



# The Doctrine of Election



**Part Two**

**A. W. Pink**



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### 4. Its Verity and 5. Its Justice

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#### 4. Its Verity

Before proceeding further with an orderly opening up of this profound but precious doctrine, it may be better (especially for the benefit of those less familiar with the subject) if we now demonstrate *its Scripturalness*. We must not take anything for granted, and as numbers of our readers have never received any systematic instruction upon the subject—yea, some of them know next to nothing about it—and as others have heard and read only perversions and caricatures of this doctrine, it seems essential that we should pause and establish its verity. In other words, our present object is to furnish proof that what we are now writing upon is not some theological invention of Calvin’s or any other man’s, but is clearly revealed in Holy Writ, namely, that God, before the foundation of the world, made a difference between His creatures, singling out certain ones to be the special objects of His favour.

We shall deal with the subject in a more or less general way—occupying ourselves with *the fact itself*; reserving the more detailed analysis and the drawing of distinctions for later chapters. Let us begin by asking, Has God an elect people? Now this question must be propounded to God Himself, for He alone is competent to answer it. It is, therefore, to His holy Word we have to turn, if we would learn *His* answer thereto. But ere doing so, we need to earnestly beg God to grant us a teachable spirit, that we may humbly receive the divine testimony. The things of God can no man know, till God Himself declares them; but when He *has* declared them, it is not only crass folly, but wicked presumption, for any one to contend or disbelieve. The Holy Scriptures are the rule of faith, as well as the rule of conduct. To the law and the testimony, then, we now turn.

Concerning the nation of Israel we read, “The Lord thy God hath *chosen* thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deut. 7:6); “For the Lord hath

*chosen* Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure” (Psa. 135:4); “But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have *chosen*, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, thou art my servant; I have *chosen* thee, and not cast thee away” (Isa. 41:8, 9). These testimonies make it unmistakably plain that ancient Israel were the favoured, elect people of God. We do not here take up the question as to *why* God chose them, or as to *what* they were chosen unto; but notice only the bare fact itself. In Old Testament times God had an elect nation.

Next, it is to be observed that even in favoured Israel God made a distinction: there was an election within an election; or, in other words, God had a special people of His own from among the nation itself. “For they are *not all Israel*, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all *children*: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Rom. 9:6-8). “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. . . . I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal: even so that at this present time also there is a remnant according to the *election* of grace. . . . Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the *election* hath obtained it” (Rom. 11:2-7). Thus we see that even in visible Israel, the nation chosen to outward privileges, God had an election—a *spiritual* Israel, the objects of His love.

The same principle of Divine selection appears plainly and conspicuously in the teaching of the New Testament. There too it is revealed that God has a peculiar people, the subjects of His special favour, His own dear children. The Saviour and His apostles describe this people in various ways, and often designate them by the term of which we here treat. “For the *elect’s* sake those days shall be shortened . . . insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very *elect* ... and they shall gather together *His elect* from the four winds” (Matt. 24:22, 24, 31). “Shall not God avenge His own *elect*, which cry day and night unto Him?” (Luke 18:7). “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of *God’s elect*?” (Rom. 8:33). “That the purpose of God according to election might

stand” (Rom. 9:11). “I endure all things for *the elect’s* sake” (2 Tim. 2:10), “The faith of *God’s elect*” (Titus 1:1). Many other passages might be quoted, but these are sufficient to clearly demonstrate that God has an elect people. God Himself says He has, who will dare say He has not!

The word “elected” in one of its forms, or its synonym “chosen” in one of its forms, occurs upon the sacred page considerably over one hundred times. The term, then, belongs to the divine vocabulary. It must mean something; it must convey some definite idea. What, then, is its significance? The humble inquirer will not force a construction upon the word, or seek to read into it his own preconceptions, but will prayerfully endeavour to ascertain the mind of the Spirit. Nor should this be difficult, for there is no word in human language which has a more specific meaning. The concept universally expressed by it is that one is taken and another left, for if all were taken there would be *no* “choice.” Moreover, *the right of choice* always belongs to him who chooses: the act is his, the motive is his. Therein “choice” differs from compulsion, the paying of a debt, discharging an obligation, or responding to the requirements of justice. Choice is a free and sovereign act.

Let there be no uncertainty about the meaning of our term. God has made a choice, for election signifies selection and appointment. God has exercised His own sovereign will and singled out from the mass of His creatures those upon whom He determined to bestow His special favours. There cannot be an election without a singling out, and there cannot be a singling out without a passing by. The doctrine of election means that from all eternity God made a choice of those who were to be His special treasure, His dear children, the coheirs of Christ. The doctrine of election means that before His Son became incarnate God marked out the ones who should be saved by Him. The doctrine of election means that God has left nothing to chance: the accomplishment of His purpose, the success of Christ’s undertaking, the peopling of heaven, is not contingent upon the fickle caprice of the creature. God’s will, and not man’s will, fixes destiny.

Let us now call attention to a most remarkable and little known example of divine election. “I charge thee before God, and the Lord

Jesus Christ, and *the elect angels*” (1 Tim. 5:21). If then, there are “elect angels” there must necessarily be non-elect, for there cannot be the one without the other. God, then, in the past made a selection among the hosts of heaven, choosing some to be vessels of honour and others to be vessels of dishonour. Those whom He chose unto His favour, stood steadfast, remained in subjection to His will. The rest fell when Satan revolted, for upon his apostasy he dragged down with himself one third of the angels (Rev. 12:4). Concerning them we read, “God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness” (2 Pet. 2:4). But those of them who belong to the election of grace are “the holy angels:” holy as the consequence of their election, and not elected because they were holy, for election antedated their creation. The supreme example of election is seen in Christ; the next highest in that God made choice among the celestial hierarchies.

Let us next observe and admire the marvel and singularity of God’s choice among men. He has selected a portion of Adam’s race to be the high favourites of heaven. “Now this is a wonder of wonders, when we come to consider that the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, is the Lord’s. If God must have a chosen race, why did He not select one from the majestic order of angels, or from the flashing cherubim and seraphim who stand around His throne? Why was not Gabriel fixed upon? Why was he not so constituted that from his loins there might spring a mighty race of angels, and why were not those chosen of God from before the foundation of the world? What could there be in *man*, a creature lower than the angels, that God should select him rather than the angelic spirits? Why were not the cherubim and seraphim given to Christ? Why did He not assume the nature of angels, and take *them* into union with Himself? An angelic body might be more in keeping with the person of Deity than a body of weak and suffering flesh and blood. There was something congruous if He had said unto the angels, ‘Ye shall be My Sons.’ But no! though all these were His own; He passes them by and stoops to man” (C. H. Spurgeon).

Some may suggest that the reason why God made choice of

Adam's descendants in preference to the angels, was that the human race fell in Adam and thus afforded a more suitable case for God to display His rich mercy upon. But such a supposition is entirely fallacious, for, as we have seen, one third of the angels themselves fell from their high estate, yet so far from God showing them mercy, He "hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). No Saviour was provided for them, no gospel has ever been preached to them. How striking and how solemn is this: the fallen angels passed by; the fallen sons of Adam made the recipients of the overtures of divine mercy.

Here is a truly marvellous thing. God determined to have a people who should be His peculiar treasure, nearer and dearer to Himself than any other creatures; a people who should be conformed to the very image of His Son. And that people was chosen from the descendants of Adam. Why? Why not have reserved that supreme honour for the celestial hosts? They are a higher order of beings; they were created before us. They were heavenly creatures, yet God passed them by; we are earthly, yet the Lord set His heart upon us. Again we ask, why? Ah, let those who hate the truth of God's high sovereignty and contend against the doctrine of unconditional election, carefully ponder this striking example of it. Let those who so blatantly insist that it would be unjust for God to show partiality between man and man, tell us why did He show partiality between race and race, bestowing favours upon men which He never has upon angels? Only one answer is possible: *because it so pleased Him.*

Election is a divine secret, an act in the will of God in eternity past. But it does not forever remain such. No, in due time, God is pleased to make openly manifest His everlasting counsels. This He has done in varying degrees, since the beginning of human history. In Genesis 3:15 He made known the fact that there would be two distinct lines: the woman's "seed," which denoted Christ and His people, and the Serpent's "seed," which signified Satan and those who are conformed to his likeness; God placing an irreconcilable "enmity" between them. These two "seeds" comprehend the elect and the non-elect. Abel belonged to the election of grace: evidence

of this being furnished in his “faith” (Heb. 11:4), for only those “ordained to eternal life” (Acts 13:48) savingly “believe.” Cain belonged to the non-elect: evidence of this is found in the statement “Cain, who was of that Wicked one” (1 John 3:12). Thus at the beginning of history, in the two sons of Adam and Eve, God “took” the one into His favour, and “left” the other to suffer the due reward of his iniquities.

Next, we behold election running in the line of Seth, for it was of his descendants (and not those of Cain’s) we read, “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord” (Gen. 4:26). But in the course of time they too were corrupted, until the entire human race became so evil that God sent the flood and swept them all away. Yet even then the principle of divine election was exemplified: not only in Enoch, but that “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8). It was the same after the flood, for a marked discrimination was made between the sons of Noah: “Blessed be the Lord God of Shem” (Gen. 9:26), which imports that God had chosen and blessed him. On the other hand, “Cursed be Canaan: a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren” (Gen. 9:25), which is expressive of preterition and all that is involved in God’s rejection. Thus, even of those who emerged from the ark, God made one to differ from another.

From the sons of Noah sprang the nations which have peopled the world. “By these [i.e., Noah’s three sons] were the nations divided in the earth after the flood” (Gen. 10:32). From those seventy nations God chose the one in which the great current of His election would run. In Genesis 10:25 we read that this dividing of the nations was made in the time of Eber, the grandson of Shem. Why are we told this? To intimate that God then began to separate the Jewish nation unto Himself in Eber, for Eber was their father; hence it is also that at the beginning of Shem’s genealogy we are told, “Shem also (the elected and blessed of God), the father of all the children of Eber” (10:21). This is very striking, for Shem had other and older children (whose line of descendants is also recorded), as Asshur and Elim, the fathers of the Assyrians and the Persians.

The seemingly dry and uninteresting detail in Genesis 10 to

which we have just alluded, marked a most important step forward in the outworking of the divine counsels, for it was then that God began to separate unto Himself the Israelites in Eber, whom He had appointed to be their father. Till then the Hebrews had lain promiscuously mingled with the other nations, but now God “divided” them from the rest, as the other nations were divided from one another. Accordingly, we find Eber’s posterity, even when very few in number, were designated “Hebrews” as their *national* denomination (“Israel” being their *religious name*) in distinction from those among whom they lived: “Abraham the *Hebrew*” (Gen. 14:13), “Joseph the *Hebrew*” (Gen. 39:14). Hence, when they became a nation in numbers, and while living in the midst of the Egyptians, they are again styled “Hebrews” (Exod. 1:15), while in Numbers 24:24 they are distinctly called “*Eber!*”

What we have sought to explain above is definitely confirmed by “Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the most High *divided* to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. *For* the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance” (Deut. 32:7-9). Notice, first, the Lord here bade Israel cast their minds back to ancient times, the traditions of which had been handed down by their fathers. Second, the particular event alluded to was when God “divided” to the nations their inheritance, the reference being to that famous division of Genesis 10. Third, those nations are spoken of *not* “as the sons of Noah” (who was in the elect line), but as “the sons of *Adam*”—*another* plain hint that *he* headed the line of the reprobate. Fourth, that when God allotted to the non-elect nations their earthly portion, even then the eye of grace and favour was upon the children of Israel. Fifth, “according to the *number* of the children of Israel,” which was seventy when they first settled in Egypt (Gen. 46:27)—the exact number of the nations mentioned in Genesis 10!

The chief link of connection between Eber and the nation of Israel was, of course, Abraham, and in his case the principle of divine election shines forth with sunlight clearness. The divine call



which he received marked another important stage in the development of God's eternal purpose. At the tower of Babel God gave over the nations to walk in their own evil ways, afterward taking up Abraham to be the founder of the favoured nation. "Thou art the Lord the God, who didst *choose* Abraham, and broughtest him forth out of Ur" (Neh. 9:7). It was not Abraham who chose God, but God who chose Abraham. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia" (Acts 7:2): this title "the God of glory" is employed here to emphasize the signal favour which was shown to Abraham, the glory of His grace in electing him, for there was nothing in him by nature that lifted him above his fellows and entitled him to the divine notice. It was unmerited kindness, sovereign mercy, which was shown him.

This is made very evident by what is told us in Joshua 24 of his condition *before* Jehovah appeared to him: "Thus saith the God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served *other gods*" (verse 2). Abraham was living in the heathen city of Ur, and belonged to an idolatrous family! At a later date God pressed this very fact upon his descendants, reminding them of the lowly and corrupt state of their original, and giving them to know it was for no good in him that he had been chosen: "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him" (Isa. 51:1, 2). What a flesh-withering word is that: the great Abraham is here likened (by God) to "the hole of the pit"—such was his condition when the Lord first appeared unto him.

But there is more in the above passage. Observe carefully the words "I called him *alone*." Remember that this was while he dwelt in Ur, and as modern excavations have shown, that was a city of vast extent: out of all its huge number of inhabitants God revealed himself to *one only*! The Lord here emphasized that very fact and calls upon us to mark the singularity of His election by this word "alone." See here, then, the absolute sovereignty of God, exercising His own imperial will, choosing whom He pleases. He

had mercy upon Abraham simply because He was pleased to do so, and He left the remainder of his countrymen in heathen darkness simply because it so seemed good in His sight. There was nothing more in Abraham than in any of his fellows why God should have selected *him*: whatever goodness was found in him later was what God Himself put there, and therefore it was the consequence and not the cause of His choice.

Striking as is the case of Abraham's own election, yet God's dealings with his offspring is equally if not more noteworthy. Therein God furnished an epitome of what has largely characterized the history of all His elect, for it is a very rare thing to find a whole family which (not simply makes a profession, but) gives evidence of enjoying His special favour. The common rule is that one is taken and other is left, for those who are given to really believe this precious but solemn truth, are made to experimentally realize its force in connection with their own kin. Thus Abraham's own family furnished in his next and immediate successors, a prototype of the future experience of the elect. In his family we behold the most striking instances of both election and preterition, first in his sons, and then in his grandsons.

That Isaac was a child of pure electing grace (which was the cause and not the consequence of his faith and holiness), and that as such he was placed in Abraham's family as a precious gift, while Ishmael was excluded from that preeminent favour, is quite evident from the history of Genesis. Before he was born, yea, before he was conceived in the womb, God declared unto Abraham that Isaac was heir of the same salvation with him, and had irrevocably estated the covenant of grace upon him thereby distinguishing him from Ishmael; who, though blessed with temporal mercies, was not in the covenant of grace, but rather was under the covenant of works (see Gen. 17:19-21 and compare the Spirit's comments thereon in Gal. 4:22-26).

Later, while Isaac was yet young, and lay bound as a sacrifice upon the altar, God ratified the promises of blessing which He had made before his birth, confirming them with a solemn oath: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I

will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven” (Gen. 22:16, 17). That oath respected the *spiritual* seed, the heirs of promise, such as Isaac was, the declared son of promise. To that the apostle referred when he said, “wherein God; willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath” (Heb. 6:17). And what was His “immutable counsel” but His eternal decree, His purpose of election? God’s counsels are His decrees within Himself from everlasting (Eph. 1:4, 9,10). And what is a promise with an oath but God’s immutable counsel or election put into promissory form. And who are the “heirs of promise” but the elect, such as Isaac was.

An objector would argue that the choosing of Isaac in preference to Ishmael was not an act of pure sovereignty, seeing that the former was the son of Sarah, while the latter was the child of Hagar, the Egyptian bondwoman—thus supposing that God’s gifts are regulated by something in the creature. But the next instance precludes even that sophistry and entirely shuts us up to the uncaused and uninfluenced will of the Most High. Jacob and Esau were by the *same* father and mother, twins. Concerning them 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. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Rom. 9:11-13). Let us bow in awed silence before such a passage.

The nation which sprang from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was God’s chosen and favoured people, singled out and separated from all other nations, to be the recipients of the rich blessings of God. It was that very fact which added so greatly to the enormity of their sins, for increased privileges entail increased responsibility, and increased responsibility not discharged involves increased guilt. “Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel.... *You only* have I *known* of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos 3:1, 2). From the days of Moses until the time of Christ, a period of fifteen hundred years, God suffered all the heathen nations to walk in their

own ways, leaving them to the corruptions and darkness of their own evil hearts. No other nation had God's Word, no other nation had a divinely appointed priesthood. Israel alone was favoured with a written revelation from heaven.

And why *did* the Lord choose Israel to be His special favourites? The Chaldeans were more ancient, the Egyptians were far wiser, the Canaanites were more numerous; yet they were passed by. What, then, was the reason why the Lord singled out Israel? Certainly it was not because of any excellency in them, as the whole of their history shows. From Moses till Malachi they were a stiff-necked and hardhearted people, unappreciative of divine favours, unresponsive to the divine will. It could not have been because of any goodness in them: it was a clear case of the divine sovereignty: "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers" (Deut. 7:6-8). The explanation of all God's acts and works was to be found in Himself—in the sovereignty of His will, and not anything in the creature.

The same principle of divine selection is as plainly and prominently revealed in the New Testament as in the Old. It was strikingly exemplified in connection with the birth of Christ. First, in the place where He was born. How startlingly the sovereignty of God was displayed in that momentous event. Jerusalem was not the Saviour's birthplace, nor was it one of the prominent towns of Palestine; instead, it was in a small village! The Holy Spirit has called particular attention to this point in one of the leading Messianic prophecies: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be *little* among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of *thee* shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel" (Mic. 5:2). How different are God's thoughts and ways from man's! How He despises what we most esteem, and honours that which we look down upon. One of the most insignificant of all places was chosen by God to be the scene of the most stupendous of all events.

Again; the high sovereignty of God and the principle of His singular election appeared in those to whom He first communicated these glad tidings. To whom was it God sent the angels to announce the blessed fact of the Saviour's birth? Suppose Scripture had been silent upon the point: how differently would we have conceived of the matter. Would we not have naturally thought that the first ones to be informed of this glorious event had been the ecclesiastical and religious leaders in Israel? Surely the angels would deliver the message in the *temple*. But no, it was neither to the chief priests nor to the rulers they were sent, but unto the lowly shepherds keeping watch over their flocks in the fields. And again we say, how entirely different are God's thoughts and ways from man's. And what thus took place at the beginning of this Christian era was indicative of God's way throughout its entire course (see 1 Cor. 1:26-29).

Let us next observe that this same grand truth was emphasized by Christ Himself in His public ministry. Look at His first message in the Nazareth synagogue. "And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor [i.e., the poor in spirit, and not to wealthy Laodiceans]; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted [not the stout-hearted, but those sorrowing before God over their sins] , to preach deliverance to the captives [and not to those who prate about their "free will"], and recovering of sight to the blind [not those who think they *can* see] , and to set at liberty them that are bruised [not those who deem themselves whole], To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:17-19).

The immediate sequel is indeed solemn: "And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bear him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (verses 21, 22). So far so good: they were pleased at His "gracious words;" yes, but would they tolerate the preaching of *sovereign grace*? "But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was

throughout the land; but unto *none of them* was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and *none of them* was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian” (verses 25-27). Here Christ pressed upon them the truth of God’s high sovereignty, and *that* they could not endure: “And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath; and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city” (verses 28, 29) and mark it well that it was the respectable worshippers of the synagogue who thus gave vent to their hatred of this precious truth! Then let not the servant today be surprised if he meet with the same treatment as his Master.

His sermon at Nazareth was by no means the only time when the Lord Jesus proclaimed the doctrine of election. In Matthew 11 we hear Him saying, “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” (verses 25, 26). To the seventy He said, “Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are *written in heaven*” (Luke 10:20). In John 6 it will be found that Christ, in the hearing of the multitude, hesitated not to speak openly of a company whom the Father had “given to him” (verses 37, 39). To the apostles He said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit” (John 15:16): how shocked would the great majority of church goers be today if they heard the Lord say such words unto His own! In John 17:9 we find Him saying, “I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me.”

As an interesting and instructive illustration of *the emphasis* which the Holy Spirit has placed upon this truth we would call attention to the fact that in the New Testament God’s people are termed “believers” but twice, “Christians” only three times, whereas the designation *elect*, is found fourteen times and *saints* or separated ones sixty-two times! We would also point out that various other terms and phrases are used in the Scriptures to express election: “And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this

thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and *I know thee* by name” (Exod. 33:17); “Before I formed thee in the belly *I knew thee*, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee” (Jer. 1:5; compare with Amos 3:2). “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have *chosen*” (John 13:18; compare with Matt. 20:16). “As many as were *ordained to* eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48). “God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to *take out of them* a people for his name” (Acts 15:14). “Church of the firstborn, which are *written in heaven*” (Heb. 12:23).

This basic truth of election undergirds the whole scheme of salvation: that is why we are told “the *foundation of God* standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord *knoweth them that are his*” (2 Tim. 2:19). Election is necessarily and clearly implied by some of the most important terms used in Scripture concerning various aspects of our salvation, yea, they are unintelligible without it. For example, every passage which makes mention of “redemption” presupposes eternal election. How so? Because “redemption” implies a previous possession: it is Christ *buying back* and delivering those who were God’s at the beginning. Again; the words “regeneration” and “renewing” necessarily signify a *previous* spiritual life—lost when we fell in Adam (1 Cor. 15:22). So again the term “reconciliation:” this not only denotes a state of alienation before the reconciliation, but a condition of harmony and amity, before the alienation. But enough: the truth of election has now been abundantly demonstrated from the Scriptures. If these many and indubitable proofs are not sufficient, it would be a waste of time to further multiply them.

Let it now be pointed out that this grand truth was definitely held and owned by our forefathers. First, a brief quotation from the ancient Creed of the Waldenses (eleventh century)—those renowned confessors of the Christian Faith in the dark ages, in the midst of the most terrible persecutions from the Papacy: “That God saves from corruption and damnation those whom He has chosen from the foundation of the world, not for any disposition, faith, or holiness that He foresaw in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ Jesus His Son; passing by all the rest, according to the irreprehensible reason of His own free will and justice.” Here is one

of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England: “Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, He hath constantly decreed by His secret counsel to us to deliver from curse and condemnation those whom He had chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring by Christ to everlasting salvation as vessels made to honour.”

This is from the Westminster Confession of Faith, subscribed to by all Presbyterian ministers, “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.” And here is the third article from the old Baptist (English) Confession: “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of His glorious justice.”

Let it not be thought that we have quoted from these human standards in order to bolster up our cause. Not so: the present writer, by divine grace, would believe and teach this grand truth if none before him had ever held it, and if every one in Christendom now repudiated it. But what has just been adduced is good evidence that we are here advancing no heretical novelty, but a doctrine proclaimed in the past in each section of the orthodox Church upon earth. We have also made the above quotations for the purpose of showing how far the present generation of professing Christians have *departed from the Faith* of those to whom under God, they owe their present religious liberties. Just as the modern denials of the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures (by the higher critics), the denial of immediate creation (by evolutionists), the denial of the deity of Christ (by Unitarians), so the present denial of God’s sovereign election and of man’s spiritual impotency, are equally departures from the Faith of our forefathers, which was based upon the inerrant Word of God.



The truth of divine election has been most conspicuously exemplified in the history of Christendom. If it be true that during the last two thousand years of the Old Testament dispensation the spiritual blessings of God were largely confined to a single people, it is equally true that for the last five hundred years one section of the human race has been more signally favoured by heaven than all the other sections put together. God's dealings with the Anglo-Saxons have been as singular and sovereign as His dealings with the Hebrews of old. Here is a fact which cannot be gainsaid, staring us all in the face, exposing the madness of those who deny this doctrine: for centuries past the vast majority of God's saints have been gathered out of the Anglo-Saxons! Thus, the very testimony of modern history unmistakably rebukes the folly of those who repudiate the teachings of God's Word on this subject, rendering their unbelief without excuse.

Tell us, ye who murmur against the divine sovereignty, why is it that the Anglo-Saxon race has been singled out for the enjoyment of far the greater part of God's spiritual blessings? Were there no other races equally needy? The Chinese practiced a nobler system of morality and were far more numerous: why, then, were they left for so long in gospel darkness? Why was the whole African continent left for many centuries before the Sun of Righteousness shone there again with healing in His wings? Why is America today a thousand times more favoured than India, which has thrice the population? To all of these questions we are compelled to fall back upon the answer of our blessed Lord: "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." And just as with Israel of old there was an election within an election, so in Germany, in Great Britain, and in the U.S.A., certain particular places have been favoured with one faithful minister after another, while other places have been cursed with false prophets. "I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city" (Amos 4:7)—true now in a spiritual way.

Finally, the veracity of election is clearly evidenced by the fierce opposition of Satan against it. The Devil fights *truth*, not error. He vented His hatred against it when Christ proclaimed it (Luke 4:28, 29); he did so when Paul preached it (as Rom. 9:14, 19 more than

hints); he did so when the Waldenses, the Reformers, and the Puritans heralded it—using the Papists as his tools to torment and murder thousands of them who confessed it. He still opposes it. Today he does so in his guise as an angel of light. He pretends to be very jealous of the honour of God’s character, and declares that election makes Him out to be a monster of injustice. He uses the weapon of ridicule: if election be true, why preach the gospel? He seeks to intimidate: even if the doctrine of election be Scriptural, it is not wise to preach it. Thus, the teaching of Scripture, the testimony of history, and the opposition of Satan, all witness to the veracity of this doctrine.

## 5. Its Justice

Somewhat against our inclinations we have decided to depart again from the logical method of exposition, and instead of now proceeding with an orderly unfolding of this doctrine, we pause to deal with the principal objection which is made against the same. No sooner is the truth set forth of God’s singling out certain of His creatures to be subjects of His special favours, than a general cry of protest is heard. No matter how much Scripture is quoted to the point nor how many plain passages be adduced in illustration and demonstration of it, the majority of those who profess to be Christians loudly object, alleging that such teaching slanders the divine character, making God guilty of gross injustice. It seems, then, that this difficulty should be met, that reply should be made to such a criticism of the doctrine, ere we proceed any further with our attempt to give a systematic setting forth of it.

In such an age as ours, when the principles of democracy, socialism and communism are so widely and warmly espoused, in a day when human authority and dominion are being more and more despised, when it is the common custom to “speak evil of dignities” (Jude 8), it is scarcely surprising that so many who make no pretension of bowing to the authority of Holy Writ should rebel against the concept of God’s being partial. But it is unspeakably dreadful to find the great majority of those who profess to receive the Scriptures as divinely inspired, gnashing their teeth against its author when informed that He has sovereignly elected a people to

be His peculiar treasure, and to hear them charging Him with being a hateful tyrant, a monster of cruelty. Yet such blasphemies only go to show that “the carnal mind *is* enmity against God.”

It is not because we have any hope of converting such rebels from the error of their ways that we feel constrained to take up the present aspect of our subject—though it may please God in His infinite grace to use these feeble lines to the enlightening and convicting of a few of them. No, rather is it that some of God’s dear people are disturbed by these ravings of His enemies, and know not how to answer in their own minds this objection, that if God makes a sovereign selection from among His creatures and predestinates them to blessings which He withholds from countless millions of their fellows, then such partiality makes Him guilty of treating the latter unjustly. And yet the fact stares them in the face on every hand, both in creation and providence, that God distributes His mercies most *unevenly*. There is no equality in His bestowments either in physical health and strength, mental capacities, social status, or the comforts of this life. Why, then, should we be staggered when we learn that His *spiritual* blessings are distributed unevenly?

Before proceeding further it should be pointed out that the design of every false scheme and system of religion is to depict the character of God in such a way that it is agreeable to the tastes of the *carnal* heart, acceptable to depraved human nature. And *that* can only be done by a species of misrepresentation: the ignoring of those of His prerogatives and perfections which are objectionable, and the disproportionate emphasizing of those of His attributes which appeal to their selfishness—such as His love, mercy, and long-sufferance. But let the character of God be faithfully presented as it is actually portrayed in the Scriptures—in the *Old Testament* as well as the New—and nine out of every ten of church-goers will frankly state that “they find it impossible to love Him.” The plain fact is, dear reader, that to the present generation the Most High of Holy Writ is “the unknown God.”

It is just because people today are so ignorant of the divine character and so lacking in godly fear, that they are quite in the dark as to the nature and glory of divine justice, presuming to

arraign it. This is an age of blatant irreverence, wherein lumps of animate clay dare to prescribe what the Almighty ought and ought not to do. Our forefathers sowed the wind, and today their children are reaping the whirlwind. The “divine rights of kings” was scoffed at and tabooed by the sires, and now their offspring repudiate the “divine rights of the King of kings.” Unless the supposed “rights” of the creature are “respected,” then our modems have no respect for the Creator, and if His high sovereignty and absolute dominion over all be insisted upon, they hesitate not to vomit forth their condemnation of Him. And, “evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33)! God’s own people are in danger of being infected by the poisonous gas which now fills the air of the religious world.

Not only is the miasmatic atmosphere obtaining in most of the “churches” a serious menace to the Christian, but there is in each of us a serious tendency to humanize God: viewing His perfections through our own intellectual lenses instead of through the glass of Scripture, interpreting His attributes by human qualities. It was of this very thing that God complained of old when He said, “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one *as* thyself” (Psa. 50:21), which is a solemn warning for us to take to heart. What we mean is this: when we read of God’s mercy or righteousness we are very apt to think of them according to the qualities of *man’s* mercy and justice. But this is a serious mistake. The Almighty is not to be measured by any human standard: He is so infinitely above us that any comparison is utterly impossible, and therefore it is the height of madness for any finite creature to sit in judgment upon the ways of Jehovah.

Again; we need to be much on our guard against the folly of making invidious distinctions between the divine perfections. For example, it is quite wrong for us to suppose that God is more glorious in His grace and mercy than He is in His power and majesty. But this mistake is often made. How many are more thankful unto God for blessing them with health than they are for His bestowing the gospel upon them: but does it therefore follow that God’s goodness in giving material things is greater than His goodness in bestowing spiritual blessings? Certainly not. Scripture

often speaks of God's wisdom and power being manifested in creation, but where are we told of His grace and mercy in making the world? Inasmuch as men commonly fail to glorify God for His wisdom and power, does it thence follow that He is not to be so much adored for them? Beware of extolling one of the divine perfections above another.

What is justice? It is treating each person equitably and fairly, giving to him his due. Divine justice is simply doing that which is right. But this raises the question, *What* is due unto the creature? what is it that God *ought* to bestow upon him? Ah, my friend, every sober-minded person will at once object to the introduction of the word "ought" in such a connection. And rightly so. The Creator is under no obligation whatever unto the works of His own hands. He alone has the right to decide whether such and such a creature should exist at all. He alone has the prerogative to determine the nature, status, and destiny of that creature; whether it shall be an animal, a man, or an angel; whether it shall be endowed with a soul and subsist forever, or be without a soul and endure only for a brief time; whether it shall be a vessel unto honour and taken into communion with Himself, or a vessel unto dishonour which is rejected by Him.

As the great Creator possessed perfect freedom to create or not create, to bring into existence whatever creatures He pleased (and a visit to the zoo will show He has created some which strike the beholder as exceedingly queer ones); and therefore He has the unquestionable right to decree concerning them as He pleases. The justice of God in election and preterition, then, is grounded upon His high sovereignty. The dependence of all creatures upon Him is entire. His proprietorship of all creatures is indisputable. His dominion over all creatures is absolute. Let these facts be established from Scripture—and their complete demonstration therefrom is a very simple matter—and where is the creature who can with the slightest propriety say unto the Lord most high "What doest *Thou*?" Instead of the Creator being under any obligation to His creature, it is the creature who is under binding obligations to the One who gave it existence and now sustains its very life.

God has the absolute right to do as He pleases with the creatures

of His own hand: “Hath not the potter power over the clay; of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?” (Rom. 9:2 1) is His own assertion. Therefore He may give to one and withhold from another, bestow five talents on one and only a single talent on another, without any imputation of injustice. If He may *give* grace and glory to whom He will without such a charge, then He may also *decree to do so* without any such charge. Are men chargeable with injustice when they choose their own favourites, friends, companions, and confidants? Then obviously there is no injustice in *God’s* choosing whom He will to bestow His special favours upon, to indulge with communion with Himself now and to dwell with Him for all eternity. Is a man free to make selection of the woman which he desires for his wife? and does he in anywise *wrong* the other women whom he passes by? Then is the great God *less free* to make selection of those who constitute the spouse of His Son? Shame, shame, upon those who would ascribe less freedom to the Creator than to the creature.

Upon a little reflection it should be evident to all right-minded people that there is no parity between human and divine justice: human justice requires that we should give each of our fellows his due, whereas no creature is due *anything* from God, not even what He is pleased to sovereignly give him. In his most reverent discussion of the nature of God’s attributes W. Twisse (moderator of the Westminster Assembly) pointed out that if human justice be of the same nature with divine justice then it necessarily follows: first, that which is just in man is just with God. Second, that it must be after the same manner just: as human justice consists in subjection and obedience to God’s law, so God Himself must be under obligation to His own Law. Third, as a man is *under obligation* to be just, so God is under obligation to be just, and therefore as Saul sinned and acted unjustly in slaying the priests, so had God been unjust in doing the like.

Unless the perversity of their hearts blinded their judgment men would readily perceive that divine *justice* must necessarily be of quite another order and character than human, yea, as different from and superior to it as divine *love* is from human. All are agreed that a man acts unjustly, that he sins, if he suffers his brother to

transgress when it lies in his power to keep him from so doing. Then if divine justice were the same in kind, though superior in degree, it would necessarily follow that God sins every time He allows one of His creatures to transgress, for most certainly He has the power to prevent it; yea, and can exercise that power without destroying the liberty of the creature: “I also *withheld thee from sinning against Me*; therefore suffered I thee not to touch her” (Gen. 20:6). Cease, then, ye rebels from arraigning the Most High, and attempting to measure *His* justice by your petty tape-lines—as well seek to fathom His wisdom or define His power, as comprehend His inscrutable justice. “Clouds and darkness are round about him,” and this be it noted, is expressly said in connection with: “righteousness [justice] and judgment are the habitation of His *throne*” (Psa. 97:2).

Lest some of our readers demur at our quoting from such a high Calvinist as Mr. Twisse, we append the following from the milder James Ussher. “What is the divine justice? It is an essential property of God, whereby He is infinitely just in himself, of himself, for, from, and by Himself, and none other: ‘For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness’ (Psa. 11:7). What is the *rule* of His justice? Answer: His own *free will*, and nothing else: for whatsoever He willeth is just, and because He willeth it therefore it *is* just; not because it is just, therefore He willeth it (Eph. 1:11; Ps. 115:3).” Such men as these were conscious of their ignorance, and therefore they cried unto Heaven for instruction, and God was pleased to grant them clear vision. But the pride-inflated pharisees of our day think they can *already* see, and therefore feel no need of Divine illumination: consequently they remain blind (John 9:40, 41).

So again that justly renowned teacher W. Perkins: “We must not think that God doeth a thing because it is good and right, but rather is the thing good and right because *God* willeth and worketh it. Examples hereof we have in the Word. God commanded Abimelech to deliver Sarah to Abraham, or else He would destroy him and all his household (Gen. 20:7). To man’s reason that might seem unjust, for why should Abimelech’s servants be punished for their master’s fault? So again Achan sinned, and all the house of

Israel were penalized for it (Josh. 7). David numbered the people, and the whole nation was smitten by a plague (2 Sam. 24). All these to *man's reason* may seem unequal; yet being the works of *God* we must with all reverence judge them most just and holy." Alas, how little of this humility and reverence is manifested in the churches today! How ready is the present generation to criticize and condemn whatever of God's ways and works suit them not!

So far from the truth are most of those who are now looked up to as "the champions of orthodoxy," that even they are often guilty of turning things upside down, or putting the cart in front of the horse. It is commonly assumed by them that God Himself is under law, that He is under a moral constraint to do what he does, so that He cannot do otherwise. Others wrap this up in more sophisticated terms, insisting that it is His own *nature* which regulates all His actions. But this is merely an artful subterfuge. Is it by a necessity of His nature or by the free exercise of His sovereignty that He bestows favour upon His creatures? Let Scripture answer: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he *will* have mercy, and whom he *will* he hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18). Why, my reader, if God's nature obliged Him to show saving mercy to *any*, then by parity of reason it would oblige Him to show mercy to *all*, and thus bring every fallen creature to repentance, faith, and obedience. But enough of this nonsense.

Let us now approach this aspect of our subject from an entirely different angle. How could there possibly be any injustice in God's electing those whom He did, when had He *not* done so *all* had inevitably perished, angels and men alike? This is neither an invention nor an inference of ours, for Scripture itself expressly declares "*Except* the Lord of Sabbath had left us a seed, *we* had been as Sodom" (Rom. 9:29). Not one of God's rational creatures, either celestial or earthly, had ever been eternally and effectually saved apart from the grave of divine *election*. Though both angels and men were created in a state of perfect holiness, yet they were mutable creatures, liable to change and fall. Yea, inasmuch as their continuance in holiness was dependent upon the exercise of their own wills, unless God was pleased to supernaturally preserve them, their fall was certain.



“Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his *angels* he charged with *folly*” (Job 4:18). The angels were perfectly holy, yet if God gave them no other assistance than that with which He had capacitated them at their creation, then no “trust” or reliance was to be placed in them, or their standing. If they were holy today, they were liable to sin tomorrow. If God but sent them on an errand to this world, they might fall before they returned to Heaven. The “folly” which God imputes to them in the above passage is their creature *mutability*: for them to maintain their holiness unchangeably to eternity, without the danger of losing the same, was utterly beyond their *creature* endowment. Therefore, for them to be immutably preserved is a grace which issues from another and higher spring than the covenant of works or creation endowment, namely, that of election grace, super-creation grace.

It was meet that God should, from the beginning, make manifest the infinite gulf which divides the creature from the Creator. God alone is *immutable*, without variableness or shadow of turning. Fitting was it, then, that God should *withdraw* His preserving hand from those whom He had created upright, so that it might appear that the highest creature of all (Satan, “the anointed cherub” Ezek. 28:14) *was mutable*, and would inevitably fall into sin when left to the exercise of his own free will. Of God alone can it be predicated that He “cannot be tempted with evil” (James 1:13). The creature, though holy, may be tempted to sin, fall, and be irretrievably lost. The fall of Satan, then, made way for evidencing the more plainly the absolute *necessity* of electing grace—the imparting to the creature the image of God’s own immutable holiness.

Because of the mutability of the creature-state God foresaw that if all His creatures were left to the conduct of their own wills, they were in a continual hazard of falling. He, therefore, made an election of grace to remove all hazard from the case of His chosen ones. This we know from what is revealed of their history. Jude tells us of “the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” (verse 6), and the remainder of them would, sooner or later, have done so too, if left to the mutability of their own wills. So also it proved with Adam and Eve: both of them evidenced the mutability of their wills by apostatizing.

Accordingly, God foreseeing all of this from the beginning, made a “reserve” (Rom. 11:4—explained in verse 5 as “election”), determining to have a remnant who should be blessed of Him and who would everlastingly bless Him in return. Election and preserving grace are never to be severed.

We have thus far pointed out, first that divine justice is of an entirely different order and character than human justice; second that divine justice is grounded upon God’s sovereign dominion over all the works of His hands, being the exercise of His own imperial will. Third, that nothing whatever is due the creature from the Creator, not even what He is pleased to give, and that so far from God’s being under any obligation to it, it is under lasting obligations to Him. Fourth, that whatever God wills and works is right and must be reverently submitted to, yea, adored by us. Fifth, that it is impossible to charge God with injustice in His electing certain ones to be the objects of His amazing grace, since that apart from it, *all* had eternally perished. Let us now descend to a lower and simpler level, and contemplate God’s election in connection with the human race fallen in Adam.

If there was no injustice in God’s making a choice of some unto special favour and eternal blessing as He viewed His creatures in the glass of His purpose to *create*, then certainly there could be no injustice in His determining to show them mercy as He foreviewed them among the mass of Adam’s *ruined* race; for if a sinless creature has no claim whatever upon its maker, being entirely dependent upon His charity, then most assuredly a fallen creature is entitled to nothing good at the hands of its offended judge. And this is the angle from which we must now view our subject. Fallen man is a criminal, an outlaw and if bare justice is to be meted out to him, then he must be left to receive the due reward of his iniquities, and *that* can mean nothing less than eternal punishment, for his transgressions have incurred infinite guilt.

Before enlarging upon what has just been said, it also needs to be pointed out that if the only hope for a *holy* creature lies in God’s electing grace, then doubly is this the case with one that is *unholy*, totally depraved. If an holy angel was in constant danger, incapable of maintaining his purity, because of the mutability of his nature

and the fickleness of his will, what shall be said of an *unholy* creature? Why, nothing less than this: fallen man has a nature that is confirmed in evil, and therefore his will no longer has any power to turn unto that which is spiritual, yea, it is inveterately steeled against God; hence, his case is utterly and eternally hopeless, unless God, in His sovereign grace, is pleased to save him *from himself*

Preachers may prate all they please about man's inherent powers, the freedom of his will, and his capacity for good, yet it is useless and madness to ignore the solemn fact of the fall. The difference and disadvantage between our case and that of unfallen Adam's can scarcely be conceived. Instead of a perfect holiness possessing and inclining our minds and wills, as it did his, there is no such vital principle left in our hearts. Instead, there is a thorough disability unto what is spiritual and holy, yea, contrary enmity and opposition thereto. "Men err, not knowing the power of original sin, nor the depth of corruption that is in their own hearts. The will of man now is the prime and proper seat of sin: the throne thereof is seated therein" (Thomas Goodwin). Outward helps and aids are of no account, for nothing short of a new creation is of any avail.

No matter what instruction fallen men receive, what inducements be offered them, the Ethiopian cannot change his skin. Neither light, conviction, nor the general operations of the Holy Spirit, are of any avail, unless God over and above them impart a new principle of holiness to the heart. This has been clearly and fully demonstrated under both Law and Gospel. Read Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 and see the wondrous and awe-inspiring manifestation of Himself which God granted unto Israel at Sinai: did *that* change their hearts and incline their wills to obey Him? Then read through the four Gospels and behold the incarnate Son of God dwelling in the midst of men, not as a judge, but as a benefactor—going about doing good, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, proclaiming the gospel: did *that* melt their hearts and win them to God? No, they hated and crucified Him.

Behold, then, the case of fallen mankind: alienated from the life of God, dead in trespasses and sins, with no heart, no will for spiritual things. In themselves their case is desperate, irretrievable,

hopeless. Apart from divine election none would, none could, ever be saved. Election means that God was pleased to reserve a remnant, so that the entire race of Adam should not eternally perish. And *what thanks* does He receive for this? None at all, save from those who have their sin-blinded eyes opened to perceive the inexpressible blessedness of such a fact. Thanks, no; instead, the vast majority even of those in professing Christendom when they hear of this truth, ignorant of their own interests and of the ways of God, quarrel at His election, revile Him for the same, charge Him with gross injustice, and accuse Him of being a merciless tyrant.

Now the great God stands in no need of any defence from us: in due time He will effectually close the mouth of every rebel. But we must address a few more remarks to those believers who are disturbed by such as insist so loudly that God is guilty of injustice when He sovereignly elects some. First, then, we ask these slanderers of Jehovah to *make good* their charge. The burden of proof falls upon them to do so. They affirm that an electing God is unjust, then let them demonstrate *how* such be the case. They cannot. In order to do so they must show that lawbreakers merit something good at the hands of the lawgiver. They must show that the King of kings is morally obliged to smile upon those who have blasphemed His name, desecrated His sabbaths, slighted His Word, reviled His servants, and above all, despised and rejected His Son.

“Is there one man in the whole world who would have the impertinence to say that he merits anything of his Maker? If so, be it known unto you that he shall have all he merits; and his reward will be the flames of hell forever, for *that* is the utmost that any man ever *merited* of God. God is in no debt to man, and at the last great day every man shall have as much love, as much pity, and as much goodness, as he deserves. Even the lost in hell shall have all they deserve; ay, and woe worth the day for them when they shall have the wrath of God, which will be the summit of their deservings. If God gives to every man as much as he merits, is He therefore to be accused of injustice because He gives to some infinitely more than they merit?” (C. H. Spurgeon). How many who now speak of him eulogistically, and refer to him as “beloved Spurgeon,” would gnash their teeth and execrate him were they to

hear his faithful and plain-spoken preaching.

Second, we would inform these detractors of God that His *salvation* is not a matter of justice, but of *pure grace*, and grace is something that can be claimed by none. Where is the injustice if any one does as he wills with his own? If I am free to disburse my charity as I see fit, shall God be conceded less freedom to bestow His gifts upon whom He pleases! God is indebted to none, and therefore if He grants His favours in a sovereign way who can complain. If God passes thee by, He has not injured thee; but if He enriches thee, then art thou a debtor to His grace, and then wilt thou cease prating about His justice and injustice, and wilt gladly join with those who astonishingly exclaim, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psa. 103:10). Salvation is God’s free gift, and therefore He bestows it on whom He pleases.

Third, we would ask these haughty creatures, to whom has God ever *refused* His mercy when it was sincerely and penitently sought? Does He not freely proclaim the gospel to every creature? Does not His Word bid *all* men to throw down the weapons of their warfare against Him and come to Christ for pardon? Does He not promise to blot out your iniquities if you will turn unto Him in the way of His appointing? If you refuse to do so, if you are so thoroughly in love with sin, so wedded to your lusts that you are determined to destroy your own soul, then who is to blame? Most certainly God is not. His gospel promises are reliable, and anyone is at liberty to prove them for himself. If he does so, if he renounces sin and puts his trust in Christ, then he will discover for himself that he is one of God’s chosen ones. On the other hand, if he deliberately spurns the gospel and rejects the Saviour then his blood is on his own head.

This leads us to ask, fourth, You say it is unjust that some should be lost while others are saved: but *who* makes them to be lost that are lost? Whom has God ever caused to sin?—rather doth He warn and exhort against it. Whom has the Holy Spirit ever prompted to a wrong action?—rather doth He uniformly incline against evil. Where do the Scriptures bolster up any in his wickedness?—rather do they constantly condemn it in all its forms. Then is God unjust if

He condemns those who wilfully disobey Him? Is He unrighteous if He punishes those who defiantly disregard His danger-signals and expostulations? Assuredly not. To each such one God will yet say, “Thou hast destroyed thyself” (Hos. 13:9). It is the creature who commits moral suicide. It is the creature who breaks through every restraint and hurls himself into the precipice of eternal woe. In the last great day it will appear that God is *justified* when He speaks, and *clear* when He judges (Psa. 51:4).

Election is the taking of one and leaving of another, and implies freedom on the part of the elector to choose or refuse. Hence the choosing of one does no injury to the other which is not chosen. If I select one out of a hundred men to a position of honour and profit, I do no injury to the ninety and nine not elected. If I take two from a score of ragged and hungry children, and adopt them as my son and daughter, feed and clothe, house and educate them, I do them an immense benefit; but while disbursing my bounty as I choose and making two happy, I do no injury to the eighteen who are left. True, they remain ragged, ill-fed, and uneducated, yet they are in no worse condition for my having shown favour to their late companions—they only continue precisely in the situation in which they were.

Again; if among ten convicts justly sentenced to death, the king of England was pleased to choose five to be the recipients of his sovereign mercy, pardoned and released them, they would owe their very lives to his royal favour; nevertheless, by extending kindness to them, no injury is done to the other five: they are left to suffer the righteous penalty of the law, due to them for their transgressions. They only suffer what they *would* have suffered if the king’s mercy had *not* been extended toward their fellows. Who, then, can fail to see that it would be a misuse of terms, a grievous slander of the king, to charge him with injustice, because he was pleased to exercise his royal prerogative and evidence his favour in this discriminating manner.

Our Saviour definitely expressed *this* idea of election when He said, “Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Matt. 24:40). If both had been “left,” then both had perished: hence the “taking” of the one did no injury to his fellow.

“Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Matt. 24:41). The taking of the one was a great favour to her, but the leaving of her companion did her no wrong. Divine election, then, is a choice to favour from among those who have *no claims* upon God. It therefore does no injustice to them that are passed by, for they only continue as and where they were, and as and where they would have been if none had been taken from among them. In the exercise of His electing grace God has mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and in the bestowment of His favour He does what He wills with His own.

It is not difficult to perceive the ground upon which the false reasoning of God’s detractors rests: behind all the murmurings of objectors against the Divine justice lies the concept that God is *under obligation* to provide salvation for all His fallen creatures. But such reasoning (?) fails to see that if such a contention were valid, then *no thanks* could be returned to God. How could we praise Him for redeeming those whom He was bound to redeem? If salvation be a *debt* which God owes man for allowing him to fall, then salvation cannot be a matter of *mercy*. But we must not expect that those whose eyes are blinded by pride should understand anything of the infinite demerits of sin, of their own utter unworthiness and vileness; and therefore it is impossible that they should form any true concept of Divine grace, and perceive that when *grace* is exercised it is necessarily exercised in a *sovereign* manner.

But after all that has been pointed out above some will be ready to sneeringly ask, “Does not the Bible declare that God is ‘no respecter of persons’: how then can He make a selection from among men?” The calumniators of Divine predestination suppose that either the Scriptures are inconsistent with themselves, or that in His election God has regard to merits. Let us first quote from Calvin: “The Scripture denies that God is a respecter of persons, in a different sense from that in which *they* understand it; for by the word *person* it signifies not a man, but those things in a man which, being conspicuous to the eyes, usually conciliate favour, honour, and dignity, or attract hatred, contempt, and disgrace. Such are riches, power, nobility, magistracy, country, elegance of form, on

the one hand; and on the other hand, poverty, necessity, ignoble birth, slovenliness, contempt, and the like. Thus Peter and Paul declare that God is not a respecter of persons because He makes no difference between the Jew and Greek, to reject one and receive the other, merely on account of his nation (Acts 10:34, Rom. 2:11). So James uses the same language when he asserts that God in His judgment pays no regard to riches (2:5).

“There will, therefore, be no contradiction in our affirming, that according to the good pleasures of His will, God chooses whom He will as His children, irrespective of all merit, while He rejects and reprobates others. Yet, for the sake of further satisfaction, the matter may be explained in the following manner. They ask how it happens, that of two persons distinguished from each other by no merit, God, in His election, leaves one and takes another. I, on the other hand, ask them, whether they suppose him that is taken to possess any thing that can *attract* the favour of God? If they confess that he has not, as indeed they must, it will follow, that God looks not at man, but derives His motive to favour him from His own goodness. God’s election of one man, therefore, while He rejects another, proceeds not from any respect of man, but solely from His own mercy; which may freely display and exert itself wherever and whenever it pleases.”

To have “respect of persons” is to regard and treat them differently on account of some supposed or real difference in them or their circumstances, which is no warrantable ground or reason for such preferential regard and treatment. This character of a respecter of persons belongs rather to one who examines and rewards others according to their characters and works. Thus, for a judge to justify and reward one rather than another because he is rich and the other poor, or because he has given him a bribe, or is a near relative or an intimate friend, while the character and conduct of the other is more upright and his cause more just. But such a denomination is inapplicable to a disburser of charity, who is granting his favours and bestowing freely undeserved gifts to one rather than to another, doing so without any consideration of personal merit. The benefactor has a perfect right to do what he will with his own, and those who are neglected by him have no valid



ground for complaint.

Even if this expression be taken in its more popular acceptation, nothing so strikingly evidences that God *is* “no respecter of persons” than *the character* of the ones He has chosen. When the angels sinned and fell God provided no Saviour for them, yet when the human race sinned and fell a Saviour was provided for many of them. Let the unfriendly critic carefully weigh this fact: had God been a “respecter of persons” would He not have selected the angels and passed by men? The fact that He did the very reverse clears Him of this calumny. Take again that nation which God chose to be the recipients of earthly and temporal favours above all others during the last two thousand years of Old Testament history. What sort of characters were they? Why, an unappreciative and murmuring, stiffnecked and hardhearted, rebellious and impenitent people, from the beginning of their history until the end. Had God been a respecter of persons He surely had never singled out *the Jews* for such favour and blessing!

The very character, then, of those whom God chooses refutes this silly objection. The same is equally apparent in the New Testament. “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world” (James 2:5): blessed be His name, that it is so, for had He chosen the wealthy it had fared ill with many of us, had it not? God did not pick out magnates and millionaires, financiers and bankers, to be objects of His grace. Nor are those of royal blood or the peers of the realm, the wise, the gifted, the influential of this world, for few among *them* have their names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. No, it is the despised, the weak, the base, the non-entities of this world, whom God has chosen (1 Cor. 1:26-29), and this, in order that “no flesh should glory in his presence.” Pharisees passed by and publicans and harlots brought in! “Jacob have I loved:” and what was there in him *to* love!—and echo still asks “what?” Had God been “a respecter of persons” He certainly had never chosen worthless *me!*

The second of seven booklets.

