

Election

(God's Sovereignty)

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that is not; and hath the Lord regarded thee in thy low state, and magnified thee, by setting his love upon thee? Hath he taken thee from the dunghill, to set thee among princes, even the princes of the world to come? This is that exaltation which the poor should always rejoice in. Were you the head instead of being the tail; were the necks of your enemies under your feet; yea, were the devils themselves made subject to you; it could not afford you the thousandth part of that cause of rejoicing, as that "your names are written in heaven." Are other men prosperous in the world, and free from trouble, while you are reduced to a low estate, and chastened every morning? have, perhaps, but a handful of meal, and a little oil in a cruse, &c. yet think not your portion mean, or hardly dealt out: your good things are to come; they are growing in the other world; and at the time of harvest the Lord will send his angels for you: yea, your Lord himself will come and fetch you thither; and "you shall be for ever with him, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are rivers of pleasures for evermore;" and then you will sing, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places;" at least say so now. As Abraham dealt by his concubines' children, so doth God by the Ishmaels of the world, he gives them portions, and sends them away, Gen. 25: 6. But the inheritance he reserves for his Isaacs; to them he gives all that he hath, yea, even himself; and what can we have more!

ELECTION

THE doctrine of Election containeth the whole sum and scope of the gospel; and our minds, if honestly subdued to the doctrine of God's sovereignty, cannot be employed about a more excellent subject. It is called "The foundation of God," not only because of the supereminency of it, but as a foundation of his laying, which God himself is the author of, and he alone; and the basis whereof is himself: it is that foundation which standeth sure, and keeps all them sure who stand upon it.

Election is the pitching of everlasting love, or the good pleasure of God, choosing and decreeing to eternal life: it is the great charter of heaven, God's special and free-grace deed of gift to his chosen ones, made over in trust unto Jesus Christ, for their use and benefit. Now, in deeds of gift (to make them authentic) there must be inserted the name of the donor, or person that gives; the name of the donee, or person to whom; the quality and extent of the thing that is given; the time when it was done; the consideration that moved thereto; and, in case of impotency, it is usual and necessary to ordain some friend as scoffee in trust, who is to stand seized or possessed of the gift for the donee's use: all which are evidently found in scripture election, and may be summed inot this proposition.

Prop. "That there is a peculiar people, who were personally chosen of God in Christ, according to his own good pleasure, and ordained to eternal life, before the world began."

Before I come to a downright proof of the proposition, I shall first explain the terms, and then produce some instances of a lower kind of election, that is, to matters of a lower concern than that of eternal life; which yet may be reckoned a type and shadow of it.

1. For explanation. This word 'peculiar' denotes the

exemption or privileging of a person or thing from the power of another, in whose jurisdiction it was, or seemed to be: it sometimes signifies riches, or substance, which is of a man's own proper getting, by labor and industry: it is also used to denominate such a part of a man's inheritance as he keeps in his own hands; which our law calls his demesne lands. In all which respects, the elect are aptly termed a peculiar people: for, (1.) Though Satan be prince of the world, and rules on every side; yet, as touching the elect, it is but an usurped and temporary jurisdiction that he hath over them: they do, indeed, belong to another prince, to whom their chief Lord hath given them; who therefore (in the appointed time) will rescue them from that usurpation. (2.) They are the Lord's treasure, or inheritance, obtained by labor indeed, with sweat and blood; than which nothing is more a man's own, nor hardlier parted with; such was the portion bestowed by Jacob on his beloved Joseph, "even that which he got with his sword, and with his bow," Gen. 48: 22. And, (3.) They are the Lord's demesnes: he keeps them in his own hands, tenders them as the apple of his eye, and will not entrust them in the hands of others: no, not of their own selves.

'Chosen or elected:' the proper import of the word is, to select or make choice of one or more out of a greater number. 'Personally chosen,' that is, they were singled forth, or pitched upon by name; and chosen in Christ, or into Christ, as their head and mediator; that being in him, all the grace and glory they were chosen unto might be rightfully theirs, and accordingly applied to them.

'To ordain' is the same here as to predestinate, appoint, prepare, decree, or fore-determine of things to come: which was in such manner done, that the event always has, does, and ever shall, justly succeed according to designation. In this sense men cannot be said to predestinate, because they cannot, with any certainty, determine of things not yet in being: but all things were present with God from eternity, and his decree was the cause of their after-existence.

By 'eternal life' I understand, not only the saints' actual possession of blessedness and glory; which consists in their perfect conformity to God, and union with him (according to the 17th of John,) but also, whatever is requisite thereto,

have, Heb. 13: 5. bearing ourselves as becomes the children of such a Father, so rich, wise, bountiful, tender, and faithful to us; who always gives the best supply; and that in the best proportion, manner, and time.

Have therefore your faith exercised, as about the greater, so also about the smallest and commonest matters; use grace, and have grace: it is want of use makes you lame of your right hand; and much using renders it more useful. Faith is the head of your spiritual senses; and if that be active, the rest cannot be idle, nor much at a loss. Faith also is a plain-dealer: it represents things as they are; shews them in their true dimensions, with their use and end. See therefore that you never hold a consultation unless faith be present, yea, and president too, else all will be in disorder at once: one act of faith shall sooner remove the mountain, than all the cattle on a thousand hills.

Lastly. You that have closed with this truth, and having made diligent search, do find in yourselves those marks of God's elect, sit down and take the comfort of it; let this joy of the Lord be your strength: "eat your bread, and drink your wine" (or water either) "with a merry heart, since God hath accepted you," Eccl. 9: 7. If David's heart was so taken with that temporal favor which chose him to be king before the house of Saul, 2 Sam. 6: 21. how should our souls be wrapped into the third heaven, that we (poor, unworthy, wretched we) should be taken into that peculiar favor, in which the generality of men have nothing to do! How should it affect our hearts, and raise up our spirits, both in all active obedience, as David, who danced before the ark with all his might, and also to all long-suffering, with joyfulness; as Paul, and other chosen vessels, who rejoiced in tribulation; because this "love of God was shed abroad in their hearts," Rom. 5: 3, 4.

Art thou of those who are wise and noble according to the flesh? Be filled with an holy amazement, and exultation together, rejoicing with trembling, that the great God (to whom thou wast no more than others, thy consorts that are left, and who commonly chooses the base and foolish, thereby to magnify his grace) should thus go out of his way to call in thee; and hath also made his call effectual to thee, even then when thou wast environed with a world of temptations to obstruct it. And if thou be a man of low degree, poor, weak, foolish, of no account among men, even as one

Saviour expressly says to his disciples, "I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you," John 15: 19. While in nature, they love the world, and the world them: but when election breaks forth in its fruits, when once they are called according to purpose, then "a man's enemies will be those of his own house," Micah 7: 6. And hence it is, that the very doctrine of election is so disgusting to the world, and contended against; wherein I wish that some of the elect themselves were not (unwittingly) involved. Therefore think it not strange, but take it as an appendix of election, John 15: 17, 18, 19, as a part of that you were chosen unto; and as that by which, partly, you must be fitted for the main end: your Lord himself was made perfect through sufferings, Heb. 2: 10, and those fore-known, were predestinated to be conformed to their head, in suffering as well as glory, Rom. 8: 29, and 6: 5.

III. Having trusted electing love for eternal salvation, see you distrust it not for things of lesser moment. When the Lord ordained you to life! he ordained also to those various occurrences, windings and turnings, you should be exercised with in your way thither; and, it is sure, he does nothing in vain! There is need of all sorts of weather for the earth's good; all fair would destroy it. Know it therefore of a truth, that all your concerns were fore-determined of God; and that so well, that all your prudence and love to yourselves could not mend it: nor can all your care and solicitude alter any of them, either as to matter or form; no, not to change the color of a hair: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," Matt. 6: 34.

But whence is it that believers, who have trusted God for their souls, should yet make a difficulty of trusting him for their outward man? and so cumber themselves with unprofitable burdens?

Earthly things are nearer our senses; and thence we are more sensible of the comfort of them, as also of their want: they also seem more within our line and compass; and so we reach more earnestly after them, and are answerably troubled when we fall short: whereas we should carry it for temporals as we do (or should do rather) for our souls and spiritual portion; that is, look to our present duty, be diligent in our placc, and content with such things as we

by way of right, preparation, or otherwise; wherein are comprised, the mediation of Christ, effectual calling, and final perseverance in faith and holiness; which are indeed but so many parts or subdivisions of election: you have them all conjoined in one verse, both as appropriate to the same persons, and as being inseparable, in Isa. 62: 12. where those for whom the highway is cast up, are termed "the holy people;" there is their election; the "redeemed of the Lord;" that is plainly their redemption: they are also said to be "sought out;" which imports their effectual calling: and "a city not to be forsaken," which implies not less than perseverance. And they are here put in succession, as they fall in order of time: election is therefore called "a preparing unto glory," Rom. 9: 23.

' Before the world began.' The same thing, for brevity sake, is commonly called eternity; and in Scripture-phrase, from everlasting.

' According to his own good pleasure.' This shows the root of election; the great bottom-ground on which it is founded, exclusive to all things else, as being any way casual, contributory, or motive thereto.

II. For instances of a lower kind of election: consider here God's choosing or destinating certain persons by name (and some of them before they were born,) to signal and eminent service in the world; wherein they were patterns of the election we are treating of, and may well be accounted a collateral proof and evidence of it.

Abraham was pitched upon to be the root and father of God's peculiar people; whom he would own and honor above the nations of the world; and that in him "all families of the earth shall be blessed," Gen 12: 1—3. which contains a promise, that the Messiah, or Saviour of the world, should come of his posterity: a wonderful high honor; but what was there in Abraham, that might move God thus to prefer him above the rest of his kindred? was he any thing more to God? or had he served him better than other idolaters with whom he had lived? No, in no wise; and yet the Lord singled him forth, and called him alone, Isa. 51: 2. And, in truth, no other reason can be given for it, than what is given for his love to Abraham's posterity; "He loved them because he loved them," Deut. 7: 7, 8. Nor was he pitched upon to be the father of many nations,

when the Lord seems to go from you, do you follow the harder after him, as he for a long time followed you, waiting that he might be gracious unto you? this is truly a God-like love; the eminency whereof lies in this, that "he loved us when enemies to him;" and loved us into a likeness to himself; answerable whereto, we should love him, even while our fears may apprehend him to be our enemy; and, through the power of his love secretly working in our hearts, go on to love him, until the glory of the Lord be risen upon us. You could not thus love God, if he had not loved you first, 1 John 2: 19.

4. Do you rejoice in the thoughts of electing love, what it is, and whence it came? what it hath designed you for, and will bring you unto at last? is it your delight to converse with the book of life? and do you rejoice more that "your names are written in heaven, than if devils were subject to you;" when your flesh and your heart fail you, do you look to electing love as your strength and portion, and count it a goodly heritage? Psal. 16: 6. Do you aim at that which electing love designed you for; and because so designed, if by any means you may attain to it? and are you better satisfied to be at the good pleasure of God, than at your own? and bless his wisdom and grace for undertaking the disposal of your eternal interest? such fruit could not be, but from that seed of God.

Let me add a few tokens more of true love, according to its ordinary acceptation and conduct among men. 1. He that loves another, will delight in his presence, and seek occasions of conversing with him. 2. Being absent, he thinks much upon him, and gives welcome entertainment to whatever may be a remembrance of him. 3. He will seek the well-pleas'dness of him who is the object of his love, by presenting things lovely to him; by avoiding whatever may disgust him: by a wary preventing, or a speedy removing, what might give the other occasion to be jealous of his love to him. 4. He will candidly interpret whatever might seem a declining of the other's love to him; and not be satisfied until it be recovered, or better understood.

II. If you be of this happy remnant of election, then look for ill-usage from the world. The men of the world have always hated God's elect, and will: why did Esau hate Jacob? because of the blessing, Gen. 27: 41. And our

nor Sarah to be the mother of them, for any natural fruitfulness in them above others; for Abraham's body was now dead; and Sarah, besides her natural barrenness, was past the age of child-bearing; which occasioned her to laugh at the promise: for who, indeed, would make choice of a dried stock, and barren soil, to begin his nursery with? in such materials there is nothing to induce to it.

The same courses he was pleased to take with Abraham's immediate seed: he takes not all of them; but, "in Isaac shall thy seed be called," Gen. 21: 12. Thus, Isaac was taken, and Ishmael left. And though Abraham's prayer was heard for Ishmael, so as to have him blessed with outward things; yet, as to the main thing, God rejects him, and resolves to establish his covenant with Isaac, chap. 17: 9. who was yet unborn.

The like he also doth by Isaac's children. "Jacob he loved, but Esau he hated," Mal. 1: 2, 3. Rom. 9. which is both the prophet's and apostle's exposition of those words, "The elder shall serve the younger," Gen. 25: 23. and this difference was put before they were born; yea, and entailed also upon their posterities: the one are "the people of his wrath, against whom he hath indignation for ever," Mal. 1: 4. "their captivity shall not return." "When the whole earth rejoiceth, they shall be desolate," &c. Ezek. 35: 3, 14. but for Jacob, "the Lord will bring them back to their own land, and plant them, and build them assuredly; and do them good with his whole heart," Jer. 31: 37, 41. But let it be observed, it was not Jacob's more worthy demeanor, whether foreseen or acted, that procured him the blessing. Esau did more for it than he, and more sincerely: he hunted for venison, and for true venison, such as his father loved; which he also makes ready, and brings with speed, big with expectation of his blessing; which also he seeks importunately, "with tears and bitter crying," Gen. 27: 4, 5, 38. Now, what good things does Jacob do to inherit the blessing? 1. He goes about to invade another's right; for the blessing belonged to the first-born. 2. He seeks to pervert the known intention of his father, which was to bless Esau. 3. He abuseth his father with counterfeit venison. 4. He takes the name of God in vain, to make his dispatch the more probable, Gen. 27: 28. 5. He seeks it by fraud, and downright lying: he clothes

different about it: put yourself on the trial touching your interest in it, and bring forth your evidences for it: observe what are the properties of God's elect, and see if they stand on your side.

1. As touching the great business of salvation, do you submit to mercy without indenting, and making terms with God? have you laid yourself at his feet, with "peradventure he will save me alive;" and if he say, I have no pleasure in thee; Lo, here I am, and here I will lie: if I must perish, I will perish here; I cannot die in a better place or posture. Thus did Job, when the Lord seemed to set himself against him, as resolved to destroy him, yet still he resolved to trust in him, and to hold fast his integrity, Job 13: 15. This is a love more noble, and of an higher extract, than those are acquainted with, who conclude, that upon their doing this and that (which they suppose every man hath power to do,) they shall be saved; for such kind of love is mercenary: he will not stir, nor look towards the vineyard, until he hath agreed for his penny; the other goes in, and falls to his work, and leaves it to his master to give him what is meet, Matth. 20: 2. 7. 11. which also he leaves to his master's judgment, and not his own: and truly he speeds not the worse for his so doing. But I would not be taken to intend a contentedness or willingness to be destroyed: this I hope is pleaded before, under the first general head.

2. Do you own God's sovereign commands, without disputing? Abraham did thus in the business of Isaac; although he could not see how the promise of God and the killing of his son could stand together; and so will Abraham's children do. They know that their Lord is a great King, hath absolute dominion, giveth account of none of his matters: what he is pleased to command, their duty is to obey, without asking a reason why? or, how will these things consist? such demands become not the lips of those who live upon grace.

3. Doth your love towards God hold the same course that his love hath done towards you? All that God hath done, or will do, for his chosen, is the product of electing love. Does all your obedience arise from love? and does this love of yours grow out of his? is his electing love the root of it? is all that you do towards God in a way of gratitude and duty, and with design to glorify his grace? and

his neck and hands with the kid's skin, and roundly affirms himself to be Esau (very improper means to obtain a blessing!) it need not be asked, which of the two's department was most deserving? One would easily conclude the blessing to be Esau's: but see the event! he that carries himself so unworthily, carries away the blessing; he that behaves himself dutifully to obtain it, is dismissed without it; and though his father blessed Jacob unwillingly, and by mistake, yet when he came to know it, he was so far from reversing what he had done, that he earnestly affirms it: "I have blessed him; yea, and he shall be blessed," Gen. 27: 33. Would we know, now, the reason of this strange (and according to men) irrational event? it was, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, (the elder must serve the younger,) not of works, but of him that calleth," Rom. 9: 11. And it is wonderful to observe, how God ordered the whole course of this transaction, as intending it a full and pregnant example of eternal election: for it holds forth plainly the sovereignty of God over his creatures, in taking whom he will; the freeness of his grace in choosing those that are less deserving; the sure effect of his purposes; with his wise and certain ordering of things relating to his end: as also of his using means and instruments therein, quite besides the natural scope of them, and contrary to their own intentment.

Then for the Israelites:—This people the Lord chose in Abraham four hundred years before he publicly owned them: they are expressly termed, "an elect nation," as being separated from the rest of the world; "an holy, special, peculiar people unto God." He took them for "his own portion, the lot of his inheritance:" read his own words (for they are precious words with those to whom they appertain): "Ye shall be holy unto me; for I have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine," Levit. 20: 26. "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all the people that are on the face of the earth," Deut. 7: 6. The Lord this day hath avouched thee to be his peculiar people, and to make thee high above all nations," chap. 26: 18, 19. "The Lord had a delight in thy fathers, to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people," chap. 10:

15. &c. But were they as far above other nations in goodness, in greatness, or excellent demeanor? had they better improved their part in the common stock? and was that it which entitled them to this honor? No such matter, as appears, (1.) By the reason there assigned; "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people, [for all the earth is mine,]" Exod. 19: 5. It is as if the Lord had said, there is no difference between you and other nations: all the earth is mine, and I may take where I will: I am not tied to any: I might take of them, and discard you; they cannot carry it more unworthily than you have done, and will do. I looked from heaven, and considered their works and yours, I see that your hearts are fashioned alike. And, (2.) Their after-demeanor did abundantly verify it; and the Lord foresaw it; "I knew that thou wouldst deal treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb; that thou wouldst be obstinate, thy neck an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; and that thou wouldst do only evil from thy youth up," &c. Isa. 48: 4, 6. Jer. 32: 30. What then was the cause and motive of God's choosing them above others? It was his undeserved love and favor to them; "He loved them because he loved them," Deut. 7: 8. and 9: 4.

Come to David: God hath provided himself a king among Jesse's sons, and Samuel must go to anoint him: but it must be "him whom the Lord should name to him:" not the eldest or goodliest person; and therefore, says he (when they pass before him), "The Lord hath not chosen this, nor this, nor these, but David." It is true, the Lord did not mention David's name to Samuel; but he did what was equivalent; for when David comes in, he tells him, "This is he, anoint him." 1 Sam. 16: 1. 12. And observe, this [he] was the youngest, the meanest and most unlikely; scarce reckoned as one of the family; for he was not brought in amongst the rest. Then, note his circumstances; his employment was to keep the sheep: his exercise, what was it but such as is reckoned effeminate? he addicted himself to music. See also his complexion or constitution of body, white and ruddy; no promising character of a martial spirit: and yet this man (or rather this lad and stripling) thus qualified, and thus educated, he must be the captain of the Lord's host; who yet had the greatest enemies to deal with,

branch, you know, "cannot bear the root," Rom. 11: 18. Even faith itself must not (and if it be right faith, it will not,) "gather where it hath not strewed." Own nothings, therefore, that may detract from the honor that is due to sovereign grace. 2. Bear yourself upon this grace, against all your weakness and unworthiness: let not these discourage you, but rather plead them as occasions by which grace will be manifested and magnified, and shew itself to be what it is. Thus did David; "Pardon my sin; for it is great," Psal. 25: 11. and Moses, when all the people's obedience could not furnish him with an argument for God's continuing his presence with them, what is his plea? They are an honest ingenuous people; tractable to thy commands; pliant to thy will: they are worthy for whom thou shouldst do this; for they love thy company, and have built thee a tabernacle? No, there is none of this stuff in it: but, "Let my Lord, I pray thee, go with us; for it is a stiff-necked people; their neck is an iron sinew, and their brow brass," Exod. 34: 9. therefore go thou with us, to better us, to soften us, and to pardon us: and by this shall the freeness of thy grace appear to us: for, "how else shall it be known that I and this people have found grace in thy sight?" Exod. 33: 46. but yet, withal, (1.) Look that ye make not a light matter of your sins, or of your sinfulness: you cannot think had enough of yourself, or of them; nor be too much humbled; only, be not cast down. (2.) Use the means that grace hath appointed; "Watch, and be sober; watch unto prayer; put on the whole armor of God," and keep it close about you; your sword and shield be sure you forget not: but still let your eyes be towards the land of grace, through Christ, for counsel, strength, agency, and every good thing; and depend on it for conserving and actuating the grace it hath wrought in you, as plants do on their roots: the spouse, after married to Christ, prays to be "drawn to him," Cant. 1: 4. (3.) Whatever befalls you, remember the good pleasure of God is in it; hold your peace, as Aaron did, Lev. 10: 3. or if you must speak, "let your speech be seasoned with salt: it is the Lord, let him do as it seemeth him good," 1 Sam. 3: 18.

Other useful instructions from the doctrine of election in general, and together.

I. It being a doctrine of so great importance, be not in-

honor: and that he should do it, as it were, against our wills; for so it is, inasmuch as to graft our happiness on the will of another, is contrary to nature; of all bottoms, we should not have pitched it there; and yet, in truth, no other ground would hold us: his name may well be called Wonderful; "It is not after the manner of men, this is the Lord's doing, and let it be marvellous in our eyes," Psal. 118: 23.

Infer. 2. It shews what reason we have to discard and cashier for ever that groundless and blindfold opinion, which lays the stress of salvation on a thing of nought: for what else is the will of a frail and mutable man? to forsake a living fountain, and rest on a cistern, a broken cistern, what folly is it! to cast our eagle's wings, and trust to a foot out of joint; who would do it that is not void of understanding! surely Job was aware of it, when he professeth, "He would not value a life that depended on his own righteousness," Job 9: 15. 21.

The grace of God is little beholden to that doctrine which would give the glory of it to a graceless thing; and as little have the souls of men to thank it for: it feeds them with dreams and faucies; which, when they awake, will leave them "hardly bestead, and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward," Isa. 8: 21. Therefore, sit not down under the shadow of that gourd; it hath a worm at the root; and they will not be held guiltless, nor kept from the scorching sun, whoever they be, that shelter themselves in the covert of it. It is a spark of men's own kindling, wherewith, though compass'd round, they will lie down in sorrow, chap. 50: 11. Therefore let those who disrelish this doctrine, because it founds not salvation upon self, look well to their standing, and shift from it in time.

Infer. 3. Fall in practically with the doctrine of election, as founded upon grace. As it was grace which gave you your elect being, so let it be your spirit and utmost endeavor to improve this your being to the praise of that grace. 1. Give it the sole honor of election's original: suffer not free-will-grace, or any thing else, to pretend to a share in the parentage of it: let not your faith, whether foreseen or perfected, be reckoned the ground-work, or **motive of your election: it is a branch of it; and the**

and therefore had need of a man of courage and conduct to be over them. Well, let David's birth, complexion, employment, education, be what it will, ever so unlikely in all human respects, yet this David is, and must be the man whom the Lord will honor to rule his people, to fight their battles, and to do exploits. In this choice the Lord w. s pleased to set by whatever is taking with men: "he seeth not as man seeth," that is he regards not men for their natural accomplishments: if for any thing, it must be (probably) for some excellent endowment of the mind; and that of wisdom is of as weighty consideration in the choice of a prince, as any other: but this is no inducement or motive to God; "he respects not any that are wise in heart:" Job 37: 24. and if he did, it was not here to be had. David had no prince-like qualities above his brethren, until afterwards; as is plainly intimated in these words, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day forward," 1 Sam. 16: 13.

'Then for Jeremy: The Lord ordains him to be a prophet, sets him over nations and kingdoms, commissions him to root out and pull down, to build and to plant, &c. why? what had Jeremy done, that the Lord should call him to so imperial a work? Sure no great matter; for this he was ordained to before he was born: "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet;" it also appears by his own confession, how unfit he was for such a work: and how unwilling; "I cannot speak, for I am a child," Jer. 1: 5, 6.

Another instance may be Cyrus: This man was decreed to a great and noble work. - It was, in brief, to destroy the golden monarchy; to break in pieces the hammer of the whole earth, to release God's people out of captivity, and to build his temple: and this was prophesied of him more than an hundred years before Cyrus was born. The Lord styles him his anointed, his elect, his shepherd, and one that should "perform all his pleasure:" and he calls him by his name too; which is twice repeated, as a thing to be remarked: and to enforce it the more, he adds a note of narrower observance; "I have called thee, even thee by name," Isa. 44: 48. and 45: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. 13.

Was Cyrus thus chosen, because he would be a puissant

prince? or did the Lord make him puissant and victorious, because appointed to such a work? hear what the Lord himself (who best knows the ground of his own designation) says of him: "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden," (that is, I gave him strength, and taught him how to use it) "I will loose the loins of kings, and open to him the two-leaved gates; I will go before him:—I will break in pieces the gates of brass and cut in sunder the bars of iron," &c. But what shall Cyrus have done, that the great God should do him this honor? he did not so much as know the Lord; which is also twice repeated, as a matter worthy our observation, Isa. 45: 1—5.

Lastly. PAUL: The Lord from heaven commissions him his preacher-general among the Gentiles; to bear his name before Kings; to maul and ransack the devil's kingdom; and to turn the world upside-down; witness his doings at Ephesus, Athens, and other places. And this he was called to, even while in the heat of his persecuting fury against that name, which he is now sent to preach: and that there was no motive on Paul's part, himself is witness, where speaking of that his call, he ascribes it to the pleasure and power of God, as much as he doth his natural birth, Gal. 1: 15. The original of all which is couched in that word, "He is a chosen vessel unto me," Acts 9: 15.

I might also bring in the stories of Samson, Josiah, John Baptist, and others to the same effect, but that time would fail. Now these instances may not be valued as historical relations only; (that would be too narrow a meaning for them), but according to the scripture way of inferring, and improving to spiritual uses; and so there will be a good preparatory proof of the business in hand: For if there be an election personal unto things of less eminent concernment; and that so long before some of the persons were in being; if also there be an absoluteness in God's decrees concerning these; how much more in matters of eternal weight! And if the Lord did not look out of himself for the moving consideration on which he selected those persons to their several honors, and achievements, (and if he had, he should have found none,) much less an election to eternal salvation, and union with himself, be founded in the creature. Doth God take care for an ox? from the less to

performed in the person of another. Christ and Adam being parallels in their headship, the imputation of one's guiltiness, and of the other's righteousness, are righteously applied to their respective seeds. And this was a main end of the Lord's putting those he would justify into Christ: that he "being made sin, and a curse for them, they might be made the righteousness of God in him; and so, God might be just in justifying them. Faith in this matter holds the place of an evidence or seal of that righteousness which belonged to us as being in Christ, before we believed (as Canaan did to Abraham's seed before they were born:) and is given us on account of our interest therein, Phil. 3: 12. that we might apprehend it, and enjoy the benefits of it, Phil. 1: 29. which is surely a far better ground to build our justification upon, than our weak and imperfect faith, which stands in need daily of righteousness of God for its own support. But let not faith lose of its due respect: it is a precious grace, and may not suffer disparagement. Though it doth not originate your title to justification, it is the best evidence ye can have for it; though it be not your peace-maker (primarily,) it is yet of that important usefulness, that your peace cannot be completed, nor can you know that your peace is made, without it. Your record is in heaven, and cannot be pleaded here (the court of conscience takes no notice of it,) until exemplified under the seal of faith. It is somewhat like the *instrumentum pacis*, where parties have been at variance; though the peace be made, and terms agreed, it has not its full effect until ratified on both sides, and exchanged. Therefore,

Infer. 5. Make it the main part of your care and business to get into Christ, and to abide in him.

VI. The founding of election upon grace, affords us divers useful instructions: as,

Infer. 1. To fall down and adore the great God, for this unspeakable discovery of his love to men. It is one of the richest mercies that he would not entrust us in our own keeping: that another (and he one that had not the least need of us) should be more provident for us than we would have been for ourselves: that our chiefest interest should have the highest security: that it should be founded upon grace; the attribute which our great King most delights to

pertains to life and godliness, grace and glory, this life and that to come, is all laid up in Christ (as all sorts of food in the ark, for those who found grace in his sight,) all fulness dwells in him, Col. 2: 9. John 1: 16. and that for you. He is not only a root stable in himself, but establishing to you; communicating sap and spirit to all his branches: while there is life in him, you cannot die. This it is that makes the saints stand firm and secure in the midst of dangers; "the evil one toucheth them not," 1 John 5: 18. Let all the rebel-crew of adversaries (Satan, the world, and your own evil hearts) associate themselves, and take counsel together, it all comes to naught: let their assaults be renewed again and again, they are still beaten off: they gird themselves, and are broken in pieces; they gird again, and again they are broken in pieces: thus it is, and thus it shall be, to the end of our warfare; "for God is with us," Isa. 8: 9, 10. This was it made David fearless, even "in the valley and shadow of death; the Lord was with him," Psal. 23: 4. And those three noble confessors, they walked secure in the fiery furnace, because "the Son of God was among them," Dan. 3: 25. Therefore do all, suffer all, and expect all, as being in Christ, and not otherwise: but wo to him that is alone, who, when he falls, hath not Christ to help him up.

Infer. 3. Let this your relation to Christ be evidenced by your likeness to him: He that is joined "to the Lord, is one spirit," 1 Cor. 6: 17. "The holy oil that was poured on your head, runs down to the skirts of his garments;" that is, to the very meanest of his followers; and they carry along the pleasant scent with them wherever they go, or should do, as Paul did, 2 Cor. 2: 14. It is natural to these married unto Christ to bring forth fruit unto God, Rom. 7: 4. and see it be such as will abide the test, endure all sorts of weather, and be bettered by it.

Infer. 4. This doctrine illustrates that of justification; as shewing wherein the true matter of justifying righteousness doth consist, and how it comes to be ours. Our faith (or act of believing) cannot be the matter of it, for that it is an imperfect thing; and so cannot be reckoned in the place of perfect righteousness: for it must be a righteousness perfectly perfect that justifies, as it was a sin perfectly sinful that condemned. This righteousness also must be our own, in a way of right, as Adam's sin also was, though

the greater is a scriptural way of arguing, and proves strongly.

I come now to a more direct and positive proving the proposition, wherein my present scope is not so much to prove that there is an election, as what this election is; viz. how it is qualified and circumstanced: and this respects the objects of election, with the manner, time, and motives of it. And yet, as introductory to these, it may be expedient to touch on the other; and so, for the clearer discussion thereof, I cast the proposition into six branches.

- I. That there is an Election of men to Salvation.
- II. That this Election is absolute.
- III. That it is personal.
- IV. That it is from Eternity.
- V. That the Elect were chosen in Christ.
- VI. That Election is founded upon grace.

These being made good by positive scripture, or arguments taken thence; it will not much concern us what is alleged to the contrary: They are of the deep things of God, and discoverable only by scripture light; and therefore in vain are they brought to any other touchstone; for who hath known the mind of the Lord, or can, but as himself hath been pleased to reveal it?

- I. There is an Election of Men to Salvation.

That is, there are some, a certain remnant, that shall be saved: and this by virtue of election.

This is clearly implied in those noted and compendious sentences, vessels of mercy, afore prepared unto glory, Rom. 9: 23. The election hath obtained, Rom. 11: 7. The Lord added to the church such as should be saved, Acts 2: 47. And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed, Acts 13: 48. But more expressly in Rom. 11: 5. There is a remnant according to the election of grace, 1 Thess. 5: 9. God hath not appointed us unto wrath; but to obtain salvation: And 2 Thess. 2: 13. God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, &c. And these are called the election, or party of elect ones; as those circumcised, are called the circumcision; and the angels that stood, are distinguished from those that fell, by the title of elect. They are also said to be chosen vessels, vessels of mercy; as

those that are left, vessels of wrath, and sons of perdition: the scripture still sets them forth by distinguishing characters.

1. As a party separate from the world; I (says Christ) have chosen you out of the world, John 15: 19. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, John 17: 9. And they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world, John 17: 16. Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them without all things are done in parables, Mark 4: 11. Of Jacob and Esau, (who were an evident type of this separation) it is said of Rebeckah, "two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people," Gen. 25: 23. And of Jacob's posterity, "the people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations," Numb. 23: 9. And this "people (says God) have I formed for myself," Isa. 43: 21. "These are the people of his holiness; the rest are adversaries," chap. 63: 18. 2 Pet. 2: 9.

2. As men of another race or kindred; and as springing from another root. "We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness," 1 John 5: 19. (or in that wicked one as their root and head:) "He that is of God beareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God," John 7: 47. The one party are said to be "children of light," the other of the night, 1 Thess. 5: 5. the one of God, the other of the world, 1 John 4: 4—6. the one is from above, the other from beneath: John 7: 23. God is the Father of the one, and the devil of the other, chap. 8: 41, 42. 44.

3. As men subject to another head. "We are thine," says the church to God; "thou never bearest rule over them," Isa. 63: 19. "all that the Father giveth me (saith Christ) shall come to me, John 6: 37. my sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me, and a stranger they will not follow," John 10: 27. and this, "because one is their master, even Christ," Matt. 23: 9. Of others, he saith, that "they will not come unto him," John 5: 40. The one party are followers of the Lamb, the other of the prince of darkness, led captive by him at his will.

4. As belonging to another world. "The good seed are the children of the kingdom," Matth. 13: 38. and they are distinguished from the children of this world, as a par-

to us; lying down, rising up, and all the day long accompanying us! and how careful should we be, not only to keep this charter uncanceled, but also to keep it clean from all sorts of dust and soil, by which the legibleness thereof might any way be obscured to ourselves or others!

Infer. 2. Let election's eternal origin be an argument for its eternal duration; and so, of the saints' invincible perseverance to glory. That which is from everlasting, shall be to everlasting; if the root be eternal, so are the branches. Surely, for this good end (among others,) it is twice recorded in the Revelation, that "their names were written in the book of life, from the foundation of the world," Rev. 13: 8. and 17: 8. namely, to signify and assure, that the elect shall be safely and surely kept from those dreadful apostasies, which the rest of the world shall fall into, and be overwhelmed with. And hence, perhaps, it is that we read of nothing done in eternity, but election, and things appendant, or peculiar thereto; as the promise of eternal life, the Lamb slain, the kingdom prepared, &c. Election is an eternal fountain, that never leaves running while a vessel is empty, or capable of holding more; and it stands open to all comers: therefore, come; and if you have not sufficient of your own, go and borrow vessels, empty vessels, not a few; "pay your debts out of it, and live on the rest" to eternity, 2 Kings 4: 7.

V. From the doctrine of choosing in Christ.

Infer. 1. It is an high demonstration of God's love to his chosen. We may say of it as Huram to Solomon, "Because the Lord loved his people, he set his Son over them," 2 Chron. 2: 11. It is also an eminent proof of his manifold wisdom, to contrive the blessedness of his people in such a manner, as should most certainly secure their obtainment of it; most signally illustrate his love to them; and so, most affectionately win upon their hearts, and to oblige them to himself for ever. We may hence also discern something of that immense greatness and holiness of God; that though he so loved his elect, as to make them "one in himself," John 17: 21. that union could not be admitted without a mediator equal with himself.

Infer. 2. Gather hence your stability and safety: whatever strait or difficulty you are entering upon, "drink of this brook in the way," and lift up your head. *Whatever*

would be in the third heaven) presently replies, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory."

Infer. 3. As it is a matter of honor and privilege, so it will prove one of the best titles to your heavenly inheritance. It will signify something one day, (however by some too lightly esteemed now,) when it shall be the great distinguishing character between you and the world: whoever he be that derives not his genealogy from this register, will be put from the heavenly priesthood. Neh. 7: 64. The new Jerusalem admits none but those whose "names are written in the book of life," Rev. 21: 27. yea, every one that is not found written there, shall be cast into a lake of fire, chap. 20: 15. therefore "give all diligence to make your election sure."

Infer. 4. It also imports matter of duty from us. When princes confer titles of honor, lands, or immunities; they use to reserve some kind of rent or other service, to mind their subjects, though favorites, of whom they hold. You have no such way of owning your great benefactor, nor such means of being considerable in the world; as by bearing the badge and impress of him who gave you this name of honor. Let his name therefore be named upon you; carry his name in your bosom; bear it on your shoulders, and the "pains of your hands;" let the choicest of your affections, the chief of your strength, and the whole of your activity, be employed for his honor; let every thing you do, bear an impression of him whose name is holy.

Then from the antiquity of election.

Infer. 1. Let the ancientness of electing love, draw up our hearts to a very dear and honorable esteem of it. Pieces of antiquity (though of base metal, and otherwise of little use or value) how venerable are they with learned men? and ancient charters, how careful are men to preserve them; although they contain but temporary privileges, and sometimes but of trivial moment? how then should the great charter of heaven, so much older than the world, and containing matters of eternal weight and glory; which also hath been confirmed by so many promises; exemplified by multitudes of cases; with a seal affixed more precious than heaven itself, all which proclaim the eternal validity of it; how should this, I say, be had in everlasting remembrance, and the thoughts thereof be very precious

ty "accounted worthy to obtain the world to come," Luke 20: 35. and accordingly we find, that none are admitted into the new Jerusalem but "whose names are found written in the book of life, Rev. 21: 27. and whose name "soever was not written there, was cast into the lake of fire," chap. 20: 15. On the same account Judas is said to go to his own place, Acts 1: 25. and the elect into "the kingdom prepared for them," Matth. 25: 35. I shall bring but one only argument for proof of this branch, and it is of such weight, that there needs not another, namely, that except the Lord had thus reserved a remnant, no flesh had been saved: the whole world would have been as Sodom, Isa. 1: 9.

II. Election is absolute.

In this are two things of great import, irrevocableness, and independency. The decree is irrevocable on God's part, and independent as to human performances. The Lord will not go back from his purpose to save his people; nor shall their unworthiness or aversion make void, or hinder his most gracious purpose. And hence those various expressions of the same thing, namely, predestinate, ordain, prepare, appoint, have nothing subjoined that is like a condition. There is indeed a kind of conditions (or rather qualifications) that must, and always do, precede the final completion of election; as "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ;" which therefore may be called conditions of salvation; but not so to election.

Election is the great fundamental institute of the gospel: it is that which in human states is called the supreme law; which is both irreversible in itself, and requires that all inferior administrations may be accommodated thereto: so the salvation of God's elect being the highest law of the heavenly state and kingdom, must on the same (and firmer) ground remain inviolable. It is that for which all things else have being; the plot whereby God designs to himself, the highest glory, and for which he hath been at such cost, that should his design miscarry, the whole creation could not countervail the damage. He could not therefore,—for God cannot deny himself,—I say, he could not so contrive the grandest design of his glory, as that it should ever need

to be revoked or altered: nor could he leave it obnoxious to disappointment; as it must have been, if ventured on a created bottom: yea, it behooved him, as supreme lawgiver, so to determine and subjugate all, that the great end of all might not be frustrated. And thus any prudent founder of a state would do, if the utmost of his skill and power would extend to it: but from their defectiveness in these, the best founded states on earth are subject to mutation: princes die, and their thoughts perish; their minds alter and depart from their first intentions; successors drive a contrary interest; unlooked for accidents entangle them; foreign enemies encroach upon them, and obstruct their work: or the people's own folly may be such, as to mar and defeat the best laid designs for their own good. Human affairs are exposed to thousand incidents, which human prudence can neither prevent nor provide against. But with God it is not so: no event can be new to him: "He declares the end from the beginning," Isa. 46: 10. his judgment and purpose cannot alter, "he is of one mind, and who can turn him?" Job 23: 13. he is also immortal, and "the thoughts of his heart stand fast to all generations," Psal. 33: 11. no creature can seclude itself from his government; "In his hand is the soul of every living thing," Psal. 145: 16. yea, the most casual (to us) and opposite emergencies, are by his power, and wisdom reducible to his purpose, and cannot resist their being made subservient to his will. And this may be one reason why election is so often said to be "from the beginning, and from the foundation of the world," namely, to show that whatever should be in time, should be subordinate to election, which is all one as to make it absolute. And further, this absoluteness may be evinced by such arguments as these:

Arg. 1. If election were not absolute, it would be but after the covenant of works; which being conditional, how soon was it broken, even by one who had power to keep it! and if man in that honor did not abide in it, how should he now, when so strong a bias is grown upon his heart, that he runs counter ever since? Gen. 6: 5. "If there had been a law given that could have given life, righteousness should have been by the law," Gal. 3: 2. which shows, that the new covenant does more for us than the old; for it giveth life; and then it must give the performance of the

ver. 24. he further backs it with the remembrance of the great things God hath done for them afore-time: than which there is nothing of stronger tendency to a soul's recovery.

III. From the personality of election: and, IV. From the eternity of its original, I gather in general,

That since the scriptures have so highly renowned these two circumstantial parts of election, by so frequent a mentioning of them: and that on occasions of the solemnest import, we ought not to pass them by, as things of an indifferent notice; but as being diversely instructive, worthy to be kept, and soberly contended for. The Holy Ghost doth not use to inculcate matters of ordinary observance, or little import; but as noting to us some great importance in them: as taxing also our sloth, and aptness to neglect them; and to stir up our minds to make the more diligent search, what, and what manner of things they are, and how to be improved: in particular,

From the personality of election I infer:

Infer. 1. That it ought to be minded as matter of the highest honor to the parties concerned. The Lord illustrates Moses at no ordinary rate, when he tells him, "I know thee by name;" Exod. 33: 17. and, doubtless, intended that Moses himself should so account of it, and be highly satisfied therewith, though denied some other things he would fain have had. Thus also Paul signalizeth those eminent saints, who were his fellow laborers in the gospel; that "their names were in the book of life," Phil. 4: 3. And our Saviour propounds it to this disciples, as matter of the highest exaltation, that "their names were written in heaven," Luke 10: 20. That our poor insignificant names should be written in God's book, and laid up among his treasures in heaven, when the generality of names (even names of note,) are written in the dust, let it not seem a light matter to us: for this is that "everlasting name, which never shall be cut off," Isa. 56: 5.

Infer. 2. The knowledge of this, namely, that God has thus taken notice of our name, is a great privilege to them that know it. It enlarges the heart to higher expectations; it gives boldness, or freedom of speech towards God; as if nothing were too great for such a one to ask. See how Moses grows upon it; no sooner, says God, "I know thee by name," but Moses (as wrapt into the second, and fain

him above them all; especially considering, that faith and holiness are as absolutely promised and provided for in election, as salvation itself, as the end of faith.

2. After a man comes to believe, this doctrine of absolute election is of singular use and benefit to him, both as tending to keep him on his feet, and to raise him when he is down. 1. It is a great preservative in time of temptation. The remembrance of that love which looked upon him when he was in his blood, and said he should live, and hath now also made good its word to him, must needs operate strongly with a gracious heart, against whatever might be unworthy of such love: let the bait be ever so aptly suited, he will turn from it in a holy disdain, as good Joseph did, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God!" Gen. 39: 9. who hath dealt so bountifully with me! 2. Nothing more tends to recovery after a fall, than the consideration of the freeness of God's love at first, and his mighty power in quickening, when altogether dead; and that both these, namely, his love and his power, are engaged by an absolute covenant, to bring every one that takes hold thereof to glory; and therefore will receive him, not only after, upon return to his duty, but in the midst of his backslidings, he will come and heal him. The Lord's way of dealing with Ephraim is an instance pertinent to the case in hand: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners," Isa. 57: 17, 18. And in the 44th chapter, he doth, as it were, clench and fasten this nail in a sure place: "Remember, O Jacob, I have formed thee; thou shalt not be forgotten of me: I have blotted out thy sins; therefore return unto me." And Jer. 3: 14. "Return, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you," (to wit, by his covenant of election.) To this purpose also is the edge of Samuel's argument applied in 1 Sam. 12: 20. 22. "Fear not; ye have done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the Lord: as if he had said, your wickedness indeed is great, ye have highly provoked the Lord, by your casting him off: yet, be not discouraged, as if the Lord would cast you off: "For the Lord will not forsake his people;" but why? "Because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people." And in

condition which that life depends upon: it also shows, that the first covenant did not give life, and that it failed because it was conditional. The law shows our duty, but giveth not wherewith to perform it: the new covenant does both, by writing the law in the heart. All under the covenant of works are without God, without Christ, without hope, Eph. 2: 12. and this, because strangers to the covenant of grace, or grace of election. If therefore the elect shall be in a better state than before, their election must be absolute: and that it might be so the new covenant was made with Christ on their behalf; and is, "that grace given us in him before the world began," 2 Tim. 1: 9. Titus 1: 2.

Arg. II. Election must be absolute; because whatever can be supposed the condition of it, is a part of the thing itself: much like that promise of God to Abraham, "Thy seed will I give this land," Gen. 12: 7. In which promise the Lord undertakes as well to give Abraham a seed to inherit that land, as that land to his seed: and accordingly we find that the next head of that seed was born by virtue of the promise, Gal. 4: 23. 28. so the whole course and series of things conducing to the final accomplishment of election, is included in it, and ascertained by it; and that with such firmness and security, as if the end itself had been attained when the decree was made; as, namely, redemption from sin, effectual calling, and perseverance to glory (of which more fully under those heads); which also seems to be the meaning of the apostle, where he makes eternal life itself to be the substance of the promise: "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life," 1 John 2: 25.

Arg. III. It must be absolute, because by such an election only can salvation be ensured. This bottom Adam had not in his primitive state; he was made upright, but his continuing in that state, depended upon his well using of what he had, without any additional help. In him may be seen the utmost that created grace of itself can do, even in a state of perfection; unto which being left, how soon did he degenerate, and come to ruin? and all his posterity would have run the same course, if placed in his stead; as we know they have done (one by one) notwithstanding all the helps which are given in common unto men. And it is no wonder, since now they have so strong a bent unto

penance; and yet they humbled themselves, and turned from their evil ways, upon this only consideration, "Who can tell if God will turn away his fierce anger, that we perish not?" *Jonah 3: 9, 10.* It is a happiness worth your venturing for: for, 1. You can lose nothing by endeavoring. 2. You can hardly have a more solid evidence of your being elected, than to have your heart taken with electing love, and casting yourself upon it: and 3. Never did any perish who ventured on this bottom.

II. From the doctrine of election's absoluteness is evinced the exceeding riches of the grace of God, in that he hath not left this great concern to human contrivance, but hath laid it more sure and safe than men themselves would have done: for it is too evident, (by the reasonings that are used to make election dependant and conditional,) how it would have gone, if left to the wisdom of men. But I shall not doubt to affirm, that this doctrine of election's absoluteness is much beforehand with that which teacheth it to be conditional, both in point of encouragement, and otherwise; and that as well before believing as afterwards.

1. Before a man comes to believe; supposing him to be notionally instructed therein before. For being under conviction of the greatness and multitude of his sins, and finding the power of indwelling corruptions so insuperable, having also some sight of the holiness of God, and that he will by no means clear the guilty, it needs must prove a difficult matter, to believe that there is mercy and pardon for such a one as he; or that ever those domineering lusts should be made to submit: but then considering, 1. That electing love pitches on the chief of sinners. 2. That it flows not from, nor is founded upon, any condition to be performed by men. And, 3. That election has in it all that conduceth to life and godliness: these things (I say) considered, it cannot but have a far greater influence on the soul, to cleave unto God, and follow hard after him, than if his election were suspended upon his doing that which he finds in himself no power to perform: for he sees by woful (and yet, through grace, happy) experience, that as the law is made weak through the weakness of the flesh; so also, setting aside the absoluteness of electing love, all the means of grace, which are given in common among men, would be wholly ineffectual to salvation: which difficulties, electing love in its absoluteness will supersede, and set

evil, which Adam had not. And if there be any advantage cast in, (which some do affirm, and call it the new covenant,) the more is our doctrine confirmed: for the more helps they have, if yet they fall short, (as they do,) the more evident it is, that nothing short of such an election will secure them. An example of this we had in the old world; who, by their natural ingenuity, and long lives to improve it, together with Noah's six score years' preaching, and the Spirit's striving, were not led unto God, but still grew from bad to worse, until all "the imaginations of their hearts were only evil, and that continually," *Gen. 6: 8.* And this was not the case only of some, but of the whole race universally: "All flesh had corrupted his way," *chap. 6: 12.* It is true, that Noah was found righteous; and as true it is, that election was it that made him so. Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord," *ver. 8.* in the same sense that Paul obtained mercy, *1 Tim. 1: 16.* viz. by mercy's obtaining, or taking hold of him. It may also be seen in the people of Israel; who, over and above their common and natural grace, had many helps and additions that others had not: "the Lord dealt not so with any nation as with them," *Psal. 147: 19, 20.* and yet the generality of them so bad, that they justified their sister Sodom, *Ezek. 16: 51.*

The first covenant thus failing, such was the grace of our Lord (foreseeing it) as to determine on a second, or new covenant; by which he would fix and secure a remnant, and that infallibly: and hence it is termed, The covenant of grace, as not depending at all upon works; and this is that grace that saves, and "reigns to eternal life," *Rom. 5: 21.* *Eph. 2: 5, 8.* And these are the "sure mercies of David," recorded in the 55th of Isaiah: it is the absoluteness of it that makes it a better covenant.

Arg, IV. There is the same reason for the absoluteness of men's election, as of Christ's. That man, or human body, which the second person was to assume and unite to himself, was not ordained to that union upon any condition whatever; as, namely, if he should fulfil all righteousness, destroy the devil, dissolve his works, and make atonement for sin; for these he could not have done without that union: and that his ordination thereunto was absolute, appears by *Heb. 10: 5.* "A body hast thou prepared me;"

doctrine; only by the way let me premise a caution or two.

1. Let no man tax God with injustice or partiality because he takes not all; or because not those of highest esteem among men. Do not the princes of the world exercise dominion over men like themselves? Or is there a subject so mean, but will think himself wronged, if questioned for disposing of his own (which yet is his own but as borrowed?) And shall vain man presume to arraign his sovereign Lord! "Wo to him that striveth with his Maker," Isa. 45: 9. If you must be meddling, let it be with pots of earth like yourselves.

2. Let no man depreciate the doctrine of election because it takes in but a remnant. Why are they styled, "the little flock," but to heighten the mercy and privilege of it in their esteem? Noah did not condemn the grace of God to himself and his sons, because the world of ungodly were excluded the ark; nor the remnant that escaped the sword in Egypt, Jer. 44: 28. reckon their own deliverance the less mercy, because the rest of their countrymen had not a share in it. Men do not use to slight their own inhumanities for others not being interested in them; but rather to value themselves the more upon it.

And now, as a means to prevent or remove the evil surmises cautioned against; with those other sinister deductions which carnal reason may be apt to suggest; let us draw up a few of those many and worthy improvements this doctrine is capable of, above and beyond that of the contrary tenor; as also of those laws of duty which it lays upon us. And here I would see, first, what fruit may be gathered from the several branches of the proposition; and then, what from the gross or whole of it promiscuously.

1. Since there is an election of men to salvation, put you in for a part and interest in it: though their number be but small, cast in your lot, and make one among them. My meaning is, that though ever so few are the objects of election, you will make it your business to prove yourself of that few. If but two in the whole world, who knows but thou mayest be one of them? And do it the rather, for *knowers' sake*: it is our Saviour's argument, "They are but few that go in at the straight gate;" therefore strive. The Ninevites had not that ground to believe God would accept them that you have; for their ruin was pronounced in peremptory words, and no room expressly left for re-

and Luke 1: 35. "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," Matt. 1: 21. "He shall save his people from their sins." In which places the absoluteness of the decree for that man's being united to the Son of God, is evidently set forth. And that our election (as to this circumstance of it) holds proportion with that of Christ, you shall see more fully afterwards. Take only (at present) those gracious words, which, doubtless, he uttered with great satisfaction to himself in the 17th of John, ver. 21. "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

Arg. V. It was requisite that election should be absolute, because of the absoluteness of God's decree touching the death of his Son, unto which he was fore-ordained unpeevably, 1 Pet. 1: 20. and all that he saved before he suffered, were saved on the credit of that decree, Rom. 3: 25, 26. The scripture also says plainly that he was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Rev. 13: 8. and that it was not possible that cup should pass from him, Matth. 26: 39, 42. And if it be a thing below the prudence of men to lay down the price without securing the purchase; then, surely, the wisdom of God could not determine the death of his Son for men's salvation, and yet leave the salvation of those very men at an uncertainty: which it must have been, if their election were not absolute.

Arg. VI. Lastly, It might also be argued from the nature of divine promises; which are patterns, or declarative copies of the decree. Now the promises touching spiritual blessings are absolute; they are of that word which is "for ever settled in heaven," Psal. 119: 89. See the promise of sending Christ to be a redeemer, Gen. 3: 15. the Holy Ghost to sanctify, and lead into all truth, John 16: 13. to sprinkle clean water upon them; to give them a new heart; to cause them to walk in his statutes; that he will be their God, and they shall be his people, and shall not depart from him, Jer. 24: 7. Ezek. 36: 26. that if they sin, he will chastise them with the rods of men, but his everlasting kindness he will not take from them, Psal. 89: 30—34. and that at last he will "present them faultless before the presence of his glory," Jude 24. These all, with others of like tenor, are delivered in positive and absolute terms, without any shew of reservation, proviso, or condition. And if these, which are transcripts of the decree, be ab-

that he loves any, and especially themselves; and not to find fault because he loves not all alike. "Who am I, (says David,) that thou hast brought me hitherto?" And Christ's disciples, "Lord, why wilt thou manifest thyself to us (us twelve) and not to the world?" John 14:22. It is therefore strange to consider, why and how, any that call themselves of the brotherhood, came so to espouse the quarrel of those without; and that with such eagerness, as to strive and fall out among themselves about the other's concerns. It were more advisable to leave off disputing, and fall to practice. But, to answer more directly: 1. This remnant is not so contemptibly to be spoken of; they are "Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," Rev. 5: 11. And how small soever the number be, (if it were but one, it were more by one than the whole creation could deserve,) I say, how few soever they are, no man knows but himself may be one of them; unless by despising the grace of God in election, he hath proved it otherwise to himself. 2. To pitch on a few while in their blood and enmity against God, and resolve even then to make them everlastingly happy, and that against the natural bent of their own will, was a grace much more high and sovereign, than to save them for their own better improvement of what they have in common with other men; for that would not be of grace, but of debt. Or if the Lord should bring ten thousand times that number into a salvable state, (as they speak,) but so as, very possibly, not one of them shall ever be saved, it would not bring the thousandth part of that glory to his grace, as to save a few invincibly. 3. If the Lord did foresee that but few would believe, and yet resolve to save none but such as should believe; then the objection, as to fewness, falls on the objector's doctrine as much as ours. 4. As for godly sorrow, faith, and repentance, they are the gift of God, and proper to the elect: and so, no reason to suppose the intervention of these in them that are left; or to fear an implacable resolution to punish and torment any in whom these possibilities go forth into act.

Other allegations they have against the doctrine of election, which will admit of as plain a solution as those above; but it being my purpose to collect what I shall find in the scriptures for it, and not to controvert the point; I proceed no further, but go on to the usefulness of the

absolute, it follows that the decree also is the same: and on this ground it is the apostle stands when he challengeth all the world to nullify God's election, Rom. 8: 33, 34. which he could not have done, had not election been sovereignly absolute.

- III. Election is personal: and,
- IV. It is from eternity.

These two I put together in proof, because they are frequently joined in scripture. It was not the whole lump of mankind that was the object of election; neither was election, as some say, a decree to elect such as should happen to be thus and so qualified: but certain determinate persons were chosen by name, or singled out from among the rest, and ordained to eternal life. Our Saviour styles them the "men that were given him out of the world," John 17: 6. and they were given him by name, as well as by number; and by those names he knows them, chap. 10: 3. 14. It is not unworthy our deepest attention, how the Lord takes notice of the names of his people; as intending it, doubtless, a signal token of the special regard he hath to their persons. He therefore tells Moses, "I know thee by thy name," Exod. 33: 17. It is an appropriating of them to himself, Isa. 43: 1. "I have called thee by name; thou art mine." Sometimes also, when he calls to those he eminently owns, he doubles their name by repetition: thus to his friend Abraham, Gen. 22: 11. To Moses, his servant, Exod. 3: 4. and others. But I find no instance of his speaking so to other men; and these, I suppose, are recorded as worthy of special remark; and that it is no light matter (much less to be scoffed at, as it is by some frothy spirits,) that the elect were chosen by name, and that their names are written in heaven. And that it was transacted from eternity, is evident from John 17: 23, 24. Eph. 1: 4. Rev. 13: 8. and 17: 8. and other scriptures.

The personality of election, with its eternity, may be evinced by such arguments as these:

Arg. I. From the example of Christ's election. It was not a person uncertain that was to be Lord and Christ; but the second person in human nature: and this capacity he sustained from everlasting, Prov. 8: 23.—31. 1 Pet. 1: 20. Nor was it any body which he might assume, but the very

of God, but most consonant thereto; for how can it stand with his wisdom, to determine the death of his Son for the salvation of men, and leave it undetermined, and consequently uncertain, whether any one person shall have salvation by it? For so it must be, if election be not absolute. 2. It is so far from being at manifest hostility with the mercy of God, that it is most congruous and suitable to the very nature of it. To shew mercy, is to open the heart to one in distress; to love and do good to enemies, whom he might as justly have destroyed, and was no way obliged to spare, much less to advance them: nay, perhaps they were deeper involved in guilt, than other men, even the chief of sinners; which is, certainly, the highest illustration of mercy, and far from a manifest defiance of it. 3. It doth not oppose the justice of God; for, to whom is he debtor, or can he? All had a stock in Adam; and having lost it by their own default, God is not obliged to restore it; therefore no injustice to repair one, and not another.

Objec. Doth it argue any sovereign or high strain of grace, when ten thousand have equally offended, to pardon one or two, and implacably resolve to punish and torment all the rest to the utmost extremity? And this against all possible interueniency of sorrow and repentance for their faults?

Ans. It were very desirable that men, while they pretend to argue for the truth, would order their speech as becomes the gravity of such a subject, Eccl. 5: 1. and much more, that they come not so near a downright reproaching that glorious grace, of which we cannot have apprehensions awful enough. The men who thus speak, had need to try their spirits, whether they be of God; since from the same premises they draw conclusions quite contrary to those, who, we know, "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." In scripture account, it is no derogation from the grace of God, that he called Abraham alone, leaving millions beside to their perishing condition. Nor can I believe that Moses understood it as disparaging God's love to mankind, when he tells us, that he chose the people of Israel for his own peculiar people; who yet were the fewest of any people, Deut. 7: 7. One of a city, and two of a family, were less in proportion than one or two of ten thousand; yet no complaint upon it, by those interested in that grace. It is the property of God's children to admire

numerical body that was prepared for him, Heb. 10: 5. Psal. 40: 7. "And this very person he loved before the foundation of the world," John 17: 24. It is worthy of observation, how particular the decree was, even in things circumstantial, to our Lord Christ; as that he should come of Abraham's stock, of Judah's tribe, of David's lineage, be conceived of a virgin, born at Bethlehem; and this when the sceptre was departing from Judah; that he should be buffeted, scourged, spit upon, hanged upon a tree, his hands and feet pierced; that gall and vinegar should be given him to drink; that a bone of him should not be broken (even while on both sides of him others' were); that his garments should be parted, and lots cast on his vesture; as also that he should rise again the third day, &c. And that these were all decreed, appears by the prophecies of them, which are the decree exemplified, or drawn out of the register. As touching his resurrection, it is said expressly in Psal. 2: 7. "I will declare the decree;" and the same is as true of all the rest. And if the election of the head was personal, and from eternity, why not theirs that should make up his body, since they did as really exist then, as the human nature of Christ did? Besides, it was very agreeable that he and they should both be appointed together: for he could not be a head, but with respect to a body; and that they were expressly determined of, appears by Psal. 139: 16. "In thy book were all my members written, when as yet there was none of them." If you say, that was meant of David's members; I answer, that if God thought the members of an earthly body worthy his registering, he could not be less particular and exact about the mystical body of his son: besides, David was his type.

Christ also was ordained to be a Saviour, and that by his death, and both "from the foundation of the world," 1 Pet. 1: 20. It was therefore expedient then also to be determined how many, and who in particular, should have salvation by him. He was not to die for himself; but for those whose security he undertook. Now it is not a thing proper to speak of security, or bail, but with respect to a debtor, or offender; and that debtor or offender must be known too, and named, or else the entering of the bail is an insignificant act; especially where the surety hath ac-

Object. Upon what account can men be pressed to a frequent, diligent, conscientious attendance upon the ministry, if salvation, and consequently preparation, and meetness for salvation, shall as certainly be had by a broken, careless, superficial attendance in this kind?

Answer. On what account did the Lord so frequently admonish his people, "to keep the law, without turning aside; to circumcise their hearts; and to be no more stiff-necked;" and this, as the condition of their obtaining Canaan, which the author of this objection elsewhere affirms they could not. But further, as men are creatures, it is their duty to serve and honor God; and, in order thereto, to wait upon him in his ordinances, and that with all diligence, although the business of their salvation was not concerned in it, but much more since it is, if any thing of self-concern may enforce a duty: and truly the present sweetness that is in the good ways of God, is argument sufficient to induce our most serious attendance thereon. But that salvation or meetness for salvation, may as certainly be had by a careless attendance, it is far from the doctrine of absolute election to assert: for it presseth it still as an important duty, to "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure." But, really, remissness in our duty is the natural result of that doctrine which teacheth That a man possibly may lose all he hath run for at the last step: for who will strain and toil himself, as they term it, for an uncertainty? And if there be any such who neglect their duty, because if elected they are sure to be saved, they give but a sorry evidence of their state; and are, commonly, such as oppose the doctrine of election, and not of those who hold for it.

Object. Such an election as we contend against, we judge to be the most-unworthy the most excellent nature of God; and to be at manifest defiance with his wisdom, holiness, mercy, justice, &c.

Answer. If the election contended against be such as the objector's arguments are pointed at, it is such as I suppose never was held by any; and then it is ill-spent time to set up counterfeit notions, and make a great business of confuting them. But it is absolute election, without respect to men's works, that is striven against: and for this we say, 1. Absolute election is no way contrary to the wisdom

debt or default of his own to be charged with. Our Lord and Saviour did not make his soul an offering for somebody's sins, but uncertain whose. Aaron knew whose trespasses he offered for: their names were graven on his breast-plate: not their national name or qualification (namely, Israelite, or believer,) but their personal names, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, &c. So had our great high priest, or he could not have made atonement for us: and that place, Rev. 13: 8. points at the same time for both. Those words "from the foundation of the world," do refer as well to the writing of their names in the book of life, as to the lamb's being slain; as is evident from the 8th verse of the 17th chapter, where, deciphering those "who shall wonder after the beast," he says, they are such whose "names were not written in the book of life, [from the foundation of the world,]" as were theirs who followed the Lamb, and whom "God had from the beginning chosen to salvation," 2 Thess. 2: 13.

Arg. II. The design of God, in the death of Christ, could not otherwise be secured. Had the design been, to purchase salvation for believers, without ascertaining the persons that should believe, it had been uncertain whether any would be saved, because uncertain whether any would believe. If certain that some would believe, this certainly must be decreed: for nothing future could be certain otherwise. And if it was decreed that some should believe, the individuals of that some must be decreed also: for faith is the gift of God, and could not be foreseen in any, but whom he had decreed to give it unto. Which laid together, are a good demonstration, that those Christ should die for, were as well pre-ordained, as that he should die for them; and that definitely, and by name.

Arg. III. It may be further argued, from the Father's "preparing a kingdom from the foundation of the world," and mansions or places in it. To prepare the way of this argument; consider the punctuality of God's dispositions in things of a lower concern: he did not create the earth in vain (that is, to stand empty and void, as at its first formation;) nor the several quarters thereof to be inhabited indefinitely, by some nation or other, who should happen to get possession of them, but "he divided to the nations their inheritance, and the bounds of their habitation,"

chapter 2, how by illiterate men's ministry, he took them by thousands, and "added to his church daily such as should be saved," Acts 2. 9, 10, 11. 47. So, then, the ministry of the gospel is in no wise made useless or disestimable by the doctrine of absolute election, but is rather heightened thereby, as being the "power of God to that salvation he hath chosen us to."

Object. Of what great consequence to the world are the richest gifts of wisdom, knowledge, utterance, &c. if all those who are in any possibility of being saved by them, may and shall as certainly be saved without them?

Answer. That the richest gifts of wisdom, knowledge, utterance, are of no great consequence to the world, is no consequence of the doctrine of absolute election; for they are given "for the perfecting of the saints, and edifying the body of Christ," that is, the elect: and all the diversities of gifts, manifestations, and operations, do concur to the same end, since it is the same God who worketh all in all: That is, he appointeth men to salvation, these gifts, as a means to prepare them for it, and makes them effectual thereto. But that those richest gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and utterance, are of no great use or consequence to the world, is a very natural consequent of that doctrine, which tells the world that the sun, moon, and stars, do preach the gospel sufficiently for salvation: which if they do, wherein, indeed, are those richest gifts to be esteemed, and to what end is this waste? Why should the best of men suffer stripes, imprisonments, and death, for doing that which might be done by those above the reach of danger? And, withal, it is too well known and obvious, that men of greatest knowledge, utterance, and depth of reason, such as are styled the princes of this world, are not always, nay, are very rarely, the fastest friends of truth and godliness; and those few that are, are not always most successful in their work, Eccl. 9: 11. while some others, meanly furnished in comparison, have turned the world upside down, 2 Cor. 12: 10. Acts 17: 6. 2 Cor. 10: 10. The Lord oft-times rejects the wise and prudent, and reveals himself by babes, to take from men occasion of boasting, and to make it appear, that the faith of his people does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, 1 Cor. 2: 5. "Whose weakness is stronger than men, and his foolishness wiser," chap. 1: 25.

Deut. 32: 8. Acts 17: 26. Mount Seir was given to Esau, and Ar to the children of Lot, chap. 2: 5. 9. each nation had its limits staked out, and this from the days of old. And if we may distinguish of acts in God, and of time in eternity; his purpose to form and bring forth those nations, must needs be as early as to create and furnish those parts of the world which they should inhabit. Now, earthly settlements being of trivial moment to the heavenly mansions; it seems a good consequent, that if yet particular nations were fore-appointed for particular provinces on earth; much more should particular persons be designed for those particular mansions in heaven: and if either were appointed first, it must be the person: for, "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." Heaven was made at the beginning of the world; but election was before.

The domestics of God's house, or place of glory, are a sacred state or order of kings and priests; and each individual person hath his place or apartment set out for him. Those glorious places were not prepared for believers indefinitely; but for certain determinate persons particularly: the twelve apostles shall have their twelve thrones, and each one his own. This is evident by our Saviour's answer to the mother of Zebedee's children: "To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my father," Mat. 20: 23. If for believers indefinitely, why not for these two brethren, especially since they first made request for them? The truth is, those places were not now to be disposed of; it was determined who should have them long before, even "from the foundation of the world," chap. 25: 34. The scope of this answer was not to shew that the places requested were prepared for believers indefinitely (for these were believers who made request for them;) but that they were appointed for certain particular persons, and they must have them. Much might be added, in confirmation hereof; but by these (I hope) it is clear, that election is personal, and from eternity.

V. Election is in Christ: or, the elect were chosen in Christ.

It was requisite the new covenant should have a head

and mediator, as well as the old; that righteousness and life might flow from him into all the elect seed, as sin and death had done from Adam: in which respect, Christ and he are set forth as parallels, in Rom. 3: from verse 12. to 21. The benefits which the elect were chosen unto, they are made partakers of, by their union with Christ: he is the root, in whom all fulness dwells. Not only the foundation on which the church is built; but the rock which affords all the spiritual materials of the heavenly temple; even the cement that holds one part to another, and the whole to himself: and this by virtue of the decree. For we are to consider that there is a decretive union before the actual; and the one influenceth the other into being; and that as really, as the determined death of Christ did the salvation of those who died before him. Though Christ be not the cause of election, yet he is the grand means, by whom we obtain the blessedness we were chosen unto: by him it is, that "we have access unto that grace wherein we stand," Rom. 5: 2. And we shall find, that the epistles generally, when they speak of the great things relating to salvation, do still bring in Christ, as the person principally concerned about it. Salvation, indeed, is a gift; it is perfectly free; yet not to be had, but in Christ: "It comes upon us through his righteousness; as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the righteousness of one (by means of their oneness with him) shall many be made righteous," Rom. 5: 18, 19. Mankind (by their apostacy in Adam) had destroyed in themselves the whole of that principle which would have led them to God, as their life and blessedness: and had, withal, contracted such an enmity against him, and repugnancy to all overtures for returning to him (and this gulph was so fixed,) as would for ever have kept God and us asunder, had not that blessed project of choosing in Christ been set on foot to dissolve it. It could not be done by any created power; nor could creatures so much as propound a way for it: and if they could, who durst so harden himself, as to mention the thing which only could do it! But the great God, blessed for ever, he finds out a way for it: and the same love that ordained to eternal life, would also put it in such a way, as should surely take effect. And to this end (namely, that those ordained to salvation might be both

winter, day and night, shall not cease," takes not away the necessity of the sun's being in the world, nor of its daily rising, setting, and various revolutions; for by these, as the necessary means thereof, must the decree be made good. So the absoluteness of that other part of the promise, that "seed-time and harvest shall not cease," doth not a whit discharge the husbandman either of his usefulness or duty; but evinceth the one, and enforceth the other; giving also encouragement to him in his work. The force of this answer will not be evaded, by alleging, that God affords them means proper and sufficient for seed-time and harvest, (that is, they have fitting seasons, with seed corn, horses, ploughs, and other utensils of husbandry;) and that is all the promise intends; and if they improve them not, the fault is their own. True, it is so, and they shall smart for their neglect: but what will become of the promise, and sureness of the covenant? Therefore this is not all that God doeth for men in this point. He that decreed how long the earth shall endure, and what number of men he will raise upon it, did also decree his own upholding thereof during that time, and by what means those men should be propagated, and kept alive; and did accordingly put into them the principles of self-preservation; by which they are naturally prompted to use them, as they are to eat, drink, and sleep: "He hath set the world in their hearts," Eccl. 3: 11. As the elect shall certainly be saved, and also prepared for that salvation; so hath the Lord appointed them such a ministry, and for so long a time, and their attendance thereon in such a manner, as best agrees with his own intention, and which he will bless and make effectual for that end; as is seen by his sending Paul to certain places where he must preach, and not hold his peace: Why? Because God had much people there, (that is, of his elect ones,) who must be brought in by Paul's ministry. Bythina, and other places, he is not suffered to go into, though he would; God had not yet any work for him there. Those that are to be taken, the Lord will bring them under the means, as he did that shoal of fishes under Peter's net, John 21: 6. Witness the eunuch, Cornelius, the jailer, and others. And this means, whether powerful or simple in man's esteem, it is all one to God; his word shall accomplish that he sends it for; and the weaker the means are, the more is the power of God magnified. See Acts,

friend to godliness, whatever it may pretend to; since all that a man doeth on that account terminates in self. Godliness is to aim at God as our chief end in all that we do: now one that holds the elect sure of salvation, and believes himself to be one of them, and yet goes on to fear God, and obey him, glorifies God more than he that performs the same duties for kind (and perhaps greater in bulk,) in expectation of life thereby. The Pharisees fasted oftener than Christ's disciples; but were not such real friends to godliness as they. Long prayers, fastings, and alms-deeds, are all nothing without love: and who, do you think, will love God more, he that believes himself sure of God's love unchangeably, or one that holds that, after all his toiling and straining, he may possibly run in vain, and lose all at last? If ye speak thus, ye cross the experience of God's children; yea, and of nature too; for who counts it a toil to eat his meat when nature requires it, especially when it is most agreeable both to his palate and constitution? "All the ways of God are pleasantness to them that walk in them;" and these would not leave them again, although their future happiness were not concerned in it: if they be grievous to any, it is from their unacquaintedness with his love, 1 John 5: 3:

Object. It must needs make men very remiss and loose in the service of God.

Ans. A strange assertion! that the assurance of God's love should make men careless in serving him: they that so judge, can never be over diligent to make their calling and election sure. Christ knew that the "angels had charge over him," and that "he should not dash his foot against a stone;" yet was nevertheless careful of his own preservation. Paul was sure of the crown of righteousness; and yet as diligent in beating down his body, and strained as hard in running his race, as any of those who lay the stress of salvation upon their works.

Object. Such a notion of election lays the honor and necessity of that great ordinance of preaching the gospel in the dust: for if the elect (so called) shall as certainly be saved by a weak, simple, or corrupt ministry, and this, it may be, enjoyed but a day or two in all a man's life, or loosely attended upon, wherein is the ministry of the gospel to be esteemed?

Ans. That peremptory decree, that "summer and

rightfully entitled thereto, and successively brought into it,) they were put into Christ by election: he was the chief and eminent elect one; the first-born, and prince of the family: and all the elect besides were given to him, as younger brethren, to be maintained upon his inheritance. It is plain to him that reads, that the whole of salvation was laid upon Christ; that he bears up the pillars of it, and that all shoulders else had been too weak: he is both the means and centre, by whom, and in whom, God will have all things gathered together in one. He was made "God with us," that we might be made one in God; as appears by the scope of his prayer in the 17th of John. In him the father is well pleased; and out of him there is nothing pleasing to God, or eternally good for men: we are therefore said to be chosen in him, Ephes. 1: 4. to be called in him, Phil. 3: 14. to be created in him, Ephes. 2: 10. to be preserved in him, Jude 2. and in him to be blessed with all spiritual blessings, Ephes. 1: 4. Blessings in themselves would not be so to us, if not in Christ; and being in him, all things are turned into blessings to us: for now nothing can come at us, but as coming through him: and whatever so comes, is tinctured by his divine excellence, and made propitious to us: and hereby it is, that the thing we were chosen unto, is effectually and infallibly provided for. There are divers good reasons and ends for God's choosing the elect in Christ. As,

Arg. 1. That by bringing in man's restoration this way, he might, as it were, baffle his great adversary, and outshoot him in his own bow: and it well became the wisdom and grace of God thus to do. The devil thought, by poisoning the root, to vitiate and ruin the whole stock and progeny; and he failed not of his design. The Lord would therefore retrieve that ruin, by putting his elect into an head incapable of degeneracy; and not only recover them, but bring them into a better estate than they had lost: he would set up a man that should be too hard for the devil, and be able both to destroy him, and dissolve his works; and he hath accordingly done it. In which method of man's recovery, is a great answerableness to the method of his ruin: and it is a thing the Lord would have us to mind, as appears by the parallel before mentioned, Rom. 3: 12—21.

be in his own power to reverse it; and yet, keeping to himself the knowledge of that settlement, propose the enjoyment thereof conditional, namely, upon terms of obedience to his father's command: the tendency of all which is but to prove himself the son of such a father, and to prepare him for his place: and, the more to oblige his son to a studious preparing himself for it, to lay before him the evil and danger of a negligent course; by which, if persisted in, he might render himself incapable. But, surely, supposing this father to have the same power over his son, as God hath over the heart and spirit of his people; he will so order him by instruction, discipline, and good principles, that he shall not run into a forfeiture. Besides, threatenings of damnation are not properly applicable to believers, who know themselves so to be: for "he that believeth, is passed from death to life, and shall not come into condemnation, John 5: 24. however, at times, for want of a thorough knowing their state, unthankfulness for it, or some other miscarriage, they bring themselves under doubts of it: but for such as have complete assurance under God's hand and seal (as the objection speaks,) they are "sealed up to the day of redemption," Eph. 4: 30. Rom. 8: 15. with a seal that never shall be loosed.

Object. In case any person were so adjudged to eternal life from eternity, that there is no possibility of miscarriage, then there was no necessity of Christ's dying for him. *Ans.* The asserters of absolute election do hold, with the scriptures, that election is "in and through Christ:" the same decree that ordained to salvation, ordained also the mediation of Christ in order thereto: that God might be "just in justifying, he hath appointed us to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. 5: 9. Ye might, with as much shew of reason, infer, that if such an end be appointed to be wrought by such a means, then that means is unnecessary to that end: that if God had chosen men to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, then holiness and faith are needless things. These are absurd reasonings, which the truth neither owns nor needs.

Object. We judge such an election to be an open enemy to godliness: for who will strain and toil himself for that which he knows he shall obtain by an easy pace?

Ans. The doctrine of conditional election can be no

Arg. II. That by shewing us his righteousness in the way and manner of our recovery, we might the more readily subscribe to his righteousness in the imputation of Adam's sin: for, without a sight and knowledge of the one, we cannot, with any heartiness, submit to the other. Hence, some, in their too bold arguings against election, have alleged, that what Adam did was without their consent: but will they abide by this allegation? In the matter of Achan, each single person stood in the place of the whole nation; and so on the trespass of one, wrath came upon all; yet had not that confident people the hardiness to plead, that Achan's act concerned not them; they did not consent to it: but let them take heed, lest while they thus excuse themselves from Adam's sin, they do not, by parity of reason, exclude themselves from the righteousness of Christ: since the setting up the second Adam was as much without their consent as the first.

Arg. III. If the elect had not been in Christ, the satisfaction he undertook for sinners could not have availed them. As Adam's sin could not have been ours, if not in him; so neither the righteousness of Christ, if not in him. Divine justice could not have punished him for us, nor absolved us through him; we could not have been justified and reconciled by the blood of his cross, had not he sustained our persons, and stood in our stead; another's act cannot be mine, either in profit or loss, if there be not a legal oneness between us.

Arg. IV. If not in Christ, we could not have been sanctified. The lump was sanctified in the first-fruits; and so is the church in Christ, 1 Cor. 1: 2. The wild olive-nature could not be suppressed and changed, but by grafting into the true: "For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches," Rom. 11: 16. A man cannot be naturally born, but from Adam, as his natural head; and as impossible it is to be born again, without a like relative union to Christ, as our spiritual head. There is no being a new creature, but by being in Christ: "They that are joined unto the Lord (and they only,) are one spirit with him," 1 Cor. 6: 17. 2 Cor. 5: 17. The branch must be in the vine, before its sap can be derived into it: he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, must be one. There must be a contact (a

it: for he that determined the safety of their lives, determined also, that it should be effected by their abiding in the ship; and that this caution, or threatening of danger, in case they went out, should be a means to prevail with them for that abiding; and so it did. In like manner, that saying of the apostle, that "if they lived after the flesh, they should die, Rom. 8: 13. was very consistent with what he had said before, namely, "that sin should not have dominion over them," Rom: 16: 14. and that "nothing should separate them from the love of God," chap. 8: 39. For as the Lord deals with reasonable creatures, so he makes use of rational arguments, motives, and cautions to work upon them: both end and means, and inducements to the use of those means, were all determined together.

Object. We judge it a very senseless part in a father, to give his child complete assurance, under hand and seal, that he will make him his heir, against all possible inter-veniences; and yet presently threaten him, if he be not dutiful, to disinherit him.

Answer. Undutiful children may dare to judge thus of their father's actions; and children, that otherwise are dutiful and good, yet, while children, may have childish con-ceptions of what their elders do: but men grown up, and acquainted with their father's prudence and goodness, will lay their hands upon their mouths. The promise and purpose of God, to give Canaan to Abraham's seed, was so absolute, that, by the objector's own confession, all their unworthiness could not deprive them of it: it is also evident by their demeanor, and the event at last: yet how often does the Lord threaten to disinherit them? and to blot out their name from under heaven," Exod. 32: 10. Numb. 14: 12. Deut. 9: 14. Did Moses now go and "charge God foolishly?" did he tell him, It is a senseless part thus to threaten, after so absolute an engagement to the contrary? No; he puts the Lord in mind of his promise to their fathers; of his mercy in pardoning them afore-time; what reflection it would have on his honor among the Egyptians, if he should now destroy them, &c. Not a word of complaint, that first to promise, and then to threaten, is a senseless thing: it had been senseless in Moses thus to do, and in no wise consistent with his duty. But more directly; it were no senseless part in a father, to purchase an office for his son, and so to settle it on him, that it shall not

touching of him,) before this virtue can come from him: for the promises being all made to Christ, Gal. 3: 16. cannot descend to us, but as being in him; it is that makes us heirs of promise: the Holy Ghost, in whom all promises are virtually contained, "is shed upon us through Jesus Christ," Tit. 3: 10.

Arg. V. Lastly, By this choosing in Christ, salvation itself is invincibly secured; and could not otherwise be. The first Adam had but a conditional life; it depended on his own personal obedience, and therefore subject to losing: and had he kept it, he could have derived to us but the same that himself had; which still must have been a mutable state (for this Adam, while a public person, and as such could not be said to be in Christ; if he had, he should not have fallen:) but the second Adam hath life in himself: "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself," John 5: 26. and that absolutely: he is the "prince of life," Acts 3: 15. and implantation into him inspires his branches with his own life. And "the law of that spirit of life in him, makes free from the law of sin and death," Rom. 8: 2. "He that thus hath the Son, hath life," 1 John 5: 12. "and shall have it more abundantly," John 10: 10. "Because he lives, they shall live also," chap. 14: 19. It is a bottom that cannot miscarry; as they are sanctified in Christ Jesus, so in him they are preserved, Jude 1. To this end, "it pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell," Col. 1: 19. and to put those he would save into him as their head; that being incessantly influenced from an immortal root, they might effectually be kept from withering and falling off; and grow up to that state and glory they were designed for by election. This is the grand record, and ground of our safety, "that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," 1 John 5: 11.

Having gone these steps towards the compass and extent of election, it concerns us to know where this broad river hath its head; what rock it is that this immense fabric is built upon; lest we give the honor of it to another; or endanger ourselves by settling on a wrong foundation: to shew which is the scope of the last particular under this general head: namely,

holy things, we might become more holy, and so, more capable of communion with God here, and prepared for our heavenly inheritance. 6. Good works are a part of election, and the elect are as absolutely ordained to them, as to salvation itself, John 15: 16.

Objections I did not intend to meddle with: but considering that that which follows of this kind (though done for another occasion) may help to discover the lightness of what is alleged against our doctrine of election, I have therefore inserted it here; and hope it shall prove to its further confirmation.

Object. There is no election, nor decree of election, of particular persons as such: but of the entire species of men from eternity.

Answer. Election is the choosing of some from among others, and it always supposeth a greater number out of which the choice is made; and, consequently, the taking (or choosing) of all is quite besides the notion of election: the scripture says, they are chosen out of the world, John 15: 19. then the world is not chosen: that is, the entire species of men is not the object of election.

Object. God hath not decreed from eternity to elect any person of mankind upon any terms, but that in case he liveth to years of discretion he may possibly perish.

Answer. This is excepted against: 1. Because the person of Christ himself is not exempted. 2. Because as possibly the death of Christ might be in vain. 3. It makes the decree and election two things, and divers in respect of time. That election was from eternity, is proved before, Eph. 1: 4. and that the elect shall not perish, is absolutely promised, John 16: 28.

Object. Threatenings of damnation are absolutely inconsistent with a peremptory decree to confer salvation.

Answer. No more than the threatening of death upon Adam was inconsistent with God's purpose to send him a Saviour, Gen. 2: 17. with chap. 3: 15. That caution also, that "except the mariners staid in the ship, they could not be saved," as well consistent with that peremptory promise, "that there should be no loss of any man's life," Acts 27: 22. 31. The promise of safety was absolute, but their actual obtainment of it was conditional. Yet so, as that the performance of the condition on their part, was as certain by the decree, as safety upon their performance of

ELECTION

VI. That election is founded upon grace; or, the good pleasure of God's will is the only original cause and motive of election.

Election is a "promotion that cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, or south," but from God; who, as he puts down one, and sets up another: so some he chooseth, and others he passeth by, as seemeth him good; and none can say to him, What doest thou? or, Why hast thou made me thus? for election, as it always supposeth a greater number out of which the choice is made, so an arbitrary power in him that chooseth, to choose whom he will, without giving account to any for what he doeth. But the ground or motive of divine election is very different from the manner of men; for they commonly pitch upon things for some natural aptness of them for their works: they will not take a knotty, cross-grained, or wind-shaken piece of timber, to make a pillar of state: but the Lord pitches upon such (and such to choose,) the poor, base, weak, foolish things of the world; the worst of men, and chief of sinners: the instances of Paul, Manassah, Mary Magdalen, and others, make it evident: and of these he is pleased to make lively images of his son, and pillars for the house of God (columns of state indeed!) whereon to write his own name; to manifest thereby his sovereignty, holiness, wisdom, power, righteousness, and free grace to eternity.

The Lord's way and method in bringing his sons to glory, is the best demonstration of the right order of causes; for though there be a concurrence of many things, as causes and effects, one of another, yet, if observed in their order, they will still lead us up to the good pleasure of God, as first and supreme, and perfectly independent. And this I term the only original cause of election, to shut out all works and worthiness of men from being any way causal, influential, or motive thereto; and so from sharing in the glory of God's grace, which he is very jealous of, and will not impart to any. The New Testament current runs evidently this way, making the whole of salvation, both means and end, to depend expressly on the divine will. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke

2. How shall this kind of election be reconciled with Acts 10: 34. "That God is no respecter of persons?"

Ans. 1. This shows the inconvenience of minding the literal sense of the words above the scope: the former exception takes in all; and now this excludes all: for, if literally taken, God should have respect to none. 2. The Jews were an elect nation; and so, this objection will lie against their election as much as this we are upon. 3. The scope of the place plainly intends, that God respects no man's person, either less or more, for his outward condition, or carnal privileges. Till then the partition was up, and the Lord seemed only to regard the Jewish nation, suffering all besides to walk in their own ways, Acts 14: 16. But now had God to the Gentiles also granted repentance unto life, Acts 11: 18. You will say, perhaps, they were fearers of God whom he thus accepted. True; but that was not it which first induced his acceptance, or entitled them to it; although it was their inlet into it, and evidence for it. If men fear not God till he hath put his fear within them: then their fearing of him doth not precede his respect towards them: but follows upon it, and this is the favor which he bears to his chosen, Psal. 106: 4. But,

3. If men be ordained to salvation absolutely, what need or use is there of good works?

Good works have divers good uses and ends, and good reasons there are for God's ordaining them to be walked in: without supposing our walking in them to be the ground, condition, or motive of our election: as, 1. To testify our love to God; of which we have no such evidence, as the keeping of his commandments, 2 John 5: 3. 2. To show forth his virtues, whose offspring we profess ourselves to be, Matth. 5: 45. That ye may be (i. e. ye may appear and approve yourselves to be) "the children of your Father which is in heaven." 3. To convince those without, that they, by our good conversation, may be won over, and learn to do well; or else be compelled to glorify God in the day of visitation. 4. For encouragement and example to weaker Christians; who are yet children in the good ways of God, and are more aptly led by example than precept. 5. That by having our senses exercised about

12: 32. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise, and revealed them to babes; for so it seemed good in thy sight," chap. 10: 21. "A remnant according to the election of grace," Rom. 11: 5. "Predestinate to the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will," Eph. 1: 5. "Redemption also, and forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," Eph. 1: 7. (the same grace that elected:) the making known the mystery of his will: this also is according to that [his good pleasure] "which he hath purposed in himself," ver. 9. Yea, all the operations of God, whether for us, upon us, or by us, they all have their rise from the same spring, and are carried by the same rule: "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," ver. 11. And for the Old Testament, you have it sufficiently exemplified there in the instances before given, and especially touching the ground of God's love to the people of Israel (who, in that respect, were the archetype of the spiritual election;) namely, that "his own good pleasure" was the only cause of his choosing them above other nations: "He loved them, because he loved them," Deut. 7: 8. and 9: 4. and 10: 15. And, which is yet more, the election of Christ himself was of grace: "It pleased the father, that in him (the man Jesus) should all fulness dwell," Col. 1: 19.

And good reasons there are, why election should be founded on grace; and why it could not, with respect either to God's glory, or the elect's security, be founded otherwise. And

Arg. I. Is from the sovereignty of God; whose will being the supreme law, admits not a co-ordinacy, much less will it stand with sovereign power to be regulated by the will of another. That would be a contradiction to sovereignty; for that which regulates, must be superior to that which is regulated by it. Sovereign princes, to shew their prerogative, affirm their acts of grace to be of their own mere motion: and their grants are reputed the more authentic, being so expressed. The like we find in scripture frequently ascribed to God; that "he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy," Rom. 9: 18. that "he worketh all things," (not by motives from without, but) "after the counsel of his own will," Eph. 1: 11. that "it is not of man's willing or running; but of God, who sheweth

strictions, which must be gathered from the scope and context: as, where the gospel is said to be preached to every creature under heaven, Col. 1: 23. and yet men only are intended, and not all of them neither: for the gospel had reached but a small part of the world at that time, and not the whole of it yet. So, Moses is said to have in every city them that preach him, Acts 15: 21. it must be understood only of cities where the Jews dwelt, and had synagogues; which were but few in comparison. Those also that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word, Acts 8: 4. i. e. they avoided no place nor person, but preached wherever they came. At first it was confined to the Jews, but now without limit. "Every man shall have praise of God," 1 Cor. 4: 5. it can be meant only of good and faithful servants; which are but a remnant to the whole piece. So, God is said to be the Father of all, Eph. 4: 6. and yet Satan, we know, is the father of the far greater part of the world. And Christ is said to reconcile all things, Col. 1: 20. and yet all the angels must be exempted: the good angels, because they never were at enmity; and the evil ones, because not reconcilable, Eph. 1: 10. "That he might gather together in one, all things in Christ:" This all things seems plainly to intend the elect; for they are the subject discoursed of in the whole chapter: and in Matthew, those gathered together are styled the elect, chap. 24: 31. In Heb. 12: 8. all are said to be partakers of chastisements; and yet sons only can be intended: for bastards are not partakers of it, as it follows there. "They shall be all taught of God," John 6: 45. It respects only the sons of the church, (i. e. such as are elected,) whose iniquities are forgiven them, and their sins remembered no more, Jer. 31: 34. It is the tenor of the new covenant, which is made with the house of Israel, that is, Jews in spirit, or the elect nation, Heb. 8: 10, 11. And if these terms universal, *all* and *every*, are sometimes applied to the elect, exclusive of others, why not as well in the place whence the query is taken? I have instanced these, to show what contradictory notions would follow should the vocal sound of words be adhered to: what a sandy foundation universal election is built upon: and how likely we are to lose the truth, while we listen to an uncertain sound; the meaning whereof may yet be had from the context, and general current of scripture.

mercy," Rom. 9: 16. and, indeed, his own mere motion was both a nobler and firmer consideration than any desert on the creature's part. When the world had been drowned for their obdurate impenitency, the few that remained were as bad as before; and those that should come after, the law foresaw would be the same. One would think, now, the natural result of this experiment should be, "I will utterly cut them off, and be troubled with them no more;" but the Lord's thoughts are not as our thoughts; he argues and concludes in another mode: "I will not again any more curse the ground for man's sake." And he is pleased to give the same reason here why he will not, as before why he would; as is seen by comparing Gen. 6: 5. and 7. with chap. 8: 21. See also the instance of God's dealing with Ephraim; he was wroth with him, and smote him; and Ephraim, so far from relenting, that "he went on forwardly," (that is, stubbornly, as resolved in his course;) "I hid me (says the Lord,) and was wroth," Isa. 57: 16. this, one would think, if Ephraim had had in him but a spark of ingenuity, or love to himself, should have moved him to alter his course: but what cares Ephraim? he still kept the same way; and it was the way of his heart: not an inconsiderate pet, or sudden temptation, but natural and fixed: all which the Lord sees and considers; and having laid all together, resolves to heal him, and "restore comforts to him," Isa. 57: 18. On the other hand, those good souls "who feared the Lord, and obeyed the voice of his servants, they yet walked in darkness, and had no light," Isa. 50: 10. Ye may be sure, they would gladly have understood their condition, namely, that they were such as "feared the Lord;" their will could not be wanting to a thing so greatly importing their comfort; nor were they idle in seeking for it; they walked, though in the dark, but could not walk themselves out of it; they are still as they were; they had no light. By these different examples it is evident that the sovereignty of God still keeps the throne, and his dispensations of mercy, whether in purpose or in act, are not governed by the wills of men: they are things too low to be counsellors to God. And if it be thus in things of a lower concernment, much more in that great business of eternal election, which is the sublimest act of sovereign power: for non-election is not a punish-

election; yet the doctrine of special election will not stand without that, and against it: for, there is nothing more plain, than that there is an election of men to salvation; as also, that the genuine import of election, is, to choose one or more out of many: which necessarily implies the leaving or not choosing of some; and consequently the not willing of salvation to all universally. 3. The will of God cannot be resisted; because with his willing the end, he wills also the means; and those such as shall compass his end; Isa. 46: 10. "My counsel shall stand, I will do all my pleasure;" i. e. What I please to will, that I will have done. 4. The apostle is not here discoursing the extent of God's special love; whether all men universally are interested in it: but exhorting believers to a general duty; namely, to give thanks for kings and all in authority; because of the benefits we have by government: and to pray for them; not only for their peaceable governing of us; but if otherwise, that God would turn their hearts and make them nursing fathers to his church. And to enforce the duty, tells us, there is no degree nor state of men exempted from salvation; God hath chosen some of every sort; and therefore we ought not to shut any out of our prayers. 5. The word [all] is often used, when but a part and sometimes the lesser part, of the thing spoken of, is intended by it: as on the contrary, when the universality of the subject is intended, it is expressed by singulars; as, he that believeth shall be saved; and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. It sometimes signifies all of such a sort; so Eve was said to be the mother of all living; not of all living creatures, but all of her own kind. It other times intends some of all sorts: as where it is said, all the cattle of Egypt died, Exod. 9: 6. "and the hail smote every tree and every herb," ver. 23. And yet other cattle are mentioned after, and a residue of trees are said to be escaped, ver. 19. 25. and 10: 5. So here, God will have all men to be saved; that is, some of every sort and degree; Gentiles as well as Jews; kings and men in authority, as well as those of a meaner rank; as is evident by comparing the 1, 2, and 4 ver. together. The same in Joel; "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh," &c. Joel 2: 29. that is, upon some of every age, sex, and degree, without distinction; young, old, masters, servants, sons, daughters, &c. as it follows there. 6. To these universal terms do belong divers re-

ment, but the withholding of a free favor, which God, as a sovereign lord, may justly deny to one sinner, while he gives it to another. And yet this hinders not, but that every man, at last, shall be judged according to his works.

Arg. II. Election must be founded only upon grace, because grace and works are inconsistent in the cause of salvation. The scripture is very cautious of admitting any thing as a concomitant with grace in this matter; yea, although it be a thing that doth always accompany grace, and that without which a man cannot be saved. The apostle puts them in opposition, and is very intent upon the argument, as a thing of great moment, in Romans 11: where, first, he shews, that amidst the general defection of the Jewish nation, there still was a remnant whom God had reserved: these he terms "the foreknown," ver. 2. and in the 7th verse he calls them plainly, "the election;" and then, lest any should ascribe it to a false cause, as in that parallel case he resembles it to, namely, that "they had not bowed the knee to Baal," but stuck to the true religion, when others fell off; he tells us, No; their election was founded upon grace: and as for works, they had no place in the causing of it. By grace, he means the free favor of God, who is not moved by any thing without himself; but what he does he does freely, without respect to men's desert: nay, their undesert rather, is an expedient consideration in this act of grace. By works, I understand all that self-righteousness, goodness, conformity to the law, or whatever else is performable by men. These (namely, grace and works) he proves as inconsistent as contraries can be; and that the least mixture would vary the kind: if but a scruple of works be taken in, grace is no more grace; for, "to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt," Rom. 4: 4. Grace and faith are well agreed; these both have the same scope and end: but grace and works have always clashed: the setting up of the one, is the deposing of the other: either the ark must be out, or dagon down; one temple cannot hold them both. To the same effect is the drift of that discourse in Gal. 5. It appears from Acts 15: 1. that some there were who taught a necessity of circumcision; as without which they could not be saved: seemingly willing they were to admit of Christ, so they might join circumcision with him, and keep-

Such sapless, irregular, and injudicious notions, are very unworthy that celebrated and ever adorable act of predestination: and if duly weighed, would set us farther off from the doctrine of self-advancement, which stands in point-blank opposition to the doctrine of God's grace.

Arg. V. It could not stand with the wisdom and goodness of God, to found the salvation of his people on a fallible bottom; which it would certainly be, if dependant on any thing besides his own immutable will. For whatever it was that election had being from, by that also it must be maintained: what, then, would become of it, if built on that goodness which is as the morning cloud and the early dew? Hos. 6: 4. The creature's will, even in a state of perfection, was too slight and fickle a thing to build this eternal weight upon: and if a man at his best estate was vanity, how much more afterwards, when so strong a bent of vanity came upon his will!

Arg. VI. To derive election from any root besides the good pleasure of God, is to frustrate the principal end of man's salvation, namely, "The glory of God's grace," Eph. 1: 6. and 2: 7. This attribute, of all the rest, he will not have eclipsed, nor entrenched upon: it is so divinely sacred, as not to admit the least human touch; for which very cause, the Lord hath so contrived that blessed design and plot of his glory, that all "boasting is excluded; and no flesh shall glory in his presence," 1 Cor. 1: 29. But if any thing in the creature be entitled to the causality of election, flesh will glory; and instead of excluding man's boasting, grace itself will be excluded, Rom. 11: 6. which is far from a glorifying of it. I would here resolve a query or two, which some have urged from scripture: as,

1. How can this doctrine stand with the [general] love and good will of God towards men; who, it is said, will have all to be saved? 1 Tim. 2: 4. 2 Pet. 3: 9.

Ans. 1. If the word [all] be taken universally, it takes in unbelievers as well as others; (which cannot be the meaning:) therefore, the literal sense of words is not to be rested on, when the like phrase of speech elsewhere used, or evident scope of the same or other scripture, agrees not to it: the design and current of the whole must guide the construction of particular parts. 2. Though the doctrine of general love will not stand with that of special

ing the law of Moses: but this dangerous daubing with things unmixable, our holy apostle could not brook; both as reflecting on the honor of his master, and undermining their only foundation; and therefore to keep them from, or bring them off that perilous quicksand, he tells them expressly, these two cannot stand together in that matter; for if they be "circumcised, they are debtors to the whole law, and Christ is become of none effect to them," because "they are fallen from grace." It is as if he had said, If you take in any part, though never so little, of legal observances, as necessary to your being justified, ye forfeit the whole benefit of gospel grace: the grace of Christ is sufficient for you; he is a Saviour complete in himself; and if you look, though but a glance, at any thing else, it is a renouncing of him: he will be a Saviour altogether, or not at all; and therefore he tells them again, and that with a kind of vehemency, that "if they be circumcised, Christ shall profit them nothing," Gal. 5: 2.

And as a man may not put in his claim for justification on account of his works, so neither of his faith, as if that were materially, or meritoriously, causal of justification: for faith itself, as it is the believer's act, comes under the notion of a work. Let us therefore consider what part it is that faith holds in this matter; lest, while we cast our works, as not standing with grace, we make a work of faith. It is faith's office to make the soul live wholly on the power and grace of another; which is to renounce self-ability, as much as self-desert: to apprehend that righteousness by which grace justifies: not only to be justified thereby upon our believing, but to work in us even that faith by which we apprehend it, Rom. 5: 2. He that will be saved, must come, not only as an ungodly person, but as a man without strength, chap. 5: 6. and as such, in himself, he must come to be justified freely by the grace of God, chap. 3: 24. For in him, only, can he have strength to believe, even as righteousness upon his believing, Isa. 45: 24. he must reckon himself an ungodly man, to the very instant of his justification. "The just indeed shall live by faith;" but it is not his own faith, or act of believing, that he lives by, though not without it; which also seems to be the apostle's meaning, where he says, "The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the son of God:

believer: for faith is the work and gift of God; and, according to the course of all judicious agents, he that will work, must first pitch on the subject he will work upon; and he that gives, on the person he will give unto. Besides, Abel could do nothing before he believed, that might move God to give him faith; for, till then he was in the flesh, and they that are in the flesh cannot please God," Rom. 8: 8. Heb. 11: 6. therefore it could not be Abel's foreseen faith that was the cause of God's respecting him. The scripture speaks often of iron-sinewed necks, and brazen brows; and of men's being in their blood, when the Lord said, they should live: as also that God loved Jacob before he had done any good thing; and that the saints love God because he loved them first: but no where of foreseen faith and holiness, as the cause and ground of God's love to men.

4. Faith and holiness are middle things: they are neither the foundation nor top-stone of election. They are to sovereign grace, as stalks and branches are to a root: by which the root conveys its virtues into its principal fruit. Eph. 2: 8. "By grace are ye saved, through faith." 2 Thess. 2: 13. "Chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." They are no more the cause of election, than the means of an end are the first cause of purposing that end: nay, no more than Tatnai's propensity (or aversion rather) to build the temple, and to provide sacrifices for the God of heaven, was the cause of Darius's decree, that those things should be done, and that by him. Ezra 5 and 6. chapters. 5. If men be predestinated to faith and holiness, (as they are,) Rom. 8: 29: 30. 1 Pet. 1: 2. then they were not seen to be so qualified before that predestination: or if they were, then their election, as to that particular, would seem impertinent. There can no rational account be given, why men foreseen to be such, should be so solemnly predestinated thereto. Besides, if salvation be the inseparable product of faith and holiness, according to John 5: 24. "He that believeth hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation," 1 Pet. 1: 9. "Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls;" then to ordain to salvation those foreseen to be so qualified, would seem a thing both needless and insignificant: it would look like the sending of men where they would have gone of themselves.

and I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," Gal. 2: 20. Where note, that as faith is the life of a believer, so Christ is the life of his faith; and he lives on Christ, by virtue of Christ's living in him.

Notwithstanding all which, it is evidently true, and must constantly be affirmed, that grace and works will still be together in the way of salvation (the one doth not exclude the other;) only not as colleagues or joint causers thereof; but rather as a workman and his tools, which himself first makes, and then works with them. "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Eph. 2: 18. Even this believing or acting faculty is a creature of grace's raising up; and therefore, in the throne it is meet that grace should be above it. Works, therefore, how good soever, are not the cause of salvation: and if so, not the cause of election; for this, indeed, is the cause of them both: and works, if right and truly good, will always be ready to own their original, and to keep in their own place; where also they will be most considerable, and do the best service.

Arg. III. That election has no other foundation but the good pleasure of God's will, is further argued, from man's incapacity to afford any ground or motive to God for such a gift. Adam stood not so long as to beget a son in his own image: it is seen by his first born Cain, what all his natural seed would naturally be. And though some do presume to magnify man, and to speak of him at another rate; yet evident it is by scripture light, and the experience of those renewed, that man fallen is poor, blind, naked, and at enmity with all that is truly good; and that he is never more distant from God and his own happiness, than while in high thoughts of himself, glorying in his own understanding, strength, worthiness, freedom of will, improvement of common grace, and the like; for these make him proud and presumptuous, and to have slight thoughts of that special and peculiar grace, by which he must, if ever, be renewed and saved. But the Lord himself, who best knows him, reports the matter quite otherwise, and we know that his witness is true; namely, that "all the imaginations of their hearts are only evil continually," Gen. 6: 5. that "their inward part is very wickedness," Psal. 5: 9. that "every man is brutish in his knowledge; altoge-

their brutish and foolish; yea, even their pastors," Jer. 10: 8. 14. 21. that is, the very best and most intelligent among them: that "their hearts are full of madness," Eccl. 9: 3. "wise to do evil, but to do good have no understanding," &c. Jer. 4: 22. And it was not thus only with the Gentile nations, who were left to walk in their own way; but even with the Jews who had all the means of becoming better that could be devised, Isa. 5: 4. excepting that of electing grace, which took in but a remnant: "they were called Jews, rested in the law, made their boast of God, knew his will, approved the things that were excellent; were confident that they were a guide of the blind, and a light to them that were in darkness, instructors of the foolish, teachers of babes," Rom. 2: 7. 21. And yet all this while, and in the midst of all these high attainments, did not teach themselves: and where they are ranked together, he proves them to be "all under sin, none righteous, none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God, none that doeth good, no, not one, chap. 3: 10—18. Yea, this depravity of nature was so deep and indelibly fixed, that the Lord himself tells them, "The Ethiopian might as soon change his skin, as they learn to do well," Jer. 13: 23. All which, with abundantly more, bespeaks a condition extremely remote from yielding a cause or motive for this blessed election.

Arg. IV. If God's love to men had its rise from their love to him, it would not have that singular eminency in it, that is justly ascribed to it: "God so loved the world," John 3. 16. So as not to be expressed; so, as not to be paralleled; so, as not to be understood, until we come to that state wherein we shall know as we are known; nor then neither fully, because it is infinite. By this it is that God's love to man is so highly celebrated; "Herein is love; not that we love God, but that God loved us," 1 John 4: 10. And, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" chap. 3: 1. which surely then is not after the manner of men; for even publicans do so, Matth. 5: 46. and "sinners love those that love them," Luke 6: 32. but to love enemies, and while enemies (as to love a wife that is an adulteress; and so to love her, as to win her heart back again;) this is God's love to his chosen.

But, notwithstanding these scriptures, with many others,

seem purposely written to obviate such conceptions as would feign our loving of God to be the ground and motive of his love to us; yet, great endeavors there are to father election upon foreseen faith and works, which that they call the covenant of grace, has, they say, qualified and capacitated all men for; and which certain more pliant, ingenuous, and industrious persons (as they speak) would attain unto, by the helps they have in common with other men: but this pedigree of election is excepted against, as being not rightly induced: for, 1. Men having (in Adam) divested themselves of all that was holy and good, the Lord could not foresee in them any thing of worth or desirableness, but what he himself should work in them anew, and that of pure grace and favor; for sin and deformity could not be motives of love. And that the elect, of themselves, were in no wise better than other men, is evident by the scriptures late quoted; where the Holy Ghost asserting the universal depravity of human nature, exempts not one. But if such excellent and distinguishing qualifications as faith and holiness had been foreseen, and so imputable to them, the spirit of truth would not have ranked them even with the children of wrath, Eph. 2: 3. as he doth. But, 2. If they were otherwise, what could they add unto God? or whereby could they oblige him? "He respecteth not any that are wise in heart," Job 37: 24. "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him?" chap. 35: 7. and, "who hath pronounced me, (says the Lord,) that I should repay him?" chap. 41: 11. that is, who is he that is beforehand with God, in doing aught that might induce his favor? "He regardeth not persons, nor taketh rewards," Deut. 10: 17. he is not propitious to any for what they can do for him, or bring to him. Take Paul for an instance: he walked up to the light he had; was blameless; lived in all good conscience; knew no evil by himself,—a rare degree of legal righteousness!—but that it was not this moved God to make him a chosen vessel, he thankfully acknowledgeth, with self-abasement, upon every occasion, Tit. 3: 5. 1 Tim. 1: 14. 2 Tim. 1: 9.

3. Faith follows election: God respects the person before his offering. But was not Abel respected as a believer, and his offering for his faith? yea, but that faith of his was not the primary cause of God's respecting him. If Abel's person had not been respected first, Abel had never been a