

This is an excerpt from John Wesley's magisterial essay, "Predestination Calmly Considered." The excerpt establishes the fact that unconditional election entails unconditional reprobation and demonstrates the unscriptural nature of the latter, and thereby also the former:

4. How easily then may a believer infer, from what he hath experienced in his own soul, that the true grace of God always works irresistibly in every believer! that God will finish wherever he has begun this work, so that it is impossible for any believer to fall from grace! and, lastly, that the reason why God gives this to some only and not to others, is, because, of his own will, without any previous regard either to their faith or works, he hath absolutely, unconditionally, predestined them to life, before the foundation of the world!

5. Agreeable hereto, in "The Protestant Confession of faith," drawn up at Paris, in the year 1559, we have these words: —

"We believe, that out of the general corruption and condemnation in which all men are plunged, God draws those whom, in his eternal and unalterable counsel, he has elected by his own goodness and mercy, through our Lord Jesus Christ, without considering their works, leaving the others in the same corruption and condemnation." (Article 12.)

6. To the same effect speak the Dutch Divines, assembled at Dort in the year 1618. Their words are: —

"Whereas, in process of time, God bestowed faith on some, and not on others, — this proceeds from his eternal decree; according to which, he softens the hearts of the elect, and leaveth them that are not elect in their wickedness and hardness.

"And herein is discovered the difference put between men equally lost; that is to say, the decree of election and reprobation.

"Election is the unchangeable decree of God, by which, before the foundation of the world, he hath chosen in Christ unto salvation a set

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number of men. This election is one and the same of all which are to be saved.

"Not all men are elected, but some not elected; whom God, in his unchangeable good pleasure, hath decreed to leave in the common misery, and not to bestow saving faith upon them; but leaving them in their own ways, at last to condemn and punish them everlastingly, for their unbelief, and also for their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation."

(Article 6, *et seq.*)

7. Likewise in "The Confession of Faith" set forth by the Assembly of English and Scotch Divines, in the year 1646, are these words: —

"God from all eternity did unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.

"These angels and men thus predestined and fore-ordained are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

“Those of mankind that are predestined unto life, God, before the foundation of the world, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, without any foresight of faith or good works.

“The rest of mankind God was pleased, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath.” (Chapter 3.)

No less express are Mr. Calvin’s words, in his “Christian Institutions:”—
“All men are not created for the same end; but some are fore-ordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation. So according as every man was created for the one end or the other, we say, he was elected, that is,

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predestined to life, or reprobated, that is, predestined to damnation.”
(Cap. 21, sec. 1.)

8. Indeed there are some who assert the decree of election, and not the decree of reprobation. They assert that God hath, by a positive, unconditional decree, chosen some to life and salvation; but not that he hath by any such decree devoted the rest of mankind to destruction. These are they to whom I would address myself first. And let me beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to lift up your hearts to him, and to beg of him to free you from all prepossession, from the prejudices even of your tender years, and from whatsoever might hinder the light of God from shining in upon your souls. Let us calmly and fairly weigh these things in the balance of the sanctuary. And let all be done in love and meekness of Wisdom, as becomes those who are fighting under one Captain, and who humbly hope they are joint-heirs through him of the glory which shall be revealed.

I am verily persuaded, that, in the uprightness of your hearts, you defend the decree of unconditional election; even in the same uprightness wherein you reject and abhor that of unconditional reprobation. But consider, I intreat you, whether you are consistent with yourselves; consider, whether this election can be separate from reprobation; whether one of them does not imply the other, so that, in holding one, you must hold both.

9. That this was the judgment of those who had the most deeply considered the nature of these decrees, of the Assembly of English and Scotch Divines, of the Reformed Churches both in France and the Low Countries, and of Mr. Calvin himself, appears from their own words, beyond all possibility of contradiction. “Out of the general corruption,” saith the French Church, “he draws those whom he hath elected; leaving the others in the same corruption, according to his immovable decree.” “By the decree of God,” says the Assembly of English and Scotch Divines, “some are predestinated unto everlasting life, others fore-ordained to everlasting death.” “God hath once for all,” saith Mr. Calvin, “appointed, by an eternal and unchangeable decree, to whom he would give salvation and whom he would devote to destruction.” (*Inst.*, cap. 3,

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sec. 7.) Nay, it is observable, Mr. Calvin speaks with utter contempt and

disdain of all who endeavor to separate one from the other, who assert election without reprobation. "Many," says he, "as it were to excuse God, own election, and deny reprobation. But this is quite silly and childish. For election cannot stand without reprobation. Whom God passes by, those he reprobates. It is one and the same thing." (*Inst.*, 1. 3, c. 23, sec. 1.)

10. Perhaps upon deeper consideration, you will find yourself of the same judgment. It may be, you also hold reprobation, though you know it not;. Do not you believe, that God who made "one vessel unto honor," hath made "another unto" eternal "dishonor?" Do not you believe, that the men who "turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness, were before ordained of God unto this condemnation?" Do not you think, that for "this same purpose God raised Pharaoh up, that he might show his sovereign power in his destruction?" and that "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," refers to their eternal state? Why, then, you hold absolute reprobation, and you think Esau and Pharaoh were instances of it, as well as all those "vessels made unto dishonor," those men "before ordained into condemnation."

11. To set this matter in a still clearer light, you need only answer one question: Is any man saved who is not elected? Is it possible, that any not elected should be saved? If you say, "No," you put an end to the doubt. You espouse election and reprobation together. You confirm Mr. Calvin's words, that "without reprobation, election itself cannot stand." You allow, (though you was not sensible of it before,) that "whom God elects not, them he reprobates."

Try whether it be possible, in any particular case, to separate election from reprobation. Take one of those who are supposed not to be elected; one whom God hath not chosen unto life and salvation. Can this man be saved from sin and hell? You answer, "No." Why not? "Because he is not elected. Because God hath unchangeably decreed to save so many souls, and no more; and he is not of that number. Him God hath decreed to pass by; to leave him to everlasting destruction; in consequence of which

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irresistible decree, the man perishes everlastingly." O, my brethren, how small is the difference between this, and a broad, barefaced reprobation!

12. Let me intreat you to make this case your own. In the midst of life, you are in death; your soul is dead while you live, if you live in sin, if you do not live to God. And who can deliver you from the body of this death? Only the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. But God hath decreed to give this grace to others only, and not to you; to leave you in unbelief and spiritual death, and for that unbelief to punish you with death everlasting. Well then mayest thou cry, even till thy throat is dry, "O wretched man that I am!" For an unchangeable, irresistible decree standeth between thee and the very possibility of salvation. Go now and find out how to split the hair between thy being reprobated and not elected; how to separate reprobation, in its most effectual sense, from unconditional election!

13. Acknowledge then that you hold reprobation. Avow it in the face of

the sun. To be consistent with yourself, you must openly assert, that “without reprobation this election cannot stand.” You know it cannot. You know, if God hath fixed a decree that these men only shall be saved, in such a decree it is manifestly implied, that all other men shall be damned. If God hath decreed that this part of mankind, and no more, shall live eternally, you cannot but see it is therein decreed, that the other part shall never see life. O let us deal ingenuously with each other! What we really hold, let us openly profess. And if reprobation be the truth, it will bear the light; for “the word of our God shall stand forever.”

14. Now then, without any extenuation on the one hand, or exaggeration on the other, let us look upon this doctrine, call it what you please, naked and in its native color. Before the foundations of the world were laid, God of his own mere will and pleasure fixed a decree concerning all the children of men why should be born unto the end of the world. This decree was unchangeable with regard to God, and irresistible with regard to man. And herein it was ordained, that one part of mankind should be saved from sin and hell, and all the rest left to perish forever and ever, without help, without hope. That none of these should have that grace which alone could prevent their dwelling with everlasting burnings, God decreed, for this

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cause alone, “because it was his good pleasure;” and for this end, “to show forth his glorious power, and his sovereignty over all the earth.”

15. Now, can you, upon reflection, believe this? Perhaps you will say, “I do not think about it.” That will never do. You not only think about it, (though it may be confusedly,) but speak about it too, whenever you speak of unconditional election. You do not think about it! What do you mean? Do you never think about Esau or Pharaoh? or, in general, about a certain number of souls whom alone God hath decreed to save? Why, in that; very thought reprobation lurks; it entered your heart the moment that entered: It stays as long as that stays; and you cannot speak that thought, without speaking of reprobation. True, it is covered with fig-leaves, so that a heedless eye may not observe it to be there. But, if you narrowly observe, unconditional election cannot appear without the cloven foot of reprobation.

16. “But do not the Scriptures speak of election? They say, St. Paul was ‘an elected or chosen vessel;’ nay, and speak of great numbers of men as ‘elect according to the foreknowledge of God.’ You cannot, therefore, deny there is such a thing as election. And, if there is, what do you mean by it?” I will tell you, in all plainness and simplicity. I believe it commonly means one of these two things: First, a divine appointment of some particular men, to do some particular work in the world. And this election I believe to be not only personal, but absolute and unconditional. Thus Cyrus was elected to rebuild the temple, and St. Paul, with the twelve, to preach the gospel. But I do not find this to have any necessary connection with eternal happiness. Nay, it is plain it has not; for one who is elected in this sense lay yet be lost eternally. “Have I not chosen” (elected) “you twelve?” saith our Lord; “yet one of you hath a devil.” Judas, you see,

was elected as well as the rest; yet is his lot with the devil and his angels.

17. I believe election means, Secondly, a divine appointment of some men to eternal happiness. But I believe this election to be conditional, as well as the reprobation opposite thereto. I believe the eternal decree concerning both is expressed in those words: “He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” And this decree, without doubt, God will
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not change, and man cannot resist. According to this, all true believers are in Scripture termed elect, as all who continue in unbelief are so long properly reprobates, that is, unapproved of God, and without discernment touching the things of the Spirit.

18. Now, God, to whom all things are present at once, who sees all eternity at one view, “calleth the things that are not as though they were;” the things that are not yet as though they were now subsisting. Thus he calls Abraham the “father of many nations,” before even Isaac was born. And thus Christ is called “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;” though he was not slain, in fact, till some thousand years after. In like manner, God calleth true believers, “elect from the foundation of the world;” although they were not actually elect, or believers, till many ages after, in their several generations. Then only it was that they were actually elected, when they were made the “sons of God by faith.” Then were they, in fact, “chosen and taken out of the world; elect,” saith St. Paul, “through belief of the truth;” or, as St. Peter expresses it, “elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit.”

19. This election I as firmly believe, as I believe the Scripture to be of God. But unconditional election I cannot believe; not only because I cannot find it in Scripture, but also (to wave all other considerations) because it necessarily implies unconditional reprobation. Find out any election which does not imply reprobation, and I will gladly agree to it. But reprobation I can never agree to while I believe the Scripture to be of God; as being utterly irreconcilable to the whole scope and tenor both of the Old and New Testament.

O that God would give me the desire of my heart! that he would grant the thing which I long for I even that your mind might now be free and calm, and open to the light of his Spirit! that you would impartially consider how it is possible to reconcile reprobation with the following Scriptures:

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“Because thou hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”

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(Genesis 3:17.) The curse shall come on thee and thine offspring, not because of any absolute decree of mine, but because of thy sin.

“If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” (Genesis 4:7.) Sin only, not the decree of reprobation, hinders thy being accepted.

“Know that the Lord thy God, he is the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments

to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them. Wherefore, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant which he swore unto thy fathers.” (Deuteronomy 7:9, 12.) “Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God; and a curse, if you will not obey.” (11:26, 27, 28.) “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and the Lord thy God shall bless thee. But if thou wilt not hear, I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish. I call heaven and earth to record this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” (30:15, etc.)

“And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah, and he said, The Lord is with you while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him he will forsake you.” (2 Chronicles 15:1, 2.)

“After all that is come upon us, for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass; should we again break thy commandments, wouldest thou not be angry with us, till thou hadst consumed us?” (Ezra 9:13, 14.)

“Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any.” (Job 36:5.) Could he then reprobate any?

“The Lord is good to all: And his tender mercies are over all his works.” (Psalm 145:9.)

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“Turn you at my reproof: Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.” (Proverbs 1:23, etc.) Why? because of my decree? No; but “because they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.”

“I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people; a people that provoked me to anger continually to my face. Therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom. Ye shall all bow down to the slaughter; because when I called, ye did not answer. Therefore, ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen; for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name.” (Isaiah 65:2, etc.)

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear” (eternally) “the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord; and not that he should return from his ways, and live?” (Ezekial 18:20, 23.)

“Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.” (Matthew 7:26.) Nay, he could not help it, if he was ordained thereto.

“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Who unto thee, Chorazin! Wo unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you, had

been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” (What, if they were not elected? And if they of Bethsaida had been elected, would they not have repented too?)

“Therefore I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell. For if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.” (Matthew 11:20, etc.)

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“The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: Because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.” (12:41.) But what was this to the purpose, if the men of Nineveh were elected, and this generation of men were not?

“It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but unto them it is not given. For whosoever hath,” (that is, uses what he hath,) “to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: But whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.” (13:11, 12.)

“They which were called were not worthy,” (22:8,) were shut out from the marriage of the Lamb: — Why so? Because “they would not come.” (Verse 3.)

The whole twenty-fifth chapter requires, and will reward, your most serious consideration. If you can reconcile unconditional reprobation with this, you may reconcile it with the eighteenth of Ezekiel.

“This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love” (or choose) “darkness rather than light.” (John 3:19.)

“How can ye believe, who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh of God?” (5:44.) Observe the reason why they could not believe: It is not in God, but in themselves.

“Thy money perish with thee!” (And so doubtless it did.) “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” (Acts 8:20, etc.) So that St. Peter had no thought of any absolute reprobation even in the case of Simon Magus.

“They are without excuse; because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God — wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness — who changed the truth of God into a lie. — For this cause God gave them up to vile affections. — As they did not like to retain God in their

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knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” (Romans 1:20, etc.)

“Them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, to believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thessalonians 2:10,

etc.)

20. How will you reconcile reprobation with the following scriptures, which declare God's willingness that all should be saved?

"As many as ye shall find, bid" (invite) "to the marriage." (Matthew 22:9.)

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15.)

"And when he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If" (rather, *O that*) "thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" (Luke 19:41, etc.)

"These things I say, that ye may be saved," (John 5:34,) viz., those who persecuted him, and "sought to slay him," (verse 16,) and of whom he complains, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life." (Verse 40.)

"God that made the world and all things therein — giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth — That they should seek the Lord."

(Acts 17:24.) Observe, this was God's end in creating all nations on all the earth.

"As by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." (Romans 5:18.) "The same Lord over all is rich" (in mercy) "unto all that call upon him." (10:12.)

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"This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who willet all men to be saved." (1 Timothy 2:3, 4.) "Who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe;" (6:10;) that is, intentionally of all, and actually of believers.

"If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." (James 1:5.)

"The Lord is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9.)

"We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." (1 John 4:14)

21. How will you reconcile reprobation with the following scriptures, which declare that Christ came to save all men; that he died for all; that he atoned for all, even for those that finally perish?

"The Son of man is come to save that which is lost," (Matthew 18:11,) without any restriction.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) "God sent his Son into the world, that the world through him might be saved." (3:17.) "I came not" (now) "to judge the world, but to save the world." (12:47.)

"Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." (Romans 14:15.)

"Through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom, Christ died." (1 Corinthians 8:11.)

"We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that those" (or all) "who live should live unto Him which died for

them.” (2 Corinthians 5:14, etc.) Here you see, not only that Christ died for all men, but likewise the end of his dying for them.

“Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.” (1 Timothy 2:6.)

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“We see Jesus made lower than the angels, that he might taste death for every man.” (Hebrews 2:9.)

“There shall be false teachers among you, who shall privately bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.” (2 Peter 2:1.) You see he bought or redeemed even those that perish, that bring upon themselves swift destruction.

“If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins” (who are elect, according to the knowledge of God) “and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:1, 2.)

You are sensible, these are but a very small part of the scriptures which might be brought on each of these heads. But they are enough; and they require no comment: Taken in their plain, easy, and obvious sense, they abundantly prove, that there is not, cannot be, any such thing as unconditional reprobation.

22. But to be a little more particular: How can you possibly reconcile reprobation with those scriptures that declare the justice of God? To cite one for all:

“What mean ye that ye use this proverb, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord, ye shall not have occasion