, reprobation must not be posited on the basis of the foreknowledge of antecedent unbelief, nor election on the basis of foreseen faith; but rather the final unbelief of the reprobate is foreseen in the antecedent denial of efficacious grace, and the persevering faith of the elect is foreseen in the antecedent preparation of efficacious grace. In both cases, the primacy, authority, superiority, and determinative power—whether of future or of non-future things—belongs to God as the supreme arbiter.

This is what Augustine taught in *On the Predestination of the Saints*, chapter 6: “Some believe, others contradict. These, therefore, will to believe; but those do not will to believe. Who does not know this? Who denies it? But since to some the will is prepared by the Lord, and to others it is not...” From this it is clear that the decree concerning the preparation or non-preparation of human wills precedes the foreknowledge of human faith or unbelief. Which is just the same as saying that the predestination and reprobation of individual persons is prior to the foreknowledge of faith or unbelief in them.

If, as Arminius posits, after the decree of God to give Christ as Mediator and Savior, and after the further decree to save those who repent, believe, and persevere, and yet another decree to administer the necessary means of repentance and faith to all—if, I say, after these three decrees, the election and reprobation, salvation and damnation of individual persons depends upon the foreseen faith or unbelief of men, then it follows that the end of the Lord’s passion—that is, the acquisition of the Church—has been left to the power of man’s free will and might be entirely nullified.

So that Christ would not have died in vain, that He might have a Church effectively redeemed by His blood, would not come from any antecedent decree or special grace of God by which He elects certain members for Christ the Head, to be made alive and saved through Him, but rather from the contingent operation of human wills.

For all mortals, considered as not yet elect, and not predestined by that special providence of God which we call predestination, to receive faith and to persevere in it, can remain in their unbelief, can fall away from the faith they received, can, in one word, fall from salvation and leave Christ the Redeemer utterly without a redeemed Church.

This consequence cannot be denied by those who seek to derive election and reprobation from foreseen faith and unbelief. Grevinchovius candidly admitted this when he said in his Disputation on the Death of Christ, page 14: "We assert," he says, "that redemption could have been obtained for all and yet applied to none because of the intervening unbelief of all."

Likewise Episcopius, resting on this Arminian principle, admits that the entire Church on earth could fail, and that it is not necessary, in order for Christ to remain King and Head, that He always have some true Church on earth. But whatever these men hold is wholly alien to true theology and contrary to Scripture—that the death of Christ was, as it were, a throw of the dice, so that once He laid down His soul, whether anyone would be saved by His death would wholly depend on the contingency of man's free will.

Isaiah thought far otherwise, Isaiah 53:10: "If He shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed." Therefore, God promises Christ a Church if He lays down His soul as a sin offering. And what God has promised to the Son is not to be brought about by the uncertain operation of human free will, but must be derived from the firmest decree of the divine will and from the operation corresponding to that decree.

To this agrees what Augustine says in On the Predestination of the Saints, chapter 10: "He did not promise according to the power of our will, but according to His own predestination. For He promised what He Himself would do, not what men would do. For although men do the good things that pertain to the worship of God, it is He who causes them to do what He commands—not they who cause Him to do what He promises. Otherwise, for the promises of God to be fulfilled, their fulfillment would lie not in God's power but in man's."

You see the force of the argument: If election and reprobation arise from the foreknowledge of human acts proceeding contingently—or not proceeding—from the human will, then the fulfillment of God's promises, whether Christ will gain a Church by His death or not, whether He will be a Head without members, a Redeemer without redeemed, a Savior without saved—would all be committed to the liberty of man's free will. All of which, however, have their firmness and infallible certainty in divine predestination and the operation that corresponds to it, not in the bare foreknowledge of what men are going to do or not do by their own free choice.

Argument 7:

If reprobation is posited only on the basis of antecedent unbelief and the actual contempt or neglect of divine grace, then it is necessary to affirm as a matter of Catholic faith that all infants—even those of pagans—who die before the use of free will are elect and will be saved. The reason is obvious: such infants could not yet have incurred the guilt of unbelief through contempt of the Gospel and divine grace.

But the Church of Christ has never dared to assert this; rather, on the contrary, it pronounces concerning the state of infants born outside the Church, considered in themselves, that “all are born impure, all die guilty of eternal death, unless the hidden mercy of God, not revealed to us, intervenes on behalf of some outside the ordinary order.”

With this argument—drawn from the election of some infants and the reprobation of others—Augustine repeatedly shut the mouths of the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians, who referred this distinction between elect and non-elect to foreseen acts of the human will, whether good or evil, just as the Arminians now do. It would be endless to accumulate all the testimonies of Augustine in support of this view.

See *On the Predestination of the Saints*, chapter 12, and *On the Gift of Perseverance*, chapter 11, where he expressly affirms: “God helps certain little children, even though they neither will nor run, namely, those whom He elected before the foundation of the world. But others He does not will to help, concerning whom He has judged differently in His hidden, though just, predestination.”

Prosper also everywhere embraces the same view. In *On Free Will* to Ruffinus: “In infants, there is neither preceding choice nor future devotion.” In his *Letter to Augustine*, he says: “Infants, having no will yet, no personal acts, are not separated apart from the judgment of God, since some, by regeneration, are received as heirs of the heavenly kingdom, while others, without baptism, pass over as debtors to eternal death.”

Finally, to conclude briefly, the constant opinion of the entire Catholic Church—always reserving the hidden things of God—is this: that all infants are born guilty of eternal death; that many, in fact, are born without remedy and pass away as debtors to eternal death, as we learn from Prosper.

Therefore, the opinion of Arminius—which allows for no reprobation except on the basis of foreseen unbelief and perseverance therein—has always been rejected and condemned by the judgment of the whole orthodox Church.

Argument 8:

We can further argue from the nature of negative non-election or reprobation in this way: this reprobation, formally considered, is not the imposition of punishment, but rather the denial of an undeserved gift of grace. But to deny or to bestow such a benefit pertains to the absolute power of God, according to the Apostle’s citation from Moses: “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Romans 9:15).

Now, that reprobation or non-election is not itself a punishment—even if the reprobate always fall into eternal punishments—is evident from the example of the reprobate angels, or non-elect angels, in whom there was nothing yet deserving of punishment or suffering. And yet, God elected some of them and passed by others, as Suarez, Bellarmine, Vasquez, and all theologians unanimously affirm.

Nor do they merely say that God, by His absolute and antecedent will, elected some of these angels and passed over others; they explicitly add that the sole cause of this non-election was the will of God alone, with no cause considered on the part of the non-elect. Thus Suarez writes (Opusc., p. 175): "This reprobation occurred before any foreseen sin in those demons." So also Vasquez (in I, pp. 698, 701) teaches and proves: "This reprobation did not depend on the foresight of sin in them." Likewise Bellarmine (De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio, book 2, chapter 17).

But if someone objects that, in the angels, this reprobation did not have the character of punishment, but was only the denial of an undeserved benefit, and therefore did not require the foresight of rebellion as a motivating cause—whereas in humans, it is properly and truly a punishment, and therefore must be deduced from the foresight of unbelief and perseverance in the same—this is easily refuted.

For in the case of fallen man, bound in sin and ultimately to be punished for sin, the decrees of the divine will must be considered under different respects. That God from all eternity decreed to punish Judas with eternal death—this decree regards Judas's final hardening in his sins as the motivating and meritorious cause of the punishment decreed.

But that God from all eternity decreed not to deliver Judas from the state of misery and sin by special mercy, as He decreed to deliver Paul and Peter; that He decreed not to soften Judas's heart but to permit him to harden finally in his impenitence and unbelief—this decree cannot be referred to the foresight of Judas's unbelief as a motivating cause, because no evil is foreseen by God as certainly and absolutely future unless it is preceded and presupposed by God's own decree of permission.

But this very decree, by which God has determined in Himself to permit someone to harden and to end their life in impenitence and unbelief, is itself the decree of reprobation. Therefore, it is futile in this matter to refer God's will—not to prepare for this or that individual person the grace that softens the heart and produces faith, repentance, and perseverance—to the foresight of unbelief, when one must necessarily fall back on that word of the Apostle: "He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens" (Romans 9:18).

Argument 9:

If, after sufficient grace has been administered, the election and reprobation of men arise from the foresight of their faith or unbelief, then the distinction between the elect and the reprobate would arise not from something prepared and given to one that is not prepared and given to another, but from some act performed by one and not by the other, both having received the same grace indifferently.

But this must not be admitted—unless we wish to transfer the glory of our election from the pure mercy of God to the praise of free will. The consequence cannot be doubted, because according to the adversaries' opinion, when both Judas and Peter received grace sufficient for believing and repenting, the good use of free will by Peter, embracing this grace equally offered

to both, placed him among the believing and elect; and the bad use of free will by Judas, rejecting that same grace, excluded him from the number of believers and elect.

But this is diametrically opposed to the doctrine of Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:7: "Who makes you to differ? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" If this is true with regard to grace freely given (as the Schools call it), then it is much more so with regard to grace that makes one acceptable—and most of all in that first grace of election to life, which is the fountain and source of all benefits leading to salvation.

Let us hear Augustine, who follows the footsteps and doctrine of Paul. In *On the Predestination of the Saints*, chapter 5, he asks: "Are men distinguished from other men by those gifts that are common to all men?" A little later he says: "The grace by which He distinguishes the good from the evil is not common to both good and evil." Even more plainly: "God distinguishes you from another to whom He did not give what He gave to you."

From all this it is clear that the distinction between the elect and the non-elect, between believers and unbelievers, between those who persevere and those who do not, arises not from antecedent and distinct operations of human wills responding differently to grace commonly offered, but from antecedent and distinct decrees and operations of God, in decreeing, preparing, and giving to one what He neither decreed, prepared, nor gave to the other.

The opinion of Arminius, therefore, is intolerable, which ascribes to God only a general preparation and offering of grace, but attributes to the free will of each man—excited by this common grace—the very discrimination between believers and unbelievers, elect and non-elect.

Argument 10:

Concerning eternal life: one is considered to be passed over, non-elect, or reprobate antecedently to his foreseen unbelief, who, from eternity, was not destined by God, nor had efficacious means prepared or given to him by God in time for generating faith and perseverance, and for infallibly obtaining eternal life. But to many (as the outcome itself clearly shows), God neither destined, nor prepared, nor gave this efficacious grace. Therefore, many are passed over or non-elect antecedently to their foreseen unbelief and final obstinacy in the same.

There can be no question about the minor. Let us then explain and confirm the major. First, I assume that God knows infinite ways by which He could move the heart of any man to repent, believe, and persevere freely. Whoever denies this, denies the omnipotence of God and His absolute dominion over human wills—contrary to what Solomon says: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wills" (Proverbs 21:1). Augustine concurs, *On the Grace and Free Will*, chapter 14: "God does with the wills of men what He wills and when He wills, having most omnipotent power to incline human hearts as He pleases."

To these I add: the one who knew and was able to apply to both Judas and Peter those means by which each might be brought to faith and obedience and be preserved in the same unto the end, and who eternally destined and gave those means to Peter but neither destined nor gave

them to Judas—has chosen one for salvation and passed over the other, that is, has reprobated him.

This is what Ambrose hinted at in that famous saying: “God calls whom He deigns to call, and makes religious whom He wills.” These words are carefully explained by Augustine in *On the Grace of Christ Against the Pelagians and Celestians*, book 1, chapter 46. Likewise, Basil says in a certain prayer reported by Peter the Deacon in *On the Incarnation and Grace*, chapter 8: “Grant, O Lord, strength and protection. We ask that you make the wicked good, and preserve the good in goodness: for you can do all things, and none can contradict you. When you will, you save, and none can resist you.” Both learned this from the Prophet who taught us about the divine will in *Isaiah* 14:24, 27: “The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it be; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand... The Lord of hosts has purposed, and who shall annul it?”

From all these things, I infer that in the case of those who are not effectually called, who are not made religious, who are not preserved in faith and holy obedience—in a word, who are not actually saved—there was lacking in God that invincible will and irresistible grace to convert them, to make them religious and faithful, to preserve them in faith, and finally, to save them in fact. Conversely, for those who are made religious, faithful, and persevering, and are brought to eternal life, we may rightly conclude that God had, from eternity, that will which decreed to effect all these things in them.

This will to save, and the will-not-to (if it is lawful to speak this way), clearly proves both the election of some and the passing over of others.

Finally, just as it would be absurd to claim that this special will to effect faith, perseverance, and salvation in Peter arose from the foreseen faith and perseverance of Peter himself, so it is no less false and absurd to assert that this negative will—not to effect faith, repentance, and perseverance in Judas or in any reprobate—arose from the foreseen unbelief, impenitence, and final contempt of divine grace by the same.

Corvinus's response to this argument, *Against Tilenus*, p. 148, is of no value. He says: “It does not follow: God did not give faith, perseverance, or salvation to this man; therefore, He did not will to give them to him. Rather, the correct inference is this: God does not will to give these gifts except to the humble, the laboring, and those who do the will of the Father. Therefore, these gifts were not given to him because he was not such a man—his own fault.”

I reply: Corvinus is plainly forgetful of the point under dispute. The question is not about the will of God in any general sense, but about the predestining will of God to do or not to do something.

And the following is a sound and strongest inference: God gave faith, perseverance, and eternal life to Peter; therefore, by a predestining will, He willed from eternity to give faith, perseverance, and eternal life to him.

And likewise, the contrary is no less firm: God did not give faith, perseverance, and eternal life to Judas; therefore, He passed over him, did not predestine him, but reprobated him—He did not will to bless him with such great gifts.

And as for what Corvinus adds—that the only consequence is this: “God does not will to give such blessings except to the humble and obedient, and therefore they were not given to Judas, because he was not such a man”—this is of no use, because the same question remains regarding this humility and obedience as was raised about faith and salvation.

I will ask, then, why God did not give to Judas the humility and obedience which He gave to Peter. For if He had willed to give them equally to both, they would have existed equally in both. For to the will of God—when He wills to implant the good quality of humility or lowliness in the human will—no human will can resist. Such a will is indeed irresistible, because in the man himself it operates the will not to resist. For the will no longer resists when the willingness to resist has been taken away.

Furthermore, those who suspend these gifts of God upon a preceding humility—unless they confess that this very humility is a special gift of God—fall into Pelagianism and incur the condemnation of Canon 6 of the Council of Orange. But if they do confess this, it amounts to the same as conceding that God has prepared and given this humility, on which faith and salvation depend, to one and not to the other, and thus that He has prepared and given both faith and salvation itself; which is nothing else than having chosen one and reprobated the other.

Finally, what Corvinus says—that saving grace is not given to the reprobate because through their own fault they are not such as God requires—is itself an argument that they were antecedently rejected or passed over. For God decreed to make all the elect such as He Himself ordinarily requires to partake in grace and glory, as it is written in Colossians 1:12. Therefore, those whom He did not make such, He did not elect; and since there is no middle state between election and reprobation, those same He reprobated.

After all these turnings and windings, we must come back to this: that those to whom the grace of faith, repentance, and perseverance has not been given, must be acknowledged as passed over in the order of predestination unto eternal life. And, conversely, those to whom these things were prepared and given must be confessed as elect.

And just as some were mercifully elected to these good things before the foreknowledge of those goods as existing in them, so also some were passed over and not predestined to receive such things, even before they were foreseen as finally lacking those goods.

We now propose our final argument, in which we will attempt to show that this doctrine of the predestination of some and the passing over of others by the mere good pleasure of the divine will—without any antecedent regard to opposite acts of men, whether good or evil—was not some singular opinion of Augustine or his disciples, but was received and approved by those very councils which were convened against Pelagius and the Semi-Pelagians.

We have thought it necessary to do this because Arminius, Corvinus, and the other innovators confidently assert that our doctrine has never been approved by any council, not even those which were held against Pelagius.

Yet certain necessary matters must first be prefaced before this argument is given.

First, we admit that the councils held against the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians during the time of Augustine or shortly after his death—such as the Councils of Diospolis, Milevis, Carthage, Orange, and others—did not explicitly, directly, and particularly define the doctrine of absolute predestination, nor did they explicitly condemn the contrary opinion of election and reprobation based on the foreknowledge of diverse acts in men.

However, we affirm this: that many things were defined in these councils which cannot stand if absolute and gratuitous predestination is overthrown, or if that conditional election and passing over proposed by Faustus, and later by others, and finally embraced and defended by Arminius, is posited.

To this we add that the books of Faustus, in which he laboriously attempts to establish that conditional election and to overthrow the absolute, were condemned by the ancient Church, as is evident from Gratian, Decretum, Distinction 15. The decree exists in volume 3 of the Councils, and was enacted by Gelasius in a synod of seventy bishops. Hormisdas also, when consulted about Faustus's book, replied that Catholic doctrine ought to be learned from Augustine and Prosper, not from Faustus.

And among other matters, it is probable that they especially had this doctrine of conditional predestination in view: for Peter the Deacon and other orthodox men sent from the East to Rome considered the books of Faustus worthy of anathema chiefly for this reason—that they were written against the doctrine of predestination. This is affirmed in *De Incarnatione et Gratia*, chapter last.

Second, we say that we can and must gather what the opinion of the orthodox was concerning predestination from those things which they established about grace against the Pelagians and the remnants of Pelagianism. For as Augustine says in *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*, chapter 10, the only difference between grace and predestination is this: predestination is the preparation of grace, while grace itself is the giving. Therefore, if anyone teaches that the saving grace of Christ depends on the absolute will of God and is not given to or withheld from men according to their differing actions, then he must—if he wishes to be consistent—hold the same view about predestination and reprobation.

And from this, since true grace, which is not given according to merits, cannot be upheld unless predestination is also posited without any antecedent view to merits, Augustine did not hesitate to affirm: “The faith of this predestination, which is now being defended with new diligence against new heretics, has never been lacking in the Church of Christ.” (*De Bono Perseverantiae*, chapter 23). As if he had said: all Catholics who admitted that vivifying and saving grace is given or not given according to the purpose of God who shows mercy or does

not show mercy—even if they said nothing expressly about election and passing over—nevertheless, because of the close connection between these matters, they also thought the same concerning predestination.

But lest it seem to anyone slightly unjust to rely only on Augustine's judgment, listen to what the Jesuit Vasquez acknowledges about the connection of these questions. In his commentary on Aquinas, Disputation 91, chapter 2, page 631, he says: "The Pelagians spoke in the same way about predestination and grace: the same question about grace and predestination existed long ago between Pelagius and the Catholics." The reason for this is obvious: for God gives His grace in time in the same way He has decreed to give it from eternity. If from eternity He predestined to give saving grace freely to someone, then in time He gives it freely. And conversely, if in time He gives it only from regard to some preceding good operation of the human will, then from eternity He predestined that He would not give it otherwise.

Therefore, those who deny that the merits and demerits of opposing human wills—that is, the good acts of some, the bad acts of others—are the reasons why saving grace is given to these and not to those, must be considered to have likewise denied that this foreseen difference in human wills was the cause, occasion, or condition distinguishing election, predestination, and passing over.

Finally, this too must be added: those Fathers who spoke more freely before the rise of Pelagianism require, in many respects, a charitable interpretation. They sometimes refer election to the foreknowledge of merits; but we must understand election in these cases not in terms of intention, but in terms of execution, as Suarez aptly notes (Opusc., Book 3, *De Auxiliis Divinae Gratiae*, chapter 18). Moreover, they frequently derive even this very foreknowledge of merits in the elect from the gratuitous mercy of the predestining God as from its first source.

Chrysostom—who at times exceeds proper bounds in extolling the power of free will, and who dared to say, "We must first choose good things, and then God will bring what is His" (Homily 12 on the Epistle to the Hebrews), and that divine mercy "seeks out the worthy" (Homily 11 on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians)—nevertheless elsewhere excludes good works and proclaims grace alone.

To sum up briefly, when the Orthodox Fathers say that grace is given to those who prepare and dispose themselves for it through effort, good desires, or the beginning of faith, we should not think they mean anything other than that, through the exciting and inspiring grace of God, people are moved to the affection of faith and the desire for conversion, and are thereby led to the grace of justification and fuller sanctification.

Likewise, when they sometimes teach that God foreknows the faith and obedience of those whom He has destined to life and passes over those whom He foresaw would be unfaithful and disobedient, they do not suppose that God foresaw any good merits in anyone other than those which He Himself would produce in that person through the grace of predestination. For by predestination, God foreknew what He Himself was going to do, as Augustine truly states in *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*, chapter 10.

These things having been prefaced, let us now proceed to our argument, in which we will demonstrate from doctrines established by the common consensus of Catholics that Augustine's view—which may also rightly be called Pauline—concerning absolute election and passing over, can be proved most strongly and clearly.

Our argument will take the form of a threefold cord, composed and intertwined from the judgments of the Orthodox, all of which are placed beyond the realm of doubt. Once these are granted, it will follow that election and non-election or reprobation flow from God's absolute good pleasure, and not from the antecedent, foreseen, and contrary acts of men.

If I should be somewhat lengthy in explaining these, forgive me—they are of the utmost importance for judging this controversy. Thus, our argument stands as follows:

Those who proclaim and insist on a certain special and efficacious grace, by which not only the mind is enlightened, the affections stirred, and the will touched so that one is able through its help to believe, repent, and persevere—if he so wills—but whose efficacy always results in his willing, since a new will is healed (indeed created) in the person, imbued with faith and charity, and granted perseverance;

And those who recognize that this such great and efficacious grace has been prepared and given by God to some, and neither prepared nor given to others;

And finally, those who teach that God decreed to give this same special grace to some out of His mere good pleasure and not from any antecedent regard to various merits or demerits, or to any contrary human acts whatsoever;

Those, I say, who hold these three points, do not suspend predestination and passing over, or reprobation, on the foreseen operations of men, whether good or bad, but on the mere will of God, who shows mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He does not have mercy upon.

But those Catholics who opposed the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians defended these three axioms no less than Augustine himself; therefore, they also held to absolute election and passing over, and did not make them depend on foreseen human faith or unbelief, or obedience and obstinacy.

As to the consequence of the major premise, it need not be treated at length. For whoever concedes that efficacious grace is prepared and given by God's good pleasure to some and not to others, who are no more worthy and who differ in no preceding good work from those to whom it is given—if he wishes to speak consistently—cannot deny the doctrine of absolute election and passing over.

For what else do we mean by absolute predestination than the preparation of grace that efficaciously leads to glory out of sheer mercy? And what do we mean by reprobation, opposed to this absolute predestination, other than the refusal to prepare such grace out of God's most free will?

Thus, although it is not true, yet it is at least consistent for the very learned Gerard Vossius—who wrote the History of Pelagianism—to consider both the doctrine of absolute predestination and that of efficacious grace (prepared for some by God's absolute decree and not prepared for others) as peculiar to Augustine and not shared by other orthodox men who resisted Pelagius. For he claims that, if those men had been asked why one of those called was converted rather than another, they would have answered that it was due to the right use of free will, since they understood grace, which in itself is sufficient, to be made efficacious by the event or by human cooperation.

Let us now, leaving aside the consequence of the major, discuss those three propositions which we said were established by the common consensus of the Orthodox against the Pelagians.

This is the first point: the Orthodox understood the grace of Christ—which Pelagius never wished to acknowledge—not as enlightening, stirring, or knocking grace that merely approaches human will as though asking for admission, but as healing, vivifying, regenerating, making its own entrance, and in a word, as grace that inspires faith and charity and creates the good will itself anew.

We will consider three things here:

1. What kind of grace Pelagius eventually admitted.
2. What kind he never wished to admit.
3. What kind of grace it was which the Fathers referred to as the grace of Christ par excellence, and to the acknowledgment of which they sought to compel Pelagius.

I. Pelagius, then, admitted a supernatural grace—but one consisting in doctrine, or in the external revelation of those things which are necessary for attaining salvation. This is evident from Augustine (De Gratia Christi contra Pelagium, Book I, chapter 3): “Pelagius places the grace of God either in nature, or in law and doctrine: so that when God helps man by revealing and showing what ought to be done, He is believed to help.” The same can be seen in Prosper (Carmen de Ingratis, chapter 20):

“You acknowledge no other grace than the law,

Which the prophet warns by, and which the doctrine of the minister brings.”

And in the Epistle to Rufinus, De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio: “They only speak of grace in such a way that it is a kind of teacher for free will,” etc.

But the Orthodox were by no means satisfied with this external, instructive grace—they insisted that internal grace must be acknowledged. Thus, Pelagius did admit internal grace:

First, a grace that enlightens and opens the eyes of the mind. His words are clear in Augustine (De Gratia Christi, chapter 7): “God helps us through His doctrine and revelation, when He

opens the eyes of our heart, when He illuminates us with the manifold and ineffable gift of heavenly grace."

Second, he conceded an internal grace that stirs the affections and tries to awaken the slumbering will, by means of the aforementioned illumination and through a certain preceding hidden persuasion. This is the force of the following, in the same place (chapter 10): "He works in us to will what is good, when He enflames us—given over as we are to earthly desires—with the greatness of future glory and the promise of rewards, when by the revelation of wisdom He arouses the slumbering will into a desire for God, when He persuades us of all that is good." This is as far as Pelagius was brought.

II. Now, in the second place, let us consider what kind of grace he refused to admit. Briefly, Pelagius rejected that grace of God which by its efficacy heals the will and changes it from evil to good, by infusing it with faith, charity, and the rest of those gifts which bring with them spiritual life and eternal salvation. Instead, he only admitted—as stated before—that grace which enlightens the mind, stirs the affections, and invites the will, yet in such a way that it leaves the will to itself and does not move it from the balance of its own indifference, as though it waits for an act of believing, converting, persevering, and so on, to come from the will itself—without itself working those very acts within it.

Augustine expresses this opinion clearly (De Gratia Christi, chapter 5): "We must know that Pelagius did not believe our will or action to be helped by divine aid, but only the possibility of willing and acting." And a little later: "It does not help that we may will, it does not help that we may act, but only that we may be able to will and to act."

So also Critobolus, who represents the Pelagian position in Jerome's dialogue (Adversus Pelagianos, Book 3), says: "I do not remove God's help, since by His grace we can do all that we can; but we each assign it its own limits—so that it is from God's grace that free will has been given the power, and it is ours to use that will either to do or not to do."

This is what Julian meant when he said that the human will receives the actual existence of good works from itself. The Semi-Pelagians also ran aground on this same rock. For although they admitted preventer grace, yet they fashioned it in such a way that it does not give the very willing, the very believing, the very persevering, but always leaves the outcome to the free will which has been stirred and assisted by God's grace.

So Hilary, in his letter to Augustine, says that the testimony "according as God has divided to each the measure of faith" and similar texts are taken to mean that the one who has begun to will is helped, but not that the will itself is given. Shortly after, he says they give an account of election or rejection based on the fact that each person's merit is joined to their own will.

Finally, Faustus of Riez, the leader of the Semi-Pelagians, says, "It is of divine mercy that you are called, but it is entrusted to your will to follow." Again, "God awaits the will of the one who is to be cleansed." Innumerable such statements appear in that author, from which we gather that Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians are united in this—that neither wished to grant a special

generosity and mercy of God by which faith and charity are infused into some, and a good will is thereby created in them.

Now, as a final point, let us add this: Arminius, and Arnold and the others who come from the same school, do not acknowledge this grace which the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians rejected—namely, the grace that by its own efficacy creates a good will—but only that grace which moves by persuasion so that the will might wish to be good, while the outcome is left to free will. And hence it is that they say election and reprobation proceed from God's foreknowledge—namely, his eternal knowledge of whether a man will choose to admit the knocking grace or not.

Let us hear Arminius himself (*Examen Libri Perkins de Praedestinatione*, p. 220): "Grace, therefore, by its own nature, does not compel a man to assent, but moves him by gentle and sweet persuasion." This is the very same thing Pelagius admitted: "He persuades all that is good." Note also that Arminius implies that if divine grace were to operate otherwise than by this gentle persuasion—which leaves the outcome to free will—then it would immediately coerce the will. But that is the very calumny made by Pelagius and the Semi-Pelagians. For the Pelagians rejected that grace which causes us to act under the pretext that it "forces upon the unwilling a pursuit of virtue," as Augustine refutes in *Contra Tertiam Epistolam Pelagianorum*, book 2, chapters 5, 6, and 8.

The Semi-Pelagians likewise cried out that by this prevenient and cooperating grace, free will is hindered, as Hilary's letter to Augustine makes clear.

Now let us join Corvinus to Arminius. Corvinus acknowledges no grace except that which leaves the will standing, as it were, at a crossroads—so that if the will by its own act follows the direction toward which grace draws, then the man is converted; but if not, he is left without excuse. In his *Response to the Notes of Bogerman*, p. 263, he says, "It is certain that no conversion is intended precisely, but two subordinate ends of the Holy Spirit: the first is that He may convert the one in whom He works; the second, that if he resists, He may render him inexcusable." A little later, he adds, "When all the operations by which God works in us to bring about conversion are set in place, yet the conversion itself remains so in our power that we may not be converted."

From these things it is clear that among the Arminians, the conversion of the sinner is a human act, not a divine one. Indeed, far from believing that divine grace converts anyone, they hold that God does not even intend absolutely to do this, but only conditionally—if the man himself is willing. If he is not willing, then God's intention is merely to render him inexcusable.

Meanwhile, after explaining all the divine operations of grace, man is left in mere potential for conversion, but with no actual grace transferring him into the state of one converted.

Lastly, let the delegates at the Hague be heard. They acknowledge an infusion of divine grace indeed with regard to the intellect and affections, but they deny that such an infusion takes place in the will—lest it cease to be by nature free to will good or evil, and thus lose the ability for its

actions to be called either good or evil. (Acta Synodi, p. 279). A little later they say, "In spiritual death, spiritual gifts are not properly said to be separated from the human will, since they were never in it; only the liberty of doing good or evil remains, which liberty—although it cannot actually exert its strength in the sinner because of the darkness of the intellect and the depravity of the affections—yet remains in him as a created part of his nature."

Finally, they concede that by God's grace only this is effected: that the illumined intellect understands saving truth, and the inflamed affections impel the will toward grasping it. By this power, the will is rendered able to exercise its own inherent faculty of willing or not willing. In this, they say, consists the proper vivification of the will (ibid., p. 281).

In all this I see nothing ascribed to divine grace which Pelagius himself would not have conceded.

That illumination of the mind and stirring of the affections, and through these the prompting of the will and the empowerment to will the good—Pelagius attributes all of this to grace. But that the will becomes good, indeed is made alive, by its own action (without any infused gift), namely, when made able, it exercises its inherent faculty—this Pelagius himself hardly ever asserted so clearly.

You now see how far Pelagius, along with the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians, and likewise Arminius with his followers, proceeded in their acknowledgment of divine grace. You also see that they all alike halt at the same point: they do not wish to admit that most efficacious grace which, by infusing faith and charity, makes the will good; but only that grace which renders the will able so that it may become good by its own act—if it wills to be good by doing good.

III. Let us now come to what remains to be explained in this first proposition of ours—namely, what sort of grace it is that Augustine, together with the rest of the orthodox, strove to have Pelagius acknowledge, and which they emphatically called the grace of Christ. We affirm that it is no other than that which Pelagius and Arminius rejected as if it were something coercive of free will.

We cannot describe it more aptly than it was by the Reverend Bishop of Salisbury (De Vera Gratia Christi, p. 60): "This," he says, "is the true grace which Christian faith professes and believes—by which God places His laws in our minds and writes them in our hearts. When He requires our will, He Himself causes us to will; when He commands conversion, He simultaneously causes us to be converted; when He demands faith, He causes that we believe by His gift."

We may draw a few lines from Augustine. In *Contra Secundam Epistolam Pelagianorum*, book 4, chapter 5, he defines true grace as: "The inspiration of love, so that we act through holy love when we know what is right—this is proper grace." And in chapter 6: "We walk, we keep, we do—but He causes that we walk, that we keep, that we do. This is the grace of God that makes us good; this is His mercy that goes before us." He calls this grace of Christ "the help by which

something is done.” He says that by this grace there is in us not only the ability to will what we are able, but even the will itself to use that ability (*De Correptione et Gratia*, chs. 11–12).

As for that grace which only advises and persuades, but leaves the will itself hanging, as it were, in the uncertainty of its own free choice—Augustine considers that to belong more to law than to grace properly so called: “He who knows what should be done and does it not,” he says, “has not yet learned from God according to grace, but only according to law” (*De Gratia Christi*, ch. 13). And at the beginning of chapter 14: “He who does not come cannot rightly be said to have been taught by that mode in which God teaches by grace.” Therefore we say of the Pelagian and Arminian grace what Augustine once said (*De Gratia Christi*, ch. 10): “Let him at least acknowledge this grace by which the greatness of future glory is not only promised, but also believed and hoped for; by which wisdom is not only revealed but loved; by which every good is not only advised but persuaded.”

But someone may say: “This was Augustine’s private opinion, led by his view of absolute predestination.” Not so—it was the common doctrine of all the orthodox, as is evident from the councils held against Pelagius and the Semi-Pelagians.

From the Council of Milevis, canon 4: “By the grace of Christ it is granted to us that we may not only know what should be done, but also love and be able to do it.” A little later: “Both are the gift of God—to know what ought to be done, and to love to do it.” If anyone tries to evade these words by saying that grace indeed makes us love and do—but only by persuasion, if the free will consents—he will do so in vain. For the text says that God does it by way of gift, as the final words show. And in the same way He makes us love God and do His commandments as He makes us know, according to both Pelagius and Arminius, by infusing light into the mind. Therefore, to love and to do must likewise be by infusing charity into the will.

From the Synodical Letter of the African Bishops exiled in Sardinia, the same truth appears: “God commands man to will—but the Lord works in man both to will and to do. God, in giving life to men, does not wait for some beginning of the human will, but by making the will good, He gives life to it.”

These things directly contradict the Arminians, who, when the enlightening and persuasive grace is applied, suppose that the will remains in equilibrium, and that by its own action it either becomes good or evil. But those devout Fathers proclaim a creative and life-giving grace, which causes the will to be good and to will good.

Finally, this is confirmed by the Council of Orange (*Arausicanum*), canon 4: “If anyone maintains that God waits for our will to be purified from sin, and does not admit that even the willing to be purified is brought about in us by the infusion and working of the Holy Spirit, he resists the same Holy Spirit who says through Solomon, ‘The will is prepared by the Lord,’ and the Apostle, who beneficially preaches, ‘It is God who works in us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure.’”

Why so much about the grace of Christ? That it may be understood: by the unanimous consent of the Orthodox, that grace which merely enlightens, instructs, and stirs (which, if we believe the Arminians, is never absent from anyone, yet in many is fruitless for salvation) is not the grace of Christ which the Orthodox wanted Pelagius to acknowledge. Rather, it is that grace which creates a good will, sanctifies a man, and finally infallibly produces the effect of salvation.

That this is the true meaning of the term was not unknown to the Master of the Sentences, book 2, distinction 20, lit. D: "Grace," he says, "that goes before and prepares the will, is faith with love." This same grace is what Thomas Aquinas understood in *Summa Theologiae I-II*, q. 111, a. 3, when he assigned it five effects: that the soul be healed, that it will good, that it do the good it wills, that it persevere in the good, and that it attain to glory.

Let this, then, remain fixed and settled: the grace of Christ is not the reward of a will that does not resist, but rather the non-resisting will itself is the effect of that grace, given and received.

And let this suffice for the full explanation of the first proposition.

I now pass to the second. It is this:

This grace of Christ was prepared from eternity for some and given in time, and for others it was neither prepared nor given. Here, many words are not needed, for the matter speaks for itself. We clearly see from the outcome that this efficacious grace is not given to all; and that to those to whom it has never been given, it must be placed beyond all doubt that, by the eternal good pleasure of God, it was never prepared for them.

Who is so senseless as to say that faith and charity are given and infused to all? Or that a good will is created in all? Or that perseverance and glory are granted to all?

Nor can that exception be admitted here: "God gives this to all, but not all receive it." For to whomever a good will, faith, charity, and perseverance are given by God, it is presumed that he has received them. For they are said to be given, not to those who lack such gifts, but to those who rejoice in them.

And if we consider the matter itself, it is plainly a frivolous fiction to say that God works a good will in men if men will. For this is the same as if God were to bargain to give a good will to those who already have it before it is given.

But let us see what the judgment of the orthodox has been on this matter. From Augustine we have almost countless testimonies, many also from Prosper and other disciples of Augustine, and not a few from the Synods themselves convened against the Pelagians.

That noble statement is found in *On the Grace of Christ, Against Pelagius and Celestius*, chapters 12 and 13: "By this grace, by which strength is perfected in weakness, He brings the predestined and those called according to purpose to the highest perfection and glorification. This grace God infuses more deeply and inwardly with ineffable sweetness, not only through

those who plant and water externally, but also through Himself, who secretly gives the increase, so that He not only shows the truth, but also imparts love.”

Thus, God teaches those who are called according to His purpose, granting both knowledge of what to do and the power to do what they know. With these words, this grace is restricted to the predestined and those called according to purpose, and it is simultaneously shown to be efficacious not merely by its outcome but by the purpose of the Giver and the nature of the grace itself. That such grace is not given to all is clearer than daylight.

No less illustrious is another testimony from *On the Predestination of the Saints*, chapter 9: “Faith, whether begun or perfected, is a gift of God; and that this gift is given to some and not to others, let no one doubt who does not wish to oppose the clearest testimony of sacred Scripture. But why it is not given to all should not trouble the faithful, who believe that all have fallen into the just condemnation of one man.”

Lest I be overly long in piling up testimonies, let me add just one more from Letter 107, where among the twelve statements affirmed to pertain to the Catholic faith, the second is this: “The grace of God is not given to all men.” These words, even by Arminius’ own admission, cannot be referred to that grace which only enlightens, stirs, and persuades (since he considers that common to all mortals), but to the grace which regenerates, sanctifies, and saves.

Nor can they take refuge in the claim: “This vivifying and saving grace is given in fact to some because they were willing to receive it, and not to others because they were willing to reject it.” For in that very same letter it is deemed Pelagian to claim that this grace is given because we are willing, and orthodox to confess that by this grace God makes us willing.

To this add: It is the very property and power of this grace that it is not rejected by any hard heart, because it is given precisely in order that the hardness of the heart be first removed.

Prosper does not differ from Augustine, saying in *To the Excerpts from the Book of Doubts*, 8: “Let us acknowledge and piously confess that God immutably foreknew to whom He would give the gift to believe, or whom He would give to His Son so that none of them would be lost. And this is the predestination of the saints: namely, the foreknowledge and preparation of God’s grace by which they are certainly delivered. As for the rest, whoever they are who are not delivered—whom the grace of God has not rescued from the general ruin of mankind—we must acknowledge that they are justly not exempted.”

He affirms that liberating grace is prepared and given to some, and denies that it is either prepared or given to others. In his work *On the Ungrateful*, chapter 11, it is counted Pelagian doctrine to say that the grace of Christ leaves out no human being at all among those who are born. And in *On the Calling of the Gentiles*, Book 1, chapter 13, he clearly affirms that the grace of the Savior passes by some.

Let us now turn to the Councils, of which we can affirm generally, as Vossius notes, that “the grace of Christ proclaimed in them is not given promiscuously to all.” Experience itself cries this aloud.

The Council of Milevis declares that the grace of God given to us through Jesus Christ is the grace of justification, in canons 3, 4, and 5. But this grace—whatever might be said of the exciting and enlightening grace—is not common to all; no one doubts that.

The same is the judgment of the Council of Arles, which rightly declares that the grace here in question is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit correcting our will, turning it from unbelief to faith, from impiety to piety, canon 5. That such an effective inspiration is given to some and not to others is so obvious that to deny it is not only ignorance, but foolishness.

Finally, we have the best and most explicit testimony in the Synodical Epistle of the bishops exiled in Sardinia: “He does not think rightly about grace who believes that it is given to all men.” Shortly after, they show what grace they mean—namely, that grace by which God works both the willing and the doing in man. They continue, and explain further to whom God does this: “He works this in His own, so that they may work out their salvation.” But who are those whom God acknowledges as His own? It immediately follows: “All the predestined are they whom God wills to be saved.”

From all this it follows that there are some to whom this efficacious grace unto salvation has neither been given nor ever destined. You now see, from the consensus of the orthodox, that the grace of Christ properly so called—that is, regenerating and saving grace—is not given to all, but to certain persons whom God peculiarly claims as His own.

There remains one final proposition, which chiefly concerns the cause of this, and which was no less confessed by all the orthodox than the two former.

Proposition II. That grace of Christ, which consists in the infusion of faith and charity and of all other gifts necessary for infallibly effecting salvation (that is, the grace by which the soul is healed, and by which God gives both the willing and the doing of good), is not given to men on account of any antecedent consideration of better works or dispositions in the recipients, nor is it withheld from others on account of any antecedent consideration of worse works or dispositions in those who do not receive it. Rather, it is given purely from the will of God, who has mercy on whom He will, and on whom He will not, He has not mercy, without any regard for any previous distinction between persons.

That this was the doctrine of the Catholic Church is clear, first, because the contrary was always defended by Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians, and was held as a sort of defining mark of their sect. For although they (as even the Arminians now do) acknowledged a certain grace offered to all from the mere mercy of God, yet that grace which heals, gives life, and justifies—which is not only offered on God’s part, but already possessed on man’s part—they believed this grace was never given except on account of some antecedent merit of a good work or disposition seen by God in the recipient but not in others.

Thus Augustine writes of Pelagius himself, namely that he held that God gives this grace to him who is found worthy to receive it (On the Proceedings of the Palestinian Council, chapter 14).

And in Heresy 88, the same Father testifies that the Pelagian error was this: “That the grace of God, by which we are freed from ungodliness, is given according to our merits.”

Likewise, Prosper writes in his Chronicle under the year 414, “At that time, Pelagius the Briton promoted the heresy bearing his name against the grace of Christ, proclaiming that every person is governed toward righteousness by his own will, and that one receives only as much grace as he has deserved.”

Now, let Faustus, the champion of the Semi-Pelagians, speak on their behalf. In Book 1, Chapter 17, he says: “If the mercy of God which draws us is given to the worthy, you observe that it is in some way bestowed as a reward for human effort.” Shortly after he adds, “He whom you see drawing others seeks someone who in every way keeps the commandments, so that by some spark of the will, he may be able to take hold of him who is called.”

In all these statements I would have you note this: not even Pelagius denied that grace is offered indiscriminately to the worthy and unworthy out of divine mercy; but he departs from the Catholic position in this—that he believed it is always conferred and given because of some particular merit in those to whom it is given, just as it is not given because of some particular demerit in those from whom it is withheld.

Now the term merit among the Fathers in this controversy signifies nothing else than some antecedent work or better disposition in one person than in another, in view of which this grace of Christ is given to one and not to another.

2. The truth of our foregoing proposition is made clear from this—that the orthodox Fathers expressly deny that this saving grace presupposes any better work or condition in the one to whom it is given than in those to whom it is not given. Rather, whatever distinction exists between men, they profess to be the effect of this grace when received, not the moving cause of its being given.

Innumerable testimonies occur in Augustine, but we will be content with a few. One especially clear one appears in Against the Two Letters of the Pelagians, Book 1, final chapter: “We rightly pronounce anathema on the Pelagians, who are such enemies of the grace of God that comes through Jesus Christ our Lord, that they say it is not given freely but according to our merits, and thus grace would no longer be grace. They place everything in free will, into which man has sunk deeply, such that they say man merits grace by using it well—though no one can use it well except through grace, which is not rendered according to debt but is freely given by the mercy of God.”

Here, note this: By “the grace of God which comes through Jesus Christ our Lord,” we are not to understand merely the exciting grace that still, as it were, stands outside and knocks at the human mind—though that too is administered to men for Christ’s sake—but the grace that gives life, that is infused, received, and heals the human will. Pelagius’s opinion was that grace, from the mere mercy of God, warns, enlightens the minds of men, stirs them, and knocks on their wills; but that it heals, gives life, and justifies men only insofar as each, by the voluntary

obedience of free will, admits this knocking grace. Augustine and the orthodox, by contrast, taught that the admission of grace does not depend on the contingent obedience of free will, but that God, by a hidden and secret calling, so works on the sense of the one to whom He wills to give grace that He inclines the will to consent (Epistle 107), or as he elsewhere says, that "God works good wills in the hearts of men by a marvelous and ineffable power" (On the Grace of Christ, ch. 24).

Another testimony is found in *On Predestination and Grace*, final chapter, where he affirms that divine election unto grace is to be referred solely to the munificence of the divine will. In agreement with this is what he says in *On the Predestination of the Saints*, ch. 14: "We defend against the new Pelagian error that the grace of God is not given according to our merits, but that it is given freely to whom it is given, for it is not of him that wills or of him that runs, but of God who shows mercy."

A third and final testimony we will cite from Augustine is from *On the Gift of Perseverance*, ch. 15: "If grace precedes faith, since it precedes the will, then certainly it precedes all obedience; it also precedes charity, and it works all these things in him to whom it is given, and in whom it precedes all of them." These words do not refer to the knocking grace, which may be excluded or admitted according as free will resists or does not resist, but to the entering or infused grace, which always makes the unwilling willing—because it first removes resistance. It does not delay to enter and heal the will until the will, by itself, has ceased to resist.

This is what Thomas Aquinas means when he says that grace is not immediately ordained to action, but is as it were a certain disposition which gives a kind of spiritual being to the soul, and is presupposed to the infused virtues as their principle and root. He says grace relates to the soul as health does to the body. Elsewhere he adds: "In the gratuitous being, the first thing is the informing of the subject, then the act of the will."

Now let us hear Prosper, who teaches just as clearly that if we ask why one person has grace while another lacks it, this cannot be resolved by referring to human willing or not-willing, as if to say: "This one became a partaker of divine grace because he wished to receive it, and the other remained without it because he did not wish to receive it or because he willed to resist it."

In *The Epistle on Free Will to Ruffinus*, he writes: "If grace is rendered according to merits and is not itself the creator of good things, then it is called grace in vain." And in *Response 8 to the Chapters of Gaul*: "It is impious to say that the grace by which we are saved is either repaid to good merits or withheld due to evil ones. If human will itself, by the act of receiving, were the cause of why some receive saving grace and others do not, then grace would be repaid for the merit of prior obedience, and withheld due to the demerit of prior resistance."

The same Prosper—or whoever was the author of the *Call of the Gentiles*, Book 1, ch. 18—writes: "In all men, the cause of receiving grace is the will of God. The rule of election is hidden. Men receive grace without merits that began it."

These things weigh equally against Pelagius and Arminius. For both hold that the will of God is indeed the cause of grace being offered or administered to all men universally; but both deny that the will of God, in choosing some over others, is the cause why grace is received by some and not by others. On the contrary, they teach that God's will to elect certain individuals is motivated by His foreseeing their acceptance of grace. And so they derive both election and the donation of grace from the same act—namely, the meritorious obedience of the human will—though they refer the offer of grace to God's pure mercy.

Finally, in chapter 25 of the same book, it is shown that the question, "Why does this person receive grace rather than that one?" is impenetrable and cannot be solved by reference to free will. But Pelagius solves it by free will; so does Arminius. For according to these authors, since sufficient grace is administered to all, one person receives and possesses it because he willed, another rejected and lacks it because he was unwilling. But far otherwise does that most learned Father speak, in the same chapter: "By the power of grace, He subjected to Himself those whom He willed." Those who are drawn are of such a kind as those who are left in their hardness.

Let it be briefly noted here that it is futile and foolish for the Arminians to quarrel about resistible and irresistible grace, so as to suspend election, faith, perseverance, and their opposites upon the foreseen resistance or non-resistance of free will—since this very not resisting is the effect of saving grace prepared in predestination and given at its appointed time; whereas resisting is indeed the effect of a will corrupted and infected by sin, but is also the clear mark of grace not being prepared and being withheld.

3. That this saving and life-giving grace is not given or withheld on account of differing acts of human wills is likewise shown by this: that the same orthodox Fathers are not afraid to affirm that in those to whom this grace was denied, there was no special demerit or greater unworthiness than in those to whom it was granted. They expressly exclude that resistance or those "obstacles" by which some invent excuses for grace being repelled. Not, of course, because those to whom this grace is denied do not resist or place no obstacles—for as many sins as we commit, so many obstacles do we place in the way of divine grace—but because even those who have been granted this saving grace, had they been left to their own free will, would have resisted no less. And those who now oppose so many obstacles, once imbued with this grace, would have ceased to resist just as those others did.

Augustine clearly indicated this in Epistle 107. For he first refutes that Pelagian saying: "All would receive grace, if they did not reject it by their own will." Then he asserts that in this matter, no human merits of the will are taken into account, since those to whom that grace is not given are often distinguished by no merit or will at all from those to whom it is given, but have a similar condition to them—and yet it is justly not given to them. Finally, he describes the state of the controversy in these terms: "The question is whether grace is given to us because we will, or whether God makes us will by that grace." The former view pleased Pelagius and Arminius; the latter, Augustine and all the orthodox who condemned the Pelagians.

The same Augustine, in Questions to Simplician, Book 1, Question 11, teaches that the resistance of the human will never hinders the giving of this grace which flows from a special purpose of mercy. He says: "The effect of the mercy of God cannot be placed in the power of man, so that it would be in vain that God has mercy if man is unwilling. For if He willed to have mercy on even those (namely, the resistors), He could call them in such a way that they would be moved and follow." Then he adds: "God never has mercy in vain," and many other statements in the same sense.

Likewise, in On the Predestination of the Saints, chapter 8: "If the Father had willed to teach those to whom the word of the cross is foolishness, without a doubt they too would come." And soon after: "Why does He not teach all?" If we answer, "Because they do not want to learn, those whom He does not teach," it will be said in reply: "Then where is that which is written, 'O Lord, you shall turn us, and we shall be made alive'?"

Therefore, that there are some who finally resist, and others who do not resist the divine motions, we do not deny or doubt. But the Pelagians say that this distinction between those who do not resist and those who do arises from the liberty of the will as stirred and urged on by grace; the orthodox say that it arises from the efficacy of grace, which heals the free will and works the good will in it.

Let us now add Prosper. In On the Call of the Gentiles, chapter 17, he writes: "There are no crimes so detestable that they can exclude the gift of grace." The same author, in what we cited earlier, denies that this grace is withheld due to evil merits (Response 8 to the Chapters of the Gauls). He acknowledges that in all the wicked there is a malicious resistance to divine grace, but says that this same grace would have shown itself in the converted as well—if only it had been given to them in such a way that it subdued that resistance (On the Call of the Gentiles, Book 1, final chapter).

Let us now briefly add something concerning the councils. At the Council of Palestine, Pelagius was forced to anathematize his own proper dogma that grace is given according to merits, as attested by Prosper in Against the Conference, chapter 10, and by Augustine in many places, which would be too troublesome and unnecessary to list here individually.

In the Synodical Epistle of the African Bishops, Book 2, we read: "In this the Lord showed His free gift to Jacob, in that He chose him not on account of any merits of future good works, but because He foreknew that He would give to him both faith and good works."

You see from the judgment of these Fathers that both election and faith are freely given to men and not on account of the merit of any good work. Therefore, grace is not received because of preceding obedience, but rather obedience and the submission of the will flow from grace once received. And it is found in the same epistle: "No knowledge can support free will unless the grace of spiritual infusion is given to it." Thus, the Pelagians argue in vain that, before grace is infused, the will merits by its obedience that it be infused; for as long as grace is not in man, it is necessary that he resist it in word or in deed, as the same Fathers truly taught.

But in the Council of Arausio (Orange), this Pelagian error is most plainly refuted, canon 6: "If anyone says that the mercy of God is divinely given to those who believe, who will, who strive, etc., without the grace of God—and does not confess that it is through the infusion and inspiration of the Holy Spirit that we are able to believe, to will, and to do all these things as we ought—but instead subordinates grace to human humility or obedience, and does not agree that the grace by which we are made obedient and humble is itself the gift of God, he resists the Apostle who says, 'What do you have that you did not receive?' and 'By the grace of God I am what I am.'"

In this canon, it must be carefully observed that the words "without grace" must not and cannot be applied to stirring or knocking grace, because even Pelagius did not think that anyone could believe, will good, strive, or do anything in the order of salvation without the grace of God as exhorter and stirrer. Rather, the words are to be understood of the healing and life-giving grace that affects the will itself; for he believed that this grace was given to those who, being stirred by the preceding exhorting grace, began to believe, to will well, to desire, and to strive by their own free will. And this is the very opinion of Arminius.

Furthermore, it should be noted that this helping and saving grace was subordinated by the Pelagians to human obedience or humility springing from man's free will not yet regenerated—which Grevinchovius and other Remonstrants also commonly do. But against all of these, the Council decrees that such acts are not merits by which grace is to be received, but rather are gifts which follow grace already received. In another canon of the same Council: "God inspires faith and the love of Himself not on account of any preceding good merits."

I will not heap up more citations. These are more than sufficient to show that those three theses which I laid down at the beginning were approved not by Augustine's authority alone, but by the unanimous consent of the orthodox Church at that time.

I now conclude: If these three points are granted—

1. That the grace of Christ is not given to all;
2. That this grace of Christ, which is not given to all, is not merely stirring or knocking grace, but healing and saving grace;
3. That this healing and saving grace is not given or withheld on the basis of any prior distinction of good or evil works (which the Fathers call giving or denying grace "according to merits"), but according to the good pleasure of the divine will, which has mercy on whom He wills, and on whom He does not will, He does not have mercy—

if, I say, these are granted, the entire framework of Pelagian and Arminian theology collapses. For it builds faith, perseverance, election, and salvation upon the free will of man, indeed stirred by some assisting and persuading grace, but attaining or rejecting saving grace—and so salvation itself—by his own compliance or resistance.

From these same premises, the doctrine of the orthodox is also confirmed, namely that election, grace, faith, perseverance, and salvation are not deduced from human actions but from the divine good pleasure; and that passing over and the denial of those same gifts is not to be attributed to special unworthiness or greater past demerits, but is to be referred to the will of God, who freely has mercy on whom He wills and deems whom He wills unworthy of so great a mercy.

And let this suffice for our disputation on this controversy, which we never would have entered into, had not the adversaries, in attempting to introduce conditional election and reprobation—founded, as the ancients said, upon the merits of human wills under the aid of stirring grace—ended up offering unsuspecting and ignorant people nothing but pure Pelagianism.

CHAPTER XI—Epilogue, in which the abuse of the foregoing doctrine is censured, and its manifold use is shown.

We now bring to a close our disputation concerning Election and Reprobation. One task alone remains: that, by way of conclusion, we briefly censure the abuse of this doctrine and demonstrate its proper use.

Let us begin with the preachers themselves, and then descend to their hearers.

Ministers act wrongly and imprudently in delivering this most true doctrine when they present it preposterously and out of order. This must be judged to be the case when they immediately invite carnal men—who should first be called to faith in Christ and serious repentance—to speculate on the abyss of election and reprobation. These seem to me to do no differently than if someone were to deliberately set before a sick and very weak man food too solid for his stomach to bear—contrary to that word of the Apostle in Hebrews 5:14: “Solid food is for the mature”, that is, for those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised, etc.

We ought, therefore, to imitate the practice of Christ Himself and the Apostles, and to preach the saving Gospel in that order which our Master and those most skillful architects employed.

But how did Christ Himself proceed when instructing men unto eternal life? We have a clear example in John 3:16. First, He teaches that God so loved the world that He gave His Son as the Redeemer of the human race. Then He adds that whoever believes in this Redeemer shall obtain eternal life; but those who do not believe perish because they have not believed in the Son of God.

Up to this point, there is not a single word about the secret of Election and Reprobation.

Only afterward, when He sees that some have been brought through the preaching of the Gospel to repentance, faith, and holiness of life—lest they attribute the effects of special grace

and mercy to themselves—Christ unveils to them that deep mystery of election, and teaches that all these things flow from the decree of predestination. This is the meaning of those words: “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; to them it has not been given” (Matthew 13:11); and, “All that the Father gives me shall come to me” (John 6:37).

Saint Paul insists upon the same path and observes the same order of teaching. For when he was about to preach the Gospel of Christ to the Jews, he did not begin with election and reprobation. Rather, he promiscuously promises the forgiveness of sins to all who believe (Acts 13:38), and he teaches that all unbelievers, by their own fault, reject the eternal life that was offered to them (v. 46).

Only afterward, when it was apparent that some had truly embraced Christ in faith, the Evangelist thought it proper to reveal the cause of this matter in these words: “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (v. 48).

Therefore, if we do not wish to be preposterous, then whenever we are dealing with those who are, in all likelihood, for the most part unlearned and carnal and not yet endowed with true faith and holiness, we must press faith in Christ and newness of life. We must not rush forward into the doctrine of election and reprobation until we are dealing with those in whom we perceive the manifest effects of election—that is, faith and the fruits of faith.

Augustine wisely said (De Perseverantia, book 2, chapter 16): “It is useful that some truth be withheld for the sake of those who are incapable.” From which comes that word of the Apostle: “I could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to carnal” (1 Corinthians 3:1).

This most true doctrine is abused by those who, in explaining it to the people, wander into those questions which, due to excessive subtlety, escape popular comprehension and are more suited to the schools than to the pulpits—indeed, not even to the schools, unless the importunity of opponents and the necessity of our defense sometimes force us unwillingly and reluctantly into such subtle speculations.

Such are the debates over signs of prioritas and posterioritas [priority and posteriority] concerning the eternal decrees of God, which are discussed with great labor by theologians, but with little fruit. Some contend that the first decree in the divine mind and will was about sending the Redeemer; then the second, about saving the elect through this Redeemer. Others pursue the opposite path.

Indeed, human audacity has broken out to such an extent that, once they have set in order the decrees of God’s will—claiming to know this as the first, that as the second, the next as the third, and so on—they do not hesitate finally to affirm that, unless God followed the order they approve, He has acted either foolishly or unjustly.

A prudent preacher must wholly abstain from treating these thorny questions, nor should the matter be carried so far that, if we are mistaken in these speculations, blame is cast upon God Himself.

It is sufficient, therefore, for ministers of the Word—whenever this matter of predestination must be treated before the people—to restrain themselves within those boundaries which sacred Scripture has clearly marked out for us.

Let them teach that, before the foundation of the world was laid, God elected His own unto eternal life.

Let them teach that this election did not proceed from foreseen merits of men, but from the gratuitous good pleasure of the One who elects.

Let them teach that whatever good conducive to salvation is found in us is the effect of this gratuitous mercy.

Let them teach that the certainty of our election must not be sought in the hidden decrees of God, nor in idle speculations, but in the effects and operations of a faithful and sanctified soul.

These and similar truths, which are clear, firm, and fruitful, can and ought to be preached to the Christian people.

But those things which are either too thorny or minimally fruitful—especially when they are not clearly grounded and revealed in the Word of God—must be altogether excluded from popular sermons.

And in this place, we cannot refrain from censuring the foolishness and rashness of certain preachers—especially younger ones—who, as soon as they learn of some new controversy about predestination stirred up among the theologians, however thorny and however fruitless it may be, nonetheless bring it immediately before the people. They press it, they incessantly hammer it in, and they think themselves quite learned while discussing among the unlearned things that their hearers do not at all understand.

Against such as these, that saying of Ecclesiasticus (Sirach 19:12) may be applied: “A fool is pained by a word, like a woman in labor with child.” “Like an arrow fixed in a man’s thigh, so is a word in the belly of a fool.”

This abuse is therefore especially to be avoided by ministers of the Word—who, while they can rightly deliver to God’s people a simple, clear, and foundational doctrine of predestination with fruit and edification—must not wander into subtle and perplexing questions, and debate them on both sides as if they were in the schools, lest by that same vain effort they train the people more in curiosity and a love of dispute than in faith and the pursuit of godly living.

Indeed, what Prudentius said of the sophists may also be applied to these men: “They dissect faith with minute ambiguities.” Or rather that saying of Paul: “They are sick about questions, from which arise envy, strife,” etc. (1 Timothy 6:4).

Just as we rightly rebuke those who sin by excess, expanding this doctrine of predestination to intricate and superfluous questions, so also those are no less blameworthy who sin by

defect—when they propose to the people that predestination and reprobation should be viewed only in terms of outcome or event, that is, in the infallible salvation of the predestined and the infallible destruction of the reprobate—while meanwhile caring little, or at least not with equal diligence, to impress upon the people the means by which the elect are brought to salvation and the means by which the reprobate plunge themselves into voluntary ruin.

Indeed, it is dangerous to urge the doctrine of predestination and reprobation in a bare and isolated way, and to place it before the eyes of the unlearned without qualification.

Therefore, a prudent preacher will never insist to the people that certain individual persons are absolutely predestined to life, without at the same time teaching that these are none other than those who, by believing and living piously, take hold of the way to eternal life.

He will never teach that certain individual persons have been passed over in this infallible ordination to eternal life, without at the same time showing that these are none other than those who, by their own voluntary impenitence, unbelief, and wickedness, bring upon themselves eternal death most justly.

Thus Paul delivers this doctrine of predestination in Romans 8. As soon as he mentions predestination, he immediately adds vocation, justification, sanctification—without which it is lawful to dream of our predestination, but not lawful to possess anything certain or assured.

So also in Ephesians 1: when he speaks of the doctrine of predestination, he joins with it sanctification and the other spiritual gifts which are *τεκμήρια* [evidences] of the predestined.

The same applies to the doctrine of reprobation: it must always be so explained that all may understand that, although God does not rescue the reprobate from death by a special benefit of mercy, yet He does not drive any into sin, but they rush headlong into their own ruin—and that by a voluntary, not coerced, motion.

Thus Paul, in Philippians 3:19, when he speaks of the reprobate, says: “Whose end is destruction,” and then adds: “Whose god is their belly, whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things.”

So too Jude, in his Epistle, recounting certain men who were forewritten unto condemnation, immediately adds in verse 4 that these are ungodly men, who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness and deny God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is therefore not the office of the preacher to so urgently press absolute predestination as to forget the means in the process. For although God’s decree to save this man—say, Peter or Paul—is absolute, yet the salvation of Peter and Paul, in regard to the fulfillment or execution of that decree, depends on the conditional use of the means.

And on the other hand, the reprobation of any individual persons must not be pressed as though they are to be damned infallibly, whatever they may do. For the decree of reprobation concerning some does not nullify the truth and firmness of the evangelical promises made to all

and each. For they are truly and universally proclaimed in this form: Whoever believes shall be saved. They are truly and individually applied to every traveler along the way: If you believe and live piously, you shall be saved.

Not to be overly lengthy, the admonition of the most prudent and learned Augustine is exceedingly necessary to be observed by all ministers of the Word, who, On the Gift of Perseverance, book 12, chapters 21 and 22, shows that we may say true things about the defined sentence of the divine will concerning the salvation or rejection of men, yet not in the manner in which they ought to be said.

For example, if someone were to address his hearers in this fashion: Whether you run or sleep, whether you receive the word of the Gospel into your hearts or reject it, you will all nonetheless be in the end just such as God, who cannot be overcome, has decreed you to be; just such as God, who cannot be deceived, has foreknown you to be—this indeed is most true. Yet, because in the manner of its presentation it appears to separate the end from the means, and to invite men to sloth, Augustine judges it to be indeed most true, but at the same time most improper, most offensive, most unfitting—not because it is false speech, but because it is not healthfully applied to the weakness of human frailty.

It is the part of a deceitful or unskilled physician to bind on a good remedy in such a way that it either does not benefit or even harms.

Thus far we have briefly noted those abuses into which ministers sometimes fall when they try to explain the doctrine of predestination and reprobation to the people. But as you will have observed, we have referred them to three heads:

They sin either by introducing the doctrine preposterously to those who are not yet capable of it;

Or by extending it immoderately beyond the fundamental and simple doctrine handed down by the Apostles, into perplexing, curious, and popular comprehension-defying speculations;

Or finally by presenting it in a truncated way—that is, by urgently and nakedly pressing the infallible and absolute outcome or event predestined by God in either direction, while burying in silence the means, conditions, or the divergent paths by which different ends are reached.

But the decree concerning different ends is hidden, and pertains more to God than to men. The command concerning the means, however, is revealed, and pertains more to men than to God. This, therefore, is especially to be pressed and inculcated by the ministers of the Word.

But let us now move from the preachers to the hearers.

The doctrine of predestination is commonly abused by men in two ways. Some abuse it unto presumption, others unto despair.

The presumptuous, upon hearing mention of predestination, as though they could divine what God has determined about them before the foundation of the world, immediately

conclude—without any antecedent warrant—that they are among the predestined. And to this rash conclusion they attach the profane corollary: Since I am predestined, however I live, I will be saved. Thus the rashness of presuming what they wish is followed by the license of living as they wish.

On the other hand, the despairing, as soon as they understand that before the foundation of the world some have been elected by God and others passed over, immediately, with a gloomy foreboding, count themselves among the reprobate. And to this blind conjecture they also add the wicked corollary: Since I am not among the predestined, why should I trouble myself with hearing the Word of God, receiving the sacraments, mortifying my flesh, or bearing fruit in newness of life? Whatever I do, I shall in the end be damned.

Thus, in despair, they fall into the same sloth and negligence of their salvation into which others commonly fall through presumption.

Both abuses must be severely corrected, and the remedies to avoid them must be indicated at the same time.

As for the former [abuse], those rash presurers must be warned: although it is most certain in the thesis that God, from all eternity, has elected some and rejected others, yet when we descend to particular persons, it is a secret hidden in the divine mind who those individuals are that are destined to life, and who are not included in this gracious decree.

Therefore, it is a plainly diabolical temptation which urges men to penetrate the depths of God's eternal decrees and from thence to draw a rash persuasion concerning their own predestination. For the decree of predestination is altogether impenetrable to us with respect to others. Hence that saying of Prosper, On Free Will: "Let us not impatiently grieve that we do not know the vessels of election."

It is also impenetrable to us with respect to ourselves from an a priori standpoint, and is perceptible only from the effects after conversion and sanctification.

Luther put it excellently in his commentary on Genesis 26: "Concerning God insofar as He is not revealed, there is no faith, no knowledge, no understanding. Avoid speculation about the hidden God, if you wish to escape blaspheming God. If you believe in the revealed God and receive His word, He will gradually also reveal the hidden God to you. Do not seek things too high for you, and do not investigate things too mighty for you. Listen to the incarnate Son, and your predestination will freely offer itself to you." Thus far Luther.

They are plainly raving who presume to know their own predestination as though they had been admitted into God's secrets before their conversion and justification.

The only remedy for this madness is that just as they have received from the word of God that, before the foundation of the world, some were elected and some rejected, so also they must learn from the same word that no one can or ought to absolutely determine himself to be in the

number of the elect unless he first perceives himself to be in the number of the truly converted and believing.

So Paul, in 2 Timothy 2:19: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." As if he had said: God Himself knows the elect by inspecting the secret decree of His will; but you, O man, whoever you are, do not know that you are elect unless you depart from the way of iniquity you have taken.

Likewise Peter: "Make your election sure by good works," 2 Peter 1:10. For although it is most certain and unshakable in the purpose of the electing God, yet no man can have any certainty of his own predestination unless he is one who acts well.

Finally, in Ephesians 1, where the doctrine of predestination has its proper seat, the Apostle teaches both: that God chose His own before the foundation of the world (verse 4), and that we have no certainty of this election sealed in our hearts unless after we have received the Gospel into our hearts and believed in Christ.

If you follow the God who calls you, you may rightly conclude that you were predestined from eternity. If you remain in your unbelief and ungodliness, you may dream or speculate that you are predestined, but you cannot know or believe it.

Let rash presumption of one's own predestination therefore be cast far away. It is not the result of the most true explanation of predestination, but of the most foolish carnal thinking or of the devil's most pernicious temptation.

Now let us consider the corollary which such presurers are accustomed to infer: "Since I am predestined, however I live, I shall be saved."

I shall not further examine how rash this presumption is, since it has already been sufficiently addressed. Let us suppose that such a one is truly predestined—still, nothing could be more wicked, more foolish, more false than this conclusion.

First, it is the mark of a wicked man—not of one predestined—to seize from the doctrine of predestination an excuse for sinning, when he should have drawn from it an incentive to live piously.

Whoever says in his heart, "I am predestined," says nothing other than this: "God, from His mere good pleasure, has destined me to eternal life." But whoever concludes from this, "Therefore it is lawful for me to live as I please," says nothing other than this: "Therefore, by the most certain purpose, it is lawful for me to hasten into hell."

But how can anyone not be more wicked than wickedness itself to reason thus: "Because I believe that God has been specially kind to me, I will therefore make myself specially ungrateful to Him. Because God has decreed to bring me into the kingdom of heaven, I will therefore see whether, despite that decree, I can throw myself into the abyss of hell."

Profane and impious men, who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, may perhaps sometimes go mad in this way based on a presumed opinion of their predestination. But for a man who is truly regenerated and faithful—whose heart the Spirit testifies is a child of God and destined before the foundation of the world to the participation of the heavenly kingdom—it is as impossible to draw such a wicked conclusion from the sense and persuasion of his own predestination as it is for wood to grow cold from being set on fire, or for the air to be darkened by receiving the rays of the sun.

“Whoever has this hope,” says the Apostle, “purifies himself,” 1 John 3:3.

Therefore, whoever defiles themselves with every kind of lust is most alien from a true persuasion of their election.

Secondly, nothing is more foolish than the above inference. For just as it is a mark of prudence to choose and employ means that are suitable and fitting for the attainment of a destined end, so it is the height of folly to argue from the destination of the end to the removal or neglect of the means.

This will be made plain by the addition of notable examples. God had decreed from eternity—and had even revealed to Abraham—that in his seed all nations would be blessed. Suppose then that Abraham, relying on this decree, had wished to abstain entirely from conjugal relations with his wife Sarah, and reasoned thus within himself: “Whatever I do or do not do, God Himself will ensure that His decree is fulfilled”—it would be difficult to say whether such reasoning suffered more from stupidity or from wickedness.

In like manner, if Hezekiah, after the decree of God concerning the extension of his life by fifteen years had been made known to him, had on account of this decree determined neither to eat, nor drink, nor do anything further for the preservation of human life—who could acquit him of utter madness?

By the same reasoning, even if we concede that this individual man is predestined by God to eternal life; even if we further concede that he has certain knowledge of his predestination—not only by faith and the inward testimony of the Spirit, but by the audible voice of God Himself sounding from heaven—yet even after such extraordinary revelation of his predestination, to neglect the means that lead to eternal life, or to wait until, by virtue of the divine decree, he is forced against his will and laziness to employ them, would be a clear sign not of a predestined man, but of a brainless one.

Thirdly, nothing is more false or mendacious than the argument: “I am predestined; therefore, whether I believe or not, whether I live well or wickedly, I shall be saved.” For although with predestination granted, the salvation of the predestined is certain, yet it is not to be granted under any condition whatsoever.

For example, it is certain that Paul was predestined to eternal life before the foundation of the world. But if anyone were to argue, “Therefore, even if he had not been converted to Christ, or had remained a blasphemer, he would still have been saved,” he would be asserting what is

most false. For if such arguments were true, then the preaching of the Gospel would be empty, the administration of the sacraments superfluous, and our conversion, justification, and sanctification entirely idle; for predestination alone would carry a man to heaven even unwillingly, as it were with a twisted neck.

But such a dream must be utterly rejected. For the decree of predestination concerning the attainment of the end does not exclude the means or the ordinary method by which men are brought to the end, but includes them.

Therefore, it is far from true that the following conditional is verified by virtue of predestination: "Even if Paul had remained in unbelief, he would have been saved." On the contrary, its contradictory can be rightly inferred from it, namely: "If Paul does not believe, it is impossible for him to be saved."

The reason is ready at hand: because the same God who predestined Paul to be saved, predestined him to be saved through faith, not through impenitence and unbelief.

This can be well illustrated by that decree of God concerning the preservation of all those from shipwreck who sailed to Rome with the Apostle Paul. For although God had certainly determined to rescue them all, and had revealed this decree of His to Paul by an angel (Acts 27:24), yet the Apostle cries out: "Unless the sailors stay in the ship, they cannot be saved" (v. 31).

We say the same about predestination to eternal life with respect to any person whatsoever: although it is most certain to God by decree, and most fully known to the individuals themselves, nevertheless they cannot be saved unless they remain in faith and piety.

Therefore, the doctrine of predestination does not permit anyone to persuade himself of the certainty of his salvation before he feels himself to be truly converted, truly faithful, and truly sanctified. Still less does it permit anyone to presume that he may, while following his lusts and living impiously, nonetheless reach the heavenly kingdom.

And thus ends the discussion of the first abuse.

Now let us address those who, from the doctrine of predestination, take occasion for despair, and from it conclude that—even if they believed in Christ and lived as holily as possible—they would nevertheless, because of the infallibility of the divine decree, inevitably be damned.

Let us first consider how poorly founded this persuasion of their own reprobation is. Secondly, how poorly drawn is the consequence they infer—that even if they believed and pursued good works, they would still certainly be damned.

As to the first: What, I ask, argument can any Christian have for despair from the fact that we teach that God, before the foundation of the world, determined in the secret counsel of His mind this matter of predestining and reprobating?

First, reason itself forbids us to form any conclusion, either way, about matters wholly unknown to us. And what God did before the world was created is so hidden in itself—so deep and impenetrable—that trying to grasp it by speculation is nothing other than if an earthly little man were to try, by climbing a ladder, to ascend into heaven itself. That word from Exodus 19:12 should prevail here: “Beware lest you go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely die.”

Hilary expresses this well in *De Trinitate* book 10: “Heavenly reason is to be understood only so far as it permits itself to be understood.” It permits this much to be understood: that there are some who are elect, and some who are passed over; but who are elect, and who are passed over, it does not permit to be known.

Furthermore, if someone is so unrestrained in mind that he cannot keep himself from speculating outside of the Word of God about these eternal and hidden acts of God, yet to prescribe to himself, on the basis of this most uncertain divination, a rule of action or inaction is to act without any reason whatsoever—indeed, to act insanely.

Suppose we are to enter into battle between two armies, and God Himself, through some prophet, has revealed that in this fight the greater part of the soldiers will perish, and the lesser part will escape unharmed, but says nothing by special revelation about which individuals will be spared or not. I now ask: if someone, on account of this revealed divine will, wishes to consider himself—particularly and as if by name—among those who will surely perish, and not only that, but, as if it were a hopeless matter, throws down his arms, rushes into enemy swords, and offers himself up to be slaughtered—shall we judge that man to have been moved to this despair by divine revelation, or by his own madness? Surely, by his own fault—having seized, not a legitimate reason, but an unjust occasion from the divine revelation.

The same must be said, without doubt, about those who, from the generally revealed doctrine of predestination and reprobation, take occasion to count themselves among the reprobate and certainly doomed, and from there neglect the spiritual armor, offer their throat to the devil, and hurl themselves headlong into the abyss of hell.

We must not despair of the salvation of any man whom the patience of God still allows to live, Augustine once wrote—and above all, of oneself.

Let this therefore be cast out of every Christian’s heart, as the very root of all deadly temptation: that destructive conclusion, “I am one of the reprobate.”

Finally, although (as we noted above) before true conversion and sanctification no one can have either certainty of their election or any true sense and living consolation from it, yet the doctrine of eternal election gives no Christian even a probable conjecture by which he might rightly conclude that he is, by name and singularly, one of the non-elect.

Rather, it suggests many things by which anyone living within the boundaries of the Church, even if not yet converted, may incline—and indeed ought to incline—toward the hope that he is one of those whom God, before the foundation of the world, elected to eternal life.

Theologians universally accept this rule: "One ought to presume good concerning every man until the contrary is certain."

If it is unlawful to make judgments by conjecture to the disadvantage of others, then it is also unlawful to do so concerning ourselves. But let us consider how many things there are which should deter any Christian from such despair.

If you are a Christian, you have God calling you through the Gospel; you have the Son of God offered to you in the Gospel, along with Him the remission of sins and eternal life; you have the Spirit of God standing at the door of your heart and knocking; and many other things which, although they may be insufficient to infallibly demonstrate to an unconverted and unsanctified person his election, are nevertheless more than sufficient to demonstrate to anyone that he neither can nor ought to presume his own reprobation.

But the despairing sort object: "God indeed offers me external means, but because I am not among the elect, that precious gift of faith He will never grant to me." How do you know this? You—ask God for faith. Use diligently the means ordained for producing faith, and you may reasonably consider that you are neither alien from God's predestination nor destined to be forever deprived of the gift of faith.

But if anyone so obstinately persuades himself that he is reprobate that he simultaneously casts off all concern for his own salvation, he has admitted this persuasion into his mind without any reason, and he neglects the means of grace contrary to all religion.

Now, because there are such people who so perversely abuse the doctrine of predestination and reprobation, this doctrine is no more to be concealed or repudiated than the doctrine of the Trinity is to be abandoned because it is mocked and rejected by Jews or Muslims.

Therefore, having exploded this rash and impious persuasion, let us also briefly refute the inference they add, namely, that even if they believed the Gospel and pursued good works, they would still be damned because of the infallible decree of the divine will.

I respond: There never has been such a decree in the divine will as these people invent, namely, to damn any mortal even if he were to believe and pursue holiness. On the contrary, God has expressly willed and publicly proclaimed a different decree to all men:

John 3:16: "Whoever believes in the Son shall not perish but have eternal life."

Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

Therefore, the doctrine of secret predestination and reprobation can be of no comfort to anyone until he senses that he is in Christ Jesus and striving after a new life; and it can inject no despair into anyone who believes the Gospel and seriously seeks righteousness—for such striving is a preliminary evidence of election.

Hence Augustine, *De bono perseverantiae*, chapter 23: “From your good and rightly directed course you may rightly infer that by the grace of God you pertain to divine predestination.”

To sum up everything: the doctrine of eternal predestination and reprobation is true and clearly taught in the Holy Scriptures as a thesis; yet concerning particular persons who are elect or passed over, it is an inscrutable mystery, which to attempt to know by curious inquiry or mere conjecture is full of both folly and impiety.

We must always return to the revealed Word: when we render faith and obedience to it, then from the effects that follow, we may safely conclude to our comfort that we are elect children of God. But so long as we remain unbelieving and unconverted, it is foolish to presume we are elect, and madness to presume we are reprobate—since God’s will in neither direction is made clearly known to us by any external effect.

Thus far we have fought against the abuses of this doctrine. Let us now show its proper use.

But here, I must first preface this point: Those are by no means to be listened to who think that the doctrine of election and reprobation ought to be altogether buried in silence, merely because profane and stubborn men sometimes abuse it—some to presumption and licentiousness, others to despair and laziness. Provided that the previously mentioned cautions are observed—namely, that we do not inappropriately force the doctrine upon those who are incapable of receiving it, nor stretch it immoderately to curious speculations, nor present it to the people in a diminished and mutilated form—it is clear that the doctrine itself ought to be proclaimed.

1. Because Christ and the Apostles taught it so openly, despite the wickedness of carnal men. It is safer to derive what is useful or harmful in preaching from their example than from human reasoning.
2. Because election is a singular benefit of God and the foundation of all other benefits that lead to salvation. It is a mark of the most ungrateful hearts to want to bury so great and excellent a benefit merely because the wicked and impure are offended by it.
3. Finally, because this very doctrine powerfully advances those who believe and live piously along the way of faith and godliness. And more weight must be given to them than to the profane, who are wont to turn everything into ruin for themselves. For it is not so much to be feared that the truth will offend those who refuse to receive it when we speak, as it is to be feared that when we are silent, those who might hear the true doctrine of predestination with profit may instead be ensnared by falsehood.

Let us now set out to explain the uses of this doctrine.

First, it serves to illustrate many of God’s attributes. From the doctrine of predestination shine forth especially those divine properties which it is most necessary for all Christians to rightly

know and acknowledge—and which are barely acknowledged with sincerity by those who oppose predestination. I will briefly run through some of the principal ones.

Infallible and eternal foreknowledge of God regarding contingent events and all the actions of free agents is such a property, that if it be granted, God is affirmed; if it be denied, God is denied. Hence Isaiah 44:7—God claims this foreknowledge of future things for Himself alone and denies it to all the gods of the nations. But this foreknowledge is so joined with the doctrine of predestination that whoever grants or denies one is judged to have granted or denied the other.

Next, the absolute dominion of God over all creatures and their actions, and especially over human wills and deeds, is so much God's own property that whoever cannot freely bend human wills according to His purpose is not to be reckoned as God at all. But if we reject the doctrine of absolute predestination, we must at the same time reject this absolute power of God over human wills. Therefore, one of the chief uses of this doctrine is that we learn that in God there is this most sovereign power to bend human hearts wherever He pleases.

Moreover, the immutability of the divine will is among the most celebrated attributes of God. “The Lord of Hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it?” (Isaiah 14:27). “I am God and do not change” (Malachi 3:6). But what is predestination if not the eternal ordering of this immutable will? Hence that phrase in Hebrews, *to ametatheton tes boules autou* [“the unchangeableness of His purpose”], is nowhere more clearly seen than in this matter of predestination.

Lastly, the pure and utterly unmerited mercy of God from the creature's side is to be recognized and praised above all. And this property shines with such brilliance in the doctrine of predestination that those who deny or obscure it are thereby convicted of denying or obscuring this very pure and free mercy of God in saving sinners. Unless, therefore, we wish to invent a new God, we must not introduce a new predestination; but rather retain that predestination which sacred Scripture has delivered to us.

Let Arminius and the Arminians serve as an example, who—retaining the bare name of predestination—have in fact introduced postdestination. Under the empty title of predestination, they understand nothing else than God's will to admit believers into the kingdom of heaven and to exclude unbelievers, a will conceived in God only with regard to individuals once He had foreseen that they would persevere either in faith or in unbelief until the end.

Now it is worthwhile to consider how these men philosophize concerning the above-mentioned divine attributes. Vorstius, because he did not wish to accept a doctrine of predestination agreeable to the divine nature, invented a divine nature agreeable to the doctrine of predestination which he had imagined. Thus, he casts into doubt all the aforementioned attributes of God. He sharply attacks universal foreknowledge under the guise of presenting others' objections, but offers no reply to them. As for the arguments of the orthodox, he either weakens them as best he can or at least attempts to.

Let us briefly sample a few things. That infallible and altogether universal foreknowledge of all future events is of no use in God, page 329. If this universal and entirely infallible foreknowledge is admitted, it becomes necessary to twist many passages of Scripture with astonishing glosses, page 330. Far be it from us to attribute to God either hypocrisy or recklessness and imprudence of the kind which that infallible foreknowledge of all future things seems necessarily to imply, page 331.

Now, let us hear what he determines concerning God's dominion over human wills: he wants virtues and good works to be entirely free and contingent in us or to be done by us, and therefore, he cannot will them more powerfully or effectively than by way of wish and desire. *Amica duplicatio ad Joannem Piscatorem*, page 55. And elsewhere, he testifies that God so procures our conversion, piety, and perseverance that He is to be understood rather as desiring and wishing them than as absolutely and necessarily willing or effecting them. *Notæ ad Disputationem de Deo*, page 355.

Hence comes that common doctrine of all Arminians: that after all the operations of divine grace which God uses for human conversion have been applied, the conversion itself still remains so in the power of man that he can either be converted or not. Indeed, because they think God's will cannot so govern the human will—while preserving its freedom—as to bend it in whatever direction He pleases, they say that God never absolutely wills or precisely intends the conversion of any particular man. *Corvinus ad Bogermanum*, page 203.

Furthermore, the immutability of the divine will does not remain intact among those who attack the doctrine of absolute predestination. Thus, we read in Vorstius, *Notæ*, page 195, this censure of our theologians: they speak not cautiously enough who affirm that God, not only in essence but also in will, is entirely immutable. He claims that God's will concerning things outside Himself is as changeable in God as it is in angels and men, page 371. He says that nothing absurd follows from the fact that God is said, in time, to will or not will something definitely and precisely, which perhaps He did not previously will or not will in that precise way. But most crassly, on page 486, he says, "Repentance rightly applies to God, insofar as He truly disapproves of, abandons, or changes His own actions due to some unexpected cause."

Finally, those who reject absolute predestination and want to establish a form of it dependent on foreseen human acts plainly overturn the free mercy of God. For it is not an act of pure mercy to destine someone to life merely based on the foreseen good use of free will in the one to whom it is destined. Hence Augustine says that predestination must be preached, so that the true grace of God may be defended by an invincible bulwark, *De bono perseverantiae*, chapter 21.

Therefore, it is clear that this is a noble use of predestination: that from it we learn to think about God's attributes in a way that is worthy of God—something which they cannot do who scorn this doctrine. From this arises the danger that those who reject the Pauline doctrine of predestination and embrace the Arminian one may at length also embrace the Vorstian God—one largely reshaped to fit the mold of Arminian predestination.

So much for the first use of this doctrine.

Second, the doctrine of predestination serves to enflame the hearts of the faithful with the greatest possible love toward God. For what is more effective in stirring love than to be preemptively loved and graciously treated? Now only the doctrine of predestination as held by the orthodox arouses this love in the hearts of the elect, because it alone teaches that God has loved them freely from all eternity and has heaped upon them special benefits from a special love.

By contrast, Arminius's doctrine supposes that men, by believing and obeying perseveringly, first chose God before they were chosen by Him—that they first won Him over by singular acts of devotion before they were in any way affected by singular benefits from God.

Bernard noted this fruit that springs from the sense of election, in Epistle 107: "Who is righteous except the one who repays love to the God who loved him? And this does not happen unless the Spirit reveals to a man, through faith, God's eternal purpose concerning his future salvation."

Third, this doctrine marvelously stirs those who are deeply affected with a lively sense of their election to pursue true godliness. For as soon as the human heart begins to be inflamed with divine love, it immediately burns with desire to glorify God by good works and to express its gratitude. Therefore, although many who idly chatter about their predestination often become sluggish, yet those to whom it has been granted truly and vividly to feel it, plainly blaze forth into good works. Nor can the matter be otherwise: for no one apprehends by the sense of faith and by the revelation of the Spirit that he is predestined, without at the same time apprehending that he is elected in order to be holy and blameless before God in love—that he has been, as it were, newly created for good works, which God prepared beforehand that he should walk in them; in a word, that he is predestined not less unto works of grace than unto the rewards of glory. Therefore, he utterly drives away that profane thought: I am predestined; therefore I may live however I please.

Fourth, the use of this doctrine is notable in that it powerfully checks human pride and engenders true humility. For such is the nature of man that he always wants to find in himself something, however slight, by which he might seem to have merited the grace of God more than others—or at least to have obtained it congruently. But this doctrine plainly convinces every person that whatever good he has or is able to do, he has and can do only by the special and gratuitous gift of God. Who, then, can boast in his own strength, who is compelled to acknowledge that every good thing in him was begun, preserved, and completed by God—and this from a singular decree and love? Who can think highly of himself or fail to submit himself humbly to God, who believes that no one, however adorned with angelic perfection, can ever attain eternal life unless he be brought there by the predestinating hand of God?

Hence Augustine, commenting on that verse of Psalm 85, "Show us Your mercy, O Lord," says: "Blessed is he to whom God shows His mercy. That man cannot be proud to whom God shows His mercy. For by showing him His mercy, He persuades him that whatever good he has, he has only from Him who is the source of all our good. And when he sees that whatever he has is not from himself but from his God, by seeing this he does not grow proud, and not being proud he is

not puffed up; and not being puffed up, he does not fall; and not falling, he stands; and standing, he clings; and clinging, he abides; and abiding, he rejoices in his Lord.” So far Augustine.

The same point he expresses more briefly in *De bono perseverantiae*, chapter 20: “This predestination of God’s benefits must be preached, so that he who has ears to hear may glory not in himself, but in the Lord.” The Apostle himself indicated this use of predestination in Ephesians 1:6 with the words: “He chose us to the praise of the glory of His grace.”

Fifth, this orthodox doctrine of predestination and reprobation arms the faithful against doubt and against all the temptations and assaults of Satan, by which he tries to drive them into despair. This use of the doctrine is repeatedly commended to us by our Savior and the Apostles. In Luke 12:32, we read: “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” This was the aim which the Apostle had in view in Romans 8, where, after laying out the doctrine of predestination, he immediately seeks to encourage the pious and faithful against all things that might trouble, discourage, or endanger them in any way. For what else breathes in those words so full of consolation: “If God is for us, who can be against us? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.”

This, then, is the truest and most health-giving use of our predestination—not that we might feed idle minds with vain speculation, but that we might support, refresh, and strengthen weary, groaning, trembling souls under the pressures of the world, the weakness of the flesh, and the assaults of the devil, with solid hope and faith.

I know that the ancient Pelagians, and some modern enemies of absolute predestination, reason quite differently among themselves. For they are accustomed to argue in this way: “If predestination and reprobation depended upon the acts of our own free will—if grace were offered promiscuously to all—and if it were left to our own choice whether to believe or not, to persevere or not—then we could have a cheerful mind; for since the will is master of its own actions, no one could fail to attain salvation unless he chose to do so.”

“But now,” they say, “we must despair, since the whole certainty of our salvation hangs upon the hidden counsel of God, not upon each one’s own free choice.” Here I cannot help but exclaim with the Psalmist (Psalm 62:9): “O sons of men, how vain you are! You are all liars; in the balances you go up, you are altogether lighter than a breath.”

If your salvation depended on your own free will, you would presume, of course, that you would make good use of the grace offered and eventually reach the heavenly kingdom. But what Adam in his integrity did not do—what the angels, placed in heaven and adorned with heavenly perfection, did not do—do you, poor little man, covered with sin and assaulted on every side by temptations, presume that you would do, if God’s predestination were removed from the equation and the matter left entirely to your own will?

On the contrary, you complain that the doctrine of predestination throws you into despair, because it places the beginning and end of human salvation in the divine good pleasure—as if men are necessarily driven to despair when they are instructed to place their hope in God alone! As much as the proud Pelagians boast of the power of their free will—which is nonexistent—so much, and with far greater right, can the saints take comfort in the sole mercy of God, which is great.

Therefore, with Augustine I ask them: “Are we to fear that a man will despair when he is shown that he must place his hope in God? And shall he not despair if he is left to place his hope in himself, proud and most wretched as he is?” (De bono perseverantiae, chapter 23).

How great the difference is to true and solid confidence between those who wish to rely on free will awakened by grace and entrusted to their own liberty, and those who hang wholly upon the grace of predestination—grace which, with unerring and inseparable force, moves and governs the will of the elect—this Augustine shows plainly in *De correptione et gratia*, chapters 11, 12, and 13.

Therefore, despite all the calumnies of the Pelagians, we affirm that the orthodox doctrine of predestination held by our churches has this principal use: that against all doubt, and against the fiery darts of Satan, we may be armed and protected by this shield of faith—faith in the eternal and immutable love of God toward us.

Sixth, the consideration of predestination powerfully stirs the faithful to constant prayer. For once they have been taught that all good things pertaining to salvation have been prepared for them by the divine good pleasure, this gives them courage to draw these goods down to themselves from heaven by prayer—as it were, to summon them down from above. For they know that prayer is the key of heaven, and that God does not pour out His saving gifts upon those who slumber, but upon those who ask.

Moreover, the same Spirit of adoption who bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God is also the Spirit of prayer and intercession, and He inflames our hearts to call upon our heavenly Father without ceasing. Therefore, those who use the certainty of their predestination as an excuse for neglecting prayer plainly reveal that they have neither any certainty of their predestination nor even the slightest sense of it.

Thomas Aquinas rightly and wisely says (Part I, Q. 23, Art. 8): “The predestined ought to strive for good works and for prayer, because by such actions the effects of predestination are infallibly brought to pass. For just as natural effects are so governed by God that they are brought about through natural causes—without which such effects do not occur—so also is the salvation of the elect predestined by God in such a way that everything which advances a man toward salvation falls within the order of predestination: such as prayers, the pursuit of a godly life, and the like, without which the salvation of the elect will not come to pass.”

Accordingly, the more certain the persuasion of one’s predestination is impressed upon the human heart, the more one will be diligent in continually drawing near to God in prayer. The

Apostle Paul serves as an example: no one more zealously taught the doctrine of gratuitous predestination, and no one more firmly grasped the sense of his own election—yet, contrary to the slanders of the Pelagians, this doctrine and persuasion did not draw him away from prayer but rather bound him to it more fervently through constant supplication.

The same can be said of James, who was called the brother of the Lord. Without doubt, if any man possessed the firmest persuasion of divine love and of his own election, it was he. Yet Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History, Book 2, Chapter 23) records that he was so devoted to continual prayer that his knees became calloused like those of a camel.

Therefore, to grow sluggish in prayer is not characteristic of those who, by the revelation of the Spirit, have obtained certainty of their election, but rather of those who have no knowledge of it, or scarcely any at all. For as soon as a person, by faith, apprehends himself to be one of God's elect children, his soul is inflamed with the desire to draw down in prayer those good things which he believes were prepared for God's children before the foundation of the world.

Finally, it is plainly evident that the doctrine of predestination, once rooted in our hearts, greatly strengthens us to endure all adversities with patience and equanimity. This use should not be thought small, since—according to Tertullian—patience is so central to the things of God that no command can be fulfilled, no work pleasing to the Lord performed, by one who is a stranger to patience.

Now, the consideration of predestination strengthens the elect in patience in three ways:

First, inasmuch as it gives them the firm confidence that, after their momentary afflictions, they shall infallibly be brought to eternal life. For who, if he is truly persuaded that he was elected to eternal life before the foundation of the world, could be so weak or faint-hearted as to be driven to impatience by any temporal inconvenience or trial? With this confidence, the Apostle cries out amid his sufferings: “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

So also Saint Prosper, the blessed disciple of Paul, sustains himself on this same foundation: “I weigh what I suffer against what I hope for; and what is hoped for is incomparably greater than what is endured” (Sentences). Likewise, in Hebrews 10:34, knowledge of one's election unto eternal glory is cited as the chief cause of patient endurance in suffering: “You had compassion on those in chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and abiding possession in heaven.” It is as if he were saying: only those bear the loss of earthly things with a cheerful spirit who understand that heavenly things have been appointed and prepared for them.

Second, the consideration of predestination wonderfully contributes to instilling patience in the hearts of the faithful, because whoever rightly understands this doctrine also understands that he was predestined not to be carried off to heaven without blood or sweat, but to be conformed to Christ Jesus—the Head of the predestined—first in His cross, and then in His glory. So says the Apostle (Romans 8:17): “If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him.” Likewise,

Saint Peter: “Rejoice insofar as you share in the sufferings of Christ, that you may also rejoice and exult in the revelation of His glory” (1 Peter 4:13).

Thus, afflictions do not break the patience of the predestined; rather, they bring with them a quiet, spiritual joy. The afflicted rejoice and embrace their afflictions as if they were sacred relics of Christ, consecrated by His touch. And from this prior conformity to Christ in suffering the miseries of this life, they infer the certainty of their future conformity with Him in sharing the joys of eternal life—according to that saying of Gregory: “The more I am cast down by present evils, the more surely I presume upon future joys” (Morals, Book 1, Chapter 4). Hence, among the elect, not only patience but also joy arises amid afflictions.

Third and finally, the faithful are trained to patience through the doctrine of predestination because they learn from it that all things harsh and adverse befall them not by chance, but by the definite counsel of God; not by the whims of the wicked, but by the will of their heavenly Father; and not to their harm, but for their good. No one rightly holds to the doctrine of predestination who does not hold all these truths. No one is truly persuaded of these things who does not patiently endure whatever misfortunes may come upon him.

If, at times, impatience arises in the hearts of the faithful, it is because this most comforting doctrine of predestination is either not firmly believed or not attentively considered. For if it were deeply rooted in our hearts that “nothing can happen to us except what the counsel of God has already determined should happen” (cf. Acts 4:28), we would never impatiently complain that God does not alter His eternal decrees in order to spare us these momentary afflictions.

Furthermore, if we add this consideration—that the wicked are only as rods in God’s hand, and cannot strike us as much or as long as they wish, but only as much and as long as our Father sees fit—then who would not willingly submit to be chastened under the mighty hand of such a kind Father?

Lastly, if we also consider that even those things which seem harsh and bitter to endure are undoubtedly working together for our good, who (I will not say “would endure them impatiently,” but) would not gladly drink a cup, however bitter, prepared for him by so wise and loving a Physician?

And so, you see how many splendid and manifold uses the orthodox doctrine of predestination possesses.

Let me conclude in a few words: if we wish to show that our thoughts about our predestination are not mere fleeting speculations or uncertain guesses, but rather a true and solid knowledge, we must return to the uses just described and judge from them whether our persuasion of our own predestination is a false illusion or a genuine conviction born of faith.

It is to be reckoned a false and delusory persuasion if it is found to be useless and idle—or, worse yet, if it proves to be the mother of presumptuous arrogance. But if it teaches us to think rightly of God, if it inflames our hearts with divine love, if it stirs us to the pursuit of true piety, if it humbles our pride and instills genuine humility, if it arms us against doubt, if it urges us to

continual prayer, and if it strengthens us to bear the cross with patience—then we may be assured both of our predestination and of our future possession of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The End.

