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John Gill's

A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY

Book 2—Chapter 2

**OF THE SPECIAL DECREES OF GOD,
RELATING TO RATIONAL
CREATURES, ANGELS, AND MEN;
AND PARTICULARLY OF ELECTION.**

The special decrees of God respecting rational creatures, commonly go under the name of "predestination"; though this sometimes is taken in a large sense, to express everything that God has predetermined; and so it takes in all that has been observed in the preceding chapter; which some call eternal providence, of which, temporary providence is the execution; for with God there is not only a provision of things future, but a provision for the certain bringing them to pass; and the counsel and will of God is the source and spring of all things, and the rule and measure according to which he works, (Eph. 1:11) but predestination is usually considered as consisting of two parts, and including the two branches of election and reprobation, both with respect to angels and men; for each of these have place in both. Angels; some of them are called "elect" angels, (1 Tim. 5:21) others are said to be "reserved in chains", in the chains of God's purposes and providence, "unto the judgment" of the great day (2 Peter 2:4). Men; some of them are vessels of mercy, afore prepared for glory; others vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction; some are the election, or the elect persons, that obtain righteousness, life, and salvation; and others are the rest that are left in, and given up to blindness (Rom. 9:22, 23, 11:7). Though sometimes predestination only respects that branch of it called election, and the predestinated signify only the elect; for who else are called, justified, and glorified, enjoy adoption and the heavenly inheritance? not, surely, the non-elect (Rom. 8:29, 30; Eph.

1:5,11). This branch of predestination, election, must be considered first; I shall begin with,

1. The election of angels; of this the scriptures speak but sparingly, and therefore the less need to be said concerning it: that there are some angels that are elect is certain, from the proof already given: there is a similarity between their election and the election of men; though in some things there appears a little difference.

1a. The election of angels, as well as of men, is of God; he is the efficient cause of it; it is God that has chosen them, and distinguished them from others, and therefore they are called the "angels of God", (Luke 12:8, 9) not merely because they are his creatures, so are the evil angels; but because they are his chosen, his favourites, and appointed to be happy with him to all eternity.

1b. Their election, as that of men, lies in a distinction and separation from the rest of their species; they are not only distinguished from them by their characters, the one being holy angels, the others the angels that sinned; but by their state and condition, the one being preserved from apostasy, and continued in their first estate; the other left to fall into sin, and from their former state, and reserved unto judgment.

1c. In their election they were considered as on an equal footing with others not elected, as men are; as men are considered, when chosen, as in the pure mass, having done neither good nor evil, so were angels; this must be out of all question, with respect to them, since the elect angels never fell, never were in any corrupt state, and could not be so considered: besides, their preservation from apostasy, and their confirmation, by grace, in the state in which they were created, are in consequence of their election; and therefore must be previous to the fall of the rest, who, with thine, must be considered in the pure mass of creatureship; wherefore the choice of the one, and the leaving of the other, must be entirely owing to the sovereign will of God.

1d. Their election, though it is not said to be made in Christ, as the election of men; nor could it be made in him, considered as Mediator; since they having never sinned against God, and offended him, they needed him not to mediate between God and them, and to make peace and reconciliation; yet they might be chosen in him, as they seem to be, as an Head of conservation; as an Head both of eminence to rule over them, protect and preserve them in their state; and of influence, to communicate grace and strength to them; to confirm them in their state in which they are; for Christ is "the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:10).

1e. Though the angels are not chosen to salvation as men are, as that signifies a deliverance from sin and misery: seeing they never sinned, and so were never in a miserable condition, and needed no Saviour and Redeemer; yet they are chosen to happiness, to communion with God now, whose face they ever behold; and to a confirmed state of holiness and impeccability, and to the enjoyment of God, and the society of elect men to all eternity. If the election of men to grace and glory, is next

to be considered; and it may be proper in the first place to take some notice of the election of Christ, as man and mediator; who is God's first and chief elect; and is, by way of eminency, called his elect; "Behold, my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth", (Isa. 42:1) and oftentimes the chosen of God (Ps. 89:3; Luke 23:35; 1 Peter 2:4). Which character not only denotes his choiceness and excellency, and the high esteem he is in with God; who, though disallowed, disesteemed, and rejected by men, is chosen of God, and precious; but either,

2a. It respects the choice of the human nature of Christ to the grace of union with him as the Son of God. God prepared a body, or an human nature for him, in his eternal purposes and decrees; in the book of which all the members thereof were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when, as yet, before there were none of them (Heb. 10:5; Ps. 139:16). Among all the individuals of human nature, which rose up in the divine mind, to be brought into being by him, this was singled out from among them, and appointed to union with the second Person in the Godhead; this was sanctified, and set apart, and sent into the world; in which Joseph was a type of it, who was separated from his brethren: and hence this human nature of Christ was anointed with the Holy Ghost above his fellows, and hail the gifts and graces of the Spirit without measure; and was raised to such honour and dignity, as none of the angels ever were, or will be (Heb. 1:13).

2b. The character of elect, as given to Christ, respects the choice of him to his office as Mediator, in which he was set up, and with which he was invested, and had the glory of it before the world began. He was first chosen and set up as an Head; and then his people were chosen, as members of him; he was chosen to be the Saviour of the body, the church; as they are appointed to salvation by him, he is appointed to be the Saviour of them; this is meant by laying help on one that is mighty; and as their salvation is through his sufferings and death, he was foreordained, before the foundation of the world, to be the slain Lamb; through whose precious blood their redemption would be obtained; he was set forth, in the eternal decree and purpose of God, to be the propitiation for sin, to make atonement and satisfaction for it, and procure the pardon of it (1 Peter 1:18-20; Rom. 3:25). Christ is appointed to be the judge of quick and dead; as well as a day is appointed in which God will judge the world in righteousness, by the man Christ Jesus, whom he has ordained for that purpose, (Acts 10:42, 17:31). But what will now be chiefly attended to, and what the scriptures speak so largely of, is the election of men in Christ unto eternal life.

Some are of opinion that this doctrine of election, admitting it to be true, should not be published, neither preached from the pulpit, nor handled in schools and academies, nor treated of in the writings of men; the reasons they give, are because it is a secret, and secret things belong to God; and because it tends to fill mens' minds with doubts about their salvation, and to bring them into distress, and even into despair; and because some may make a bad use of it, to indulge themselves in a sinful course of life, and argue, that if they are elected they shall be saved, let them live as they may; and so it opens a door to all licentiousness: but these reasons are frivolous and groundless; the doctrine of election is no secret, it is clearly and fully

revealed, and written as with a sunbeam in the sacred scriptures; it is true indeed, it cannot be said of particular persons, that such a man is elected, and such a man is reprobated; and especially when both appear to be in a state of unregeneracy; yet when men, in a judgment of charity, may be hoped to be called by grace, they may be concluded to be the elect of God, though it cannot be said with precision; and on the other hand, there may be black marks of reprobation on some men, or at least things have such a very dark aspect on them, that we are apt to say, when we hear a man cursing and swearing, and see him in all excess of wickedness with boldness and impudence, what a reprobate creature is this; though indeed no man, be he ever so vile, is out of the reach of powerful and efficacious grace; and therefore it cannot be absolutely said that he is rejected of God: and whereas there may be only the appearance of grace, and not the truth of it, in such that profess to have it; it cannot be said with certainty that such an one is an elect person, yet in charity it may be so concluded: however, a truly gracious man may know for himself his "election of God", as the apostle affirms; and that in this way, the "gospel" being "come" to him, "not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost", (1 Thess. 1:4, 5) who by means of it has begun, and will carry on and perform the work of grace in him; wherefore such persons will not be filled with doubts and fears about their salvation, nor be led into distress and despair through the doctrine of election; nor need any be distressed about it that are inquiring the way of salvation, or have any knowledge of it; for the first question to be put to a man by himself, is not, am I elected; but, am I born again? am I a new creature? am I called by the grace of God, and truly converted? If a man can arrive to satisfaction in this matter, he can have no doubt about his election; that then is a clear case and out of all question. The doctrine of regeneration, which asserts that a man must be born again, or he cannot see and enter into the kingdom of heaven, may as well be objected to, as that of election; since it is as difficult to come to satisfaction about a man's regeneration, as about his election; and when once the one is a clear case, the other must be likewise; and when it is, what thankfulness and joy does it produce! And if the apostle thought himself bound to give thanks to God for his choice of the Thessalonians to salvation; how much more reason had he to bless the God and Father of Christ for his own election, as he does (2 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:3, 4). With what exultation and triumph may a believer in Christ take up those words of the apostle, and use them with application to himself, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom. 8:33) yea our Lord Jesus Christ exhorts his disciples, rather to rejoice that their names were written in heaven, than that the spirits were subject to them, or that they were possessed of extraordinary gifts, as to cast out devils. With great truth and propriety it is expressed in the seventeenth article of the church of England, that the consideration of this doctrine is "full of sweet, pleasant" and "unspeakable comfort" to "godly" persons: and as for the charge of licentiousness, what is there but what a wicked man may abuse to encourage himself in sin? as even the patience and longsuffering of God; ungodly men may turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and every doctrine of it; and so this, contrary to its nature, use, and tendency. Strange! that this doctrine should of itself lead to licentiousness, when the thing itself, contained in it, is the source of all holiness; men are chosen according to this doctrine to be holy; they are chosen through sanctification of the Spirit, which is

secured by this decree as certainly as salvation itself; wherefore those reasons are not sufficient to intimidate and deter us from receiving this doctrine, professing and publishing it; and the rather, since it is the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, frequently suggested and declared by them; what means else when our Lord speaks of the elect of God, for whose sake the days of tribulation should be shortened; and that it was impossible the elect should be deceived; and that God will avenge his own elect? (Matthew 24:22, 24; Luke 18:7) how clearly and fully does the apostle Paul enlarge on this doctrine of election in Romans chapter nine, eleven, Ephesians chapter one, second Thessalonians chapter two, and in other places! and since it is so plentifully declared in the Bible, and is a part of scripture given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, and is written for our learning, to teach us humility, to depress the pride of man, and to magnify the sovereign grace of God in his salvation; we need not be ashamed of it, nor ought we to conceal it; and the apostle exhorts to make our "election" as well as calling "sure", (2 Peter 1:10) but how should men do this, if they are not taught the doctrine of it; led into an acquaintance with it; instructed into the truth, nature, and use of it, and the way and means whereby it is to be made sure? I proceed then,

2b1. First, To observe the phrases by which it is expressed in scripture, whereby may be learnt what is the true meaning of the words "election" and "elect", as used in scripture with respect to this doctrine. It is expressed by being ordained to eternal life (Acts 13:48). As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed; by which ordination is meant no other than the predestination, choice, and appointment of men to everlasting life and salvation by Jesus Christ; and from whence it appears that this is of particular persons, of some and not all, though many; that it is not to temporary privileges and enjoyments, but to grace and glory; and that faith is not the cause, but the sure and certain fruit and effect of it; and that both eternal life through Christ, and believing in him, are infallibly secured by this act of grace. Some, in order to evade the force and evidence of these words in favour of election, would have them rendered, "as many as were disposed for eternal life, believed"; but this is not agreeable to the use of the word throughout the book of the Acts by the divine historian, where it always signifies determination and appointment, and not disposition; and so by our translators it is rendered "determined" in Acts 15:2 and "appointed" in Acts 22:10, 28:23 and here "preordained" in the Vulgate Latin version, and by Arias Montanus; and besides, there are no good dispositions for eternal life in men before faith; whatsoever is not of faith, is sin; and men, in a state of unbelief and unregeneracy, are foolish and disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures; living in malice, hateful, and hating one another; without hope, and without God in the world; and injurious to good men, (Rom. 14:23; Titus 3:3; Eph. 2:12; 1 Tim. 1:13) and admitting there may be what may be called dispositions for eternal life; let a desire of it, and seeking for it, be accounted such; this may be where faith in Christ does not follow; as in the young man, who asked what he must do to obtain it; and yet, when instructed by Christ, was so far from receiving his instructions, and believing him, that he turned his back on him, and went away from him sorrowful, (Matthew 19:16, 22). Let an attentive hearing of the word be reckoned a good disposition for eternal life; this was found in many of Christ's

hearers, and yet they believed not the report he made, of which he complains; and it is highly probable, that many of those attentive hearers of him, were, in a few days, among those that cried, Crucify him, crucify him, (Luke 19:48, 23:18, 21; Isa. 53:1) and after all, one would think that the Jews, who were externally religious, and were expecting the Messiah; and especially the devout and honourable women, were more disposed for eternal life, than the ignorant and idolatrous Gentiles; and yet the latter rejoiced at hearing the word, glorified it, and believed; when the former did not, but persecuted the preachers of it: from whence it follows, that the faith of the believing Gentiles did not spring from previous dispositions to eternal life; but was the fruit and effect of divine ordination.

This act of God is also expressed by the "names" of persons being "written in heaven", and in the "book of life", called, "the Lamb's book of life"; because his name stands first in it, was present at the writing of it, and is concerned in that eternal life which it has respect unto, (Luke 10:20; Heb. 12:22; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 13:8). All which shows that it is an act of God in heaven, and respects the happiness of men there; is of particular persons, whose names are in a special manner known of God, and as distinct from others; and is sure and certain, and will abide. But the more common phrases used concerning it, are those of being "chosen" and "elected"; hence the objects of it are called God's elect, and the election; that is, persons elected, (Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Rom. 8:33 11:7) which clearly imply, that only some, and not all men, are the objects of it; "I speak not of you all", says Christ; "I know whom I have chosen", (John 13:18) not all, but some of you; where all are taken, whether persons or things, no choice is made; if some are chosen, others are not, but left; and in this case the number chosen is but few; "Many are called, but few chosen", (Matthew 20:16) hence those that are chosen, are called "a remnant; according to the election of grace"; and those that are not chosen, the rest that are left (Rom. 11:5, 7). Wherefore the election treated of is not,

2b1a. An election of a nation to some external privileges, as the people of Israel, who were chosen of God to be a special people, above all people on the face of the earth; not for their quantity or quality, their number or their goodness; but because such was the pleasure of God: but this choice of them as a nation, was only to some outward benefits and blessings; as, besides the good land of Canaan, the word, and worship, and ordinances of God, with others, mentioned in (Rom. 9:4, 5) but in the same context it is observed, that they were not all Israel, or God's elect, redeemed and called people, in the most special sense; nor all children of God by adopting grace; nor were all predestinated to the adoption of children by Christ: it was only a remnant of them that were of this sort, which should be eternally saved; and whom, if God had not reserved, they had been as Sodom and Gomorrah (Rom. 9:6-8, 27, 29). And so this nation of ours is selected and distinguished from many others, by various blessings of goodness, and particularly by having the means of grace; yet all the individuals of it cannot be thought to be the objects of election to special grace, and eternal glory;

2b1c. Nor of an election to offices; as the sons of the house of Aaron were chosen to minister, in the office of priests, to the Lord; and as Saul was chosen to be king over Israel; and the twelve were chosen to be the apostles of Christ; for there were many in the priestly office very bad men; and Saul behaved so ill, as to be rejected of God from being king, that is, from the kingdom being continued in his family; and though Christ chose twelve to be his apostles, one of them was a devil: so that though those were chosen to offices, and even to the highest offices in the church and state, yet not to eternal life.

2b1c. Nor of an election of whole bodies and communities of men, under the character of churches, to the enjoyment of the means of grace: Ephesians 1:4 is no instance of this. It is not certain the apostle wrote that epistle to the Ephesians, as to a church, but to some there described, as saints and faithful in Christ Jesus; and it is quite certain, that those who he says were "chosen in Christ", were not the Ephesians only, but others also; the apostle, and others, who were not members of that church, yet shared in that grace, and other blessings aftermentioned, and were they that first trusted in Christ; and though the Ephesians may be included, yet it is not said of them as a church; besides, the phrase of being "chosen in Christ", is sometimes used of a single person, and so is not appropriate to communities and churches (Rom. 16:13). To all which may be added, that those said to be chosen in Christ, are not said to be chosen as a church, or to be one, or to church privileges; but to holiness here, and to a blameless state, or a state of perfection hereafter; even to grace and glory. Nor is the character of "elect", given to the Colossians, (Col. 3:12) given to them as a church; for the same may be observed of them as of the Ephesians, that they are not wrote to as a church; but described by the same epithets as they are; and if they were, this might be said of them in a judgment of charity, since they all of them professed faith in Christ; and the greater part of them, doubtless, in reality were possessed of it, as a fruit and effect, and so an evidence of their election; by which the apostle enforces their mutual duties to one another. And in like manner the Thessalonians are said to be chosen of God, and to know their election of God, since the gospel was come to them, attended with the power and Spirit of God, (1 Thess. 1:4, 5; 2 Thess. 2:13) and all of them had made a profession of Christ, and therefore it might be charitably hoped they were the elect of God; not chosen merely to outward means; but, as it is said, to salvation by Christ, and to the obtaining of his glory. And when the apostle Peter speaks of some he writes to as elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, and as a chosen generation, (1 Peter 1:2, 2:9) he does not write to them, and speak of them, as a church; for he writes to strangers, scattered abroad in several countries; nor as chosen barely to the means of grace and outward privileges, but to grace and glory: since they are said to be chosen "through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus".

2b1d. Nor is this act of election under consideration, to be understood of the effectual calling of particular persons; though that is sometimes expressed by choosing men out of the world; when they are separated and distinguished from the men of it; and by choosing, that is, calling the foolish things of the world, and by

choosing the poor of it, who become rich in faith, and appear to be heirs of the kingdom, (John 15:19; 1 Cor. 1:26, 27; James 2:5) the reason of which is, because calling is a certain fruit and effect of election, and is a sure and certain evidence of it; "For whom" God did "predestinate, them he also called" (Rom. 8:30). But then election and calling differ, as the cause and the effect, the tree and its fruit, a thing and the evidence of it. But,

2ble. This is to be understood of the choice of certain persons by God, from all eternity, to grace and glory; it is an act by which men are chosen of God's good will and pleasure, before, the world was, to holiness and happiness, to salvation by Christ, to partake of his glory, and to enjoy eternal life, as the free gift of God through him (Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Acts 13:48). And this is the first and foundation blessing; according to which all spiritual blessings are dispensed; and is, by the apostle, set at the front of them all; and is the first link in the golden chain of man's salvation (Eph. 1:3, 4; Rom. 8:30).

2b2. Secondly, The next thing to be considered is, by whom election is made, and in whom it is made: it is made by God, and it is made in Christ.

2b2a. It is made by God, as the efficient cause of it; God, who is a sovereign Being, who does and may do whatever he pleases in heaven and in earth, among angels and men; and has a right to do what he will with his own; as with his own things, temporal and spiritual blessings; so with his own creatures. Shall he be denied that which every man thinks he has a right unto and does? do not kings choose their own ministers; masters their servants; and every man his own favourites, friends, and companions? And may not God choose whom he pleases to communion with him, both here and hereafter; or to grace and glory? He does this, and therefore it is called "election of God"; of which God is the efficient cause, (1 Thess. 1:4) and the persons chosen are called God's elect (Rom. 8:33; Luke 18:7). This act is sometimes, and for the most part, ascribed to God the Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; as he is said to bless men with spiritual blessings, so to choose them in Christ, before the foundation of the world, (Eph. 1:3, 4) and the persons chosen are said to be "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and, sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ", (1 Peter 1:2) where the Person that chooses is not only described as the Father, but is distinguished from the Spirit, through whose sanctification, and from Jesus Christ, to whose obedience, and the sprinkling of whose blood, men are chosen by him. Sometimes it is ascribed to Christ, and he takes it to himself, "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen", (John 13:18) this cannot be understood of Christ's choosing his disciples to the office or apostleship, for all the twelve were chosen to that; but of his choosing them to eternal life; and this is what he could not say of them all, for one of them was the son of perdition; and hence the elect are called Christ's elect; not only because chosen in him, and given to him, but because chosen by him; He (the Son of man) "shall send his angels and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds" (Matthew 24:30, 31). Nor is the blessed Spirit to be excluded; for since he has a place in the decree of the means, in order

that the end may be attained, and has so much to do in the blessings, gifts, and operations of grace, leading on to the execution of the decree; he must have a concern with the Father and the Son in the act itself, as the efficient cause of it. And this now being the act of God, it is for ever; for whatever God does in a way of special grace, it is for ever; it is unchangeable and irrevocable; men may choose some to be their favourites and friends for a while, and then alter their minds, and choose others in their room; but God never acts such a part, he is in one mind, and none can turn him; his purpose, according to election, or with respect to that, stands sure, firm, and unalterable.

2b2b. This act is made in Christ, "according as he hath chosen us in him" (Eph. 1:4). Election does not find men in Christ, but puts them there; it gives them a being in him, and union to him; which is the foundation of their open being in Christ at conversion, which is the manifestation and evidence of this; "If any man be in Christ", even in the secret way, by electing grace, "he is a new creature", sooner or later; which is an evidence of it; for when he becomes a new creature, this shows him to have been in Christ before, from whence this grace proceeds; but these two, an open and secret being in Christ, differ in this, that the one is in time, and but a little while ago, the other from eternity; the one is the evidence of the other; "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago", says the apostle,

(2 Cor. 12:2) meaning himself; who was, about that time, and not before, called, converted, and become a believer in Christ, and so had open being in Christ; and, in this sense, one saint may be in Christ before another; "Salute Andronicus and Junia who also were in Christ before me", says the same apostle, (Rom. 16:7) they being called and converted before he was; but with respect to electing grace, one is not before another, the whole body of the elect being chosen together in Christ; which is the sense of the text in Ephesians: and which is not to be understood of being chosen for the sake of him; for though they are predestinated to be conformed to his image, that he may be the firstborn among many brethren, and in all things have the preeminence; and unto salvation by him, that he may have the glory of it; and to the obtaining of his glory, partake of it, and have communion with him for evermore, that he may have praise from them to all eternity: yet not his merits, his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, not his obedience, sufferings, and death, are the cause of election; these are the meritorious cause of redemption, forgiveness of sin, and justification, and salvation; not of election: the reasons why men are elected, are not because Christ has shed his blood, died for them, redeemed and saved them; but Christ has done all this for them because they are elect; "I lay down my life for the sheep", says Christ, (John 10:15) sheep and elect are terms convertible, and signify the same persons, even such before they are called and converted; as appears from the following verse: now it is not Christ's laying down his life for them makes them sheep, and elect; they are so previous to that; but because they are sheep, and chosen ones in Christ, and given him by his Father, therefore he laid down his life for them. Christ himself is the object of election; he is styled God's elect; and is said to be foreordained, before the foundation of the world, to be the Saviour and Redeemer of his people (Isa. 42:1; 1 Peter 1:20). Now, though as a divine Person, he

is, with his Father, the efficient cause of election; yet, as Mediator, he is the means, by his obedience, sufferings, and death, of executing that decree: men are chosen in him as their Head, and they as members of him; not one before another; he and they are chosen together in the same decree; they are given to him in it, and he to them; they are put into his hands, and preserved in him; and hence have a secret being in him, and union to him; hence they partake of all grace and spiritual blessings; they are first "of God in Christ" by electing grace, and then he is made everything to them; and they receive everything from him they want (1 Cor. 1:30).

2b3. Thirdly, The objects of election are to be next inquired after, who are men; for with such only is now our concern; and these not as under such and such characters, as called, converted, believers in Christ, holy and good men, and persevering in faith and holiness unto the end; for they are not elected because they are called, converted, &c. but because they are elected they become all this; and if they are not elected, especially until they have persevered unto the end, I can see no need of their being elected at all; for when they have persevered unto the end, they are immediately in heaven, in the enjoyment of eternal life, and can have no need to be chose to it: and all these characters put together, only amount to such a proposition, that he that believes, and endures to the end, shall be saved. But God does not choose propositions, but persons; not characters, but men, nakedly and abstractly considered; and these not all men, but some, as the nature of election, and the very sense of the word suggests: as in the effectual calling, the fruit and evidence of it, men are taken out of the world, and separated from the men among whom they have had their conversation in times past; so in election, they are distinguished from others; as in redemption men are redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation; so in election they are chosen out of the same: election and redemption are of the same persons, and are commensurate to each other; they are distinct from the rest of mankind; vessels of mercy, in distinction from vessels of wrath; a seed, a remnant, according to the election of grace; and election itself, as distinguished from the others, called the rest; while some are given up to believe a lie, that they might be damned, others being beloved of God, are chosen from the beginning to salvation by Christ; for certain it is, that all the individuals of mankind, neither partake of the means fixed in the decree of election, sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; nor attain to the end of it, which, with respect to men, is eternal life and happiness; for all men are not sanctified by the Spirit of God; nor have all men faith in Christ, the way, the truth, and the life; nor do all men enter into life, or are eternally saved; some go into everlasting punishment. But the number of the chosen ones is not confined to any particular nation: for as God is the God both of the Jews and of the Gentiles; so those whom he has in election prepared for glory, in consequence of which he calls them by his grace; these are not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also; and who are eventually, for the most part, the poor of this world, (James 2:5) men mean and despicable in the eyes of it; and these are but few in comparison, not only of the men of the world, but even of those that are externally called; "Many are called, but few are chosen", (Matthew 20:16) they are but a little flock, it is the pleasure of their heavenly Father to give the kingdom to, prepared for them from the foundation of the world: though considered absolutely

by themselves, they are a great multitude, which no man can number, (Luke 12:32; Rev. 5:9). And here is the proper place to discuss that question, Whether men were considered, in the mind of God, in the decree of election, as fallen or unfallen; as in the corrupt mass, through the fall; or in the pure mass of creatureship, previous to it; and as to be created? There are some that think that the latter, so considered, were the objects of election in the divine mind; who are called supralapsarians; though of these some are of opinion that man was considered, as to be created, or creatable; and others, as created, but not fallen. The former seems best; that of the vast number of individuals that came up in the divine mind, that his power could create, those that he meant to bring into being, he designed to glorify himself by them in some way or another; the decrees of election, respecting any part of them; may be distinguished into the decree of the end, and the decree of the means. The decree of the end, respecting some, is either subordinate to their eternal happiness, or ultimate; which is more properly the end, the glory of God; and if both are put together, it is a state of everlasting communion with God, for the glorifying the riches of his sovereign grace and goodness (Eph. 1:5, 6). The decree of the means, includes the decree to create men, to permit them to fall, to recover them out of it through redemption by Christ, to sanctify them by the grace of the Spirit, and completely save them; and which are not to be reckoned as materially many decrees, but as making one formal decree; or they are not to be considered as subordinate, but coordinate means, and as making up one entire complete medium; for it is not to be supposed that God decreed to create man, that he might permit him to fall; nor that he decreed to permit him to fall, that he might redeem, sanctify, and save him; but he decreed all this that he might glorify his grace, mercy, and justice. And in this way of considering the decrees of God, they think they sufficiently obviate and remove the slanderous calumny cast upon them, with respect to the other branch of predestination, which leaves men in the same state when others are chosen, and that for the glory of God. Which calumny is, that according to them, God made man to damn him; whereas, according to their real sentiments, God decreed to make man, and made man, neither to damn him, nor save him, but for his own glory; which end is answered in them, some way or another. Again, they argue that the end is first in view, before the means; and the decree of the end is, in order of nature, before the decree of the means; and what is first in intention, is last in execution: now as the glory of God is the last in execution, it must be first in intention; wherefore men must be considered, in the decree of the end, as not yet created and fallen; since the creation and permission of sin, belong to the decree of the means; which, in order of nature, is after the decree of the end: and they add to this, that if God first decreed to create man, and suffer him to fall, and then, out of the fall chose some to grace and glory; he must decree to create man without an end, which is to make God to do what no wise man would; for when a man is about to do any thing, he proposes an end, and then contrives and fixes on ways and means to bring about that end: and it cannot be thought that the all-wise and only-wise God should act otherwise; who does all his works in wisdom, and has wisely designed them for his own glory, (Prov. 16:4 they think also that this way of conceiving and speaking of these things, best expresses the sovereignty of God in them; as declared in the ninth of the Romans; where he is said to will such and such things, for no other reason but because he

wills them; and hence the objector to the sovereign decrees of God is brought in saying, "Why does he yet find fault? who hath resisted his will?" and the answer to it is taken from the sovereign power of the potter over his clay; to which is added, "What if God willing", &c. to do this or that, who has anything to say against it? he is accountable to none (Rom. 9:15, 19, 20, 22). And this way of reasoning is thought to suit better with the instance of Jacob and Esau, the children being not yet born, and having done neither good nor evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, (Rom. 9:11) than with supposing persons considered in predestination, as already created, and in the corrupt mass; and particularly it best suits with the unformed clay of the potter, out of which he makes one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour; on which Beza remarks, that if the apostle had considered mankind as corrupted, he would not have said, that some vessels were made to honour, and some to dishonour; but rather, that seeing all the vessels would be fit for dishonour, some were left in that dishonour, and others translated from dishonour to honour. They further observe, that elect angels could not

be considered in the corrupt mass, when chosen; since they never fell, and therefore it is most reasonable, that as they, so those angels that were not chosen, were considered in the same pure mass of creatureship; and so in like manner men; to which they add the human nature of Christ, which is the object of election to a greater dignity than that of angels and men, could not be considered in the corrupt mass, since it fell not in Adam, nor never came into any corrupt state; and yet it was chosen out of the people, (Ps. 89:19) and consequently the people out of whom it was chosen, must be considered as yet not fallen and corrupt; and who also were chosen in him, and therefore not so considered. These are hints of some of the arguments used on this side of the question.

On the other hand, those who are called sublapsarians, and are for men being considered as created and fallen, in the decree of election, urge, (John 15:19) "I have chosen you out of the world". Now the world is full of wickedness, it lies in it, is under the power of the wicked one; the inhabitants of it live in sin, and all of them corrupt and abominable; and therefore they that are chosen out of them must be so too: but this text is not to be understood of eternal election, but of the effectual calling; by which men are called and separated from the world, among whom they have had their conversation before conversion, and according to the course of it have lived. They further observe, that the elect are called "vessels of mercy"; which supposes them to have been miserable, and so sinful, and to stand in need of mercy; and must be so considered in their election: but though through various means the elect are brought to happiness, which are owing to the mercy of God; such as the mission of Christ to save them, the forgiveness of their sins, their regeneration and salvation; and so fitly called "vessels of mercy"; yet it follows not that they were considered as in need of mercy in their choice to happiness. It is also said, that men are chosen in Christ as Mediator, Redeemer, and Saviour; which implies, that an offence is given and taken, and reconciliation is to be made, and redemption from sin, and the curse of the law broken, and complete salvation to be effected by Christ; all which supposes men to be sinful, as it does: but then men are chosen in Christ,

not as the meritorious cause of election, but as the means, or medium, of bringing them to the happiness they are chosen to. It is, moreover, taken notice of, that the transitus in scripture, is not from election to creation, but to calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, and salvation. But, for instance, can calling be supposed without creation? It is thought that this way of considering men as fallen, in the decree of election, is more mild and gentle than the other, and best accounts for the justice of God; that since all are in the corrupt mass, it cannot be unjust in him to choose some out of it to undeserved happiness; and to leave others in it, who perish justly in it for their sins; or that since all are deserving of the wrath of God for sin, where is the injustice of appointing some not unto the wrath they deserve, but unto salvation by Christ, when others are foreordained to just condemnation and wrath for their sins? But on the other hand, what reason also can there be to charge God with injustice, that inasmuch as all are considered in the pure mass of creatureship, that some should be chosen in it, and others be passed by in it; and both for his own glory? These are some of the principal arguments used on both sides; the difference is not so great as may be thought at first sight; for both agree in the main and material things in the doctrine of election; as,

2b3a. That it is personal and particular, is of persons by name, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

2b3b. That it is absolute and unconditional, not depending on the will of men, nor on anything to be done by the creature.

2b3c. That it is wholly owing to the will and pleasure of God; and not to the faith, holiness, obedience, and good works of men; nor to a foresight of all or any of these.

2b3d. That both elect, and non-elect, are considered alike, and are upon an equal footing in the decree of predestination; as those that are for the corrupt mass they suppose that they were both considered in it equally alike, so that there was nothing in the one that was not in the other, which was a reason why the one should be chosen and the other left; so those that are for the pure mass, suppose both to be considered in the same, and as not yet born, and having done neither good nor evil.

2b3e. That it is an eternal act in God, and not temporal; or which commenced not in time, but from all eternity; for it is not the opinion of the sublapsarians, that God passed the decree of election after men were actually created and fallen; only that they were considered in the divine mind, from all eternity, in the decree of election, as if they were created and fallen; wherefore, though they differ in the consideration of the object of election, as thus and thus diversified, yet they agree in the thing, and agree to differ, as they should, and not charge one another with unsoundness and heterodoxy; for which there is no reason. Calvin was for the corrupt mass; Beza, who was co-pastor with him in the church at Geneva, and his successor, was for the pure mass; and yet they lived in great peace, love, and harmony. The Contra-remonstrants in Holland, when Arminianism first appeared among them, were not agreed in this point; some took one side of the question, and some the other; but

they both united against the common adversary, the Arminians. Dr. Twiss, who was as great a supralapsarian as perhaps ever was, and carried things as high as any man ever did, and as closely studied the point, and as well understood it, and perhaps better than anyone did, and yet he confesses that it was only "apex logicus", a point in logic; and that the difference only lay in the ordering and ranging the decrees of God: and, for my own part, I think both may be taken in; that in the decree of the end, the ultimate end, the glory of God, for which he does all things, men might be considered in the divine mind as createable, not yet created and fallen; and that in the decree of the means, which, among other things, takes in the mediation of Christ, redemption by him, and the sanctification of the Spirit; they might be considered as created, fallen, and sinful, which these things imply; nor does this suppose separate acts and decrees in God, or any priority and posteriority in them; which in God are but one and together; but our finite minds are obliged to consider them one after another, not being able to take them in together and at once.

2b4. Fourthly, The date of election is next to be considered. And certain it is, that it was before men were born; "The children not being yet born—that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, (Rom. 9:11) nor can there be any difficulty in admitting this; for if there is none in admitting that a person may be chosen and appointed to an office before he is born, as there can be none, since God has asserted it of Jeremiah; "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee", or set thee apart, "and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations", (Jer. 1:5) then there can be none in admitting that a person so early may be chosen to grace and glory. And this also is before the new birth, or before calling; for calling is the fruit and effect of election; the apostle says of the Thessalonians, "God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation", (2 Thess. 2:13) not from the beginning of the preaching of the gospel to them, or of the coming of that unto them; for that may come to, and be preached among a people, but not to their profit; may be without success, yea, be the savour of death unto death, (Heb. 4:2; 2 Cor. 2:16) and when the gospel first came to the Thessalonians, and was preached among them, some believed, and others did not; yea, the Bereans are preferred unto them, for their ready reception of the word; indeed, to some at Thessalonica, it came not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost; and which was an evidence of their election, and by which they might know it. But then this was only a manifestation of their election; that itself was previous to the gospel's coming to them, and its operation on them; it was displayed therein, and thereby; but it commenced before; (see Acts 17: 1-4, 11; 1 Thess. 1:4, 5) nor was the choice of them from the beginning of their conversion, or when they were effectually called by the gospel; for that, as has been observed, is the effect and evidence of election; election is that according to which calling is, and therefore must be before it; "whom he did predestinate, them he also called" (Rom. 8:30; 2 Tim. 1:9). Nor is this phrase, from the beginning, to be understood of the beginning of time, or of the creation; as in (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8) for though election began to operate and display itself in the distinct seeds of the woman, and of the serpent, in Abel and Cain, the immediate posterity of the first man, and the distinction has continued

ever since; yet the thing itself which makes this distinction, or is the ground of it, was long before; to which may be added, that this phrase is expressive of eternity; "I was set up from everlasting; from the beginning; or ever the earth was", (Prov. 8:23) that is, before the world began, even from all eternity; as its being inclosed by such phrases as express the same shows: and in this sense is it to be taken in the text in the Thessalonians; and it is in so many words affirmed by the apostle, that this choice of men to holiness and happiness, was made "in Christ before the foundation of the world", (Eph. 1:4) and elsewhere it is said, that the book of life of the Lamb, in which the names of God's elect are set down, and the names of others left out, was written as early (Rev. 13:8 17:8). And that this act of election is an eternal act, or from eternity, may be concluded,

2b4a. From the foreknowledge of God, which is eternal; God from all eternity foreknew all persons and things; there is nothing in time but what was known to him from eternity (Acts 15:18). Now men are elected according to the foreknowledge of God; and "whom he did foreknow he did predestinate", (1 Peter 1:2; Rom. 8:29) wherefore, as the foreknowledge of God is eternal, the choice he makes upon it must be so too; and especially as this foreknowledge is not a bare prescience of persons and things, but what has love and affection to the objects of it joined unto it: wherefore,

2b4b. The eternity of election may be concluded from the love of God to his people; for it is to that it is owing; "electio praesupponit dilectionem" election presupposes love; hence the apostle sets the character of being "beloved of the Lord" first, to the Thessalonians being "chosen" by him to "salvation", (2 Thess. 2:13) it is the immediate effect of love, and is inseparably connected with it; yea, is expressed by it; "Jacob have I loved" (Rom. 9:13). Now the love of God is an everlasting love; not only endures to all eternity, but was from all eternity: God loved Christ, as he affirms, before the foundation of the world; and in the same place he says, his Father loved his people as he loved him, (John 17:23, 24).

2b4c. It may be argued from the covenant of grace, which is an everlasting covenant, from everlasting to everlasting; in which the goings of Christ as Mediator were of old, and promises were made before the world began; and grants of grace were made, and blessings of grace provided as early; and which covenant was made with the "chosen" of God; with Christ, the chosen Head, and with his people, as chosen in him; so that if this covenant was from everlasting, and made with chosen ones in Christ, their representative, then the choice of them in him must be as early, (2 Sam. 23:5; Titus 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:9; Ps. 89:3; Mic. 5:2) and nothing is more clear than that he was set up as Mediator of this covenant from everlasting; and that his people were chosen in him, their covenant Head, before the foundation of the world (Prov. 8:22; Eph. 1:4).

2b4d. This appears from the early preparation of grace and glory: grace was given them in Christ before the world was, and they blessed so soon with spiritual blessings in him; as they are a people aforeprepared for glory, that is, in the purpose

of God; so glory is the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; which is no other than a destination, or rather a predestination of that for them, and of them to that (2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:3, 4 Rom. 9:23; Matthew 25:34).

2b4e. From the nature of the decrees of God in general, it must appear that this is eternal; for if God's decrees in general are eternal, as has been proved from his foreknowledge of whatever comes to pass; which is founded upon the certainty of his decrees, that so they shall be; and from his immutability, which could not be established if any new thoughts and resolutions arose in him, or new decrees in time were made by him; and therefore it may be reckoned a sure point, that such a special decree as this, respecting so important an affair as the salvation of all his people, as well as his own glory, must be eternal: and, indeed, the whole scheme of man's salvation by Christ, the "fellowship of the mystery" hid in him, in which there is such an amazing display of the wisdom of God, is "according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord", (Eph. 3:9-11) and which is no other than his purpose according to election, or respecting that.

2b5. Fifthly, The impulsive, or moving cause of this act in God, or what were the motives and inducements with God to take such a step as this: and these were not—

2b5a. The good works of men; for this act passed in eternity, before any works were done; "The children not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil; that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand", (Rom. 9:11) and since this was done before them, they could never be the moving cause of it; they are the fruits and effects of it, and so cannot be the cause of it in any sense: it is owing to electing grace that any good works have been done by men since the fall of Adam; for what the prophet says of the people of Israel, is true of the whole world; "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed", a remnant, according to the election of grace, a few, whom, according to this decree, he makes holy and good, and enables them to perform good works, "we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah", Romans 9:29 should have been like to the inhabitants of those cities, both in sin and punishment; as public and abandoned sinners, given up to the vilest lusts, without any check or restraint. Good works are what God has preordained, that his chosen ones should walk in them, (Eph. 2:10) and therefore the election of the one, and the preordination of the other, must be previous to them, and they not the cause of either; the same cannot be both cause and effect, with respect to the same things: besides, there are no good works truly such, before the effectual calling, which is the fruit of election; before that they have only the appearance of good works, but are not really such, not being done in faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin; nor from love to God, which is the end of the commandment; nor in the name and strength of Christ; nor with a view to the glory of God. Men must be first created in Christ, or be new creatures in him, must be believers in him, and have the Spirit of Christ, and his grace put into them, ere they can perform good works: all which are done at the effectual calling, and not before. Moreover, God does not proceed according to mens' works; nor are they the moving causes to him, in other acts of his grace; as not in the mission of his Son, (1 John 4:10) nor in calling, (2 Tim. 1:9)

nor in justification, (Rom. 3:20, 28) nor in the whole of salvation, (Titus 3:5; Eph. 2:8, 9) and so not in this first step to salvation, election; for then it would not be of grace, of pure free grace, unmixed and unmerited grace, as it is said to be. And in the strongest manner it is denied to be of works, and that established by an argument which is unanswerable (Rom. 11:5, 6).

2b5b. Neither is the holiness of men, whether in principle or in practice, or both, the moving cause of election to eternal life; it is an end to which men are chosen; "he hath chosen us in him—that we should be holy", (Eph. 1:4) not because we were holy, but that we might be so, and so denotes something future, and which follows upon it; and it is a means fixed in the decree of election to another end, salvation; to which men are chosen, "through sanctification of the Spirit", (2 Thess. 2:13) yea, the sanctification of God's elect is the object of God's decree; is the thing decreed, and so cannot be the cause of the decree; "This is the will of God, even your sanctification", (1 Thess. 4:3) not barely the approving will of God, as being agreeable to his holy nature and holy law; nor merely the will of his precept, "Be ye holy"; but his decreeing will, or determinate counsel, that men should be holy: besides, holiness in principle and practice, does not take place until the effectual calling, and is the work of the Spirit of God in time, who calls men with an holy calling; not only to holiness, but works a principle of grace and holiness in them, whereby they are influenced and enabled, under the power of his grace, to live soberly, righteously, and godly.

2b5c. Nor is faith the moving cause of election; the one is in time, the other in eternity: while men are in a state of unregeneracy, they are in a state of unbelief; they are, as without hope in God, so without faith in Christ; and when they have it, they have it not of themselves, of their own power and freewill; but they have it as the gift of God, and the operation of his Spirit, flowing purely from his grace; and therefore cannot be the cause of electing grace: besides, it is the effect of that, it is a consequence that follows upon it, and is insured by it; "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed", (Acts 13:48) it is proper and peculiar to the elect of God; the reason why some men do not believe is, because "they are not of Christ's sheep", (John 10:26) his elect, given him by the Father; and the reason why others do believe is, because they are of Christ's sheep, or his chosen ones, and therefore faith is given to them; which is called, "the faith of God's elect" (Titus 1:1). Faith is not the cause of calling, and much less of election, which precedes that: the reason why men are called, is not because they believe, but they are called that they might believe; in which effectual call faith is given to them, as the evidence of their election. Once more, faith is fixed as a means, in the decree of election; and therefore cannot be the cause of it (2 Thess. 2:13). To which may be added, if faith is the moving cause of election, men might be said rather to choose God and Christ, at least first, than they to choose him; whereas our Lord says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you", (John 15:16) the apostles had chosen him, but not first; he first chose them; so that their choice of him had no influence on his choice of them: but if faith is the moving cause of election, then men rather choose Christ than he them; for what is faith but an high esteem of Christ, a choosing and preferring him,

as a Saviour, to all others? a choosing that good part which shall never be taken away; and of the way of truth, or of Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

2b5d. Nor is perseverance in faith, holiness, and good works, the moving cause of election; but the effect of it, and what is ensured by it: the reason why men persevere is, because they are the elect of God, who cannot be deceived totally and finally, so as to have their faith subverted, and overthrown, as that of nominal professors may be; because the foundation on which they are, stands sure; sealed with this seal, "the Lord knows them that are his" (Matthew 24:24; 2 Tim. 2:18, 19). Should it be said, that it is the foresight of these things in men, which moves God to choose them; it may be replied, that God's foresight, or foreknowledge of things future, is founded on the determinations of his will concerning them; God foresees, or foreknows, that such and such a man will believe, become holy, do good works, and persevere therein to glory; because he has determined to give faith to them, work holiness in them, enable them to perform good works, and cause them to persevere therein to the end, and so be saved; and what is this, but the doctrine contended for? it is no other than a decree to give grace and glory to some persons for his own glory, and to deny them to others.

The truth of all this might be illustrated and confirmed by the case of infants dying in infancy; who, as soon as they are in the world, almost, are taken out of it. Now such a number as they are, can never be thought to be brought into being in vain, and without some end to be answered; and which, no doubt, is the glory of God, who is and will be glorified in them, some way or another, as well as in adult persons: now though their election is a secret to us, and unrevealed; it may be reasonably supposed, yea, in a judgment of charity it may rather be concluded, that they are all chosen, than that none are; and if it is allowed that any of them may be chosen, it is enough to my present purpose; since the election of them cannot be owing to their faith, holiness, obedience, good works, and perseverance, or to the foresight of these things, which do not appear in them.

In short, these maxims are certainly true, and indisputable, that nothing in time can be the cause of what was done in eternity; to believe, to be holy, to do good works, and persevere in them, are acts in time, and so cannot be causes of election, which was done in eternity; and that nothing out of God can be the cause of any decree, or will in him; he is no passive Being, to be wrought upon by motives and inducements without him; for if his will is moved by anything without him, that must be superior to him, and his will must become dependent on that; which to say of God, is to speak very unworthily of him. God wills things because it so pleases him; predestination is according to the good pleasure of his will; election is according to his foreknowledge; which is no other than his free favour and good will to men, (Eph. 1:5; 1 Peter 1:2) no other reason can be given of God's will or decree to bestow grace and glory on men, for his own glory, and of his actual donation of them, but what our Lord gives; "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matthew 11:25, 26).

2b6. Sixthly, The means fixed in the decree of election, for the execution of it, or in order to bring about the end intended, are next to be inquired into; which are, the principal of them, the mediation of Christ, and redemption by him, the sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. The mediation of Christ; Christ, as God, is the efficient cause of election; in his office capacity as an Head, the elect are chosen in him, as members of him; and though his mediation, bloodshed, sufferings, and death, are not the meritorious cause of election, yet Christ in them is the medium of the execution of it; that is, of bringing the chosen ones, through grace, to glory, whereby God is glorified, and so the end of it is answered: men are said to be chosen "unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ", (1 Peter 1:2) which words, though they seem to express the ends of election, yet are such as have the nature of means, in order to further ends, the salvation of men, and the glory of God therein. Obedience may intend the obedience of Christ, both active and passive, or his subjection to the law, and fulfilment of it, both with respect to its precepts and penalty, by which men are justified in the sight of God, and so are entitled to eternal life and happiness; and to the blood of Jesus Christ are owing, the redemption of men, the remission of their sins, and the atonement of them, which issue in their salvation, and make way for the glorifying of the justice of God, as well as the grace of God in it: and the "sprinkling" of this blood, denotes an application of it to the conscience, whereby it is purged from dead works, and the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience; and which speaks peace, and yields comfort, and causes the soul to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Moreover, men are chosen to salvation, "through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth", as means to that end, (2 Thess. 2:13). The sanctification of the Spirit, is the work of grace on the heart, begun in regeneration, and carried on by the Spirit, until it is perfected by him; and this is necessary to salvation, for without holiness, even perfect holiness, no man shall see the Lord; and therefore it is fixed as a means of it, and is made as sure and certain by the decree of election, as the end, salvation itself; and, being fixed as a mean, in this decree, confirms what has been observed, that it cannot be the cause of it: and this proves that the doctrine of election can be no licentious doctrine, but a doctrine according to godliness; since it makes such sure provision for holiness, as well as for happiness. "Belief of the truth" may signify, not a bare belief of the Gospel, and the truths of it; for though they are to be believed by all the saved ones, yet this may be where neither election, nor calling, nor sanctification, ever take place; even in reprobates, and devils themselves: but faith in Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and believing in him with the heart, unto righteousness, and with which salvation is connected, and to which it is necessary, and is a mean of it; and which being fixed in the decree of election, as such is secured by it, and certainly follows upon it.

2b7. Seventhly, The ends settled in the decree of election are both subordinate and ultimate; the subordinate ones have indeed the nature of means with respect to the ultimate one: there are many things to which the elect of God, predestinated or chosen, both with respect to grace and glory, which are subordinate to the grand end, the glory of God. So God is said to "predestinate" them "to be conformed to the image of his Son", to be made like unto him, not so much in his sonship, nor in

his sufferings, as in his holiness: man was made after the image of God, this by sinning he came short of; in regeneration the image of Christ is stamped, the lines of his grace are drawn upon, and he himself is formed in the hearts of his people; and into which image they are more and more changed through transforming views of his glory; and which will be complete in the future state, when saints will see him as he is; and to this they are predestinated, and that in order to another end, that Christ "might be the firstborn among many brethren"; the brethren are the predestinated ones, who are brethren to each other; and these are many, the many sons Christ brings to glory; and he is the firstborn among them; and that he may appear to be so, he is set up as the pattern of them, to whose image they are predestinated to be conformed, that in all things he might have the preeminence, (Rom. 8:29) moreover they are said to be "predestinated to the adoption of children", (Eph. 1:5) which may be understood either of the grace of adoption, the blessing itself, which predestination to it is no other than a preparation of it in the purposes and decrees of God, in his council and covenant, (2 Cor. 6:18) or the inheritance adopted to, which they obtain in Christ, being predestinated to it according to a divine purpose, (Eph. 1:11) likewise they are chosen to be "holy and without blame", (Eph. 1:4) even to unblameable holiness, which is begun in this life and perfected in the other; when they will appear before the throne in the sight of God without fault, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: also they are said to be chosen unto faith; "God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith", (James 2:5) not that they were, or were considered rich in faith when God chose them, but he chose them to be rich in faith, as the words may be supplied, as well as to be heirs of the kingdom; and this end is always answered, such as are chosen do believe; "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Once more, the elect are chosen to obedience and good works; the text in (1 Peter 1:2) which has been already observed, will bear to be interpreted of the obedience of the elect, in consequence both of their election and their sanctification; and certain it is, that good works are what "God has before ordained that his elect ones should walk in them", (Eph. 2:10) these are subordinate ends which respect grace, and are in order to a further end, glory and happiness, which is sometimes expressed by salvation; "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ", (1 Thess. 5:9) and again, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation", (2 Thess. 2:13) salvation was fixed upon, and the method of it contrived in eternity; Christ was sent into the world, and came to effect it; he is become the author of it by his obedience and sufferings; this is not only published in the Gospel, but it is applied to God's elect in conversion; but the full enjoyment of it is yet to come, (Rom. 13:11) the saints are now heirs of it, are kept unto it, and Christ will appear to put them into the possession of it, and to this they are chosen, (1 Peter 1:2, 5; Heb. 1:14, 9:28) this end is also expressed by eternal life, "As many as were ordained to eternal life" (Acts 13:48). This is begun in grace now, which is a well of living water springing up to it; he that believes has it already in some sense; the knowledge of God and Christ is the beginning, pledge, and earnest of it; and it will lie hereafter in a life of perfect knowledge and holiness, and in uninterrupted communion with God to all eternity; and to this the elect are ordained.

Now all these ends, both respecting grace and glory, are subordinate ones to the grand and ultimate end of all, the glory of God; for as God swears by himself, because he could swear by no greater, so because a greater end could not be proposed than his own glory, he has set up that as the supreme end of all his decrees; he has made, that is, has appointed, "all things for himself", for his own glory, (Prov. 16:4) as all things are from him, as the first cause, they are all to him as the last end, (Rom. 11:36) and with respect to the decree of election, it is the glory of his grace mixed with justice, which is the end of it; the election of men to unblameable holiness, and the predestination of them to the adoption of children, are said to be "to the praise of the glory of his grace", (Eph. 1:4-6) that his free and sovereign grace might be displayed and glorified thereby; and that men who are the chosen generation and peculiar people, might show forth the praises of it; as, they do in part now, and will do it perfectly hereafter; for they are a people he has formed for himself both in election and the effectual calling, for this end and purpose, (Isa. 43:21; 1 Peter 2:9) his great end in election is to "make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of his mercy"; that is, the riches, the fulness, and plenty of his glorious and sovereign grace and mercy on the objects of it, (Rom. 9:23) and not the glory of his grace and mercy only, but of his justice also; for which provision is made in the decree of the means, by setting forth, or pre-ordaining, Christ "to be the propitiation", or to make atonement, "for sin; to declare his righteousness", the justice of God, "that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus", (Rom. 3:25, 26) and so the glory of God, of his justice and holiness, as well as of his grace and mercy, appear to be great in the salvation of men; here mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other; and God is glorified in all his perfections, which is the great end in view.

2b8. Eighthly, The blessings and benefits flowing from election are many, indeed all spiritual blessings; it is as it were the rule, measure, and standard according to which they are communicated; the several chains in man's salvation are connected with it, and hang and depend upon it, (Eph. 1:3,4; Rom. 8:30) they need only be just named in order, since they have been suggested under the former heads.

2b8a. Effectual Calling. "Whom he did predestinate, them he called"; all the predestinated, or chosen ones, are in time called, and are called according to the eternal purpose and grace of God in election (Rom. 8:30; 2 Tim. 1:9).

2b8b. Faith and holiness, and indeed every grace of the Spirit. Holiness is both an end and a mean in this decree, as before observed, and made certain by it; faith follows upon it as a free gift of grace, and so hope and love, and every other grace.

2b8c. Communion with God. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee", (Ps. 65:4) to come into his presence, and enjoy it in his house, his word, and ordinances.

2b8d. Justification; which is secretly a branch of it, and openly as to the manifestation of it, flows from it; "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's

elect? it is God that justifieth"; that is, the elect; who because they are chosen in Christ, they are justified in him (Rom. 8:33).

2b8e. Adoption; to which the elect are predestinated, and are denominated the children of God, being given to Christ as such when chosen in him, before the incarnation of Christ, redemption by him, or having the Spirit from him (Heb. 2:13, 14; John 11:52; Gal. 4:6).

2b8f. Glorification; "Whom he did predestinate them he glorified", (Rom. 8:30) the elect, the vessels of mercy, are "afore prepared for glory", for eternal glory and happiness; and are chosen and called to the obtaining of the glory of Christ, which the Father has given to him to bestow upon them, and which they will most certainly enjoy (Rom. 9:23; 2 Thess. 2:13,14).

2b9. Ninthly, The various properties of election may be gathered from what has been said of it; as,

2b9a. That it is eternal; it does not commence upon believing, and much less at perseverance in faith and holiness; but it was an act in God before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4).

2b9b. It is free and sovereign; God was not obliged to choose any; and as it is, he chooses whom he will, and for no other reason excepting his own glory, but because he will; "what if God willing", &c. and the difference in choosing one and not another is purely owing to his will (Rom. 9:18, 22, 23).

2b9c. It is absolute and unconditional; clear of all motives in man, or conditions to be performed by him; for it "stands not of works, but of him that calleth", the will of him that calls (Rom. 9:11).

2b9d. It is complete and perfect; it is not begun in eternity and completed in time, nor takes its rise from the will of God, and is finished by the will of man; nor is made perfect by faith, holiness, obedience, and persevering in well doing, but has its complete being in the will of God at once.

2b9e. It is immutable and irrevocable; God never repents of, nor revokes the choice he has made; some choose their friends and favourites, and alter their minds and choose others; but God is in one mind, and never makes any alteration in the choice he has made; and hence their state is safe and secure.

2b9f. It is special and particular; that is, those who are chosen are chosen to be a special people above all others, and are particular persons, whose names are written in the book of life; not in general, men of such and such characters, but persons well known to God, and distinctly fixed on by him.

2b9g. Election may be known by the persons, the objects of it; partly by the blessings flowing from it, and connected with it, before observed, bestowed upon them; for to whomsoever such blessings of grace are applied, they must be the elect of God, (Rom. 8:30) they may know it from the efficacy of the Gospel upon them, in their calling and conversion, (1 Thess. 1:4, 5) and by the Spirit of God testifying their adoption to them, to which they are predestinated, (Rom. 8:15, 16) and they may be able to make it known to others by their holy lives and conversations; which is meant by making their calling and election sure, even by their good works, as some copies read, (2 Peter 1:10) since both calling and election are to be made sure, and therefore by some third thing: indeed no man can know his election of God until he is called; it would be presumption in him to claim this character, until he is born again; nor should any man conclude himself a reprobate because a sinner, since all men are sinners; even God's elect, who are by nature, and in no wise better than others, but children of wrath, even as others.

There are many things objected to this doctrine of election; but since it is so clear and plain from scripture, and is written as with a sunbeam in it, all objections to it must be mere cavil. It is urged, that God is said to be "good to all, and his tender mercies over all his works", (Ps. 145:9) which seems inconsistent with his choosing some and leaving others; but this is to be understood not of his special grace, but of his providential goodness, which extends to the elect and non-elect, the evil and the good, the just and the unjust, (Matthew 5:45) and in this sense he is the saviour, preserver, and bountiful benefactor of all men, but especially of them that believe (1 Tim. 4:10). It is observed that Christ says he was sent not to "condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved", and therefore not some only but all; but to understand this of all the individuals in the world is not true, because all are not saved; and so this end of Christ's mission, so understood, is not answered; but by the world is meant the world of God's elect, whom he was reconciling in Christ, and for whom Christ gave his life, and became the propitiation for their sins, even for all the chosen throughout the whole world, and particularly among the Gentiles. Nor is 1 Timothy 2:4 any objection to this doctrine, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth"; for all men are not eventually saved, nor do all come to the knowledge of the truth of the Gospel; nor indeed have all the means of that knowledge: but the sense is, either, that all that are saved, God wills to be saved; or that it is his will that men of all sorts and of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, should be saved; which agrees with the context (1 Tim. 2:1, 2, 7). And when it is said of God, that he is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance", (2 Peter 3:9) this must be interpreted, not of all mankind, but of the elect, to whom this and the preceding epistle are inscribed, and who are in (2 Peter 3:8) styled "beloved", and in this verse, the "us" towards whom "God is longsuffering"; now it is the will and pleasure of God that none of those should perish, but all in due time be brought to faith in Christ, and to repentance towards God: but objections from hence, with others of the like kind, are not sufficient to overturn this truth, so abundantly established in the sacred scriptures.

