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On the Book of Life

I. Since the most frequent mention of the Book of Life occurs in the Scriptures, and serious questions are usually raised about it which highlight the immutability and certainty of election, with their fruit, we thought it not uncharitable of us if we instituted a brave discussion about it among those who are devoted to righteousness. In order to more suitably accomplish this, three things will especially be considered: (1) What is to be understood by the book of life, and in what sense is it attributed to God? (2) Can anyone be removed from it? (3) Whether and whence it may be evident that we are written in this book.

II. And as regards the first consideration, what this Book is, and how many times it is mentioned, is not agreed upon by all. Some find more, some less. It pleased Sixtus of Siena, in his holy library, book 2, to distinguish these things more minutely, so he wanted to make them fivefold, like the Pentateuch, and to distribute one volume into five like volumes. The first is the Book of the living, or the catalog of the predestined, in which all who are chosen for life are written, of which Paul writes in Phil. 4:3, and are also found in Rev. 17:8, and 21:27. The second is the Book of Commandments, κατ' ἐξοχὴν [par excellence], in which Scripture is said to be rightly marked by that name; because they contain both the promises of eternal life together with the precepts necessary to attain eternal life, in which sense the Word of life and the Doctrine of salvation are sometimes called λογος ζωής, and also because Christ, who is true God and eternal life, is the center and end of all Scripture. His third is the Book of Life of the Lamb, of which Rev.

13:8, "All the inhabitants of the earth worshiped the beast, whose names were not written in the Lamb's book of life," etc. Having said this, it is not that the book is transcribed by the Lamb, but that the Lamb Himself is presented to us as a standard of life as a certain illustrious and visible book, not on paper or animal skins, but fitted in the very flesh and members of Christ, not written with cheap ink, but in His precious and undefiled blood, in which every Christian can read and learn, as it were, with one glance, whatever is necessary for a pious and truly Christian life, singular innocence, profound humility, most perfect obedience, patience, incredible ardent charity, and the other virtues most necessary for access to eternal happiness; to which 1 Peter 2:21 might pertain, having left ὑπογραμμὸν [an example] that we may follow in his footsteps. The fourth is called the Book of the past life, or the book of the life of each one, in which the words and deeds of each individual are recorded so that they may give an account of them on the day of judgment, of which he wants to understand the passage Apoc. 20:12, where from Augustine, *City of God*, book 20, chap. 14, he thinks it should be read not so much as it is commonly held, and "another book is opened, which is the book of life," but "another book is opened, which is the book of each one's life," so that a certain divine power may be noted, by virtue of which in the day of judgment each one will thus be brought back to remember their past deeds which will be placed before the eyes of their mind, so that no one will be allowed to ignore or disguise or hide their sins. The fifth and last is the blessed Book of eternal life, and namely the eternal presence of Christ, with whom is the source of life, Psalm 36, and in whose vision we shall have the constant light of life, so to speak, reading the Book of life. So that whatever is sanctioned in the first book of Predestination, in the second

book of Scripture, is promised in the third book of the Lamb, is exercised in the fourth book of Judgment, is determined in this last one, at last it is most certain and will be revealed.

III. But although we do not doubt certain things added by Sixtus to the development of the divine books listed here, there are still several that are missed here, since he either multiplies some unnecessarily, or omits others without reason. For who is ignorant of the most extensive book of Providence, of which, however, he fails to mention? Who does not see again that the first book of predestination is wrongly distinguished from the last book of glory and happiness, which differ only in title, not in reality? So that I can say nothing either about the subtle, but not very solid exposition of the book of the Lamb, for which there is no true foundation found in Scripture, or about the commentary on the book of past lives which, without reason, from the passage of Revelation he tries to exculpate, against the faith of all the approved codices who read simply, *which is the book of life*, and not *the book of the life of each one*, as he contends.

IV. Therefore, in order that we may pursue the whole matter more clearly, certain things in general concerning the books of God must be set before us, from which we will be able to arrive more easily at the knowledge of the book of life, of which we are now dealing. Scripture often mentions God's books, but not always in the same sense. We, having made other distinctions, divide them into two orders. Some are *external*, which, indeed, are from God originally, but are not subjectively contained in God. Others are *internal*, which are both from God and in God, of which He Himself is not only the efficient and principle, but also, so to speak, the subject. Again, the externals are

various, but most of all the triplicates are for the threefold God's writing: (1) The Book of the World or Creatures. (2) The Book of Scriptures. (3) The Book of Conscience. The first appeared in the World through works; the second he wrote in the Church through the Word; the third was in the heart by the Spirit.

V. The first book of God is the book of the whole world, that is, the work of this universe, in which, as if in a very large book, large and thick, but nevertheless very beautiful and with great art, God has described himself in such a way that men cannot open their eyes without being forced to look at him. For though his essence is incomprehensible, yet so illustrious as to escape the human senses, as if far away, yet He has clearly engraved the signs of His glory in each of His works, that as many excuses as you wish, whether of ignorance or lack of intelligence have been removed. For what is the visible theater of this world but that which so magnificently expresses the term *Basileus*. There is no doubt that Paul is referring to this when Romans 1:19-20, he says, τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,” that is, as if in a book which is proposed to us to read. Nor does the Scripture differ when under the metaphor of a book it speaks of creatures and specifically of heaven, Isa. 34:4, Rev. 6:14, but above all Psalm 19, where not only is the voice and sound given to the creature, but also the line, such as is usually used in writing books, Isa. 28:13. Wherefore the heavens are said to declare the glory of God within themselves, as in a book called the praise of the divine, though are seen to be mute, in which there is neither speech nor discourse, yet all are vocal, whose voice is heard everywhere, Psalm 19, verse 3, and

not only above the heavens do they declare the glory of the workman, but also below the earth, in which His magnificent name is seen, indeed, every plant shouts God's presence.

VI. Thus, God willed to educate men in the school of nature, not by words, but by works, and as Tertullian said well, "Nature is schoolmistress, the soul the pupil; and whatever has taught or the other learned has come from God, the Teacher of the teacher." It is true that because this book was obscured in a strange way by sin and was not destroyed, yet not sufficient for salvation, God added another book of Scripture, in which He not only clearly and distinctly expressed to us the characteristics of power and divinity, but also left unquestionable evidence of will and grace. It is sometimes called the book of God, the book of the Law, the book of the Covenant, the book of the Lord, Exodus 24:7, Hebrews 9:19, Isa. 34:16. Psalm 19 opens both books for us to show that God has revealed Himself to us both ways and that we must pass from the contemplation of His creation to the reading of the word so that the knowledge of God can be saving. I admit that those tablets on which He chose to inscribe His Law with His own fingers can be called the Scriptures and the book of God for a unique reason, as they are called the work of God and the Scriptures of God in Exodus 32:16. But this does not prevent that word, which was written down by the special command of God, Θεόπνευστος, by men under the inspiration of God, to be most truly called the book of God, because He is its only author and the main cause, though He used the ministry of men to promulgate it.

VII. The third external book is the book of conscience, in which God had already, from the beginning, impressed knowledge of Himself through

the law of nature, and taught that His lawful right is our duty; so that individuals, if they wish to listen to Him and consider Him attentively, will easily notice He is speaking not so much as a man, but as God himself. In its original state, this book was intact and not marked with a scratch. In despair of sin, it was indeed corrupted and repulsed in strange ways, but it still remained to man's conviction and αναπολογιαν [recounting], "They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them," Romans 2:15. In the restoration by grace, it is renewed and reformed in the faithful by the sanctifying presence of the Spirit, since He inscribes the Law with His finger, not on tables of stone, as of old, which can be broken, but on the flesh of the heart, 2 Cor. 3:3, "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people," Jeremiah 31:33. Finally, in their future state, which has been determined in advance, this book of glory will be completed in the blessed, for in the Scriptures Christ calls God 'my Father and your Father', so they may know they are His children, as well as by the name, city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, that they may know they are its inhabitants and citizens; as well as the new name its members may claim, Rev. 3:12.

VIII. Thus, the external books of God. Others are internal, which are not properly so called, as if God, who works all things in Himself with a single glance, or has need of books, as if He was like men, or needing them to aid His memory, or for the confirmation of the certainty of things, but ανθρωπόπαθος, fashioned to denote all things, both with a most certain predestination and an infallible foreknowledge; men, on the other hand, use books to record their deeds or agendas, partly for

aiding their memory, partly for the inviolable and perpetual certainty of things. So, this eternal mind of God may be like a book in which by decree He inscribes whatever is to come, and by foresight He reads and knows, as distinctly as if written in a book. And although there is only one decree and only one knowledge of God, that all things are in Him, yet by the simplest consideration, according to our way of conceiving, and by the diversity of objects in many places, this can be distinguished.

IX. Just as we said the external book of God can be conceived as threefold, we can also make the internal book threefold. The first is the book of *Providence*; the second, the book of *Judgment*; the third, the book of *Life or Predestination*. The book of Providence is universal and most extensive, which includes all creatures; the narrower book of Judgment, pertains only to intelligent and rational creatures; the narrowest book of Life, respects only the elect and the faithful. The first is the dispensation of nature; the second the economy of the law; the third presents us with a supernatural order of grace. In the first, God notes what He has decided to do in the world by His power; In the second, what He decided to render to men by justice; in the third, He decided to give [forgiveness and eternal life] to the faithful out of mercy.

X. The first book of *Providence*, in which are contained the decrees about future things outside of God, is said to include the causes, actions, courses, and effects of all creatures; where a fixed and immovable term limit is assigned to each life, which no one is allowed to undo either by accelerating or extending; which is called by some 'the book of the present life' or 'the book of the living,' in which is marked the beginning of the rise and fall of each, the growth and

decline of empires, where the administration of the whole world is ordered by a series of secondary causes, nay, the events of even the smallest things are so prescribed that not even a sparrow or a hair falls away from this providence of God. This book is discussed in Psalm 139:16, where the Psalmist, speaking of his formation in the womb, says, "Your eyes saw my unformed mass," that is, when I was not yet well formed in my mother's womb, and without a doubt "in your book" of providence and prescience "everything is written." Thus, elsewhere, Psalm 56:8, it is declared that God counts his sleepless nights and his tears in His register, that is, God has an accurate knowledge and care of them. Whence you may well infer that all things must happen infallibly and necessarily because they have been predestined from eternity; but nevertheless some wrongly infer from this that the freedom of men or the contingency of things should be removed from the world, as the Socinians wrongly argue; because this writing of God is not only concerned with the things themselves, but also with their ways, so that while the event brings about a certain future, it does not bring forth any force upon the nature of things, but allows secondary causes, indeed ineffable and hidden, to act according to their own ways in the truest reasons.

XI. The second internal book is called the book of *Judgment*, because in it are written those things which pertain to the government and judgment of rational creatures, where their adversities and successes, their good and evil are noted, from which they come to be judged. For as nothing can happen in nature that is not preordained by God, so neither can anything good or bad happen in human society that does not depend on His effective or permissive decree, nothing escapes His eternal foreknowledge and that was not written beforehand by Him.

Hence, as sin is said to be written with an iron pen in the sinner's heart, Jeremiah 17:1, so the writing is also carried before God, Isaiah 65:6, "This is written before me," says the Lord, to signify that He knows it well, and that He will always remember it. In no other way is it to be determined concerning good works, namely, that they are all written before God in such a way that He never forgets them, but rather that He will be mindful in His judgment to compensate them, not that they are the cause, for there is no merit or cause other than His will to reward them. Where the Book of Remembrance seems to look back, Malachi 3:16, is said to be "written before God for those who fear Him," indicates that God will remember their piety in due time and will recompense the reward of their faith and perseverance. Also belonging to this book is that of Daniel 7:10, and Rev. 20:12, where the last judgment is discussed, and it is said that the books were opened: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." In this way, the supreme fairness of the Judgment is characterized like a human forum, where according to the written laws, and what has been done and said in accordance with them, the judge pronounces a just sentence. Now why he mentions books, and not one book, the reason can be easily explained, because besides this internal book of God, in which all the works of men are written, two other books corresponding to that will be opened. First, *the book of Scripture* in which God prescribes the rule of God's law and our duty, to which everyone is bound to conform, and from which they are to be judged, that is, as many as have had Scripture as their guide. Secondly, *the book of conscience*, which gives evidence of facts, and

which, like a thousand witnesses, will either accuse or excuse men; for “the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts,” 1 Cor. 4:5, so that nothing may remain hidden and undisputed here that is not exposed to the eyes of the Supreme Judge.

XII. The last is *the book of life*, that is, the eternal and unchangeable counsel of God, by which, out of his sheer mercy, He separated some from the corrupt mass and enrolled them to eternal life, whom through Christ He saved from His highest and most free power, who were placed in equal misery with all others. in the past He knows and keeps steadfastly those written in this mysterious book of predestination. The Bible mentions this very often, simply and par excellence under the name of the book, Daniel 12:1, “Everyone of thy people that is found written in the book shall be saved,” only by the heavenly scripture, Luke 10:20, “Rejoice because your names are written in heaven,” both because they were chosen in heaven, and also because they were called to heaven; sometimes through the book of life of the Lamb, as Rev. 13:8, and 17:8, “All will wonder whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life,” so Rev. 21:27, not only because the election was made through Him no less than the Father, but also because it is founded in Him, Ephesians 1:4, not, indeed, that man’s merit preceded this as a cause, but follows consequentially, as Christ is primarily central in carrying out election; sometimes, finally, simply through the book of life, as Phil. 4:3, Rev. 20:15 and 22:19, on account of the end, that is, of eternal life, which alone deserves the name of life above all others, both on the prior account of predestination, which is like that which was written, and also foreknowledge of the same, which is like reading what is written.

XIII. And from this it can be easily gathered in what sense this book is attributed to God, not properly and literally, as we have already suggested, as if either a book or a writing of any material nature should be attributed to aiding the judgment of God; but mystically and figuratively, both to connote the certainty and immutability of divine predestination, and to signify the evidence and infallibility of His foreknowledge and in-depth acquaintance with the facts. For just as voices and words fly away, so to speak, while the written letter remains, so the decree of God is not an empty word, which becomes void and can be dissolved, but a powerful and effective word, which, written in the mind of God, will remain forever, and will most certainly be fulfilled. Again, as those things which are engraved can be clearly and distinctly known to the eyes of the faithful subjects, but those which fall into the ear only by word, is such that we may be more easily be deceived in perceiving and remembering them. Therefore, this knowledge of vision is one which God has foreordained the futurity of things in a decree He sees and reads, and it is so certain and distinct that He can neither deceive nor be deceived. Whence Paul, 2 Tim. 2:19, witnesses, "The Lord knows them that are His," and Christ, John 10:27, "I know my sheep, and I know whom I have chosen," John 13:18.

XIV. But if we ask further why the Holy Spirit chose to use this phrase to denote this mystery, various reasons can be given. Some think the metaphor is derived from *military matters*, and from the commander of the war, who consigns the chosen soldiers in a book, whence the phrase of *enlisting a soldier*; but the rejects and those of bad faith, he either dishonorably discharges or passes over. Thus, Jehovah of hosts, who calls His faithful ones to holy service, so that under the banner of Christ, their leader, they may fight the wars of the Lord against the

Devil, the world, and the flesh, is said to write in a book those whom He intends to save. Others want to allude to civil society and the *list of friends*, just as we usually put the names of those whom we love above all others in our list, so that their memory will always abide in our spirit. Thus, God has recorded in His book the names of the elect and the faithful, who are truly God's friends, as the angel tells us about Abraham, Genesis 22, and about Christ's, John 13:18, that they should never leave His mind, for which reason they are mentioned elsewhere carved in the hands of God, Isaiah 49:16.

XV. But others more conveniently establish the similitude required by civil custom and those who are given a state, whose names are usually recorded in the list of citizens and public records, so that they can appropriate the rights and privileges of citizens, which was not only done among the Roman people, but also known among the Israelites, where the genealogical registers of all the families and tribes, but above all of the kings and priests, were written and kept with the utmost accuracy, lest strangers and foreigners should be admitted to the people of God. Wherein belongs the enumeration, which should have been done according to the decree of God, Exodus 30:12, and the book of enumeration, about which Nehemiah 7:5, and primarily, βιβλος γενεσεών, the *Book of the generation* of Christ, which is related by Matthew and Luke, to reveal the true race of Christ. Nor does it seem to look at Ezekiel 13:9 when speaking of false prophets and denouncing their punishments in the name of God, "My people shall not be in the counsel," he says, "and they shall not be written in the writing (or book) of the house of Israel, nor shall they come into the land of Israel," where he notes three degrees of punishment, expulsion from the public council, in which the prophets could take part, Jeremiah 26:7; the

expulsion from the people, who were all described and registered to the public who were made white, that they should no longer be considered members of it, or enjoy its privileges; expulsion from the land itself, lest, as was granted even to foreigners, they should be allowed to set foot and further dwell in it. Alluding, therefore, to this custom, the Holy Spirit designates the election of those to be saved per the book by an elegant metaphor, so as to note that by this covenant they become true citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, to whom belong all the privileges, immunities, and benefits of the blessed, whose names are therefore in this book, as if in some kind of public register, if one is correct to speak like this, let them be recorded, not on earth, but in heaven, not by the hand of men and ink, but by the finger of God himself, and by His eternal decree, not on paper or animal parchment, but in His mind, not to be considered as citizens of Israel, according to the flesh the sons of Abraham, and the heirs of the earthly Canaanites, but that they may be recognized as truly sons of God, Israel according to the Spirit, and the heirs of the heavenly Canaan. This regard is clearly evident in Psalm 87:5-6 and Rev. 22:19, but especially, Hebrews 12:23, where the church of the faithful is called, "the assembly of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven." For whatever things are referred to there, they are said allusively to the state of the Israelite people, the mount is opposed to the mountain, the city to the city, the earthly Jerusalem to the heavenly, the blood of the victims that was shed in the Old Testament to the sprinkling of the blood that was shed by Christ, the host of angels whose διαταγῆς [ordination] was given from the Law, Galatians 3:19, to the myriads of those who ascend and descend upon the Son of Man, John 1:51, and who are ministering spirits for the salvation of the faithful, Hebrews 1:14; thus "the first-

born, whose names are written in the heavens," clearly have a relation to the first-born of the Israelites, whose names were recorded in the genealogical tables. For in order that the faithful truly possess the prerogatives of the firstborn, both in dominion, because they have become kings in Christ, who must reign on the earth, Rev. 5:10, then in a double portion, promises, namely, of the present and future life, 1 Tim. 4:8, and grace and glory, Psalm 84, also in the priesthood, when they became the kingdom of the priesthood in Him, 1 Peter 2:5, 9, and Rev. 1:6. Thus, they are truly enrolled in the book of heavenly genealogy when they obtain the right to a heavenly inheritance, and to the house of the eternal Father, of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named, Ephesians 3:15, obtained through election.

XVI. From this it is clear what is to be understood by *the book of life*, and in what sense it is attributed to God. It is also clear that the decree of election is not based on a general and indifferent design for the salvation of all, if they believe, as the Socinians and Remonstrants would have it; but in the special and specific design of those who, by the grace of God, are both to believe and be saved. For whoever records, in a book, the names of those about whom he decides something specific, thinks of them by name, as individuals sealed, and does not point with uncertainty to individuals with a fanciful hunch. So that here it is quite one thing to assign and decide a common quality, under which men may obtain life and salvation, but another thing to inscribe the names of some, to the exclusion of others, in the book of life; for this writing refers to the persons themselves, not simply to the qualities under which men can obtain salvation indefinitely.

XVII. So that was the first question in controversy. The second follows, which, as it is more difficult, demands greater precision; Can certain people, once written in the book of life, be erased from it? The reason for this doubt arises from the various passages of Scripture in which this seems to be asserted.

(1) From the vow of Moses, Exodus 32:32, who, when he heard that God, angry with the people of Israel, wanted to completely cut them off, was moved by such an intense zeal of charity that he not only interceded for them, but he wished to be erased from the book of God, rather than the whole nation, "Either forgive their sin, or if you do not wish, delete me, please, from your book which you have written." And lest the vow should be thought so impossible, the Lord immediately adds, "He that sinneth, I will blot him out of my book." Where not only the possibility of the thing, but also the certainty, is signified.

(2) From the imprecation of David, who, Psalm 69:28, speaking of the enemies of the Church and his own, entreats, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous."

(3) From the prophetic threat in John's Revelation, 22:19, "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life," etc.

These things seem more clearly than the noonday light to prove that some people can be erased from the book of life. Thus, the Socinians and Remonstrants and others, who defend the apostasy of the saints and the changeability of election, commonly use these passages to support their error.

XVIII. But the opposite opinion of the orthodox is most true, which decrees this book admits of no erasure, and no one once ascribed to it can be erased from it. There are many arguments that can be brought to bear on it, but we will highlight only a few of them. First, it is demanded from *the immutability of the divine decrees*. For since the book of life is nothing else than the decree of election, as we have already said, by which it was decided to save some from eternity, if such a decree is firm and ἀμεταθέτον [fixed], it is necessary for the writing of such a book to be unchanging and eternal. Now that this is the condition of divine decrees in general, and particularly the decree of predestination, both the very nature of God and the Scriptures plainly cry out. And indeed, the nature of God, because as it is unchangeable and constant, in whom there is no παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα, James 1:17, so must it be unchangeable in will and counsel, that once it is established it can neither be rescinded nor recalled; otherwise it would either change for the better, and so He would not be the wisest, or for the worse, and so He would not be the very best. The Scripture also confirms the same very clearly throughout. For whether decrees are considered in general, "My counsel shall stand," says the Lord, Isaiah 46:10, "I will do all my good pleasure," and Paul, Romans 9:19, "For who hath resisted his will?" Whether it be specifically about election, who does not know that it is called στερεον θεμελιον, "a firm foundation," which cannot be overthrown by any art or strength of the Devil, 2 Timothy 2:19, ἀμετάθετον βουλής, "an unchangeable counsel," which God has sanctioned by two things in which it is impossible for Him to lie, namely, by word and oath, Hebrews 6:17-18, and πρόθεσις κατ' ἐκλογὴν "a purpose according to election, which remains firm," Romans 9:11. Let us omit the various

other phrases by which it is usually described, affirming the same immutability.

XIX. Nor are they to be heard here, who are often compelled [according to their errant understanding of] the Scriptures to attribute repentance and change to God, or who attach certain conditional decrees to Him. For apart from the fact that the election and the calling of the gifts are ἀμεταμέλητοις [without repentance] enumerated from Romans 11:29, it is known that repentance does not properly belong to God, but ανθρωπόπαθως [anthropopathically] and metonymically, not affectively [as willing], but effectively [as to accomplishment] as it denotes a change not of a plan in God, but of a work and a fact outside of God, and it proceeds from the [unchanging] plan of God. Even the changes of things do not immediately mean a change of His will, because those changes depend on the will of God itself remaining unchangeable. As for conditional decrees, we must not doubt that the things themselves willed and decreed are sometimes conditional; which can only be fulfilled by this or that condition: but the orthodox constantly deny that the volition itself, or the decree, can be given conditioned by prior antecedents, and the very wise [Protestant] Synod of France has more than once repudiated it, as an injury to the wisdom, power, and goodness of God. Indeed, God wills and discerns some things to be fulfilled under a condition, either to bring about or to permit. It is true that the same [God] wills something and decides [the outcome] under an impossible condition, and which He knows most certainly will never come about, and which He decides not to give, who alone can give [that which is required], seems far from His wisdom and power.

XX. Secondly, the eternity of *the covenant of grace* furnishes us with an argument. For since this new covenant was not to be abrogated like the former, when it had been cut on tablets of stone, but it was to be eternal and unchangeable, and by a famous promise, Jeremiah 32:30, 40; Hosea 2:19-20, the book also of life, which is truly called the book of the covenant because the covenant is founded and committed in it, so it cannot but be eternal and indelible. Nor should it be repeated here that the constancy promised in the covenant is on the part of God, but not immediately on our part. Therefore, if God promises us His help, if we do our duty, it does not immediately follow that we will always do our duty, so that the covenant would never be broken. For the Lord Himself blocks all the ways to this exception, when in the promise of the covenant He remembers not only His love, but also our fear. For as He promises that He will not depart from us, so He also testifies that he will effect it, so that we do not depart from him, "I will make a perpetual covenant with them, that I may not turn away from doing good to them, and instill reverence in their hearts, that they may not depart from me" [Jeremiah 32:40]. In this way He fulfills both His *and* our parts, so that there is nothing that can destroy the covenant. For if it could be annulled for any reason, it would most likely be done either on God's part, through a change of love, if God withdrew from us, or on our part, through our inconstancy by which we forsook God. But the merciful God assures us that we are safe against both dangers. For as before, He testifies that He will never depart from us; as to the latter, He affirms that by the fear which He will instill in us, He will effect that we should never depart from Him. Thus, He not only promises the end, but also the very means which lead to it, not only offering the benefit of life under the condition which He provided under the law, but also

conferring and fulfilling the condition itself. So that the Remonstrants are in vain, who say that permission cannot be conditioned by a condition of this promise, which does not coincide with the actual thing promised, which anyone may see is most absurd.

XXI. Thirdly, our reasoning is led by the connection and inseparability of the divine graces contained in this book. For as the Heathens used to speak so ill of their graces, that they were always connected and united to each other by a sort of indissoluble bond, it must be considered to have a far superior place in the divine graces, that they may never be separated from each other, and he who once had one must necessarily be a partaker of all. But this [truth] is not only gathered from the eternity of divine love, which extends from eternity to eternity, from eternity in the sense of predestination from before, to eternity in the sense of glorification after the fact, but especially from the effects of that love which God communicates to His faithful, which the Apostle lists in that really wonderful golden chain of salvation, Romans 8:29-30, where it includes all the parts of salvation, the beginning in foreknowledge and predestination, the means in calling and justification, and finally the end in glorification. For these five rings are so connected with each other, that all are equally needed in it; “Those he foreknew he predestinated, and those he predestinated he called, and those he called he justified, and those he justified he glorified.” Hence, no one can be glorified unless he has been justified, called, predestined, and foreknown; no one can be foreknown and predestined at the same time, who is not most certainly glorified. Elsewhere, [if this was not true], Paul would have wrongly said, by conjoining the beginning with the end, that the election had been accomplished, that is, the elect had obtained salvation, but the rest had

been blinded, Romans 11:7. Thus, God's purpose of predestination would not be achieved; nor would the truth of the Apostle's statement be consistent with his own; nor would the faithful have a subject matter in which to boast and exult because of this benefit, which cannot be said without absurdity, nor thought without impiety.

XXII. But let us not linger longer in demonstrating the certainty of election, which, indeed, could be done with various other arguments, but which would lead us away from the goal; let us see a little more precisely whether the Scriptures can be regarded as confirmation of the eternal nature of the book of life. This, however, cannot be gathered by only one solitary reason. First, from the fact that Christ, Luke 10:20, commands the disciples to rejoice, not that the demons are subject to them, but that “their names are written in the heavens.” Now why does He not want them to rejoice in those extraordinary gifts, but only in their election, except for the fact that those gifts were miraculous and temporary, which would cease and be taken away because they were ministerial only, and were such that could also be performed by the reprobate? But the benefit of election which is denoted by this Scripture is eternal and salutary which neither falls onto the reprobate, nor can be taken away from the faithful. But if, as the adversaries think, they could have been erased from this book, He would have exhorted them to rejoice in vain and without reason. For what reason could there be joy for the disciples, if they were in constant crisis of losing this benefit? What joy could they perceive, if it had occurred to them that the firmness of that plan depended on the tenuous free will of a little boy, than which nothing is more unstable and capricious? Finally, that solid joy is that which is eternal, and which no one can snatch away from us; otherwise, more pain often comes from the loss of that which

is good, than the joy perceived from its short and momentary possession. Nor did [German Socinian] Johannes Volkel loosen the knot, vol. 5, chap. 17, when he says that it is a sufficient proof of joy, "to have entered the surest way of salvation, and to be occupied in that state, in which you can be determined to persevere, and if you persevere, you will obtain everlasting happiness in all things." For besides what he falsely supposes to have a name written in heaven, he only conveys the ability to persevere if you will, though Christ also infers the infallibility of persevering and the certainty of attaining salvation, not only the possibility of a thing, but also its futurity. He also wrongly insists that true and solid joy is placed in a changeable and uncertain good, that at every moment one may be able either to shake off the temptations of the Devil, or to be destroyed by one's own weakness and inconstancy. He can also do this because, like heaven, the things that belong to it are stable and immovable; but the earth and all earthly things are transitory and perishable, whence the kingdom of Christ, which is eternal and ἀσάλευτον [cannot be moved], Hebrews 12:28, is called the kingdom of heaven; thus, the writing which takes place in the heavens, not only marks the possession of the heavenly inheritance, but also the constancy and eternity of the divine decree. As the reprobates are said to be written on earth, Jeremiah 17:13, not only because their portion is on earth, not in heaven, but also that their doom and destruction may be noted; as well as the fact that what is written on the ground or in the dust may be easily erased.

XXIII. Secondly, the same [truth] is also not obscurely gathered, Rev. 21:27, where John testifies that no one will enter the heavenly city, except those written in the book of life, "And there shall by no means [εἰ μὴ = if not] enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever

worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life," where the particle $\epsilon\iota\ \mu\eta$ is not [viewed as expressing] an exception, as if those written in the book of life were taken out of the number of the unclean, which the thing itself cries out to be most absurd; but it is an adversative [expressing opposition] which excludes and does not include the elect from that number, in which sense it is often used clearly in Scripture, Luke 4:26-27, Gal. 1:[6-]7, Mark 13:32, whence light may be brought to the two most afflicted places, John 17:12, Galatians 2:16, which the adversaries take advantage of, both to defend the apostasy of the saints, and to establish justification by works with faith; for there these particles are to be understood not as exceptions, but adversatively. John 17:12, "No man perisheth, except the son of perdition," that is, but only [the son of perdition]. Galatians 2:16, "A man is not justified by the works of the law, unless by faith in Jesus Christ," that is, but only by faith. In this sense John says no one will enter the city unless they are written in the book of life. Whereby these two things are necessarily assumed: only those *written* in this book should enter it, while those *not written* may *not* enter and, furthermore, *none* of those *written* will ever be excluded. But this could not be said, if, as the adversaries maintain, some of them could be erased from this book, consequently cutting them off from life and salvation.

XXIV. This very fact is confirmed in the third place by the promise which Christ gives to the conqueror, Rev. 3:5, "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." For since all the elect and faithful are conquerors in Christ, Romans 8:37, and 1 Cor. 15:57, from this it is quite clear no one will be erased from this book. You will say that this negation of the deletion could not have been proposed as some extraordinary benefit

and singular privilege, which is nevertheless declared by Christ, if it were impossible to do otherwise. [Why declare the possibility of erasure when such erasure is impossible, according to the Scriptures cited?] But the answer is easy, for Christ did not propose this destruction was possible in others, but only wished to designate the eternity and constancy of His grace; in the same way that in verse 12 of the same chapter [Rev. 3] He promises the conqueror that he will be like a pillar in the temple of God and will no longer go out, not that anyone can actually go out, but that the perpetuity of glory is indicated. Thus, Christ promises the consolation of His faithful who persevere in faith and piety, which is the perseverance of divine love and benevolence. And thus, He wants to set up an antithesis between the state of the militant Church, in which many hypocrites are always hidden, though they appear from the canon of charity to be written in the book of life, but at the last day are to be discovered and separated from the saints; and the state of the triumphant Church, which has admitted none but true and genuine citizens, who will enjoy eternal communion with God.

XXV. Finally, if anyone could be erased from the book of life, it would only be possible either because God was unable to distinguish [beforehand] true citizens from false, or because He was unable to bestow upon them the preordained grace [necessary for becoming true citizens]. But neither can be said because that is contrary to the supreme wisdom and constancy of God, as if something had happened to Him unexpectedly, because of which He had ever broken from His former plan; or that, having once pleased Him, they afterwards displeased Him. But this derogates from His infinite powers, as if He could not accomplish what He had once appointed. To say this writing

is conditioned, as Volkel wishes, because no one written in the book of life is destined for life without any condition and [the book] completely unchangeable, so long as he is still alive and has not yet completely conquered from all sides; it is to beg for the principle and to assume what is in question [beg the question = assuming the very thing in controversy which is yet to be proved]. For although we do not deny there are conditions which are necessary for the possession of salvation, though this inscription [in the book of life is infallibly] destined for us, because we are not led to the end without means, and He who predestines to the end also predestines the means leading to it, we nevertheless deny that the inscription itself can be said to be conditioned, so that a certain condition precedes it, so that doubts and powers are suspended; not only because, as we have said before, the decrees of God cannot be suspended by any condition outside God, but also because the condition itself, [and the means to achieve it] whatever it ultimately may be, must be appointed for us in the book of life, unless we wish to pass over to the camp of Pelagius. Let it, therefore, remain fixed, as we have previously undertaken to prove, that no one can be erased from the book of life: so that this saying may be given a far superior right to God, as the most infamous judge Pilate said of himself, "What I have written, I have written." How does Augustine apply Psalm 68, for us 69 [verse 28], according to these words, *Let them be blotted out of the book of the living*. "Brothers, we must not accept that God writes anyone in the book of life and erases him. If a man said, What I have written, I have written, does God write and then erases anyone? They are foreknown. He predestined all before the foundation of the world to reign with his Son in eternal life. The book of life contains those whom he inscribed," etc.

XXVI. But since the passages quoted seem to undermine the anchor of our salvation, let us see a few ways in which they may be answered. The first passage is taken from Exodus 32:32, where it deals with the vow of Moses, which, because it is more difficult than the others, must be dealt with in a little more detail. Not a few interpreters have occupied themselves with this difficulty, which are not worth mentioning, as their variegated comments do little to resolve the matter. Some, such as Rabbi Solomon Jarchi among the Jews, and Cajetan among the Pontiffs, contend that by this book is not to be understood the book of life, but the book of the Law, vocation, or leadership, from which Moses asked his name to be blotted out, preferring to remove the memory of his deeds by perpetual oblivion, than all the people perish; and if the meaning was, 'If you do not wish, O God, to spare the people because of the sin which they admitted into your Law, I no longer wish to be named in this Law, as if I had been the author of this promulgation, or at least if I had given the opportunity as to why the whole people should be destroyed.' Others, like Augustine, quest. 147 in Exodus, and Gregory of Valencia, want Moses to have interrupted God with such reasoning stemming from the great security of divine familiarity: "Either forgive them this harm, or erase me from your book. But you will not erase me from your book, in which you inscribed me with an indelible character, therefore forgive them this harm." Others refer to the book of the covenant or the catalog of the Church's Saints in this sense; "I would rather you take me off the list of your people, and from the number of them to whom you have made promises of life, than allow me to see all the people exterminated." There are those who have said Moses was disturbed, not from reason, "but from the attack of human infection, weakness and impatience," as

Hugh of St. Victor. But not all these things can untie the knot, and they seem more weakening than what is proper to such ardent charity and heroic affection.

XXVII. Therefore, we think that it is more convenient to answer the bifurcation:

(1) That the words of Moses should not be referred to the book of eternal life, or to the decree of election, as if he wished to devote himself to eternal destruction, but to the book of present life, which is the book of Providence, that he wished to die sooner than to see the destruction of the whole people, or that by this death of his own people He wished to redeem salvation, as if to say, "It is better for me to die than for all the people who are enrolled in your covenant, and freed from Egypt by so many miracles, to perish in this desert under the perpetual disgracing of your name." This was the opinion of Jerome, quest. 9 to Algasia, where he says that out of charity for the people Moses and Paul wished to perish, not forever, but in the present, not in the spirit, but in the flesh, that is, by bodily death. To whom Euthymius goes in Psalm 68, and Gregory in I. 10, delay. chap. 7. And to confirm (a) that Moses speaks in general about the book of God, about the book of life. "Delete me," he said, "from your book." (b) Because Moses' vow must respond to God's threat against the people, since he wishes to transfer the punishment inflicted on them to himself. But the threat and punishment were nothing other than their murder and bodily death; as is clear from verse 10, "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation;" where, by its annihilation, no one can deny the marking of its sudden and universal destruction; and reason

shows that, since there were not a few chosen among the people, no one said God had threatened them with eternal death. This is confirmed from verse 24 [sic: 27], where the punishment itself is proposed to be inflicted on the people. Whence Moses, speaking of the same kind of death, says, "delete me from thy book." (c) He does this above all, as he did in Numbers 11:15, on a similar firm occasion, and to the same mind, returning to the sepulcher of concupiscence, "if you deal thus with me, I beg you to kill me," desiring a bodily death, nay, an untimely and violent death, due to his burning in love for the people, that he might redeem their death by his own destruction.

XXVIII. It is true, though we understand this book to be the book of life, it does not immediately follow that the adversaries maintain that anyone can be erased from that book. Because in prayers and vows not all are made with vigor and strength, but sometimes they are made αδυνατα [weakly], as David when he wishes to die for Absalom, 2 Samuel 18, as Christ praying to pass the cup, Matthew 26, and Paul to become accursed for his brothers, Romans 9:3. And yet they are not made erroneously and haphazardly because they are not made absolutely, but rather hypothetically, under some tacit or expressed condition of the will of God and the possibility of the matter. Nor should it be seen as surprising, for in this way, according to the consideration of the objects, Saints are wont to be affected differently, and to speak differently, when they regard their own salvation or that of others, looking to the glory of God; but it is otherwise with regard to God's decree and good pleasure.

Christ, when He attends to the unbelief and [lack of] love by the Jews, weeps, and earnestly deplores their downfall, Luke 19:41. "Oh, that you

would attend to those things which concern your peace." But at the same time, when He thinks of the most just decree of the Father, He who rests in it exults in His Spirit and gives thanks to Him, Matthew 11:25. Thus, when at the time of the passion of the divine wrath, which was imminent to Him, weighed down with the heaviest weight and the most terrible death which threatened Him with a kind of horror, yet restrained by His natural impartiality, He implores God: "Let this cup pass from me." But when He raises His eyes again to the wisest decree of the Father, He submits to it, "but not as I, but as you will, O Father."

Thus, when Paul looks back to God's eternal plan regarding the election and rejection of men, he acknowledges that it is so unchangeable that He can neither reject the people whom He foresaw and chose, nor can He give [saving grace to] those whom He rejected; but at the same time, while he attends to the rejection of his brethren, and that grievous *πωρωσιν* [hardening] which happened to Israel, he cannot control himself, but with intense love of charity chooses to become anathema to his brethren, and to be separated from Christ Himself.

We observe the same in Moses. Of course, Moses was not unaware that God's plan was irrevocable, and that it was impossible for either the elect to perish or the reprobate to be saved; He knew it was alien to God's own justice to destroy the innocent with the guilty. But since all his senses were bound, as it were, by the care of the people, whose care he knew was demanded of him, nothing else came to his mind at that moment than the people should be saved, and the glory of God should not be obscured by their destruction; but he paid no attention to those things which were contrary to his great anxiety. Nor was it surprising he was perplexed, for he thought that by the destruction of

the chosen people the faith of God would be obliterated, and that His glory would be endangered in a strange way by this rejection; he thought the covenant entered into with him would be broken, and that the great Egypt would be given an opportunity to blaspheme its enemies. This he bears so painfully and impatiently, that he would rather devote himself to destruction than allow such a snare of blasphemy to [benefit] his enemies. But these things are to be understood in such a way that a silent condition must always be included in such a vow and the like, for instance, *if* it is possible, and *if* it leads to the glory of God; concerning those in any way under any blame, it might be a useful means of obtaining pardon for the people. Hence, the petition does not immediately imply the possibility of the fact, but expresses the petitioner's zeal and charity, and a certain heroic and extraordinary ardor, who would, at any risk, even his own destruction, if possible, redeem the glory of God and the salvation of his brothers. And such desires and wishes, although they are in themselves ineffectual to act, yet they are usually of the greatest virtue to procure; for friends are accustomed, by such prayers, in a certain way, to wring out of their friends that which they desire from them. It is as if a son, who is dear to his father above all others, pleads with his father on behalf of his brother whose fault it was to have fallen asleep, and tries to appease his anger, by suggesting either forgive him, or kill me, or disinherit me; for he knows that the parent will do anything rather than kill or disinherit the good son.

XXIX. Because it is not easy to conceive how Moses and Paul could have wished for their eternal destruction and separation from the highest good, which seems to be the strongest adversary to piety and love; We do not, without discomfort, distinguish here between the friendship of

Christ and its fruit, or between holiness which is ethically good and physical happiness. For as in God, we pay particular attention to these two things: sanctity and happiness, which are shared in a small measure with the creatures whom He calls to Himself; Thus, in the loss of God there are two things, a lack of holiness, by which we adhere to God, and a lack of happiness, in which we enjoy Him. Thus, Christ is said to have been forsaken by God, namely the sharing of glory and the influx of joy, although He was never separated from Him as to the participation of holiness and the influx of virtue, rather as to the inclination toward favor, but not the inclination toward justice. We can say the same about Moses and Paul, that they did not desire the privation of holiness, or the dissolution of their friendship with God, who by desiring this would not be so displeasing to God as they would be wicked by seeking such; but rather let them speak of the fruits of that friendship and the sense of happiness to signify that they would love God more willingly in His sight, with the joy and sweetness that springs from it, far more than if all the people should perish. They do not wish to be enemies of God, but objects of vengeance. They want to perish, not as enemies of God, but as saviors of their brothers, if only this could be done from the nature of things, and through the counsel of God, to whom the saints must always submit themselves in their prayers and vows to Christ. So that similar statements here are always to be understood conditionally and hypothetically, not absolutely.

XXX. But here someone would rule at once; Although the condition in Moses was implied, the difficulty is not removed, because God, answering Moses, speaks absolutely, not only declaring the thing may be done, but actually denounces what is about to be, verse 33, “Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.”

Response #1: If we understand the passage about bodily death, all difficulty will be removed, because no one denies that many are often taken from the living, and are destroyed from the number of the living by the just judgment of God. Response # 2: But if we speak of the eternal, the possibility of the thing is no longer established; for as the vow of Moses had been conditional, if it could be done through an impossibility, God answers under the same tacit condition, that if the thing could be done, Moses would not be destroyed, because it is contrary not only to consistency, but also to divine justice, which would not allow him to be destroyed, who would be out of harm's way, but would require the guilty person to be punished. God, therefore, speaks of that which ought to have been done by law, but not of that which He Himself was going to do, otherwise as many as had sinned, both the reprobate and the elect, would have been destroyed, which, however, was not done. Whence you may well gather, that the justice of God requires the guilty be punished, not the innocent, but also that the matter should not be immediately ordered to be executed individually. Thus, the Lord corrects the vow of Moses by not being angry with him for such a prayer, which, although he poured it out precipitously, the Lord nevertheless knew that it proceeded from a certain excess of charity, but He kindly reprimands Moses and commends the equity of his judgment, which nevertheless does not exclude the truth of mercy, which was clearly demonstrated in granting the pardon of the people.

XXXI. Therefore, although this wish could not be fulfilled by Moses, it should not be thought that it was in vain, for one should not pay as much attention to the event, as the demonstration of hyperboles or excesses of charity, which is usually applied to the impossible, because there is no satisfaction in what can actually be done. Whence a

hyperbolic phrase is used, in which what is to be discerned is not so much what is said as what is understood; and not so much that it is actually possible, but that those things which are most difficult are included under it, but nevertheless possible, are all understood. So that Moses might show that he could experience nothing more severe and intolerable than the calamity of his people, he brings to himself the most difficult thing, which could not be done, not that it might be done, but that by it he might signify the most horrible thing that could be said or thought according to the very nature of this world. Hence, it is no more troubling than what Moses or Paul wishes, when Paul himself says in Galatians, chapter 4, "You would have plucked out your own eyes," not as if he thought that their eyes could be plucked out, but it as if he only hinted that nothing was so dear to them that they would not lose it for his sake. Thus, Moses wishes his name to be blotted out of the book of life, and Paul to be accursed by Christ, not because they really wanted this, for they by no means thought it could actually be done, but rather to show how they would refuse nothing if God would appease His people, and that there was nothing more they could hope for than the salvation of the people. Moreover, if it is asked why Moses expressed his mind with this phrase, rather than any other, it can be answered that he spoke from the occasion, and as a matter of fact, having regard to what had gone before. The Lord had said to Moses, "Let me go, that I may consume them in my burning anger, and I will blot out their name from under heaven," Deut. 9:14. Therefore, Moses answers by alluding to those words, and asks for the salvation of the people, not only that his name be blotted out from under the heavens, but also from the book which He had written in the heavens. The same can be said of Paul's vow. He had said at the end of [Romans] chapter 8,

that there was nothing in heaven, nor on earth, nor in the underworld, that could separate him from the love of God in Christ. Now, in order to testify to his excessive love for the Jews, his brothers according to the flesh, and the inmost pain with which he was affected by their destruction, he confesses that he wished to be accursed from Christ, that is, to be separated from Him, if it were possible, and thus, was animated out of love when he said he would have their salvation redeemed by his destruction, so they would not be separated from Christ, but instead, *he* would be separated from Him.

XXXII. The second passage that is objected to is taken from Psalm 69:28, where the Psalm, among other things, curses the enemies of the Church and its people, also adds this, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous;" which of course he would not have been able to say, unless he had recognized that certain ones *could* be deleted from such a book. I respond: Indeed, this could conveniently be related to some regarding temporal destruction and bodily death, as in the catalog of the faithful who, professing the name of God, were considered by the rule of charity to have died in the grace of God. It is true that even though this prayer was extended even further to eternal destruction, he would not even do anything for his adversaries. For a double deletion needs to be distinguished; some positive and real, others only negative and apparent. The former may be considered previously written and then erased; the latter may be considered never having been inscribed, though they thought, testified and believed otherwise. The former is absolutely impossible, the latter is often understood in regard to hypocrites and προσκαίρων [the temporary Christian professors], when God removes their mask and renounces them from the external body of

the Church; for thus, by removing from them the signs of vocation, and the prerogatives of the external covenant in which they boasted, He shows they were never really chosen, nor did they belong to the mystical body of the Church, even though they temporarily occupied a place among the faithful, and were held as such either according to their own boasting, or according to the opinion of others. Thus David, acting in a prophetic spirit, does not so much conceive prayers against the enemies of the Church, as he does pouring out oracles about their destruction, while he wishes those who boasted they were members of the Church, and were seen to be inscribed on the white list of the faithful, with their masks taken off, should be cast out of the Church and cut off, that it may appear that, although they had been mixed with the household [of God] they were themselves strangers, and had never really been inscribed on the white list of the faithful. Now that this is the mind of the Psalter can be proved, (1) From the following words, which are added to the exegete, they were not written when the righteous' names were written; this occurs here and there in the Psalms, that the latter part of the verse is an exegesis of the former verse, and the same thing is said in other terms, the same as observed here; What the Psalmist would say figuratively and tropically about erasure, he already explains in his own expression, when he says, *they are not written*, so as to imply that erasure is nothing else than *they who are not written*. (2) From the parallel passage previously cited, Ezek. 13:9. When denouncing the Pseudo-Prophets with the same punishment, He emphasizes it negatively, "they are not written in the catalog of the house of Israel," etc. (3) From the completion of this oracle, which in the New Testament partly refers to Judas, the betrayer, Acts 1:20, but also to the obstinate enemies of Christ, Romans 11:8-9,

since it is clear from the declaration of Christ Himself that they were reprobates and children of perdition, having been devoted to eternal destruction, it is easily evident from this that it cannot be said they were ever truly inscribed, unless we say the writing for damnation and the writing for life are one and the same, which is *ἀσυστατον* [inconsistent].

XXXIII. Thus, explains Augustine in h. 1. *Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous:* "Brethren, we must not take it that whoever God inscribes in the book of life can be blotted out. If a man said, what I have written, I have written, concerning the title where the king of the Jews was written, will God inscribe and then destroy anyone? It is [based on] prescience; he predestined all before the foundation of the world to reign with his Son in eternal life; those whom he inscribed, the book of life itself contains." And a little later, "How are these then to be erased from there, where they were never written? This was said according to their hope, because they thought they were written there. What is erased from the book of life? To make it clear to them that they were not there, etc. For the verse that follows explains what was said, and they are not written with the righteous. He then said they should be destroyed according to their hope, but according to your equity, what do I say? they are not written," etc. From which it is clear that erasure itself is nothing else than the manifestation of non-writing, or the negation of writing. You may ask, Why does the Bible use this word, 'destroy,' if they were never written? I respond: This is because he does not always speak from the truth of the matter, but to man *κατά δόξαν* [according to his alleged glory], according to the vain presumption of hypocrites, or the opinion of others, as Matthew 9:12. The Pharisees

are called healthy, who do not need a physician, not because they were such, but because they boasted that they were such, Luke 18:9. Thus Matthew 13:12, "He that hath nothing, even that which he hath shall be taken from him." How so, if he has nothing? That is to say, according to the interpreter of Luke 8:18, "Even what he seems to have." Thus, they are said to have been erased, because they seemed to be inscribed either according to their own opinions or to others. And here it is to be observed that the Church is usually distinguished according to the double σχέσιν, either as the visible of the called, or the invisible of the predestined; Thus, the book in which men are enrolled can be said to be twofold, the book of external calling, in which as many as are called externally are enrolled and received into the visible Church, and the other, the book of eternal predestination, in which God inscribes those who are His. His inscribing is external and perceptible, which is done before men as regards their external profession and from the judgment of charity; but out of this the internal and substantially called are in God's decree, which are the truth of the matter. This double inscription is opposed to a double erasure, one of which is true of actual eternal inscription, the other which is merely disguised and temporary. The former can be given and is often given, but the latter never; in the same plain agreement with which Christ, John 15:2, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away," not that it was really ever so ingrained in Christ, but because it seemed so. Of course, just as grafting can be twofold, one of external profession, such as that of hypocrites temporarily, another of internal communion, such as that of true believers, so there is a twofold cutting off, one from the internal communion of the mystical body of Christ, which is impossible, the other from external possession, which is usually done by them every

day by those who either voluntarily withdraw from the Church and make shipwreck of the faith, or who are expelled from it by the just judgment of God.

XXXIV. From which it is easy to gather what is to be answered to the third place said from the prophetic communication, Rev. 22:19, "If anyone takes away from the words of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the book of life." In addition to the fact that the statement is conditional, not absolute, *if* someone takes it away; and that condition does not fall on those written through the grace of election, 1 John 3:9. It is certain that deletion is not to be understood positively, which supposes a previous inscription, but negatively, which negates all writing that may possibly be erased, to make it known that they were never written, and that they are therefore to have no part in that view; and this is not obscurely evident from an equally relevant part of the verse, when it is said that his part will be taken out of the holy city [Rev. 22:19]; not what they previously had or will have, but rather that they will not have any part in it whatsoever. Thus God, in order to commend the equity of His judgment, teaches how punishment should correspond to sin, as is not often the case elsewhere. For the falsifiers and corrupters, who have wished to adulterate this book by addition, God will add on top of you all the plagues of that book. As for other impostors, who have mutilated this book by taking away, God will take away his part from the book of life, "If anyone adds to the words of this prophecy, all the plagues of this book will be imposed on him, but if anyone takes away from the words of this book of prophecy, God will take away his part from the book of life," etc. Not how much he actually had, but what he thought he had or

he boasted that he had it, and which others, from his profession, thought, by an external judgment of charity, to belong to him.

XXXV. There remains the third and last question to be briefly considered: Whether and how we may know that we are written in the book of life? To which, as there are two members of it, we must also answer distinctly. At first, the reason for doubt emerges from it, since election, which is marked in the book of life, remains hidden before God like a book sealed with seven seals, or it cannot be known with certainty except by the event itself, not unlike the other decrees of God; so, it does not seem to be evident to any mortal. Hence, the Pontiffs and others, who attack the subjective and objective certainty of grace, deny that anyone can or ought to be certain without special revelation, nor by the certainty of divine faith, to which falsity cannot be subject, that his sins have been forgiven him, and that he is in the grace of God, and if certainty is held, it is only moral and conjectural, which should [not] be accompanied by doubt and hesitation. See Bellarmine, *On Justification*, chap. 2.

XXXVI. It is true the Orthodox who follow the Scriptures as a guide here have a very different mind. For although they do not doubt that this book, sealed with seven seals, cannot be opened by anyone, either by angels or men; yet they know that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb of God, who prevailed to open the book, namely Christ the Θεάνθρωπος [God-man], who, since He has the fullest knowledge of it, obtained the right and office to reveal as much as is necessary, Rev. 5:5. Although they admit that this knowledge is not always possessed, or that it does not come into action in the same degree and tenor, they nevertheless acknowledge that it is possible to have this special

revelation, so that the believer can at any time, and must decide with certainty, that he is chosen for eternal life and established in grace. Nor are there lacking various reasons by which this opinion can be confirmed.

(1) Because it is the very image of God's grace, that He wishes not only to bestow good things on us, but also to impress upon us the sense and knowledge of them; otherwise, we would neither be thankful for them nor enjoy them with consolation, though we are bound to do both. Here Paul, 1 Cor. 2:12, it is testified that "we have received the Spirit of God, that we may know the things which have been given to us by God."

(2) Because the faithful can know they are children of God, therefore, both chosen and enrolled in the book of life. No one can obtain this adoption except by election; "The same Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," Romans 8:16.

(3) Because they can know they have eternal life: "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe in the name of the Son of God," 1 John 5:13. But where does eternal life come from except from the book of life?

(4) Because they can know that they believe, while faith is actually reflected in their apprehension, "I know whom I have believed," says Paul, 2 Tim. 1:12. "We have believed and know that you are the Christ, the Son of God," said the disciples, John 6:69. And 1 John 2:5, "we know that we know Him." But faith comes from calling, calling from predestination, so that he who knows that he believes must also know that he is chosen.

XXXVII. (5) This is especially the case with the white stone which Christ promises to give to the Victor, on which a new name must be inscribed, which no one knows but he who has received it, Rev. 2:17. For whether the white stone refers to the custom of the judgments, in which the guilty were acquitted with the white stone, but condemned with the black, to which belongs Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 15:

“The ancient custom was to vote using black and white pebbles: the black to condemn: the white to absolve from punishment.”

Hence, the custom of marking happy days with a white stone seems to have flowed, and thus, the absolution of the faithful before God is signified, of which Christ speaks, John 5:24. Whether He alludes to the Councils of old, in which, as Erasmus observes, the name of the one who was favored was inscribed in stone, so that the dignity of the children of God who become kings and priests to God may be indicated, Rev. 1:5; or finally, whether he looks back to the solemn contests of the Greeks, in which, if Arete is to be believed, white pebbles were given to the conquerors as a sign of victory, in order that by this means the glory and triumph of the victorious faith might be outlined, it is certain, in whatever way He took that new name, which is said to be inscribed on these pebbles (which can be nothing else than the glorious name of the son of God and the heir of the kingdom of heaven, which in Isaiah 56:5 is said to be a better name than sons and daughters, about which see 1 John 3:1, Rev. 22:4-5, and 3 :12), to be known to the recipient, though hidden from others. But this would be said erroneously and falsely, if neither adoption nor election could be known to any of the faithful. For let us not doubt that the perfect fulfillment of this promise is reserved for the future life, in which, having completed our course and fought

the good fight, we shall be acquitted by Christ, and shall receive the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven and the crown of life, as our victorious βραβειον [award]; it cannot be denied, however, that in this life, in which the faithful, through the grace of God, not only begin to overcome, but also υπέρνικωσι [more than conquerors], Romans 8:34, [sic: 8:37], for their consolation already commences, when the absolving decision of Christ is intimated in their hearts and their adoption is sealed in them by the Spirit, Romans 8:16, Gal. 4:6.

XXXVIII. (6) These also convey the same information: πληροφορία [full assurance], πεποίθις [confidence], καυχῆσις [pride], εἰρήνη [peace], χάρα [joy], ανεκλαλητος [inexpressible], and the like, which are given throughout to the faithful. For by this agreement they could have peace with God, or glory in Him, or exult with inexpressible and glorious joy; By what reason would that confidence and full assurance, by which they approach the throne of grace μετὰ παρρησίας [with boldness], be given them, if they were constantly agitated by fear and doubt and could only obtain a conjectural and uncertain opinion of the grace of God? To take refuge here in a special revelation, as if that conviction had been the privilege of some few, but not of all, exulted above the common lot of the faithful; is to ignore the power of the Spirit and the nature of true faith, which must produce the same effects in all, though in different degrees. Wherefore those endowments, not just particular to some, but common to all, whose foundations and principles the Apostle testifies applying to himself as well as other believers, Romans 8:31-34, of course, God's election, calling, and justification, with Christ's death, resurrection, and intercession, etc.

XXXIX. Although we believe this certainty can be had, we do not think it always and everywhere comes into action or comes out to the same degree. Indeed, we do not always doubt that the principle of this certainty is in the faithful, but not equally in the act. For faith, severely shaken by the onslaught of temptations, cannot produce this effect. Thus, if a believer falls into some grave sin, and remains in it, he will be far from being able to elicit this act for the time being since the actual fear of the opposite may follow, and a deep cloud may be seen interposed between God and man, which intercepts the radiance of the Spirit and takes away the sense of grace. Hence, those sad complaints of the faithful, as of Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Romans 7:24, and David who complains that the right hand of the Most High is mute, Psalm 77:10. But this happens above all in graver crimes, for while the sinner wallows in them, the Spirit taking away the light of divine consolation, that actual conviction [of salvation] seems to be completely removed, all spiritual comfort blocked, and the light of the divine countenance hidden; especially if the waves of temptation rise higher, and even wound the conscience pressed in its burden by the fiery weapons of the Devil; for then this persuasion is not merely sweet; but the exact opposite seems to succeed, whereby the troubled faithful apprehend God as angry with them, and appear to have been brought to the very gates of the Orcus [Roman god of the underworld]; hence that David, Psalm 31:22, "I said in my haste, I am cut off before your eyes," etc. Therefore, in order for that conviction to come out acutely, there must necessarily be present in the believer the pursuit of holiness, and the use of all the means decreed by God to attain salvation; Because it was only to those who walked in the way according to these central principles that He gave His

promises; in which are the γνώρισματτα [attributes] and unquestioned evidence of election and justification. Wherefore the apostle not only declares there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ, but in order that his true character may be pointed out, he adds, *those who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit*, to whom these also belong, 1 John 2:3, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." From this it is clear that without the study of sanctification no actual conviction can be given either of grace or of glory. It is only when sanctification is absent that [allegedly] the true act of trust can stand with the act of sinning on purpose, which the profane would have, by casually loosening the veils of security and license.

XL. From this it is also not obscurely gathered, that this conviction does not always come into action in the same degree and in the same tenor in all the faithful, nay, even in the same faithful. For since it always has sanctification as its companion, nay, it arises from it in a certain way and is merged in it, according to the lesser or greater measure of sanctification, it must be greater or less, and either increase or decrease. Hence, it is felt to be strong and lively, or thin and feeble, according as the faith and piety in us either increases or weakens, lacking vigor, or according to the intensity of the waves of temptation attacking the anchor of faith. Thus, the twofold state of the faithful must be distinguished here, either of Temptation and mourning, or of Victory and Triumph. The former in which he fights by hand-to-hand combat that which the enemy has sown; The latter by which he wrests from Temptation, and triumphs over his vanquished enemy; For in Him the believer fears and is repelled, in Him he trusts and is strengthened; To that point, David cries out in sorrow, "My God, my God, why hast

thou forsaken me? and I have been cast out of thy sight;" In this he triumphs, happy and confident in his going forth, "I have set the Lord before my eyes, because he is at my right hand, therefore I will not be moved. Therefore, my heart rejoiced, and my glory rejoices," Psalm 16:8-9. To that point, Paul complains he is carnal and sold under sin; During this he recognizes himself as the Victor, and thanks God his deliverer, Romans 7:24-25, 1 Cor. 15: 55, 57. We are not, therefore, as our adversaries falsely assert, among those who want their conviction to have that degree of certainty which will permanently exclude all fear of the opposite, but rather who believe [true Christians] will at last overcome and conquer their fear. For though this progress may for a time be cut off in the faithful, and the sense both of past election and of future glory be taken away, yet it cannot be completely lost or extinguished, so as to be taken away from them forever. For the soul of the faithful finally emerges from that abyss of temptations by the grace of God who chose him, and raises him up, when he asks for the lost joy of salvation to be restored to him, and he rejoices over the restoration, so that the bones that were broken before now rejoice, Psalm 51:12, 14. Thus the faithful, tossed by storm and tempest, taste and perceive more sweetly the rest in the harbor of salvation, returning from temptation strengthened and happy. Hence, we conclude that, even if such knowledge and conviction cannot always be in everyone, yet no one is a true believer who is not at last, sooner or later, steeped in the sense of it to the glory of God and his own comfort.

XLI. This, then, having once been established, it remains to be inquired, whence that knowledge is to be had, which seems all the more difficult, because with this book of life close to God, it remains closed and sealed, 2 Tim. 2:19, nor should it be fully opened before the last day,

Rev. 20:12, it does not seem easy to say by what means we can arrive at His knowledge. Indeed, will it be necessary to ascend to the heavens ourselves, in order to open this book and read our names written in it? Are the mysteries of God to be searched for us, which God has kept for himself alone, Deut. 29:29, and what should be marveled at in submission to that which is venerable, and not be wondered at with a curious and sacrilegious rashness? Or will we demand or wait for some extraordinary revelation from heaven, which will reveal this mystery to us, and which will make us sure and secure about our election? Of course, we would be disappointed if we wanted to even think about such a thing or to undertake it. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" That we should cry out to the edge of that abyss with Paul, ὧ βάθος πλούτου καὶ σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως Θεοῦ, Romans 11:33-34. Acts 15:18, *His works have been known to him since ancient times*, he who sees them and reads them in the decree, but who presumes to arrogate to himself this knowledge of mortals, which He kept only for Himself? He knows those who are His own, 2 Tim. 2:19, but who besides God, unless He reveals Himself, is able to rise up to the task?

XLII. However, this does not stand in the way, for the less we say that knowledge can be had from the prior and antecedent, but rather from the posterior and consequent; not by inquiring into the causes of Election, which is impious, but rather by observing the effects and signs, which is permitted; Not by ascending into heaven, but by descending to us; not by opening the book of life, which is hidden from all but God alone, but by reading the book of the Gospel together with the book of conscience, which are open to every believer who seriously

pays close attention; Not by fearing the sanctuary of the divine mind; but by diligently observing the regeneration of the heart. Of course, as we said concerning the business of salvation that God is not ignorant of His goods bestowed upon us, therefore, He does not want to hide from us the main foundation of all His goods, on which all our solace depends, that is, Election. From this truth we find it is the Father who sustains the office of Supreme Judge, instead of a tribunal giving an absolute sentence about us; It is the Son of God and Sponsor, who made satisfaction for us; So think of the Holy Spirit as a kind of heavenly Chancellor, if one is allowed to speak so, who inscribes and works in us the stamp of Election and Justification; So much so that the conscience is like a mirror or a certain sky, in which we can see and read the precisely organized engravings of whatever the Father decreed in our favor. It is not otherwise that the terrible sentence of the Law is written in the conscience of the wicked, which accuses and condemns them. Thus, these two books correspond very well to each other, the *book of life* and the *book of conscience*. In the former that sentence of acquittal is written by decree; In the latter that sentence [of guilt] is written down by the impression of the Holy Spirit.

XLIII. But if one asks further, How does the Holy Spirit engrave that stamp on our hearts? I answer using twofold Scriptures: one which seals the remission of sins, the other which seals the renewal of the heart. For when the covenant of grace, which depends on the book of life, is fulfilled in two parts, the promise of favor on the part of God, and the stipulation of duty on our part, that God may remember our sins no more, and write the Law in our hearts, Jeremiah 31:33-34. For both, a double operation of the Spirit was needed, (1) Consolation, (2) Sanctification, by which He would seal the promise of grace in us, and

by writing the Law in us, He would instill in us the faithfulness of obedience. Hence, he is called the Spirit of grace and supplications, Zech. 12:10, grace on the part of God, because He seals it, supplications on our part, because He awakens us to them; and Romans 8:15-16, The same Spirit, which testifies we are the children of God, by descending into our hearts through the application of divine promises, causes us to cry Abba Father, ascending to God with inexpressible groans. But Paul's excellent passage, 2 Tim. 2:19, where he says that the foundation of God, which necessarily includes Election, is fortified and sealed with a double seal, hence, on the part of God by His love and care because *God knows those who are His own*; and from this, in the pursuit of piety and sanctification on our part, *Let him who calls upon the name of Christ depart from iniquity*. For by these two characteristic arguments the Holy Spirit impresses upon us the certainty of our election; Then by consoling us with the remembrance of the love and benevolence of God the Father, which never forsakes us; Then by sanctifying us by withdrawing from iniquity and pursuing piety. For wheresoever there is a sense of divine love, and peace and joy blossoming from it, as well as a zeal for good works; there the indubitable γνωρίσματα [attributes] of election and justification will meet, for there can never be anything like that in a reprobate. And it regards Rev. 13:8, where all the inhabitants of the earth are said to worship the Beast, in addition to specifying inscription in the book of life, which argues that those who do *not* consent to this sin, as well as this 'holy' apostasy, and instead prefer to pursue a pure and undefiled life, is to be recognized as indubitable testimony [of their salvation].

XLIV. He does this because 2 Peter 1:10 commands the faithful to *confirm their Calling and Election*, that is, by good works, not with

respect to God Himself and indeed on both sides of the matter, since both [calling and election] are ἀμεταμελητος [without repentance] and unchangeable [on God's part]; but on the basis of our own sense of ourselves. For it is wonderful how much good works contribute to this, either as *effects* which prove the cause, or as *fruits* which indicate the tree, or as *seals* and marks which express the image of the heavenly Father by whom we are called, or as *means* which lead us infallibly to salvation, to which we are destined. For in these four ways good works can confirm this certainty, as if *effected by Election*, because they depend on it and are ordained, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:30, Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:2, or as a *seal of Calling*, by which it is sealed in us, 2 Cor. 1:21-22, 1 Peter 1:15, and 2:9, or as the *fruits of faith and justification*, which arise from them, Romans 5:1, Galatians 5:6, Romans 6:1-2, or as means of salvation which tend to it, Ephesians 2:10, Matthew 5:8, Hebrews 12:14. For if the effect necessarily betrays its cause, as does the fruit the tree, if the means is connected with the end, and the characteristics reflect the image of its prototype, who can doubt whether the believer who truly discovers these things in himself has already been chosen, called and justified, and so should deduce he is most assuredly saved?

XLV. But there can be no more sure or more indubitable argument and τεκμηριον [convincing proof] of this truth than the very conformity and similitude which intercedes between us and God. For with Election and Calling they aim at no other than our communion with God, and from that likeness and transformation, 1 John 3:2, Col. 3:4, 2 Cor. 3:18, Psalm 17:15, in no other way can both be more clearly demonstrated, than if we are able to detect in ourselves the rays and characteristics of His conformity, so that we may present to God the same thing that God

does to us. For with Election and Calling they aim at no other than our communion with God, and from that likeness and transformation, 1 John 3:2, Col. 3:4, 2 Cor. 3:18, Psalm 17:15, in no other way can both be more clearly demonstrated, than if we are able to detect in ourselves the rays and characteristics of our conformity to God, so that we may present to Him the same conformity that He does to us. If then, you wish to know, Has God chosen you from eternity? Look back, did you seriously choose God as your God in time, so that He alone will be your inheritance, your portion and the highest good? For as many as God chooses for His own, they in turn choose God and adhere to Him constantly. Do you want to know, Did He call you? Take heed whether you call upon Him from your heart; for to the divine voice which calls you as a son, it is necessary to respond with the human voice, which takes refuge in Him as the Father, Romans 8:15, Hosea 2:20. You ask, Has God foreknown and loved you according to His design and purpose? See whether you know Him and love Him in your heart; For love begets love, and flame kindles flame, 1 John 4:10-11. Are you asking whether you have obtained mercy and forgiveness of sins? Inquire whether you yourself are clothed with the bowels of mercy, and whether you are ready to forgive others whatever they have sinned against you; see if you possess the mark of that virtue, for you must determine the effect itself to be certain, Col. 3:10. In one word, if you want to know for certain whether your name is written in the Book of Life; Investigate whether the name of God and His Law are engraved in your heart to worship and love Him; for these things are such that they necessarily accompany each other, and cannot or should not ever be separated from one another.

XLVI. Though our Adversaries most falsely object that much is lacking in this assurance of security, that it is nothing more than a mother or a midwife's license; yet no stronger incentive can be given to piety and sanctity, than a lively assessment of the love of God, and of what has been bestowed to us. For the faithful soul seriously needs to consider that what God has joined together, "promises and precepts, the benefits of God as well as our duties, the end in addition to the use of the means," should not be torn away from Him; nor should any place be given to them except with these. Whoever, therefore, loosens the veils of security or license, because he divides what is to be joined, and unites what is divided, in him there can be no confidence of true grace, but a sense of anger and curse, which remains ungodly and impenitent. But those who have this hope and conviction cannot, if they are truly what they profess, not diligently purify themselves, 1 John 3:3, work out their salvation with fear and trembling, Phil. 2:12, walk in the way of good works, Eph. 2:10, to watch, to pray, to fight, and to be faithful unto death, Eph. 6, Rev. 2:10, that they may know that such works are the effects of election, and the means of salvation, without which neither can these be known, nor can these ever be obtained.

XLVII. Since then it is certain this benefit is reserved for the faithful alone, and that the Lamb will not recognize anyone as His own, whose names He has not recorded in His Book, so as to exclude no one from those written (for nothing shall enter the City, but only those who have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life, Rev. 21:27, so if anyone is not found written, he must be cast into the lake of fire, Rev. 20:15); It is most important for us to consult this Book of the Lamb often, lest those whom we think have been enlisted for His sacred service, may at last prove proscribed to our great loss. For as Nehemiah 7:64 relates, only

those were admitted to the priesthood who could show their race and family in the public tables, similarly no one can be admitted to life and the royal priesthood, whose names have not been written in the Catalogue of heavenly Jerusalem. If, however, they have once been brought into that census, it is impossible for them to be removed from it, whatever the devil and the world may finally plot against them; For God Himself professes to know such by name, and to have them under His seal. These, like pillars in the house of God, remain unmoved in His sight; Even among all the horses, trumpets, bowls, thunders and earthquakes they are never cast down from their firm position. They who are girded for vengeance are not allowed to injure the earth or the sea until these are sealed for certain safety, Rev. 7:3. Let us, therefore, rejoice and exult because our names are written in heaven. But lest we be deceived by an empty and false profession of faith, let us endeavor to confirm our election and vocation day by day by good works, so that, advancing more and more in faith and piety, we may seal the grace of God in us with this seal, and finally, when the Books shall be opened in that last and decisive day, let us be found written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that we may inherit with Him the life which He acquired by his own blood for eternity. Amen.