



The Doctrine of Election



Part One

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1. Introduction

Election is a *foundational* doctrine. In the past, many of the ablest teachers were accustomed to commence their systematic theology with a presentation of the attributes of God, and then a contemplation of His eternal decrees; and it is our studied conviction, after perusing the writings of many of our moderns, that the method followed by their predecessors cannot be improved upon. God existed before man, and His eternal purpose long antedated His works in time. “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18). The divine councils went before creation. As a builder draws his plans before he begins to build, so the great Architect predestinated everything before a single creature was called into existence. Nor has God kept this a secret locked in His own bosom; it has pleased Him to make known in His Word the everlasting counsels of His grace, His design in the same, and the grand end He has in view.

When a building is in course of construction onlookers are often at a loss to perceive the reason for many of the details. As yet, they discern no order or design; everything appears to be in confusion. But if they could carefully scan the builder’s “plan” and visualize the finished production, much that had puzzled would become clear to them. It is the same with the outworking of God’s eternal purpose. Unless we are acquainted with His eternal decrees, history remains an insoluble enigma. God is not working at random: the gospel has been sent forth on no uncertain mission: the final outcome in the conflict between good

and evil has not been left indeterminate; how many are to be saved or lost depends not on the will of the creature. Everything was infallibly determined and immutably fixed by God from the beginning, and all that happens in time is but the accomplishment of what was ordained in eternity.

The grand truth of election, then, takes us back to the beginning of all things. It antedated the entrance of sin into the universe, the fall of man, the advent of Christ, and the proclamation of the gospel. A right understanding of it, especially in its relation to the everlasting covenant, is absolutely essential if we are to be preserved from fundamental error. If the foundation itself be faulty, then the building erected on it cannot be sound; and if we err in our conceptions of this basic truth, then just in proportion as we do so will our grasp of all other truth be inaccurate. God's dealings with Jew and Gentile, His object in sending His Son into this world, His design by the gospel, yea, the whole of His providential dealings, cannot be seen in their proper perspective till they are viewed in the light of His eternal election. This will become the more evident as we proceed.

It is a *difficult* doctrine, and this in three respects. First, in the *understanding* of it. Unless we are privileged to sit under the ministry of some Spirit-taught servant of God, who presents the truth to us systematically, great pains and diligence are called for in the searching of the Scriptures, so that we may collect and tabulate their scattered statements on this subject. It has not pleased the Holy Spirit to give us one complete and orderly setting forth of the doctrine of election, but instead "here a little, there a little"—in typical history, in psalm and prophecy, in the great prayer of Christ (John 17), in the epistles of the apostles. Second, in the *acceptation* of it. This presents a much greater difficulty, for when the mind perceives what the Scriptures reveal thereon, the heart is loath to receive such an humbling and flesh-withering truth. How earnestly we need to pray for God to subdue our enmity against Him and our prejudice against His truth. Third, in the *proclamation* of it. No novice is competent to present this subject in its scriptural perspective and proportions.

But notwithstanding, these difficulties should not discourage, still less deter us, from an honest and serious effort to understand and heartily receive all that God has been pleased to reveal thereon. Difficulties are designed to humble us, to exercise us, to make us feel our need of wisdom from on high. It is not easy to arrive at a clear and adequate grasp of any of the great doctrines of Holy Writ, and God never intended it should be so. Truth has to be “bought” (Prov. 23:23): alas that so few are willing to pay the price—devote to the prayerful study of the Word the time wasted on newspapers or idle recreations. These difficulties are not insurmountable, for the Spirit has been given to God’s people to guide them into all truth. Equally so for the minister of the Word: an humble waiting upon God, coupled with a diligent effort to be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, will in due time fit him to expound this truth to the glory of God and the blessing of his hearers.

It is an *important* doctrine, as is evident from various considerations. Perhaps we can express most impressively the momentousness of this truth by pointing out that apart from eternal election there had never been any Jesus Christ, and therefore, no divine gospel; for if God had never chosen a people unto salvation, He had never sent His Son; and if He had sent no Saviour, none had ever been saved. Thus, the gospel itself originated in this vital matter of election. “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation” (2 Thess. 2:13). And *why* are we “bound to give thanks?” Because election is the root of all blessings, the spring of every mercy that the soul receives. If election be taken away, everything is taken away, for those who have any spiritual blessing are they who have *all* spiritual blessings “*according* as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:3, 4).

It was well said by Calvin, “We shall never be clearly convinced, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the fountain of God’s free mercy, till we are acquainted with His eternal election, which illustrates the grace of God by this

comparison; that He adopts not all promiscuously to the hope of salvation, but He gives to some what He refuses to others. Ignorance of this principle evidently detracts from the divine glory, and diminishes real humility—If, then, we need to be recalled to the origin of election, to prove that we obtain salvation from no other source than the mere good pleasure of God, then they who desire to extinguish this principle, do all they can to obscure what ought to be magnificently and loudly celebrated.”

It is a *blessed* doctrine, for election is the spring of all blessings. This is made unmistakably clear by Ephesians 1:3, 4. First, the Holy Spirit declares that the saints have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. Then He proceeds to show *why* and *how* they were so blessed: it is *according* as God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Election in Christ, therefore, precedes being blessed with all spiritual blessings, for we are blessed with them only as being in Him, and we are only in Him as chosen in Him. We see, then, what a grand and glorious truth this is, for all our hopes and prospects belong to it. Election, though distinct and personal, is not, as is sometimes carelessly stated, a mere abstract choice of persons unto eternal salvation, irrespective of union with their Covenant-Head, but a choice of them in *Christ*. It therefore implies every other blessing, and all other blessings are given only through it and in accordance with it.

Rightly understood there is nothing so calculated to impart comfort and courage, strength and security, as a heart-apprehension of this truth. To be assured that I am one of the high favourites of Heaven imparts the confidence that God most certainly will supply my every need and make all things work together for my good. The knowledge that God has predestinated me unto eternal glory supplies an absolute guarantee that no efforts of Satan can possibly bring about my destruction, for if the great God be *for* me, who can be against me! It brings great peace to the preacher, for he now discovers that God has not sent him forth to draw a bow at a venture, but that His Word shall

accomplish that which He pleases, and shall prosper whereto He sends it (Isa. 55:11). And what encouragement it should afford the awakened sinner. As he learns that election is solely a matter of divine *grace*, hope is kindled in his heart: as he discovers, that election singled out some of the vilest of the vile to be the monuments of divine mercy, why should he despair!

It is a *distasteful* doctrine. One had naturally thought that a truth so God-honouring, Christ-exalting, and so blessed, had been cordially espoused by all professing Christians who had had it clearly presented to them. In view of the fact that the terms “predestinated,” “elect,” and “chosen,” occur so frequently in the Word, one would surely conclude that all who claim to accept the Scriptures as divinely inspired would receive with implicit faith this grand truth, referring the act itself—as becometh sinful and ignorant creatures so to do—unto the sovereign good pleasure of God. But such is far, very far from being the actual case. No doctrine is so detested by proud human nature as this one, which make nothing of the creature and everything of the Creator; yea, at no other point is the enmity of the carnal mind so blatantly and hotly evident.

We commenced our addresses in Australia by saying, “I am going to speak tonight on one of the most hated doctrines of the Bible, namely, that of God’s sovereign election.” Since then we have encircled this globe, and come into more or less close contact with thousands of people belonging to many denominations, and thousands more of professing Christians attached to none, and today the only change we would make in that statement is, that while the truth of eternal punishment is the one most objectionable to non-professors, that of God’s sovereign election is the truth most loathed and reviled by the majority of those claiming to be believers. Let it be plainly announced that salvation originated not in the will of man, but in the will of God (see John 1:13; Rom. 9:16), that were it not so none would or could be saved—for as the result of the fall man has lost all desire and will unto that which is good (John 5:40; Rom. 3:11)—and that even the elect themselves have to be made

willing (Psa. 110:3), and loud will be the cries of indignation raised against such teaching.

It is at *this* point the issue is drawn. Merit-mongers will not allow the supremacy of the divine will and the impotency unto good of the human will, consequently they who are the most bitter in denouncing election by the sovereign pleasure of God, are the warmest in crying up the freewill of fallen man. In the decrees of the council of Trent—wherein the Papacy definitely defined her position on the leading points raised by the Reformers, and which Rome has never rescinded—occurs the following: “If any one should affirm that since the fall of Adam man’s free will is lost, let him be accursed.” It was for their faithful adherence to the truth of *election*, with all that it involves, that Bradford and hundreds of others were burned at the stake by the agents of the pope. Unspeakably sad is it to see so many professing Protestants agree with the mother of harlots in this fundamental error.

But whatever aversion men may now have to this blessed truth, they will be compelled to hear it in the last day, hear it as the voice of final, unalterable, and eternal decision. When death and hades, the sea and dry land, shall give up the dead, then shall the Book of Life—the register in which was recorded from before the foundation of the world the whole election of grace—be opened in the presence of angels and demons, in the presence of the saved and of the lost, and that voice shall sound to the highest arches of Heaven, to the lowest depths of hell, to the uttermost bound of the universe: “And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15). Thus, this truth which is hated by the non-elect above all others, is the one that shall ring in the ears of the lost as they enter their eternal doom! Ah, my reader, the reason why people do not receive and duly prize the truth of election, is because they do not feel their due need of it.

It is a *separating* doctrine. The preaching of the sovereignty of God, as exercised by Him in foreordaining the eternal destiny of each of His creatures, serves as an effectual flail to divide the

chaff from the wheat. “He that is of God heareth God’s words” (John 8:47): yes, no matter how contrary they may be to his ideas. It is one of the marks of the regenerate that they set to their seal that God is true. Nor do they pick and choose, as will religious hypocrites: once they perceive a truth is clearly taught in the Word, even though it be utterly opposed to their own reason and inclinations, they humbly bow to it and implicitly receive it, and would do so though not another person in whole world believed it. But it is far otherwise with the unregenerate. As the apostle declares, “They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:5, 6).

We know of nothing so divisive between the sheep and the goats as a faithful exposition of this doctrine. If a servant of God accepts some new charge, and he wishes to ascertain which of his people desire the pure milk of the Word, and which prefer the Devil’s substitutes, let him deliver a series of sermons on this subject, and it will quickly be the means of “taking forth the precious from the vile” (Jer. 15:19). It was thus in the experience of the Divine Preacher: when Christ announced “no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father,” we are told, “from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:65, 66)! True it is that by no means all who intellectually receive “Calvinism” as a philosophy or theology, give evidence (in their daily lives) of regeneration; yet equally true is it that those who continue to cavil against and steadfastly refuse any part of the truth, are not entitled to be regarded as Christians.

It is a *neglected* doctrine. Though occupying so prominent a place in the Word of God, it is today but little preached, and still less understood. Of course, it is not to be expected that the “higher critics” and their blinded dupes should preach that which makes nothing of man; but even among those who wish to be looked up to as “orthodox” and “evangelical,” there are scarcely

any who give this grand truth a real place in either their pulpit ministrations or their writings. In some cases this is due to ignorance: not having been taught it in the seminary, and certainly not in the “Bible Institutes,” they have never perceived its great importance and value. But in too many cases it is a desire to be popular with their hearers which muzzles their mouths. Nevertheless, neither ignorance, prejudice, nor enmity can do away with the doctrine itself, or lessen its vital momentousness.

In bringing to a close these introductory remarks, let it be pointed out that this blessed doctrine needs to be handled *reverently*. It is not a subject to be reasoned about and speculated upon, but approached in a spirit of holy awe and devotion. It is to be handled *soberly*, “When thou art in disputation, engaged upon a just quarrel to vindicate the truth of God from heresy and distortion, look into thy heart, set a watch on thy lips, beware of wild fire in thy zeal” (E. Reynolds, 1648). Nevertheless, this truth is to be dealt with *uncompromisingly*, and plainly, irrespective of the fear or favour of man, confidently leaving all “results” in the hand of God. May it be graciously granted us to write in a manner pleasing to God, and you to receive whatever is from Himself.

2. Its Source

Accurately speaking, election is a branch of predestination, the latter being a more comprehensive term than the former. Predestination relates to *all* creatures, things, and events; but election is restricted to rational beings—angels and humans. As the word *predestinate* signifies, God from all eternity sovereignly ordained and immutably determined the history and destiny of each and all of His creatures. But in this study we shall confine ourselves to predestination as it relates to or concerns rational creatures. And here too a further distinction must be noticed. There cannot be an election without a rejection, a taking without a passing by, a choice without a refusal. As Psalm 78 expresses it, “He *refused* the tabernacle of Joseph, and *chose* not the tribe

of Ephraim; but chose the tribe of Judah” (verses 67, 68). Thus predestination includes both reprobation (the preterition or passing by of the non-elect, and then the foreordaining of them to condemnation—Jude 4—because of their sins) and election unto eternal life, the former of which we shall not now discuss.

The doctrine of election means, then, that God singled out certain ones in His mind both from among angels (1 Tim. 5:21) and from among men, and ordained them unto eternal life and blessedness; that before He created them, He decided their destiny, just as a builder draws his plans and determines every part of the building before any of the materials are assembled for the carrying out of his design. Election may thus be defined: it is that part of the counsel of God whereby He did from all eternity purpose in Himself to display His grace upon certain of His creatures. This was made effectual by a definite decree concerning them. Now in every decree of God three things must be considered: the beginning, the matter or substance, the end or design. Let us offer a few remarks upon each.

The *beginning* of the decree is the *will of God*. It originates solely in His own sovereign determination. Whilst determining the estate of His creatures God’s own will is the alone and absolute cause thereof. As there is nothing above God to rule Him, so there is nothing outside of Himself which can be in any wise an impulsive cause unto Him; to say otherwise is to make the will of God no will at all. Herein He is infinitely exalted above us, for not only are we subject to One above us, but our wills are being constantly moved and disposed by external causes. The will of God could have no cause outside of itself, or otherwise there would be something prior to itself (for a cause ever precedes the effect) and something more excellent (for the cause is ever superior to the effect), and thus God would not be the independent Being which He is.

The *matter* or substance of a divine decree is God’s purpose *to manifest* one or more of His attributes or perfections. This is true of all the divine decrees, but as there is variety in God’s attributes so there is in the things He decrees to bring into existence. The

two principal attributes He exercises upon His rational creatures are His grace and His justice. In the case of the elect God determined to exemplify the riches of His amazing grace, but in the case of the non-elect He saw fit to demonstrate His justice and severity—withholding His grace from them because it was His good pleasure so to do. Yet it must not be allowed for a moment that this latter was a point of cruelty in God, for His nature is not grace alone, nor justice alone, but both together; and therefore in determining to display both of them there could not be a point of injustice.

The *end* or design of every divine decree is God's own *glory*, for nothing less than this could be worthy of Himself. As God swears by Himself because He can swear by none greater, so because a greater and grander end cannot be proposed than His own glory, God has set up that as the supreme end of all His decrees and works. "The Lord hath made all things *for himself*" (Prov. 16:4)—for His own glory. As all things are from Him as the first cause, so all things are *to* Him (Rom. 11:36) as the final end. The good of His creatures is but the secondary end; His own glory is the supreme end, and everything else is subordinate thereto. In the case of the elect it is God's amazing grace which will be magnified; in the case of the reprobate His pure justice will be glorified. What follows in this chapter will largely be an amplification of these three points.

The source of election, then, is *the will of God*. It should be scarcely necessary to point out that by "God" we mean, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though there are three persons in the Godhead, there is but one undivided nature common to Them all, and so but one will. They are one, and They agree in one: "He is in one mind, and who can turn him?" (Job 23:13). Let it also be pointed out that the will of God is not a thing apart from God, nor is it to be considered only as a part of God: the will of God is God Himself willing: it is, if we may so speak, His very nature in activity, for His will is His very essence. Nor is God's will subject to any fluctuation or change: when we affirm that God's will is immutable, we are only saying that God Himself is,

“without variableness or shadow of turning” (James 1:17). Therefore the will of God is *eternal*, for since God Himself had no beginning, and since His will is His very nature, then His will must be from everlasting.

To proceed one step further. The will of God is absolutely free, uninfluenced and uncontrolled by anything outside of itself. This appears from the making of the world—as well as of everything in it. The world is not eternal, but was *made* by God, yet whether it should be or should not be created, was determined by Himself alone. The time when it was made—whether sooner or later; the size of it—whether smaller or larger; the duration of it—whether for a season or forever; the condition of it—whether it should remain “very good” or be defiled by sin; was all settled by the sovereign decree of the Most High. Had He so pleased, God could have brought this world into existence millions of ages earlier than He did. Had He so pleased, He could have made it and all things in it in a moment of time, instead of in six days and nights. Had He so pleased, He could have limited the human family to a few thousands or hundreds, or have made it a thousand times larger than it is. No other reason can be assigned why God created it when and as it is than His own imperial will.

God’s will was absolutely *free* in connection with *election*. In choosing a people unto eternal life and glory, there was nothing outside Himself which moved God to form such a purpose. As He expressly declares, “I *will* have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I *will* have compassion” (Rom. 9:15)—language could not state more definitely the absoluteness of divine sovereignty in this matter. “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph. 1:5): here again all is resolved into the mere pleasure of God. He bestows His favours or withholds them as pleaseth Himself. Nor does He stand in any need of our vindicating His procedure. The Almighty is not to be brought down to the bar of human reason: instead of seeking to *justify* God’s high sovereignty, we are only required to *believe it*, on the authority of

His own Word. “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Matt. 11:25, 26)—the Lord Jesus was content to rest there, and so must we be.

Some of the ablest expositors of this profound truth have affirmed that the *love* of God is the moving cause of our election, citing “In love having predestinated us” (Eph. 1:5); yet in so doing, we think they are chargeable with a slight inaccuracy or departure from the rule of faith. While fully agreeing that the last two words of Ephesians 1:4 (as they stand in the Authorised Version) belong properly to the beginning of verse 5, yet it should be carefully noted that verse 5 is not speaking of our original election, but of our being predestinated *unto* the adoption of children: the two things are quite distinct, separate acts on the part of God, the second following upon the first. There is *an order* in the divine counsels, as there is in God’s works of creation, and it is as important to heed what is said of the former as it is to attend unto the divine procedure in the six days work of Genesis 1.

An object must exist or subsist *before* it can be loved. Election was the first act in the mind of God, whereby He chose the persons of the elect to be holy and without blame (verse 4). Predestination was God’s second act, whereby He ratified by decree the *state* of those to whom His election had given a real subsistence before Him. Having chosen them in His dear Son unto a perfection of holiness and righteousness, God’s love went forth to them, and bestowed upon them the chiefest and highest blessing His love could confer: to make them His children by adoption. God is love, and all His love is exercised upon Christ and those in Him. Having made the elect His own by the sovereign choice of His will, God’s heart was set upon them as His special treasure.

Others have attributed our election to the *grace* of God, quoting “There is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5). But here again we must distinguish between

things that differ, namely, between the beginning of a divine decree and its *matter* or substance. It is true, blessedly true, that the elect are the objects upon which the grace of God is specially exercised, but that is quite another thing from saying that their election *originated* in God's grace. The order we are here insisting upon is clearly expressed in Ephesians 1. First, "He [God] hath chosen us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world: that we should be holy and without blame [righteous] before him" (verse 4): that was the *initial* act in the divine mind. Second, "in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." and that "according to the good pleasure of his will" (verse 5): that was God *enriching* those upon whom He had set His heart. Third, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (verse 6): that was both the subject and *design* of God's decree—the manifestation and magnification of His grace.

"The election of grace" (Rom. 11:5), then, is not to be understood as the genitive of *origin*, but of object or character, as in "the Rose *of* Sharon," "the tree *of* life," "the children of disobedience." The election of the church, as of all His acts and works, is to be traced right back to the uncontrolled and uncontrollable will of God. Nowhere else in Scripture is the *order* of the divine counsels so definitely revealed as in Ephesians 1, and nowhere else is emphasis placed so strongly upon God's will. He predestinated unto the adoption of children "according to the good pleasure of his *will*" (verse 5). He has made known to us "the mystery of his *will*" (not "grace") and that "according to his good pleasure which he hath *purposed* in himself" (verse 9). And then, as though that was not sufficiently explicit, the passage closes with "being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh *all* things after the counsel of his own *will*, that we should be to the praise of his glory" (verses 11, 12).

Let us dwell for a moment longer upon that remarkable expression "who worketh all things after the *counsel* of his own will" (verse 11). Note well it is not "the counsel of his *own*

heart,” nor even “the counsel of his own mind,” but WILL: not “the will of his own counsel,” but “the counsel of his own will.” Herein God differs radically from us. Our wills are influenced by the thoughts of our minds and moved by the affections of our hearts; but not so God’s. “He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth” (Dan. 4:35). God’s will is supreme, determining the *exercise* of all His perfections. He is infinite in wisdom, yet His will regulates the operations of it. He is full of mercy, but His will determines when and to whom He shows it. He is inflexibly just, yet His will decides whether or not justice shall be put forth: observe carefully *not* “*Who can* by no means clear the guilty” (as is so generally misquoted), but “*Who will* by no means clear the guilty” (Exod. 34:7). God first wills or determines that a thing shall be, and then His wisdom contrives the *execution* of it.

Let us now point out what has been *disproved*. From all that has been said above it is clear, first, that our *good works* are not the thing which induced God to elect us, for that act passed in the divine mind in eternity—long before we had any actual existence. See how this very point is set aside in, “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth” (Rom. 9:11). Again we read, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto* good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Since, then, we were elected prior to our creation, then good works could not be the moving cause of it: no, they are the fruits and effects of it.

Second, the *holiness* of men, whether in principle or in practice, or both, is not the moving cause of election, for as Ephesians 1:4 so plainly declares “He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him”—not because we *were* holy, but so that we *might* be. That we “*should* be holy” was something future, which follows upon it, and is the means to a further end, namely, our salvation, to which men are chosen. “God hath from

the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit” (2 Thess. 2:13). Since, then, the sanctification of God’s people was the design of His election, it could not be the cause of it. “This is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3): not merely the approving will of God, as being agreeable to His nature; nor merely His preceptive will, as required by the Law; but His *decretive* will, His determinate counsel.

Third, nor is *faith* the cause of our election. How could it be? Throughout their unregeneracy all men are in a state of unbelief, living in this world without God and without hope. And when we had faith, it was not of ourselves—either of our goodness, power, or will. No, it was a gift from God (Eph. 2:9), and the operation of the Spirit (Col. 2:12), flowing from His grace. “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48), and *not* “as many as believed, were ordained to eternal life.” Since, then, faith flows from divine grace, it cannot be the cause of our election. The reason why other men do not believe, is because they are not of Christ’s sheep (John 10:26); the reason why any believe is because God gives them faith, and therefore it is called “the faith of God’s elect” (Titus 1:1).

Fourth, it is not God’s *foreview* of these things in men which moved Him to choose them. God’s foreknowledge of the future is founded upon the determination of His *will* concerning it. The divine decree, the divine foreknowledge, and the divine predestination is the order set forth in the Scriptures. First, “Who are the called according to his purpose;” second, “for whom he did foreknow;” third, “he also did predestinate” (Rom. 8:28, 29). The decree of God as *preceding* His foreknowledge is also stated in, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). God foreknows everything that *will* be, because He has ordained everything that *shall* be; then it is to put the cart before the horse when we make foreknowledge the cause of God’s election.

In conclusion let it be said that the *end* of God in His decree of election is the manifestation of His own glory, but before

entering into detail upon this point we will quote several passages which state the broad fact itself. “But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly *for himself*” (Psa. 4:3). “Set apart” here signifies chosen or severed from the rest; “him that is godly” refers to David himself (Psa. 89:19, 20); “for himself,” and not merely for the throne and kingdom of Israel. “For the Lord hath chosen Jacob *unto himself*, and Israel for his peculiar treasure” (Psa. 135:4). “To give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed *for myself*; they shall show forth my praise” (Isa. 43:20, 21), which is parallel with Ephesians 1:5, 6. So in the New Testament: when Christ was pleased to give to Ananias an account of the conversion of His beloved Paul, He said, “he is a chosen vessel *unto me*” (Acts 9:15). Again, “I have reserved *to myself* seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal” (Rom. 11:4 American Standard Version), which is explained in the next verse as “a remnant according to the election of grace.”

3. Its Grand Original

The decrees of God, His eternal purpose, the inscrutable counsels of His will, are indeed a great deep; yet this we know, that from first to last they have *a definite relation to Christ*, for He is the Alpha and the Omega in all covenant transactions. Beautifully did Spurgeon express it: “Search for the celestial fountain, from which the divine streams of grace flow to us, and you will find Jesus Christ the well-spring in covenant love. If your eyes shall ever see the covenant roll, if you shall ever be permitted in a future state to see the whole plan of redemption as it was mapped out in the chambers of eternity, you shall see the blood-red line of atoning sacrifice running across the margin of every page, and you shall see that from the beginning to the end one object was always in view—the glory of the Son of God.” It therefore seems strange that many who see that election is the foundation of salvation, yet overlook the glorious *Head of election*, in whom the elect were chosen and from whom they receive all blessings.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:3, 4). Since we were chosen *in* Christ, it is evident that we were chosen *out of* ourselves; and since we were chosen *in Christ*, it necessarily follows that He was chosen before we were. This is clearly implied in the preceding verse, wherein the Father is expressly designated “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now according to the analogy of Scripture (i.e., when He is said to be “the God” of any one) God was “the God” of Christ first, because He chose Him to that grace and union. Christ as man was predestinated as truly as we were, and so has God to be His *God* by predestination and free grace. Second, because the Father made a covenant with Him (Isa. 42:6). In view of the covenant made with them, He became known as “the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob;” so in view of the covenant He made with Christ, He became His “God.” Third, because God is the author of all Christ’s blessedness (Psa. 45:2, 7).

“According as He [God] hath chosen us in him” means, then, that in election Christ was made *the Head* of the elect. “In the womb of election He, the Head, came out first [adumbrated in every normal birth, A. W. Pink], and then we, the members” (Thomas Goodwin). In all things Christ must have the “preeminence,” and therefore is He “the Firstborn” in election (Rom. 8:29). In the order of *nature* Christ was chosen first, but in the order of *time* we were elected with Him. We were not chosen for ourselves apart, but *in Christ*, which denotes three things. First, we were chosen in Christ as the members of His body. Second, we were chosen in Him as the pattern which we should be conformed unto. Third, we were chosen in Him as the final end, i.e., it was for Christ’s glory, to be His “fullness” (Eph. 1:23).

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold: *mine elect*, in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa. 42:1): that this passage refers to none other than the Lord Jesus Christ is unmistakably plain from the Spirit’s

citation of it in Matthew 12:15-21. Here, then, is the grand original of election: in its first and highest instance election is spoken of and applied to the Lord Jesus! It was the will of the eternal three to elect and predestinate the second person into creature being and existence, so that as God-man, “the firstborn of every creature” (Col. 1:15), He was the subject of the divine decrees and the immediate and principal object of the love of the co-essential three. And as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son—considered as God-man—to have life in Himself (John 5:26), to be a fountain of life, of grace and glory, unto His beloved Spouse, who received her being and wellbeing from Jehovah’s free grace and everlasting love.

When God determined *to create*, among all the myriad creatures, both angelic and human, which rose up in the divine mind, to be brought into being by Him, the man Christ Jesus was singled out of them, and appointed to union with the second person in the blessed trinity, and was accordingly sanctified and set up. This original and highest act of election was one of pure sovereignty and amazing grace. The celestial hosts were passed by, and the seed of the woman was determined upon. Out of the innumerable seeds which were to be created in Adam, the line of Abraham was selected, then of Isaac, and then of Jacob. Of the twelve tribes which were to issue from Jacob, that of Judah was chosen, God elected not an angel to the high union with His Son, but “one *chosen* out of the people” (Psa. 89:19). What shall those say who so much dislike the truth that the heirs of heaven are elected, when they learn that Jesus Christ Himself is the subject of eternal election!

“Jehovah is the first cause and the last end of all things. His essence and existence are of and from Himself. He is Jehovah, the self-existing essence: the fountain of life, and essential blessedness—‘The King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, who alone hath immortality, dwelling in that light to which no mortal eye can approach.’ And throughout a vast eternity the eternal three enjoyed boundless and incomprehensible blessedness in the contemplation of those

essential perfections which belong to the Father, Son, and Spirit, the everlasting Jehovah: who is His own eternity, and cannot receive any addition to His essential happiness or glory by any or all of His creatures. He is exalted above all blessing and praise. The whole creation before Him, and as viewed by Him, is less than nothing and vanity. If any should curiously inquire, what was God engaged in before He stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth? The answer is: the blessed, co-equal, and co-essential three, Father, Son, and Spirit, had a mutual in being and society together, and were essentially blessed in that divine eternal life, in the mutual interests or propriety they have in each other, in mutual love and delight—as also in the possession of one common glory.

But as it is the nature of goodness to be *communicative of itself*, so it pleased the eternal trinity to purpose to go forth into *creature acts*. The ever blessed three, to whom nothing can be added or diminished, the spring and fountain of whose essential blessedness arises from the immense perfections in the infinite nature in which they exist—in the mutual love they have to each other—and their mutual converse together—were pleased to delight in creature fellowship and society. The eternal Father predestinated His co-essential Son into creature being and existence, and from everlasting He wore the form and bore the personage of God-man. The creation of all things is attributed in Scripture to divine sovereignty: ‘Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created’ (Rev. 4:11). Nothing out of God can move Him: or be a motive to Him; His *will* is His rule, His *glory* His ultimate end. ‘For of Him (as the first cause), and through Him (as the preserving cause), and to Him (as the final cause), are all things’ (Rom. 11:36).

God in His actual creation of all, is the end of all. ‘The Lord hath made all things for himself’ (Prov. 16:4), and the sovereignty of God naturally ariseth from the relation of all things to Himself as their Creator, and their natural and inseparable dependence upon Him, in regard of their being and well-being. He had the being of all things in His own will and

power, and it was at His own pleasure whether He would impart it or not. ‘Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world’ (Acts 15:18). He comprehends and grasps all things in His infinite understanding. As He hath an incomprehensible essence, to which ours is but as the drop in a bucket, so He hath an incomprehensible knowledge, to which ours is but as a grain of dust. His primitive decree and view, in the creation of heaven and earth, angels and men, being His own glory, and that which gave foundation to it and was the basis to support it, was Jehovah’s design to exalt His Son as God-man, to be the foundation and corner-stone of the whole creation of God. God had never gone forth into creature acts, had not the second person condescended by the assumption of our nature to become a creature. Though this took place after the fall, yet the decree concerning it was before the fall. Jesus Christ, the fellow of the Lord of hosts, was the first of all the ways of God” (S. E. Pierce).

Nowhere does the sovereignty of God shine forth so conspicuously as in His acts of election and reprobation, which took place in eternity past, and which nothing in the creature was the cause of. God’s act of choosing His people in Christ was before the foundation of the world, without the consideration of the fall, nor was it upon the foresight and footing of works, but was wholly, *of grace*, and all to the praise and glory of it. In nothing else is Jehovah’s sovereignty so manifest: indeed the highest instance of it was in predestinating the second person in the Trinity to be the God-man. That this came under *the decree* of God is clear, again, from the words of the apostle: “Who verily [says he in speaking of Christ] was *foreordained* before the foundation of the world” (1 Pet. 1:20) and who is said to be laid “in Sion a chief cornerstone, *elect*, precious” (1 Pet. 2:6). This grand original of election, so little known today, is of such transcendent importance that we dwell upon it a little longer, to point out some of the reasons why God was pleased to predestinate the man Christ Jesus unto personal union with His Son.

Christ was predestinated for higher ends than the saving of His

people from the effects of their fall in Adam. First, He was chosen for God Himself to delight in, far more so and infinitely above all other creatures. Being united to the second person, the man Christ Jesus was exalted to a closer union and communion with God. The Lord of hosts speaks of Him as “the man that is *my fellow*” (Zech. 13:7), “mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa. 42:1). Second, Christ was chosen that God might behold the image of Himself and all His perfections in a creature, so that His excellences are seen in Christ as in no other: “Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person” (Heb. 1:3), which is spoken of the person of Christ as God-man. Third, by the union of the man Christ Jesus with the everlasting Son of God, the whole fullness of the Godhead was to dwell personally in Him, He being “the Image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15, 19).

The Man Christ Jesus, then, was chosen unto the highest union and communion with God Himself. In Him the love and grace of Jehovah shine forth in their superlative glory. The Son of God gave subsistence and personality to His human nature, so that the Son of God and His human nature are not merely one *flesh* as man and wife (which is the closest union with us), nor one *spirit* only (as is the case between Christ and the Church: 1 Cor. 6:17), but one *person*, and hence this creature nature is advanced to a fellowship in the society of the blessed Trinity, and therefore to Him God communicates Himself without measure (John 3:34). Descending now to a lower plane, the Man Christ Jesus was also chosen to be an Head to an elect seed, who were chosen in Him, given a super-creation subsistence, and blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings.

If God will love, He must have an object for His love, and the object must have an existence before Him to exercise His love upon, for He cannot love a non-entity. It must therefore be that the God-man, and the elect in Him existed in the divine mind as objects of God’s everlasting love, before all time. In Christ the Church was chosen from everlasting: the one the Head, the other His body; the one being the bridegroom, the other His bride: the

one being chosen and appointed for the other. They were chosen together, yet Christ first in the order of the divine decrees. As, then, Christ and the Church had existed in the will, thoughts, and purpose of the Father from the beginning, He could love them and rejoice in them. As the God-man declares “Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. . . for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:23, 24).

The Son of God being, before all time, predestinated to be God-man, He was secretly anointed or set up as such, and His human nature had a covenant subsistence before God. In consequence of this, He was the Son of man in heaven before He became the Son of man on earth; He was the Son of man secretly before God before He became the Son of man openly and manifestly in this world. Therefore did the Psalmist exclaim, “Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for Thyself” (80:17); and therefore did Christ Himself declare, “What and if ye shall see the Son of *man* ascend up *where he was before?*” (John 6:62). “God, out of His eternal and infinite goodness of love, and purposing Christ to become a creature, and communicate with His creatures, ordained in His eternal counsel that person in the Godhead should be united to our nature and to one particular of His creatures, that so in the person of the Mediator the true ladder of salvation might be fixed, whereby God might descend to His creatures and His creatures ascend unto Him” (Sir Francis Bacon).

“Christ was first elected as Head and Mediator, and as the Cornerstone to bear up the whole building; for the act of the Father’s election in Christ supposeth Him first chosen to this mediatory work and to be the Head of the elect part of the world. After this election of Christ, others were predestinated ‘to be conformed unto His image’ (Rom 8:29) i.e., to Christ as Mediator, and taking human nature; not to Christ barely considered as God. This conformity being specially intended *in election*, Christ was in the purpose of the Father the first exemplar and copy of it. One foot of the compass of grace stood in Christ as the centre, while the other walked about the

circumference, pointing one here and another there, to draw a line, as it were, between every one of those points and Christ. The Father, then, being the prime cause of the election of some out of the mass of mankind, was the prime cause of the election of Christ to bring them to the enjoyment of that to which they were elected. Is it likely that God, in founding an everlasting kingdom, should consult about the members before He did about the Head? Christ was registered at the top of the book of election, and His members after Him. It is called, therefore, ‘the book of the Lamb’” (S. Charnock).

That passage of Scripture which enters most fully into what we are here contemplating is Proverbs 8, at which we will now glance. There are many passages in that book wherein the “wisdom” spoken of signifies far more than a moral excellency, and something even more blessed than the personification of one of the divine attributes. In not a few passages (1:20, 21, for example) the reference is *to Christ*, one of whose titles is “the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). It is as such He is to be regarded here in chapter 8. That it is a *person* which is there in view is clear from verse 17, and that it is a *divine* person appears from verse 15; yet not a divine person considered abstractedly, but as the God-man. This is evident from what is there predicated of Him.

“The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old” (verse 22). The speaker is Christ Himself, the alone Mediator between the Creator and His creatures. The words “The Lord possessed me *in* the beginning of his way” tend to hide what is there affirmed. There is no prefix in the original Hebrew, nothing there to warrant the interposed “in,” while the word rendered “beginning” signifies the first or chief. Thus it should be translated “the Lord possessed me: the beginning (or Chief) of his way, before his works of old.” Christ was the firstborn of all God’s thoughts and designs, delighted in by Him long before the universe was brought into existence.

“I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was” (verse 23). “Our Redeemer came forth of the womb of

a decree from eternity, before He came out of the womb of the virgin in time; He was hid in the will of God before He was made manifest in the flesh of a Redeemer; He was a lamb slain in decree before He was slain upon the cross; He was possessed by God in the beginning, or the beginning of His way, the Head of His works, and set up from everlasting to have His delights among the sons of men” (Prov. 8:22, 23, 31), (S. Charnock).

“When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth” (verses 24, 25). Christ is here referring to His being “brought forth” in God’s mind, being predestinated into creature existence before the world was made. The first of all God’s intentions respected the union of the Man Christ Jesus unto His Son. The Mediator became the foundation of all the divine counsels: see Ephesians 3:11 and 1:9, 10. As such the triune Jehovah “possessed” Him as a treasury in which were laid up all His designs. He was then “set up” or “anointed” (verse 23) in His official character as Mediator and Head of the Church. As the God-man He had a virtual influence and was the Executor of all the works and will of God.

“Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him” (verse 30). It is not the complacency of the Father in the Son considered absolutely as the second Person, but His satisfaction and joy in the Mediator as He viewed Him in the glass of His decrees. It was as incarnate that the Father said, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17), and it was with the foreordained God-man, who had a real subsistence before the divine mind, that He was delighted in by Jehovah before the world was. In His eternal thoughts and primitive views, the man that was His fellow became the Object of God’s ineffable love and complacency. It was far more than that Jehovah simply *purposed* that the Son should become incarnate; His decree gave Christ a real subsistence before Him, and as such afforded infinite satisfaction to His heart.

So little understood is this blessed aspect of our subject, and so

important do we deem it, that some further remarks thereon seem called for. That Christ is the firstborn or head of the election of grace was prefigured at the beginning of God's works, in fact the creation of this world and the formation of the first man were on purpose to make *Christ known*. As we are told in Romans 5:14 "which is the figure of Him that was to come." In his creation, formation, and constitution as the federal head of our race, Adam was a remarkable type of Christ as God's Elect. In amplifying this statement it will be necessary to go over some of the same ground that we covered in *Spiritual Union and Communion*, but we trust the reader will bear with us if we here repeat a number of the things.

There is a certain class of people—despising all doctrine, and particularly disliking the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty—who often exhort us to "preach Christ," but we have long observed that *they* never preach Christ in His *highest* official character, as the Covenant-Head of God's people, that they never say one word about Him as God's "Elect, in whom my soul delighteth!" Preaching Christ is a far more comprehensive task than many suppose, nor can it be done intelligently by any man until he begins at the beginning and shows that the man Christ Jesus was eternally *predestinated* unto union with the second person of the Godhead. "I have exalted one chosen out of the people" (Psa. 89:19): that exaltation commenced with the elevation of Christ's humanity to personal union with the eternal Word—unique honour!

The very words "chosen in Christ" necessarily imply that He was chosen *first*, as the soil in which we were set. When God chose Christ it was not as a single or private person, but as a public person, as Head of His body, we being chosen in Him as the members thereof. Thus, inasmuch as we were then given a representative subsistence before God, God could make a covenant with Christ on our behalf. That He *did* so enter into an eternal compact with Christ in this character as Head of the election of grace is clear from, "I have made a covenant with *my chosen*, I have sworn unto David my servant" (Psa. 89:3)—

adumbrated in the covenant He made in time with him who was typically “the man after his own heart,” for David was as truly shadowing forth Christ when God made a covenant with him as Joseph was when he supplied food to his needy brethren, or as Moses was when he led forth the Hebrews out of the house of bondage.

Let those, then, who desire to preach Christ, see to it that they give Him the preeminence in *all* things—election not excepted! Let them learn to give unto Jesus of Nazareth His full honour, that which the Father Himself hath given to Him. It is a superlative honour that Christ is the channel through which all the grace and glory we have, or shall have, flows to us, and was set up as such from the beginning. As Romans 8:29 so plainly teaches, it was in connection with *election* that God appointed His own beloved Son to be “the firstborn among many brethren.” Christ being appointed as the masterpiece of divine wisdom, the grand prototype, and we ordained to be so many little copies and models of Him. Christ is the first and last of all God’s thoughts, counsels, and ways.

The universe is but the theatre and this world the principal stage on which the Lord God thinks fit to act out some of His deepest designs. His creating of Adam was a shadow to point to a better Adam, who was to have an universal headship over all the creatures of God, and whose glories were to shine forth visibly in and through every part of the creation. When the world was created and furnished, man was brought forth. But before his formation we read of that renowned consultation of the eternal three: “And God said, Let *us* make man in our image” (Gen. 1:26). This respected *Christ*, the God-man, who was from all eternity the object and subject of all the counsels of the Trinity. Adam, created and made after God’s Image, which consisted of righteousness and true holiness, was the type, for Christ is par excellent “*the image* of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15).

The formation of Adam’s body, by God’s immediate hand, out of the dust of the ground, was a figure or shadow of the assumption of human nature by the Son of God, whose humanity

was formed immediately by the Holy Spirit: as Adam's body was produced from the virgin earth, so Christ's human nature was produced from the virgin's womb. Again; that union of soul and body in Adam was a type to express that most profound and greatest of all mysteries, the hypostatical union of our nature in the person of Christ: as it is justly expressed in what is commonly called the Athanasian Creed, "As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." Again; as Adam's person comprised the perfections of all creatures, and was suited to take in all the comforts and pleasures they could afford and impart, so the glory of Christ's humanity excels all creatures, even the angels themselves. The more attentively we consider the person and position of the first Adam the better may we discern how fully and fittingly he was a figure of the last Adam.

As Adam, placed in paradise, had all the creatures of the earth brought before him and was made to have dominion over them all (Gen. 1:28), thus being crowned with mundane glory and honour, so in this too he accurately foreshadowed Christ, who hath universal empire and dominion over all worlds, beings, and things, as may be seen from Psalm 8, which is applied to the Saviour in Hebrews 2:9, where sovereignty over all creatures is ascribed to Him, the earth and the heavens, sun, moon and stars magnifying Him. For though He was for a little while abased beneath the angels in His humiliation, yet now in His exaltation, He is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. Moreover, though the God-man, the "fellow of the Lord of hosts," went through a season of degradation before His exaltation, nevertheless His glorification was foreordained before the world began: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath *appointed* unto me" (Luke 22:29); "It is he which was *ordained* of God to be the Judge of quick and dead" (Acts 10:42).

That Christ had both a precedency and presidency in election was also shadowed forth in this primo-primitive type, for we read, "And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him" (Gen. 2:20). Yet mark the perfect

accuracy of the type: when God created Adam, He created Eve *in* him (and in blessing Adam—Gen. 1:28—He blessed all mankind in him); so when God elected Christ, His people were *chosen in* Him (Eph. 1:4), and therefore they had a virtual being and subsistence in Him from all eternity, and consequently He was styled “the everlasting *Father*” (Isa. 9:6 and compare with Heb. 2:13); and consequently in blessing Christ, God blessed all the elect in Him and together with Him (Eph. 1:3; 2:5).

Though Adam came forth “very good” from the hands of his Maker and was given dominion over all the creatures of the earth, yet we read “but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him.” Consequently, He provided a suitable partner for him, which being taken out of his side was then “buildded” (Gen. 2:22 margin), brought to, and welcomed by him. In like manner, though Christ was the beginning of God’s way, set up from everlasting, and delighted in by the Father (Prov. 8:22, 23, 30), yet God did not think it good for him to be alone, and therefore He decreed a spouse for Him, who should share His communicable graces, honours, riches, and glories; a spouse which, in due time, was the fruit of His pierced side, and brought to Him by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit.

When Eve was formed by the Lord God and brought to Adam so as to effect a marriage union, there was shadowed forth that highest mystery of grace, of God the Father presenting His elect and giving them to Christ: “Thine they were, and thou gayest them me” (John 17:6). Foreviewing them in the glass of the divine decrees, the Mediator loved and delighted in them (Prov. 8:31), betrothed them unto Himself, taking the Church as thus presented by God unto Him in a deed of marriage settlement and covenant contract as the gift of the Father. As Adam *owned* the relation between Eve and himself saying, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen. 2:23), so Christ became an everlasting husband unto the Church. And as Adam and Eve were united *before* the fall, so Christ and the Church were one in the mind of God *prior* to any foreviews of sin.

If, then, we are to “preach Christ” in His *highest* official glory,

it must be plainly shown that He was not ordained in God's eternal purpose for the Church, but the Church was ordained *for Him*. Notice how the Holy Spirit has emphasized this particular point in the type. "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is *the glory of the man*. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. 11:7-9). Yet as Adam was not complete without Eve, so neither is Christ without the Church: she is His "fullness" or "complement" (Eph. 1:23), yea, she is His crown of glory and royal diadem (Isa. 62: 3)—the Church may be said to be necessary for Christ as an empty vessel for Him to supply with grace and glory. All His delights are in her, and He will be glorified in her and by her through all eternity, putting His glory upon her (John 17:22). "Come hither, I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife. . . descending out of heaven from God, *having the glory of God*" (Rev. 21:9-11)

In His character as God's "Elect" Christ was shadowed forth by others than Adam. Indeed it is striking to see what a number of those who were prominent types of Christ were made the subjects of a *real election* of God, by which they were designated to some special office. Concerning Moses we read "Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his *chosen* stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath" (Psa. 106:23). Of Aaron it is said, "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is *called* of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. 5:4). Of the priests of Israel it is recorded, "The sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord thy God hath *chosen* to minister unto him; and to bless in the name of the Lord" (Deut. 21:5). Regarding David and the tribe from which he came, it is written, "He *refused* the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; but *chose* the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.... He *chose* David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds" (Psa. 78:67, 68, 70). Each of these cases adumbrated the grand truth that the Man Christ Jesus was chosen by God to the highest degree of glory and blessedness of all His creatures.

“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27). This expression “The Book of Life” is doubtless a figurative one, for the Holy Spirit delights to represent spiritual, heavenly, and eternal things—as well as the blessing and benefits of them—under a variety of images and metaphors, that our minds may the more readily understand and our hearts feel the reality of them, and thus we be made more capable of receiving them. Yet this we are to know: the similitude thus made use of to represent them to our spiritual view are but shadows, yet what is shadowed forth by them has *real* being and substance.

The sun in the firmament is an instituted emblem in the nature of Christ—He being that to the spiritual world which the former is to the natural—yet the former is but the shadow, and Christ is the real substance, hence He is styled “the Sun of righteousness.” So when Christ is compared to the light, He is the “*true* Light” (John 1:9), when compared to a vine, He is the “*true* Vine” (John 15:1), when to bread, He is “the true Bread,” the Bread of life, that Bread of God which came down from heaven (John 6). Let this principle, then, be duly kept in mind by us as we come across the many metaphors which are applied to the Redeemer in the Scriptures. So here in Revelation 21:27 while allowing that “the Book of Life” is a figurative expression, we are far from granting that there is not in heaven that which is figured by it, nay, the very reality itself.

This expression “the Book of Life” has its roots in Isaiah 4:3, wherein God refers to His chosen remnant as “every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem,” and it is this which explains the meaning of all the later references thereto. God’s eternal act of *election* is spoken of as writing the names of His chosen ones in the Book of Life, and the following things are suggested by this figure. First, the exact knowledge which God has of all the elect, His particular remembrance of them, His love for and delight in them. Second, that His eternal election is one of particular persons whose *names* are definitely recorded by Him.

Third, to show they are absolutely safe and secure, for *God* having written their names in the Book of Life, they shall never be blotted out (Rev. 3:5). When the seventy returned from their missionary journey, elated because the very demons were subject to them, Christ said, “But rather rejoice, because your names are *written in heaven*” (Luke 10:20 and compare with Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23), which shows that God’s election to eternal life is of particular persons—by name—and therefore is sure and immutable.

Let us now particularly observe that this election-register is designated “the *Lamb’s Book of Life,*” and this for at least two reasons. First, because the Lamb’s name heads it, His being the *first* one written therein, for He must have the preeminence; after which follows the enrolment of the particular names of all His people—note how *His* name is the first one recorded in the New Testament: Matthew 1:1! Second, because Christ, is the root and His elect are branches, so that they receive their *life from Him* as they are in Him and supported by Him. It is written “When Christ, who is *our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4). Christ is our life because He is the very “Prince of life” (Acts 3:15). Thus, the divine register of election in which are enrolled all the names of Christ’s members, is aptly termed “the Lamb’s Book of Life,” for they are entirely dependent upon Him for life.

But it is in connection with the first reason that we would offer a further remark. It is called the Lamb’s Book of Life because His is the first name in it. This is no arbitrary assertion of ours, but one that is clearly warranted by the Bible, “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me)” (Heb. 10:7). The speaker here is the Lord Jesus and, as is so often the case (such is the fullness of His words), there is a *double* reference in it: first to the archives of God’s eternal counsels, the scroll of His decrees; second, to the Holy Scriptures, which are a partial transcript of them. In keeping with this twofold reference is the *double* meaning of the word “volume.” In Psalm 40:7 “volume” is unquestionably the signification of the Hebrew word there used;

but in Hebrews 10:7 the Greek word most certainly ought to be rendered “*head*”—*kephale* occurs seventy-six times in the New Testament, and it is *always* rendered “head” except here. Thus, properly translated, Hebrews 10:7 reads “*at the head of the book it is written of me.*”

Here, then is the proof of our assertion. The Book of Life—the Divine register of election—is termed “the Lamb’s Book of Life” because *His* name is the first one written therein, and He who had Himself scanned that roll said, as He entered this world, “*at the head of the book it is written of me.*” A further reference to this Book was made by Christ in “In thy book all my members were written” (Psa. 139:16). The Psalmist was referring to his natural body, first as formed in the womb (verse 15), and then as being the subject of the divine decrees (verse 16). But the deeper reference is to Christ, speaking, as the antitypical David, of the members of His mystical body. “The substance of the Church, whereof it was to be formed, was under the eyes of God, as proposed in the decree of election” (John Owen).

Should an exercised reader be asking, How may I now be assured that *my* name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life? We answer, very briefly. First, by God’s having taught you to see and brought you to feel your inward corruption, your personal vileness, your awful guilt, your dire *need* of the sacrifice of the Lamb. Second, by causing you to make Christ of first importance in your thoughts and estimation, perceiving that He alone can save you. Third, by bringing you to believe in Him, rest your whole soul upon Him, desiring to be found in Him, not having your own righteousness, but His. Fourth, by making Him infinitely precious to you, so that He is all your desire. Fifth, by working in you a determination to please and glorify Him.

The first of seven booklets.

