



# The Doctrine of Election



**Part Three**

**A. W. Pink**



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### 6. Its Nature

#### 7. Its Design

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It has been well said that, “The reason why any one believes in election is, that he finds it in the Bible. No man could ever imagine such a doctrine—for it is, in itself, contrary to the thinking and the wishes of the human heart. Every one, at first, opposes the doctrine, and it is only after many struggles, under the working of the Spirit of God, that we are made to receive it. A perfect acquiescence in this doctrine—an absolute lying still, in adoring wonder, at the footstool of God’s sovereignty, is the last attainment of the sanctified soul in this life, as it is the beginning of Heaven. The reason why any one believes in election is just this, and *only* this, that *God* has made it known. Had the Bible been a counterfeit it never could have contained the doctrine of election, for men are too averse to such a thought to give it expression, much more to give it prominence.” (G. S. Bishop).

Thus far, in our exposition of this blessed truth, we have shown that the *source* of election is the will of God, for nothing exists or can exist apart from that. Next, we have seen, that the *Grand Original* of election is the man Christ Jesus, who was ordained unto union with the second person in the Godhead. Then, in order to clear the way for a more detailed examination of this truth as it bears upon us, we demonstrated the *verity* and then the *justice* of it, seeking to remove from the minds of Christian readers the defiling and disturbing effects of the principal objection which is made against divine election by its enemies. And now we shall endeavour to point out the principal elements which enter into election.

First, it is *an act by God*. True it is that there comes a day when each of the elect chooses God for his absolute Lord and supreme Good, but this is the effect and in no sense the cause of the former. Our choosing of Him is in time, His choosing of us was before time

began; and certain it is that unless He had first chosen us, we would never choose Him at all. God, who is a sovereign being, does whatsoever He pleases both in heaven and in earth, having an absolute right to do as He will with His own creatures, and therefore did He choose a certain number of human beings to be His people, His children, His peculiar treasure. Having done this, it is called “election of God” (1 Thess. 1:4), for He is the efficient cause of it; and the persons chosen are denominated “His own elect” (Luke 18:7; compare with Rom. 8:33).

This choice of God’s is an *absolute* one, being entirely gratuitous, depending on nothing whatever outside of Himself. God elected the ones He did simply because He chose to do so: from no good, merit, or attraction in the creature, and from no foreseen merit or attraction to *be* in the creature. God is absolutely self-sufficient, and therefore He never goes outside of Himself to find a reason for any thing that He does. He cannot be swayed by the works of His own hand. No, He is the One who sways them, as He alone is the One who gave them existence. “In Him we live, and are moved [Greek], and have our being.” It was, then, simply out of the spontaneous goodness of His own volition that God singled out from the mass of those He purposed to create a people who should show forth His praises for all eternity, to the glory of His sovereign grace forever and ever.

This choice of God’s is an *unchangeable* one. Necessarily so, for it is not founded upon anything in the creature, or grounded upon anything outside of Himself. It is before everything, even before His “foreknowledge.” God does not decree because He foreknows, but He foreknows because He has infallibly and irrevocably fixed it—otherwise He would merely guess it. But since He foreknows it, then He does not guess—it is certain; and if certain, then He must have fixed it. Election being the act of God, it is *forever*, for whatever He does in a way of special grace, is irreversible and unalterable. Men may choose some to be their favourites and friends for a while, and then change their minds and choose others in their room. But God does not act such a part: He is of one mind, and none can turn Him; His purpose according to election stands firm, sure, unalterable (Rom. 9:11; 2 Tim 2:19).

Second, God’s act of election is *made in Christ*: “according as he

hath chosen us in him” (Eph. 1:4). Election does not find men in Christ, but *puts* them there. It gives them a being in Christ and union to Him, which is the foundation of their manifestative being in Him at conversion. In the infinite mind of God, He willed to love a company of Adam’s posterity with an immutable love, and out of the love wherewith He loves them, He chose them in Christ. By this act in His infinite mind, God gave them being and blessedness in Christ from everlasting. Though, while all fell in Adam, yet all did not fall alike. The non-elect fell so as to be damned, they being left to perish in their sins, because they had no relation to Christ—He was not related to them as the Mediator of union with God.

The non-elect had their all in Adam, their natural head. But the elect had all spiritual blessing bestowed upon them in Christ, their gracious and glorious Head (Eph. 1:3). They could not lose these, because they were secured for them in Christ. God had chosen them as His own: He their God, they His people; He their Father, they His children. He gave them to Christ to be His brethren, His companions, His bride, His partners in all His communicable grace and glory. On the foresight of their fall in Adam, and what would be the effects thereof, the Father proposed to raise them up from the ruins of the fall, upon the consideration of His Son’s undertaking to perform all righteousness for them, and as their Surety, bear all their sins in His own body on the tree, making His soul an offering for sin. To carry all of this unto execution, the beloved Son became incarnate.

It was to this that the Lord Jesus referred in His high priestly prayer, when He said to the Father “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me” (John 17:6). He was alluding to the whole election of grace. They were the objects of the Father’s delight: His jewels, His portion; and in Christ’s eyes they were what the Father beheld them to be. How highly, then, did the Father esteem the Mediator, or He would never have bestowed His elect on Him and committed them all to His care and management! And how highly did Christ value this love-gift of the Father’s, or He would not have undertaken their salvation at such tremendous cost to Himself! Now the giving of the elect to Christ was a different act, a distinct act from that of their election. The elect were first the

Father's by election, who singled out the persons; and then He bestowed them upon Christ as His love-gift: "Thine they were [by election] and thou gavest them me"—in the same way that grace is said to be given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9).

Third, this act of God was irrespective of and *anterior to any foresight of the entrance of sin*. We have somewhat anticipated this branch of our subject, yet as it is one upon which very few today are clear, and one we deem of considerable importance, we propose to give it separate consideration. The particular point which we are now to ponder is, as to whether His people were viewed by God, in His act of election, as fallen or unfallen; as in the corrupt mass through their defection in Adam, or in the pure mass of creaturehood, as to be created. Those who took the former view are known as Sublapsarians; those who took the latter as Supralapsarians, and in the past this question was debated considerably between high and low Calvinists. This writer unhesitatingly (after prolonged study) takes the Supralapsarian position, though he is well aware that few indeed will be ready to follow him.

Sin having drawn a veil over the greatest of all the divine mysteries of grace—that of the divine incarnation alone excepted—renders our present task the more difficult. It is much easier for us to apprehend our misery, and our redemption from it—by the incarnation, obedience, and sacrifice of the Son of God—than it is for us to conceive of the *original* glory, excellency, purity, and dignity of the Church of Christ, as the eternal object of God's thoughts, counsels, and purpose. Nevertheless, if we adhere closely to the Holy Scriptures, it is evident (to the writer, at least) that God's people had a super-creation and spiritual union with Christ before ever they had a creature and natural union with Adam; that they were blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 1:3), before they fell in Adam and became subject to all the evils of the curse. First, we will summarize the reasons given by John Gill in support of this.

God's decree of election is to be divided into *two* parts or degrees, namely, His purpose concerning the end and His purpose concerning the means. The first part has to do with the purpose of

God in Himself, in which He determined to have an elect people and that for His own glory. The second part has to do with the actual *execution* of the first, by fixing upon the means whereby the end shall be accomplished. These two parts in the divine decree are neither to be severed nor confounded, but considered distinctly. God's purpose concerning the end means that He ordained a certain people to be the recipients of His special favour, for the glorifying of His sovereign goodness and grace. His purpose concerning the means signifies that He determined to create that people, permit them to fall, and to recover them out of it by Christ's redemption and the Spirit's sanctification. These are not to be regarded as separate decrees, but as component parts and degrees of one purpose. There is an *order* in the divine counsels as real and definite as Genesis 1 shows there was in connection with creation.

As the purpose of the *end* is first in view (in the order of nature) before the determination of the *means*, therefore what is first in intention is last in execution. Now as the glory of God is the last in execution, it necessarily follows that it was first in intention. Wherefore men must be considered in the Divine purpose concerning the end as neither yet created nor fallen, since both their creation and the permission of sin belong to God's counsel concerning the *means*. Is it not obvious that if God first decreed to create men and suffer them to fall, and then out of the fallen mass chose some to grace and glory, that He purposed to create men *without* any end in view? And is not that charging God with what a wise man would never do, for when man determines to do a thing he proposes an end (say the building of a house) and then fixes on ways and means to bring about the end. Can it be thought for a moment that the Omniscient One should act otherwise?

The above distinction between the divine purpose concerning the end and God's appointing of means to secure that end, is clearly borne out by Scripture. For example, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10). Here is first the decree concerning the *end*: God ordained His many sons "unto glory;" in His purpose of the *means* God ordained that the captain of their salvation should be made perfect "through sufferings." In like manner was it in

connection with Christ Himself. “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand” (Psa. 110:1). God decreed that the Mediator should have this high honour conferred upon Him, yet in order thereto it was ordained that “He shall drink of the brook in the way” (verse 7): God, then, decreed that the Redeemer should drink of the fullness of those pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore (Psa. 16:11), but before that He must drain the bitter cup of anguish. So it is with His people: Canaan is their destined portion, but the wilderness is appointed as that through which they shall pass on their way thereto.

God’s foreordination of His people unto holiness and glory anterior to His foreview of their fall in Adam, comports far better with the instances given of Jacob and Esau in Romans 9:11 than does the sublapsarian view that His decree contemplated them as sinful creatures. There we read, “(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;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.” The apostle is showing that the preference was given to Jacob independent of all ground of merit, because it was made before the children were born. If it be kept in mind that what God does in time is only a making manifest of what He secretly decreed in eternity, the point we are here pressing will be the more conclusive. God’s acts both of election and preterition—choosing and passing by—were entirely *irrespective* of any foreseen “good or evil.” Note, too, how this compound expression “the *purpose* of God according to *election*” supports the contention of there being *two* parts to God’s decree.

It should also be pointed out that God’s foreordination of His people unto everlasting bliss before He contemplated them as sinful creatures, agrees far better than does the sublapsarian idea, with the *unformed* clay of the Potter: “Hath not the potter power [the right] over the clay; of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?” (Rom. 9:21). Upon this Beza (copastor with Calvin of the church at Geneva) remarked that “if the apostle had considered mankind as corrupted, he would *not* have said that some vessels were made unto honour and some unto dishonour, but rather that seeing all the vessels were fit for

dishonour, some were *left in* that dishonour, and others *translated from* dishonour to honour”

But leaving inferences and deductions, let us turn now to something more express and definite. In Ephesians 1:11 we are told, “Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.” Now a careful study of what precedes reveals a clear distinction in the “all things” which God works “according to the counsel of His own will,” or, to state it in another way, the spiritual blessings which God bestows upon His people are divided into *two* distinct classes, according as He contemplated them first in an unfallen state and then in a fallen. The first and highest class of blessings are enumerated in verses 4-6 and have to do with God’s decree concerning the *end*; the second and subordinate class of blessings are described in verses 7-9 and have to do with God’s decree concerning the *means* which He has appointed for the accomplishment of that end.

These two parts in the mystery of God’s will towards His people from everlasting are clearly marked by the change of tense which is used: the past tense of “he *hath* chosen us” (verse 4), “*having predestinated* us unto the adoption of children” (verse 5) and “*hath made* us accepted in the beloved” (verse 6), becomes the present tense in verse 7: “in whom we *have* redemption through His blood.” The benefits spoken of in verses 4-6 are such as in no way depended upon a consideration of the fall, but follow from our being chosen in Christ, being given upon grounds higher and distinct from that of His being our Redeemer. God’s choice of us in Christ our Head, that we should be “holy” signifies not that imperfect holiness which we have in this life, but a perfect and immutable one such as even the unfallen angels had not by nature; and our predestination to adoption denotes an immediate communion with God Himself—blessings which had been ours had sin never entered.

As Thomas Goodwin pointed out in his unrivalled exposition of Ephesians 1, “The first source of blessings—perfect holiness, adoption, etc.—were ordained us *without* consideration of the Fall, though not *before* the consideration of the Fall; for all the things which God decrees are at once in His mind; they were all, both one another, ordained to our persons. But God in the decrees about



these first sort of blessings viewed us as *creatures* which He could and would make so and so glorious. . . . But the second sort of blessings were ordained us merely upon consideration of the fall, and to our persons considered as *sinner*s and unbelievers. The first sort were to the ‘praise of God’s grace,’ taking grace for the freeness of love; whereas the latter sort are to ‘the praise of the glory of his grace,’ taking grace for free mercy.”

The first and higher blessings are to have their full accomplishment in heaven, being suited to that state into which we shall then be installed, and as in God’s primary intention they are before the other and are said to have been “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), so they are to be realized *after* this world is ended—the “adoption” to which we are predestinated (Eph. 1:5) we still await (Rom. 8:23); whereas the second blessings are bestowed upon us in the lower world, for it is here and now we receive “forgiveness of sins” through the blood of Christ. Again; the first blessings are founded solely upon our relation to the *person* of Christ, as is evident from “chosen in Him. . . accepted in the beloved;” but the second sort are grounded upon His *work*, redemption issuing from Christ’s sacrifice. Thus the latter blessings are but the removing of those obstacles which by reason of sin stand in our way of that intended glory.

Again; this distinction of blessings which we receive in Christ as creatures, and through Christ as sinners, is confirmed by the *twofold office* which He sustains toward us. This is clearly expressed in “for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23). Notice carefully the *order* of those titles: Christ is first as head and husband to us, which lays the foundation of that relation to God of being His adopted children—as by marriage with His Son. Second, He is our “Saviour,” which necessarily respects sin. With Ephesians 5:23 should be compared Colossians 1:18-20, where the same order is set forth: in verses 18 and 19 we learn of what Christ is absolutely ordained to and His church with Him, by which He is the founder of that state we shall enter after the resurrection: and then in verse 20 we see Him as redeemer and reconciler: first the “head” of His Church, and then its “Saviour!” From this twofold relation of Christ to the elect arises a *double*

*glory* which He is ordained unto: the one intrinsic, due to Him as the Son of God dwelling in human nature and being therein the head of a glorious Church (see John 17:5); and the other more extrinsic, as acquired by His work of redemption and purchased with the agony of His soul (see Phil. 2:8-10)!

We have called attention to the fact that the only reason why any God-fearing soul believes in the doctrine of election is because he finds it clearly and prominently revealed in God's Word, and hence it follows that our only source of information thereon is the Word itself. Yet, what has just been said is much too general to be of specific help to the earnest inquirer. In turning to the Scriptures for light upon the mystery of election, it is most essential that we should bear in mind that *Christ* is the key to every part of them: "In the volume of the Book it is written of me" He declares, and therefore if we attempt to study this subject apart from Him we are certain to err. In preceding chapters we have evidenced that Christ is the grand original of election, and it is from that starting point we must proceed if we are to make any right advance.

What has just been pointed out holds good not only in the general, but in the particular: for instance, in connection with that special branch of our subject which was discussed we will now follow up from this particular viewpoint. If we go right back to the beginning itself then it will appear that God was pleased, and so resolved, to go forth into creature communion, which is to say that He determined to bring into existence creatures who should enjoy fellowship with Himself. His own glory was alone the supreme end in this determination, for "the Lord hath made all things for himself" (Prov. 16:4). We repeat, that His own glory was the sole and sufficient motive which induced God to create at all: "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:35, 36).

The principal glory which God designed to Himself in election was the manifestation of *the glory of His grace*. This is irrefutably established by "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children through [Greek] Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace" (Eph. 1:5, 6). Grace is one of those illustrious perfections in

the divine character, which is glorious in itself, and had ever remained so though no creature had been formed; but God has so displayed this attribute in election that His people will praise and render glory to it throughout the endless ages yet to be. God showed His holiness in the giving of the Law, His power in the making of the world, His justice in casting the wicked into hell, but His grace shines forth especially in predestination and what His elect are predestinated unto. So, too, when it is said to God “that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory” (Rom. 9:23), the prime reference is to His grace as Ephesians 1:7 shows.

The second person in the Trinity was predestinated to be God-man, being first decreed, for we are “chosen in Him” (Eph. 1:4), which presupposes Him to be chosen first, as the soil in which we are set. We are predestinated unto the adoption of children, yet it is “through Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:5). So we read “Who verily was foreordained [as “Christ”—see previous verse] before the foundation of the world” (1 Pet. 1:20); as we shall show later that expression “before the foundation of the world” is not merely a note of time, but chiefly one of eminence or preference, that God had *Christ* in His view before His intention to create the world for Him and His people. Now we have shown that Christ was ordained to be God-man for much higher ends than our salvation, namely, for God’s own self to delight in, to behold the perfect image of Himself in a creature, and by that union to communicate Himself to that man in a manner and degree not possible to any mere creature as such.

Together with the Son’s being predestinated to be God-man, there falls unto His glorious person, as His inheritance, to be the sovereign end of all things else which God should make and the end of whatever His intelligent creatures He should be pleased to choose unto glory. This is clear from “For all things are yours . . . and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. 3:21-23), which is spoken of in reference of endship. As you, the saints, are the end for which all things were ordained, so Christ is the end of you, and Christ is God’s *end or design* in acting. We say that Christ is “the sovereign end,” and not the supreme end, for God Himself is above and over all; but Christ is the sovereign end unto all creation,

having joint-authority with God, under God. So it is declared that “by Him” and “for Him” were all things created (Col. 1:16), as it is said of God in Romans 11:36. Thus this sovereign end in creation fell to Him as the inheritance of the Mediator: “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand” (John 3:35).

In the predestination of the Son of man unto union with the Son of God, and in the constituting of Him through that union to be the sovereign end of us and of all things, there was conferred upon the man Christ Jesus thus exalted the highest possible favour, immeasurably transcending all the grace shown unto the elect any way considered, so that if the election of *us* be to the praise of the glory of God’s grace, *His* much more so. More honour has been conferred upon “that holy thing” born of the virgin than upon all the members of His mystical body put together; and it was *grace* pure and simple, sovereign grace, which bestowed it. What was there in His humanity, simply considered, which entitled it to such an exaltation? nor could there be any desert foreseen which required it, for it must be said of the man Christ Jesus, as of every other creature, “for who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Cor. 4:7).

Let it not be forgotten that in decreeing the Son of man into union with the second person of the Trinity, with all the honour and glory involved therein, that God was perfectly *free*, as in everything else, to have decreed Him or not decreed Him, as He would; yea, had He pleased, He could have appointed the archangel rather than the seed of the woman, to that inestimable privilege. It was therefore *free grace* in God which made that decree, and by how much loftier was the dignity conferred upon Christ above His fellows, so much greater was the grace. The predestination of the man Jesus, then, is the highest example of grace, and thus God’s greatest end in predestination *to manifest His grace* (from whence election hath its title to be styled “the election of grace:” Rom 11:5) was accomplished in Him above His brethren, that He should be to the praise of the glory of God’s grace, far above what we are.

Since in the case of Christ we have both the pattern and example of election—the grand original—it is quite evident that grace is *not* to be limited or understood only of the divine favour toward creatures that are *fallen* and are delivered out of ruin and misery.

Grace does not necessarily presuppose sin in the objects it is shown unto, for the highest instance of all, that of the grace bestowed upon the man Christ Jesus, was conferred upon One who had no sin and was incapable of it. Grace is favour shown to the *undeserving*, for the human nature in the God-man merited not the distinction conferred upon it. When extended to fallen creatures, it *is* favour shown to the *ill-deserving* and Hell-deserving, yet this is not implied in the term itself, as may further be seen in the case of divine grace being extended to the unfallen angels. Thus, as Christ is the pattern to whom God has predestinated His people to be conformed, His election of them to everlasting glory was under His view of them as *unfallen* and not as corrupt creatures.

God having thus absolutely chosen the Son of man and therewith endowed Him with such royalty as to be the sovereign end of all whom He should create or elect to glory, it therefore follows that those who were chosen of us men were intended by the very ordination of God in our choice *to be for Christ's glory* as the end of our election, as well as for God's own glory. We were not absolutely ordained—as Christ in His unique predestination was in the first design of it—but from the first of ours the intention of God concerning us was that we should *be Christ's* and have our glory from Him who is “the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8). Here, as everywhere, Christ has the preeminence, for the person of Christ, God-man, was predestinated for the dignity of Himself, but we for the glory of God and of Christ. Though God the Father, first and alone, designed who the favoured ones should be, yet that there should be an election of any was for Christ's sake, as well as His own.

In our election God had His Son in view as God-man, and in His design of Him as our end, He chose us for His sake, that we might be His “fellows” or companions (Psa. 45:7), that as He was God's delight (Isa. 42:1), so we might be His delight (Prov. 8:31). Thus we were given to Christ first, not as sinners to be saved by Him, but as sinless members to a sinless Head, as a sovereign gift to His person, for His honour and pleasure, and to be partakers of a supernatural glory with Him and from Him. “And the glory which thou gavest me [as the God-man] I have given them” as concurring with Thy election of them and Thy giving of them to Me to be

Mine. Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me (i.e., with an everlasting love in election), yea, thou gavest them to me for my glory as their end, and for which chiefly Thou lovest them (John 17:22, 23).

And what immediately follows in John 17? This, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (verse 24). Christ was loved in His election from everlasting, and out of God’s love for Him His people were given to Him—with what intent? Even to behold, admire, and adore Him in His person and glory, as being that very thing they were ordained for, more than for their own glory, for *their* glory arises from beholding *His* (2 Cor. 3:18). And what is this glory which Christ was ordained unto? The glory of His *person* first absolutely decreed Him which is the height of His glory in heaven, where it is we are ordained to behold it. And observe how He here (John 17:24) reveals the main motive to God in this: “*for* thou lovedst me”—Christ’s being chosen first in the intention of God, the members were chosen and given to Him so that they should redound to His glory.

We being chosen for Christ’s glory as our end, and for His sake, as well as to the glory of God’s grace towards us, God did ordain a *double relation* of Christ unto us for His glory, additional unto that absolute glory of His person. First the relation of an “Head,” wherein we were given to Him as members of His body, and as a spouse unto her husband to be her head. Second, the relation of a “Saviour” and Redeemer, which is in addition to His headship; and both of these for the further glory of Christ, and also for the demonstration of God’s grace towards us. These two relations are quite distinct and must not be confounded. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23): each of those offices were appointed Him by the good pleasure of God’s will. This same twofold relation of Christ to His people is set forth again in Colossians 1:18-20: this double *official* honour conferred upon Him is further and above the absolute royalties of His *person* as the God-man.

Now that twofold relation of Christ to His people has,

answerably a double and distinct aspect and consideration upon us and of us in our election by God, which was not absolute as Christ's was, but *relative unto* His two principal offices. The first concerns our persons without the consideration of our fall in Adam, whereby we were contemplated in the pure lump of creatureship as to be created, and in that consideration God ordained us unto ultimate glory, under relation to Christ as an "Head:" whether as members of His body or as His bride, or rather both as He is the Head of the Church; of either or both which our persons were fully capable of before or *without* any consideration of our fall. Second, of our persons viewed as fallen, as corrupt and sinful, and therefore as objects to be saved and redeemed from the thralldom thereof, under our relation to Him as a "Saviour"

Each of these relations was for the glory of God's *grace*. First, in His design to advance us, considered purely as creatures, to an higher glory by His Christ than was attainable by the law of creation. To ordain us unto this glory was pure grace, no less so than to redeem us from sin and misery when fallen; for it was wholly independent of works or merit, even as Christ's election (which is the pattern of ours) was apart from the consideration of works of any kind: as He declared, "my goodness extendeth not to thee" (Psa. 16:2). "Although the life-work and death-agony of the Son did reflect unparalleled lustre upon every attribute of God, yet the most blessed and infinitely happy God stood in no need of the obedience and death of His Son: it was for our sakes that the work of redemption was undertaken" (C. H. Spurgeon). It is to this *original grace* that 2 Timothy 1:9 refers: grace alone moving God to redeem and call us, apart from works, "according to" that mother grace whereby we were ordained to glory from the beginning.

In that original grace lay God's grand and ultimate design, for it will have its accomplishment last of all, and as the perfection of all. God might immediately, upon our first creation, have taken us up into that glory. But second, for the further magnifying of Christ and the ampler demonstration of His grace—to extend it to its utmost reach: as the word in the Hebrew is "draw out at length thy lovingkindness" (Psa. 36:10)—He was not pleased to bring us unto the full possession of our inheritance in beholding the personal glory of Christ our head; but permissively ordained that we should

fall into sin, and therefore decreed to create us in mutable condition (as the law of creation required), which made way for the abounding of His grace (Rom. 5:15). This is confirmed by, “But God, who is rich in mercy [a term which denotes our *ill-desert*], for his great love wherewith he loved us” (Eph. 2:4): first God loved us, viewed as sinless creatures; and this became the foundation of “mercy” to us considered as sinners.

It was upon this divine determination that the elect should not immediately upon their creation enter into the glory unto which they were ordained, but should first be suffered to fall into sin and wretchedness and then be delivered out of the same, that Christ had for His great and further glory the office of Redeemer and Saviour superadded to His election of Headship. It is our being sinful and miserable which occupies our present and immediate concern, as that which we are most solicitous about while left in this world, and therefore it is that the Scriptures do principally set forth Christ as Redeemer and *Saviour*. We say “principally” for as we have seen they are by no means silent upon the higher glory of His *headship*; yea, sufficient is said thereon to draw out our thoughts, affections and hopes unto the beholding Him in His grandest glory.

In bringing to a close this outline of the divine order of Christ’s election, and of ours, as it is represented in Scripture, let it be pointed out that we are not to suppose an interval of time between God’s foreordination of Christ as Head and of Him as Saviour, for all was simultaneous in the mind of God; but the distinction is in the order of nature, and for our better understanding thereof. Christ could not be the “Head” without the correlate of His mystical “body,” as He could not be our “Saviour” except we had fallen. “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa. 42:1): Christ was first God’s elect and delight and then His servant—upheld by Him in the work of redeeming. Absolutely and primarily Christ as God-man was ordained for Himself, for His own glory; relatively and secondarily, He was chosen for us and our salvation.

The glory of the person of the God-man, absolutely considered, was the primo-primitive design of God, that upon which He set His heart; next unto this was His ordination of Christ to be an Head unto us and we a body to Him that by our union to Him as our



Head, He was the sufficient and efficient author of such blessings as our becoming immutably holy, of sonship from His Sonship, and the gracious acceptance of our persons in Him as the chief Beloved, and heirs of the same glory with Him—all of which we were capable of in God’s considering us as pure creatures through our union with Christ, and needed not His death to have purchased them for us, being quite distinct from the blessing of redemption as Ephesians 1: 7 (following verses 3-6) clearly enough shows. As this was the first in God’s design, so it is the last in execution, being greater than all “salvation” blessings, the crown of all, when we shall be “forever with the Lord.”

Descending to a much lower level, let it be pointed out that most certainly the holy angels could not be regarded in the corrupt mass when they were chosen, since they never fell; therefore it is most reasonable to suppose *we* were regarded by God as in the same pure mass of creatureship, when He elected us. Thus it was with the human nature of Christ, which is the object of election, for it never fell in Adam, nor ever came into a corrupt state, yet it was “chosen out of the people” (Psa. 89:19), and consequently the people out of which it was chosen must be considered as yet *unfallen*. This alone agrees with the type of Eve (the Church) being given to Adam (Christ) *before* sin entered. So God’s double ordination of the elect to glory and then to salvation (in view of the fall) agrees with the double ordination of the non-elect: preterition as creatures and condemnation as sinners.

N.B. For most of the above we are indebted to Thomas Goodwin. In some places we have purposely repeated ourselves in this chapter, as much of the ground gone over is entirely new to most of our readers.

## 7. Its Design

In the last chapter we have sought to go right back to the very beginning of all things and trace out the *order* of God’s counsels in connection with His eternal decree in election, so far as they are revealed in Holy Writ. Now we shall seek to project our thoughts forward to the future, and contemplate God’s grand design, or *what it was* He ordained His people *unto*. Here we shall be on more familiar ground to many of our readers, yet we must not overlook

the fact that even this phase of our subject will be entirely new to quite a few of those who will scan these lines, and for their sakes especially it will behoove us to proceed slowly, taking nothing for granted, but furnishing clear Scriptural proof for what we advance. That which is to be before us is inexpressibly blessed, O that it may please God to so quicken the hearts of both writer and reader that we may actually rejoice and adore.

1. God's design in our election was that we should *be holy*: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him" (Eph. 1:4). There has been much difference of opinion among the commentators as to whether this refers to that imperfect holiness of grace which we have in this world, or to that perfect holiness of glory which will be ours in the world to come. Personally, we believe that both are included, but that the latter is chiefly intended; and so we shall expound it. First, of that perfect holiness in heaven. That this is the prime reference appears from the amplifying clause "and without blame before him:" it is *such* a holiness that God Himself can find no flaw in. Now the imperfect holiness which the saints have personally in this life, though it be a holiness before God in truth and sincerity, yet it is not one "without blame:" it is not one God can fully delight in.

Second, as God hath ordained us to perfect holiness in the world to come, so He hath ordained us to an evangelical holiness in this world, or else we shall never come to heaven: unless we be made pure in heart here, we shall never see God there. Holiness is the image of God upon the soul, a likeness to Him which makes us capable of communion with Him; and therefore the apostle declares that we should "follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). As reason is the foundation of learning, no man being able to attain it unless he hath reason, so we cannot reach the glory of Heaven unless the principle of holiness be divinely communicated to us. Therefore, as God's first design in our election was that we should be holy before Him, let us now make this *our* paramount concern. Here too is solid comfort for those who find indwelling sin to be their heaviest burden: though thy holiness be most imperfect in this life, yet is it the earnest of a perfect holiness in the life to come.

Holiness must needs be the fruit of our being chosen in Christ, for it is essential to our having a being in Him. It would be a contradiction in terms to say that God chose a man to be in Christ and did not make him to be holy. If God ordains a man to be in Christ, then He ordains him to be a *member* of Christ, and there must be conformity between Head and members. The election of grace was given to Christ as His spouse, and husband and wife must be of the same kind and image. When Adam was to have a wife she must be the same specie: none of the beasts was fit to be a partner for him. God brought them all before him, but among them all “For Adam was not found a help *meet* for him” (Gen. 2:20), because they had not the same image and kind. So if God chooses a man in Christ—the Holy One—he must necessarily be holy, and this is the reason why our holiness is annexed to our being chosen in Him (Eph. 1:4).

God, then, has decreed that His people shall be perfectly holy before Him, that they shall be in His presence forever, there to enjoy Him everlastingly, and delight themselves in that enjoyment, for as the Psalmist tells us “in thy presence is fullness of joy.” Therein is revealed to us *of what consists* the ineffable bliss of our eternal inheritance: it is perfect holiness, perfect love to God; this is the essence of celestial glory. If the entire apostolate had spent the whole of their remaining lifetime in an attempt to depict and describe what heaven is, they could have done no more than enlarge upon these words: perfect holiness in God’s presence, perfect love to Him, perfect enjoyment of Him, even as we are beloved by Him. This is heaven, and this is what God has decreed to bring His people unto. This is His first design in our election: to bring us into an unblemished holiness before Him.

2. God’s design in our election was that we should be *His sons*: “Having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph. 1:5 American Standard Version). Holiness is that which *fits* us for heaven, for an unholy person could not possibly enjoy heaven: were he to enter it, he would be altogether out of his native element. Holiness, then, is that which constitutes the saints meetness for their inheritance in light (Col. 1:12). But adoption is that which gives *the right to* the glory of heaven, being bestowed

upon them as a dignity or prerogative (John 1:12). As we have pointed out on other occasions, the last two words of Ephesians 1:4 belong properly to verse 5: “In love having predestinated us unto the adoption.” God’s love unto His dear Son was so great that, having chosen us in Him, His heart went out toward us as one with Christ, and therefore did He ordain us unto this further honour and privilege. This agrees perfectly with “Behold, what manner of *love* the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1).

God might have made us perfectly holy in Christ and added no further blessing to it. “Ye have your fruits unto holiness” says the apostle (Rom. 6:22), and precious fruit that is; but he did not stop there—“and the end everlasting life:” that is added as a further fruit and privilege. In like manner, God added adoption to holiness: as the Psalmist says “the Lord will give grace and glory” (84:11). As our *God*, He chose us to holiness, according to that express saying “ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2). But as He became our *Father* in Christ, He predestinated us unto the adoption of *sons*. Here, then, is the twofold relation which the Most High sustains to His people in and through Christ, and there is the consequent twofold blessing of our persons because of Christ. Observe how minutely this corresponds with “Blessed be the God *and Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

By adoption we become God’s sons *in law*, as by regeneration we are made His children *in nature*. By the new birth we become (experimentally) members of God’s family; by adoption we have the legal status of sons, with all the high privileges that relationship involves: “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts” (Gal. 4:6). Adoption makes known the high prerogatives and blessings which are ours by virtue of union with Christ, the legal right which we have unto all the blessings we enjoy, both here and hereafter. As the apostle reminds us, if we are children then are we “heirs,” co-heirs with Christ; yea, heirs of God (Rom. 8:17)—to possess and enjoy God as Christ doth. “Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king’s *son-in-law*?” exclaimed David (1 Sam. 18:23), when it was suggested that he marry Michal: you may haply be the king’s favourite and he may make you great, but to

become his son-in-law is the highest honour of all. This is why we are told immediately after I John 3:1, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him” (verse 2)—like Him in our proportion: as He perfectly enjoys God, so shall we.

Let it be duly noted that it is “through Jesus Christ” we are sons and heirs of God. Christ is our pattern in election, the One to whose image we are predestinated to be conformed. Christ is God’s natural Son, and we become (by union with Christ) God’s legal sons. “That he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29) signifies that God did set up Christ as the prototype and masterpiece, and made us to be so many little copies and models of Him. Every dignity we possess, every blessing we enjoy—save our election when God chose us in Him—we owe to Christ. He is the virtual cause of our adoption. Christ, as we have said, is God’s natural Son; how, then, do we become His sons? Thus: God gave us to Christ to be married to Him, and He betrothed us to Him from everlasting, and so we become sons-in-law unto God, even as a woman comes to be a man’s daughter-in-law by marrying his son.

We owe our adoption to our relation unto Christ’s person, and not to His atoning work. Our adoption as originally it was in predestination bestowed upon us, was not founded upon redemption or Christ’s obedience, but on Christ’s being God’s natural Son. Our justification is indeed grounded upon Christ’s obedience and sufferings: “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph. 1:7). But our adoption and becoming sons-in-law to God is through Christ’s being His natural Son, and we His brethren in relation to *His person*. “God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). That fellowship or communion involves our participation of His dignities and whatever else in Him we were capable of; just as a woman acquires a legal title unto all the possessions of the man she marries. As Christ being God’s natural Son was the foundation of His work possessing infinite worth, so our adoption is founded on our relation to His person, and then our justification upon His meritorious work.

We must, however, add this word of caution to what has just

been pointed out: when we fell in Adam we lost all our privileges, and therefore Christ was fain to purchase them anew; and hence it follows that adoption, and all other blessings, are the fruits of His merit so far as their actual *bestowment* is concerned. Thus the apostle tells us Christ became incarnate “to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:5)—our sins and bondage under the law and its curse interposing an obstacle against God’s actual bestowment of adoption. But mark the minute accuracy of the language used: Christ’s redemption is not said to *procure* adoption for us, but only that we might *receive* it. That which procured adoption was our relation to Christ as God’s sons-in-law: this being God’s purpose from everlasting.

Let us duly consider now the *greatness* of this privilege. Adam was created holy, and Luke 3:38 tells us he was “the son of God,” but nowhere is it said that he was the son of God by adoption through Christ. So too in Job 38:7 the angels are called “morning stars” and “sons of God,” yet we are never told they are such by adoption through Christ. They were “sons” indeed by creation, for God made them; but not sons-in-law of God by being married unto His Son, which is a grace and dignity peculiar to believers. Thus we excel the angels by our special relation to the Son of God’s love: Christ nowhere calls the angels His “brethren,” as He doth us! This is borne out by Hebrews 12:22 where, in contrast from the angels mentioned previously, we read of “the Church of the firstborn,” a title denoting superiority (Gen. 49:3): we being related to God’s “Firstborn,” have higher privilege of sonship than the angels have.

“A figure may perhaps help us here. A father chooses a bride for his son, as Abraham chose one of his own kin for Isaac, and gives her a goodly dowry, besides presenting her with bridal ornaments, such as Eliezer put upon Rebekah. But on becoming the spouse of his son, she becomes his daughter, and now his affections flow forth to her, not only as a suitable bride for his dear son; not only does he admire her beauty and grace, and is charmed with the sweetness of her disposition, but he is moved also with fatherly love towards her as adopted unto himself, and thus occupying a newer and nearer relationship. Figures are, of course, necessarily imperfect, and as such must not be pressed too far; but if the one

which we have adduced at all help us to a clearer understanding of the wondrous love of God in the adoption of us unto Himself, it will not be out of place. We thus see that predestination to the adoption of children, is a higher, richer, and greater blessing than being chosen unto holiness, and may thus be said to follow upon it as an additional and special fruit of God's love.

“But the love of God, in predestinating the church unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, has even a deeper root than viewing her as the bride of His dear Son. It springs out of and is most closely and intimately connected with the true, real, and eternal sonship of Jesus. Being chosen in Christ, the elect become the sons of God. Why? Because He is the true, real, and essential Son of the Father; and thus, as in union with Him, who is the Son of God by nature, they become the sons of God by adoption. Were He a Son merely by office, or by incarnation, this would not be the case, for He would then only be a Son by adoption Himself. But being the Son of God by eternal subsistence, He can say, ‘Behold I and the children which Thou hast given Me: I Thy Son by nature, they Thy sons by adoption.’ We see, then, that so great, so special was the love of God to His only begotten Son, that, viewing the Church in union with Him, His heart embraced Her with the same love as that wherewith He loved Him” (J. C. Philpot).

3. God's design in our election was that we should *be saved*: saved from the fall and its effects, from sin and its attendant consequences. This particular ordination of God was upon His foreview of our defection in Adam, who was our natural head and representative; for as pointed out in previous chapters, God decreed to permit the fall of His people in order to the greater manifestation of His own grace and increased glory of the Mediator. Obviously the very term “salvation” implies sin, and that in turn presupposes the fall. But this determination of God to suffer His people to fall into sin and then deliver them from it, was entirely subservient to His prime design concerning the elect and the ultimate glory to which He ordained them. The subordination of this third design of God in our election to those we have already considered appears in “who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but *according to* His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world

began” (2 Tim. 1:9).

If the above Scripture be carefully analyzed it will be seen, first, that God formed a “purpose” concerning His people and that “grace” was given them in Christ Jesus “before the world began” either historically or in the mind of God: the reference being to His sovereign act in singling them out from the pure mass of creatureship, giving them being in Christ, and bestowing upon them the grace of sonship. Second, that God “hath saved us” (the reference being to believers) and “called us with a holy calling,” which refers to what takes place in time when He brings us forth from our death in sin by an effectual call unto holiness (cf. Titus 3:5). Third, that this saving and calling for us was “not according to our works” either actual or foreseen, but “according to His own purpose,” i.e., was based upon His *original intention* that we should be His sons. Neither our merits (for we have none), nor our misery, moved God to save us, but His having given us to Christ from the beginning.

As we have previously pointed out, God assigned unto Christ a *double relation* to His people: “Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the Body” (Eph. 5:23). In the same Epistle He is seen first as the Head in whom we were originally “blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places” (1:3); later, He is presented as Saviour, as the One who “loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and *cleanse* it” (5:25, 26). In speaking of Him as “the Saviour of the Body” it is intimated that He is the Saviour of none else, which is clearly confirmed by “therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that *they* may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10): note, not merely, “Salvation” indefinitely, but “*the* salvation” decreed by God for *His own*. Nor does “we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1 Tim. 4:10) in anywise clash with this: the “living God” has reference to the Father, and “Saviour” is more correctly rendered “Preserver” in Bagster’s Interlinear.

Now this “salvation” which God has decreed for His elect, viewed as fallen in Adam, may be summed up under two heads: from the guilt and penalty of sin, and from its dominion and power, these having to do, respectively, with the legal and experimental



sides. They are accomplished in time by what Christ did *for* us, and by what the Spirit works *in* us. Of the former it is written, “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9); of the latter we read “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (1 Thess. 2:13). It is by the latter we obtain evidence and assurance of the former: “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost” (1 Thess. 1:4, 5). When our salvation from sin is consummated we shall be delivered from the very presence of it.

4. God’s design in our election was that we should be *for Christ*: “All things were created by him, and for him,” (Col. 1:16). God not only chose us in Christ and predestinated us unto sonship through Him, but gave us to Him, so that Christ was likewise the end of God’s purpose in choosing to perfect holiness and adoption. God having a natural Son, the second person in the Trinity, whom He designed to make visible in human nature, through an union of it to His Son, did decree for His greater glory to ordain us unto the adoption of sons to Him and as brethren unto Him, so that He should not be alone, but rather “the firstborn among many brethren.” As in Zechariah 13:7 the man Christ Jesus is designated Jehovah’s “*fellow*,” so from Psalm 45:7 we learn that God predestinated others to be for his Son, to be His companions: “Hath anointed thee above *thy fellows*.”

The subject of the divine decrees is so vast in its range (whether we look backward or forward) and so comprehensive in its scope (when we contemplate all that is involved and included in it), that it is far from being an easy task to present a summarized sketch (which is as high as this writer aspires) of the same; and when attempt is made to furnish an orderly outline and deal separately with its most essential and distinctive features, it is almost impossible to prevent a measure of overlapping; yet if such repetition renders it easier for the reader to take in the prime aspects, our object will be accomplished. Part of what we now wish to contemplate in connection with God’s design in our election was somewhat anticipated—unavoidably so—in the chapter on the nature of election, when, in showing that God’s original intention

was anterior to His foreview of our fall, we touched upon the positive side of His design.

We have sought to point out the infinite distance between the creature and the Creator, the high and lofty One, and that because of the *mutability* of our first estate by nature there was a necessity of *super* creation grace if the condition and standing of either men or angels was to be immutably fixed, which God was pleased to appoint by an election of grace. And therefore did God by that election also ordain those whom He singled out unto a super-creation union with Himself and communication of Himself, as our highest and ultimate end, which is far above that relation we had to Him by mere creation; *this* being accomplished by and through *Christ*. “Yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him” (1 Cor. 8:6, American Standard Version). Let us note first the discriminating language used in this verse: there is a pointed difference made here between the “us” and the “all things,” as of a select and special company, which is repeated in the second half of the verse.

We and all other things are from the Father—“of Him” or by His will and power, as the originating cause: this is common to “us” and all of His creatures. But the “we” He speaks of as a severed remnant, set apart to some higher excellency and dignity, and this special company is also referred to as “we through Him” (the Lord Jesus) in contrast from the “through whom are *all* things.” The Authorised Version gives “one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we *in* (Greek *eis*) Him,” which is quite warrantable, the reference there being to God’s taking us into Himself out of a special love and by a special union with Himself: compare “the church of the Thessalonians which is *in* God the Father” (1 Thess. 1:1). But the Greek also imports our being singled out unto His glory, “*for* Him:” our being *in* Him is the foundation of our being for Him

The distinction to which we have just adverted receives further illustration and confirmation in “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in *you* all” (Eph. 4:6). Here again we find the same difference used about the phrases of the *all things* and the *us*. Of the all things God is said to be “above all,” whereby we

understand the sublimity and transcendency of the divine nature and essence as being infinitely superior to that being which all creatures have by participation from Him. Yet, second, the transcendent One is also imminent, near to, piercing “through” all creatures. He is present with all, yet holding a different being from all—as the air permeates all our dwellings, be they palaces or hovels. But third, when it comes to the saints, it is “*in you* all:” this is sovereign grace making them to differ from all the rest. God is so united to them as to be made one with them, in a special manner and by a special relationship.

How amazing is that grace which has taken such creatures as we are into union with One so elevated and ineffable as God is! This is the very summit of our privilege and happiness. If we compare Isaiah 57:15 with 66:1, 2 we shall see how God Himself has there emphasized both the sublimity and the transcendency of His own person and the marvel and measure of His grace toward us. In the former God speaks of Himself as “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit;” while in the other He declares “The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. . .but to this man will I look even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit.” How this demonstrates the infinite condescension of His favour that picks up animated dust, indwells us, communicates Himself to us as to none others: we have a participation of Him such as the angels have not!

Before proceeding further with our exposition of 1 Corinthians 8:6 so far as it bears upon our present subject, perhaps we should digress for a moment and make a brief remark upon the words “But to us there is but one God, the Father,” which has been grossly perverted by those who deny a trinity of persons in the Godhead. The term “Father” here (as in Matt. 5:16; James 3:9, etc.) is not used of the first person in contradistinction to the second and third, but refers to God as God, to the Divine nature as such. If it could be shown from this verse that Christ is not God in the most absolute sense (see Titus 2:13), then by parity of reason it necessarily follows that “one Lord” would deny the Father is Lord, giving the lie to Revelation 11:15, etc. The main thought of 1 Corinthians 8:6 becomes quite intelligible when we perceive that this verse

furnishes a perfect antithesis and opposition to the false devices of the heathen religion mentioned in verse 5.

Among the pagans there were many “gods” or supreme deities and many “lords” or middle persons and mediators. But Christians have only one supreme Deity, the Triune God, and only one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. John 17:3). Christ has a *double* “Lordship.” First a natural, essential, underived one, belonging to Him considered simply as the second person of the Trinity. Second (to which 1 Cor. 8:6 refers), a derived, economical and dispensatory Lordship, received by commission from God, considered as God-man. It was to this allusion was made previously, wherein it was stated that God decreed the man Christ Jesus should be taken into union with His Son, and so appointed Him His “sovereign end.” The administration of the universe has been placed under Him: all power is committed to Him (John 5:22, 27; Acts 2:36; Heb. 1:2). Christ as God-man has equal authority with God (John 5:23), yet under Him, as Corinthians 3:23, “ask of Me” (Psa. 2:8), Philippians 2:11 shows.

The next thing in I Corinthians 8:6 we would dwell upon is the clause “and we in Him” (Greek) or as the margin has it “we for Him.” Such a supernatural union with God and communication of God is His ultimate design towards us in His choosing of us. Hence it is that we so often read that “for the Lord hath chosen Jacob *unto Himself*, and Israel for His peculiar treasure” (Psa. 135:4). “This people have I formed *for myself*” (Isa. 43:21). “I have reserved to myself seven thousand men” (Rom. 11:4). This choosing of us is not merely a setting apart from all others to be His peculiar treasure (Exod. 19:5), nor only that God hath separated us for His peculiar worship and service to be holy unto Himself (Jer. 2:3), nor only that we should show forth His praise (Isa. 43:21), for even the wicked shall do that (Prov. 16:4; Phil. 2:11); but we are peculiarly for Himself and His glory, wholly in a way of grace and loving kindness.

All that which grace can do for us in communicating God Himself to us, and all that He will do for us unto the magnifying of His glory, arises wholly out of the *free favour* He shows us. In other words, God will have no more glory in us and on us, than arises out of what He bestows in grace upon us, so that our

happiness as the effect will extend as far as His own glory as the end. How wondrous, how grand, how inexpressibly blessed, that God's glory in us should not be severed in anything from our good: God has so ordered things that not only are the two things inseparable, but co-extensive. If, therefore, God has designed to have a manifestative glory unto the uttermost, He will show forth unto us grace unto the uttermost. It is not merely that God bestows gifts, showers blessings, but communicates to us *Himself* to the utmost that we as creatures are capacitated for.

This is so far above poor human reason that nothing but faith can apprehend it, that we are yet to be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19). In communicating Himself, God communicates *the whole* of Himself, whether of His divine perfections so far as to bless us therewith, or of all three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for us to enjoy and have fellowship with. All in God shall as truly serve to make the elect blessed (according to a creature capacity) as serves to make Him blessed in His own immense infinity. If we have God Himself, and the whole of Himself, then are we “heirs of God” (Rom. 8:17), for we are “joint heirs with Christ;” and that God Himself is Christ's inheritance is proved by His own declaration “the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance” (Psa. 16:5). More than this we cannot have or wish: “He that overcometh shall inherit *all* things; and I will be his *God*, and he shall be my son” (Rev. 21:7).

In consequence of having chosen us for Himself, God *reserves Himself for us*, and all that is in Him. If Romans 11:4 speaks of God's having “reserved to himself” the elect (see verse 5 and note the “also”), so 1 Peter 1:4 tells that God is “reserved in heaven for us” as is clear from the fact that God Himself is our “inheritance,” and none shall share in this wondrous inheritance but the destined heirs. And there He waits, as it were, till such time as we are gathered to Himself. There He has waited throughout the centuries, suffering the great ones of each generation to pass by, reserving Himself (as in election He did design) for His saints—“as if a great prince in a dream or vision should see the image of a woman yet to be born, and should so fall in love with his foreview of her that he should reserve himself till she is born and grown up, and will not think of or entertain any other love” (Thomas Goodwin). Christian

reader, if God hath such love for thee, what ought to be thy love to Him! If He hath given Himself wholly to thee, how entire should be thy dedication unto Him!

When God hath brought us safely through all the trials and troubles of this lower world to heaven, then will He make it manifest that His first and ultimate design in electing us was for Himself, and therefore our first welcome there will be a presenting of us to Himself: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24), which is here mentioned that we might praise and give Him glory beforehand. The reference here is (we believe) not to Christ (*that* we have in Eph. 5:27; Heb. 2:13), but to the *Father* Himself, as “the presence of his glory” intimates, that being what we are “presented” before. It is the same Person who presents us to Himself whose glory it is. This is further borne out by “to the only wise God our Saviour [note the “Father” is distinctly called “our Saviour” in Titus 3:4] be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and ever. Amen” (verse 25), all which attributes are those of God the Father in the usual current of doxologies.

God will present us to Himself “with exceeding joy.” This “presentation” takes place at the first coming of each individual saint into heaven, though it will be more formally repeated when the entire election of grace arrive there. As we on our part—and with good reason—shall rejoice, so God on His part, too. He is pleased to present us with great joy to Himself, as making our entrance into Heaven more His own concern than it is ours. This presenting us to Himself “before the presence of His glory” is a matter of great joy to Himself to have us so with Himself: as parents are overjoyed when children long absent return home to them—compare the joy of the Father in Luke 15. It is because His purpose is accomplished, His eternal design realized, His glory secured, that He rejoices. With this agrees, “He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love: he will joy over thee with singing” (Zeph. 3:17). It was for Himself God first chose us as His ultimate end, and this is now perfected.

Another Scripture which teaches that God has chosen His people *for Himself* is “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of

children by Christ *to himself*" (Eph. 1:5). The Greek word rendered "to Himself" may as indifferently (with a variation of the aspirate) be rendered "for Him," so that with equal warrant and propriety we may understand it, first, as relating to God the Father, He having predestinated us to Himself as His ultimate end of this adoption; or second, to Jesus Christ, who is also one end in God thus predestinating us unto adoption. That the preposition *eis* often signifies "for" as denoting the end or final cause, appears from many places: for example, in the very next verse, "to [or "for"] the praise of the glory of His grace" as His grand design; so too in Romans 11:36 "to Him" (or "for Him") are all things." We shall therefore take this expression in its most comprehensive sense and give it a twofold meaning according to its context and the analogy of faith.

God's having predestinated us "to Himself" is not to be understood as referring primarily or alone to adopting us as sons to Himself, but as denoting distinctly and immediately His having elected and predestinated us to His own great and glorious self, and for His great and blessed Son. In other words, the clause we are now considering points to another and larger end of His predestinating us than simply our adoption; although that be mentioned as a special end, yet it is but a lower and subordinate end in comparison with God's predestinating us *to Himself*. First, He chose us in Christ unto an impeccable holiness which would satisfy His own nature; in addition, He predestinated us unto the honour and glory of adoption; but over and above all, His grace reached to the utmost extent by predestinating us to Himself—the meaning and marvel of which we have already dwelt upon.

God's having predestinated us "to Himself" denotes a *special propriety in us*. The cattle upon a thousand hills are His, and they honour Him in their kind (Isa. 43:20), but the Church is His peculiar treasure and medium of glory. The elect are consecrated to Him out of the whole in a peculiar way: "Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase" (Jer. 2:3), which denotes His consecrating them to Himself, as the type in Numbers 18 explains it. Christ made a great matter of this in God's taking us to be His: "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are *thine*" (John 17:9); so too the apostle Paul

emphasized the same note in “The Lord knoweth them that are *his*” (2 Tim. 2:19). It denotes too a choosing of us *to be holy* before Him, as consecrating us unto His service and worship, which is specially instanced in Romans 11:4, where the “I have reserved to Myself” is in contrast from the rest which He left to the worshipping of Baal. But above all, it imports His taking us into the *nearest oneness* and communion with and participation of Himself.

Consider now the phrase in Ephesians 1:5 as meaning “for Him,” that is, for Jesus Christ. The Greek words *autos* and *hautos* are used promiscuously, either for “him” or “himself,” so that we are not straining it at all in rendering “for Him.” It is in the prepositions which are used with reference to Christ in connection with the Church’s relation to Him that His glory is told out: they are in Him, through Him, for Him. Each of these is employed here in Ephesians 1:4, 5 and in that order: we were chosen *in* Him as our Head, predestinated to adoption *through* Him as the means of our sonship, and appointed *for* Him as an end—the honour of Christ as well as the glory of His own grace was made God’s aim in His predestinating of us. The same three things are attributed to Christ in connection with creation and providence: see Greek of Colossians 1:16. But it is of God the Father alone, as the fountain, we read “of Him” (the Originator) (Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 5:18).

First God decreed that His own dear Son should be made visibly glorious in a human nature, through an union with it to His own person; and then for His greater glory God decreed us to be adopted sons through Him, as brethren unto Him, for God would not His Son in humanity should be alone, but have “fellows” or companions to enhance His glory. First, by His comparison with them, for He is “anointed *above* His fellows” (Psa. 45:7), being “the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29). Second, God gave to His Son an unique honour and matchless glory by ordaining Him to be God-man, and for the enhancing of the same He ordained that there should be those about Him who might see His glory and magnify Him for the same (John 17:24). Third, God ordained us to adoption that Christ might be the means of all the glory of our sonship, which we have through Him, for He is not only our pattern in predestination, but the virtual cause of it.



Now in God's councils of election, the consideration of Christ's assumption of man's nature was not founded upon the supposition or foresight of the Fall, as our being predestinated *for Him* as the end intimates. Surely, this is obvious. Why, to bring Christ into the world only on account of sin and for the work of redemption were to *subject Him unto us*, making our interests the end of His becoming incarnate! That is indeed to get things upside down, for Christ, as God-man is *the end of us*, and of all things else. Moreover, this were to subordinate the infinite value of His *person* to the benefits we receive from His *work*; whereas redemption is far inferior to the gift of Himself unto us and we unto Him. It might also be shown that redemption itself was designed by God first for Christ's own glory rather than to meet our need.

N. B. We are again indebted to the invaluable writings of Thomas Goodwin.

The third of seven booklets.

