

Chapter 3. Of God's Eternal Decree. (One Decree, whereby from all eternity, he foreordained whatever he should do, or would permit to be done, in time.)

1. God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass;^a yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin,^b nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.^c

a. Rom 9:15, 18; 11:33; Eph. 1:11; Heb 6:17

b. James 1:13, 17; 1 John 1:5

c. Prov 16:33; Mat 17:12; John 19:11; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28

2. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions,^a yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.^b

a. 1 Sam 23:11-12; Mat 11:21, 23; Acts 15:18

b. Rom 9:11, 13, 16,

18

“The foreknowledge of God will necessarily infer a decree; for God could not foreknow that things would be, unless he had decreed they should be; and that because things would not be future, unless he had decreed they should be.”

Edwards

3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels^a are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.^b

a. Mat 25:41; 1 Tim 5:21

b. Prov 16:4; Rom 9:22-23; Eph 1:5-6

4. These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.^a

a. John 13:18; 2 Tim 2:19

5. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory,^a out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto;^b and all to the praise of his glorious grace.^c

a. Rom 8:30; Eph 1:4, 9, 11; 1 Thes 5:9; 2 Tim 1:9

b. Rom 9:11, 13, 16; Eph 1:4, 9

c. Eph 1:6, 12

6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, fore-ordained all the means thereunto.^a Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ,^b are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified,^c and kept by his power through faith unto salvation.^d Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.^e

a. Eph 1:4-5; Eph 2:10; 2 Thes 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2

b. 1 Thes 5:9-10; Titus 2:14

c. Rom 8:30; Eph

1:5; 2 Thes 2:13

d. 1 Pet 1:5

e. John 6:64-65; 8:47; 10:26; 17:9; Rom 8:28-39; 1 John 2:19

7. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.^a

a. Mat 11:25-26; Rom 9:17-18, 21-22; 2 Tim 2:19-20; 1 Pet 2:8; Jude 1:4

8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care,^a that men attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election.^b So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God;^c and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.^d

a. Deut 29:29; Rom 9:20

b. 2 Pet 1:10

c. Rom 11:33; Eph 1:6

d. Luke 10:20; Rom 8:33; 11:5-6, 20; 2 Pet 1:10.

Albert Barnes' Comments on Romans 8:29

For whom he did foreknow - The word used here *προέγνω* *proegnō* has been the subject of almost endless disputes in regard to its meaning in this place. The literal meaning of the word cannot be a matter of dispute. It denotes properly to "know beforehand;" to be acquainted with future events. But whether it means here simply to know that certain persons would become Christians; or to ordain, and constitute them to be Christians, and to be saved, has been a subject of almost endless discussion. Without entering at large into an investigation of the word, perhaps the following remarks may throw light on it.

(1) **It does not here have reference to all the human family;** for all are not, and have not, been conformed to the image of his Son. It has reference therefore only to those who would become Christians, and be saved.

(2) **It implies "certain knowledge."** It was certainly foreseen, in some way, that they would believe, and be saved. There is nothing, therefore, in regard to them that is contingent, or subject to doubt in the divine Mind, since it was certainly foreknown.

(3) **The event which was thus foreknown must have been, for some cause, certain and fixed;** since an uncertain event could not be possibly foreknown. To talk of a foreknowing a contingent event, that is, of foreknowing an event as certain which may or may not exist, is an absurdity.

(4) **In what way such an event became certain is not determined by the use of this word.** But it must have been somehow in connection with a divine appointment or arrangement, since in no other way can it be conceived to be certain. While the word used here, therefore, does not of necessity mean to decree, yet its use supposes that there was a purpose or plan; and the phrase is an explanation of what the apostle had just said, that it was "according to the purpose of God" that they were called. This passage does not affirm why, or how, or, "on what grounds" God foreknew that some of the human family would be saved. It simply affirms the fact; and the mode in which those who will believe were designated, must be determined from other sources. This passage simply teaches that he knew them; that his eye was fixed on them; that he regarded them as to be conformed to his Son; and that, thus knowing them, he designated them to eternal life. The Syriac renders it in accordance with this interpretation: "And from the beginning he knew them, and sealed them with the image of his Son," etc. As, however, none would believe but by the influences of his Spirit, it follows that they were not foreknown on account of any faith which they would themselves exercise, or any goodworks which they would themselves perform, but according to the purpose or plan of God himself.

He also did predestinate - See the meaning of the original of this word explained in the notes at [Rom 1:4](#); see also the [Act 4:28](#) note; and [1Co 2:7](#) note. In these places the word evidently means to determine, purpose, or decree beforehand; and it must have this meaning here. No other idea could be consistent with the proper meaning of the word, or be intelligible. It is clear also that it does not refer to external privileges, but to real conversion and piety; since that to which they were predestinated was not the external privilege of the gospel, but conformity to his Son, and salvation; see [Rom 8:30](#). No passage could possibly teach in stronger language that it was God's purpose to save those who will be saved. [Eph 1:5](#), "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself." [Eph 1:11](#), being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

Further verses to study:

God will do all his pleasure Is. 46:10, Dan. 4:24,35

God searches out man's doings 2Chronicles 16:9.

Names not written in Lamb's book Rev. 13:8, 17:8, 20:15.

"Our disappointments are His appointments."

The invitations of the gospel are not addressed to men as elect, but as sinners ready to perish; all are under the same obligation to comply with these invitations, and the encouragement from Christ is the same to all.

John 6:27

