

Christopher Blackwood

Divine Election and Reprobation

Question - What is God's Decree? Answer - It is God's everlasting determination and purpose concerning all things and persons. "For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." {Acts 4:28} "Predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." {Eph.1:11} And as God decrees concerning all things and persons, so doth he decree the circumstance of place, time, means, and manner. "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." {Acts 27:31} Question - What is Predestination? Answer - It is God's fore-ordaining all reasonable creatures, whether Angels or men, to an everlasting estate either of salvation or damnation. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." {I Thes.5:9} Question - What are the parts of Predestination? Answer - Two: 1. Election, which is God's appointing some to salvation through Christ. "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." {Rom.9:23} "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." {Eph.1:5} 2. Reprobation, which is God's appointing some, both men and Angels, to destruction. There are some vessels "to dishonor." {II Tim.2:20} "To shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." {Rom.9:22} Question - Is not Christ the cause of our Election? Answer - No, not of God's decreeing of it, for that he did of his own divine purpose; but of the execution of it; that is, our salvation is for and through Christ. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." {Eph.1:4} Question - Is not sin the cause of Reprobation? Answer - No; for then all men should be reprobate, when God foresaw that all would be sinners; but sin is the cause of the execution of reprobation. Question - What use are we to make of our election? Answer - 1. It serves to humble us, that we had nothing of ourselves. 2. It should breed in us love to God, for his love to us. 3. It comforts, that our salvation stands not in ourselves, who daily might lose it; but in God's unchangeable decree. Christopher Blackwood {Soul Searching Catechism, 1653}

Sin & the Sovereignty of God

Question - Whether it is God, decreeing the works of the wicked, the author of sin? Answer - No; though God decrees the sinful works of the wicked, {for else they had not been,} as the Jews crucifying of Christ; "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain;" {Acts 2:23;} so Joseph's selling into Egypt; "but as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive;" {Gen.50:20;} yet is nothing sin, as God decrees it, or commands it. Abraham's killing of Isaac being commanded of God was a duty; which otherwise, God forbidding it, was a sin. God's decreeing of sin being a way to manifest the glory of God's justice is a good thing. Question - What is the execution of God's decree? Answer - It is an action of God, working all things in time, according to his decree. "Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." {Eph.1:11} "For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." {Acts 4:28} Question - How is the providence of God conversant about sin? Answer - God preserves that nature and will that produces sinful actions. God hath a concurrence about sinful actions, as

appears. "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." {Gen.45:8} "For the LORD thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day." {Deut.2:30} God changed the minds of the Egyptians that they hated his people. "He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants." {Ps.105:25} But as in a chain that breaks, there is no link in fault but that which breaks; so in these concurrences of causes, none is to be blamed but the next and immediate cause, which is the will of man; so that though God will the being, yet man alone wills the nature of sin. Question - What are the positive actions of God, in and about sin? Answer - His purpose to withdraw his help and grace from the creature; both the help of light, "the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day;" {Deut.29:4;} and also the help of support, as in Hezekiah of whom it is said that, "God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart;" which two helps being withdrawn, the creature sins necessarily, but voluntarily; so that as the sun causes darkness, not by overcasting the air, but by hiding his light; and as a staff falls to the ground being not forced by the hand, but only forsaken of it; so God in withdrawing either light or support, man sins. God, who suffers sin, hath the power of hindering, without any obligation to us; and man hath the power of doing, without any compulsion. The action in God is without fault, the action in man without excuse. Secondly, God works about sin by removing the impediments that hindered us from sinning. God took away Jehoiada, and then Joash showed his wickedness. "Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them." {II Chron.24:17} So God takes away a master or father that kept such a person from wickedness, who being removed, his wickedness appears. God works about sin, by setting before us objects, whereby he knows our corruption will be enticed, as a beautiful woman before an unchaste person; wine or beer before a drunkard. God works about sin, by setting bounds to sin, that it shall go so far, and no further. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." {Ps.76:10} God works about sin, in that he preserves the person, nature, and faculties of the sinner, even whilst he is in sinning. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." {Acts 17:28} As an horse man driving a lame horse is the cause of his going, not of his halting; so is God the cause of our moving, though not of the sinfulness in our moving. Christopher Blackwood {Soul Searching Catechism, 1653}

Christ – our Heavenly Treasure

Question - How may we know that our affections are made alive unto God? Answer - First: When our principal Treasure is in heaven, {Mt.6:20,} and our affections are set upon it, not upon the world. {Col.3:1,2} That though worldly occasions may put off the heart from heaven for a time, yet no sooner are these employments over, but the heart endeavors after its former enjoyment of God; so that as the affections of dead men are ever and anon upon the world, because they have a dead and worldly frame of heart; so the affections of men spiritually alive, are ever and anon upon God, because they have a quickened and heavenly frame of heart. Secondly: When the heart can relish good things, {Rom.8:5,} so that as carnal men favor profit and pleasure, and carnal contents; so the affections quickened can favor communion with God, the face of God, the Word of God, the sweetness of a spiritual duty. Thirdly: When the heart esteems God above all enjoyments. {Ps.73:25,26} So that thou wilt mortgage anything for God, and the things of God; so that thou wilt count his Glory dearer than any credit, duty to him dearer than life to thyself, {Acts 20:24,} to such affections, the promise, {II Pet.1:4,} grace, {Pv.3:15,} and Christ, {I Pet.2:7,} is precious above all. Fourthly: When thy greatest care is to please God, {Tit.3:8,} and how to get thy heart weaned from the world, and how to keep conscience pure, {I Tim.3:9,} and thy greatest fear is to sin against God, {Gen.39:9,} so that thou

fearest Him above reproach, poverty, or death itself. {Dan.3:16,17} Christopher Blackwood {Soul Searching Catechism, 1653}

Confessing Christ

Those that deny Christ are ashamed of him, they cast an imputation upon his truth, as it were not worthy to be owned; now, if we be ashamed of Christ for the present, no wonder if he be ashamed of us hereafter. "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." {Mk.8:38} Now of those that deny Christ, some do it: 1. Silently. 2. Others do it expressly. Silently, when persons from time to time can hear the truth of God spoken against, his servants railed upon, and idolatry and superstition cried up and practiced, and they sit still, as if the thing nothing concerned them, for all they are able to speak in God's behalf; they are afraid lest in speaking they should lose their correspondences with such companions. Now they cannot do their duty, and fall in with them, and therefore they will be silent. Against this sinful silence, see the carriage of David. "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed." {Ps.119:46} Though Jehoshaphat was but too cold, {though a good man,} yet when Ahab in words professed a viable hatred against Micaiah, Jehoshaphat could not but justify the prophet to the king's face, using these words, "Let not the king say so." {I Kg.22:8} So Christ, "wisdom is justified of her children;" {Mt.11:19;} shall Baal have 400 to plead for him, and God not one Elijah? There must be an account given for sinful silence, as well as for wicked speech. It's none of our least sins, that by our sinful silence we have left so many in circumstantial; yea, which is more, in fundamental errors. Nothing is more dangerous to God, and destructive to our brethren, than not to declare with our tongues the truth which we believe in our hearts, time, places, persons and circumstances being duly weighed. Christ is denied expressly; and that in a vicious life; when our practice doth not answer our profession. "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." {Tit.1:16} "Denying the Lord that bought them." {II Pet.2:9} "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." {II Tim.3:5} These turning the doctrine of free grace "into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." {Jude 4} Too many live the lives of heathens, under the name of Christians. Christ is also expressly denied in word; when magistrates shall ask us concerning our faith, and we shall not acknowledge, but for fear of prison or death deny what we believe to be truth. It was a speech of Spira, "Christ will not be denied in word, and therefore it is enough, that I have denied him in word, though in heart I never denied him." He added, "it is no small matter to deny Christ, and yet it's more ordinary than men do conceive; it is not only a denial or adjuration made before the magistrate, as it is with me; for as often as a Christian doth dissemble a known truth, so often as he approves of false worship by presenting himself add it, so often he denies Christ." I might add to his words, for how many in private conference deny Christ, whilst for fear of men they deny those truths they inwardly acknowledge? As we are not to deny our sins, but freely confess them before God, so we are to confess the truth before men, though we know before hand, that in so doing, bonds and afflictions in every place abide us. Famous was Luther herein. "It is my duty {saith he} and the duty of every Christian to speak the truth, and deny falsehood, against all noise of titles and dignities. I am a child of God, and born in the kingdom of

truth, and therefore am bound, not only to affirm it, but also to defend it by life or death." This is one of the noblest actions of a believer, to confess Christ and his truth before the world, to confess him in the midst of his enemies; neither is it sufficient to confess Christ in word in a corner; but in the assemblies of princes and councils, we must freely speak our mind, and bear witness to the truth; few indeed dare do this, but this is our duty! Famous were Peter and John herein, who witnessed the truth, being filled with the Holy Ghost, though Peter formally denied Christ before a silly damsel, yet now when Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and Alexander, and others were gathered together in counsel, and asked them by what power or name they did what they did, they answered very courageously, in these words, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole." {Acts 4:8-10} Let us desire with Luther, who said, "our knowledge suffers us not to keep silence, and the world suffers us not to speak; it is needful therefore that we be strengthened with the Spirit, that to escape dangers, we refrain not from confession." Christopher Blackwood {Treatise Concerning Denial of Christ, 1648}

Denial of Christ

Whether or no Christ is not denied in worship, when we present ourselves at such a worship as we loathe in our hearts? "Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves." {Hos.13:2} Jeroboam's priests in sign of conformity required that all that sacrificed should kiss the calves; now kissing is a token of love, so that hereby they signified their love to the calf worship; now idolatrous kissing in this kind is called a denial of God. "And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge; for I should have denied the God that is above." {Job 31:27,28} If my "mouth hath kissed my hand" "I should have denied the God that is above;" so that it is clear, that idolatrous worship denies the true God; but the question is about the presence at such worship, whether that be a denial of Christ? It seems so to be; whilst things manifestly false in their conscience, and that not in smaller, but fundamental points go for truth by their silence, they not testifying against them. After illumination, when a man knows that worship which is pleasing to God, yet for fear or loss of goods and friends, he will practice what he knows is not of God; unless a man should go thereto with an habit to protest against it. So we find the worshipers crying out in opposition to Baal, "The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God." {I Kg.18:39} All the difficulty is about hearing; whether persons hearing things manifestly false against points of faith, which they judge fundamental shall not by their silence, they not testifying against them, in some measure deny Christ. Answer: I will in this difficult question leave others to their light; only I say, to me, in my conscience, it would be a denial of Christ, which I am drawn so to think, because every child of wisdom is bound to justify wisdom, and to defend the rest of the hearers from seducement in things that are fundamentally destructive. {Mt.11:19} - Now forasmuch as thou hast a disposition in thy heart to deny Christ, though it never come to trial, God will find it out; therefore I hold it expedient and profitable, if not one man to another, yet every man to his own soul, to propound in this manner; soul, what wilt thou do if altar worship, saint worship, or any other superstition that thy soul abhors, comes to be pressed on thee, what wilt thou do? Or if it be put to thee to subscribe to doctrines thy heart cannot allow, as that works justify, as that justified persons may and do totally and finally fall away and

perish eternally, or any other doctrine of the like kind, wilt thou, O my soul, subscribe or suffer the loss of everything? If thy heart say such things are false, but yet I must practice them, and subscribe to them or else I cannot enjoy my country and my inheritance, truly God looks upon thee as one yet in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity; and such persons do not always escape a curse in this life; but if thy heart say as Paul, "God forbid that I should rejoice in anything, save in the cross of Christ," or more than a good conscience, such a testimony will make thee to rejoice in sickness and triumph in death. Christopher Blackwood {Treatise Concerning Denial of Christ, 1648}