

TWO
DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED AT SLATE RIDGE,

June 9th 1805;

IN WHICH THE

DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

IS

PROVED AND ILLUSTRATED.

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P R E F A C E,

THE Author of the following discourses, when he prepared and preached them, had not the remotest intention of publishing them. The prevalence of the contrary opinions, and the zeal of the asserters of them, manifested in attempts to subvert the sound faith of the unsuspecting and less discerning, were principal arguments to induce him to undertake the discussion of the following subject. The great object in view was to establish and confirm the doctrine of ELECTION, by a careful examination of the scriptural foundation on which it rests. This must be conceived to be necessary and important, not only because it is a radical doctrine in the christian system, but also, because it is treated with bold contempt by some, and opposed with unchristian severity by others.

In this attempt, plainness has been studied; obscure metaphysical reasonings have been carefully avoided, in order, with more success, to attain to the main end.....the conviction and satisfaction of the minds of the hearers.

The Author has little pretensions either to strict accuracy, or refined sublimity of composition. He hopes that the candid reader will consider him as aiming only to instruct; and that he will overlook those inaccuracies which offend the refined palate of the rhetorician, when he assumes the chair of the critic. By the request of his hearers only, is he constrained to admit them into public, through an humble expectation of their being useful. Should my readers think them answerable

to this end; and should good be produced by them, even in the smallest degree, there will a compensation be given, far exceeding the desert of

Your Friend, &c.

THE AUTHOR.

N. E. The request of my hearers, to prepare these discourses for the press, had been long since complied with, had not my own indisposition during the Autumn, and afflictive dispensations of God's providence in my family, occurred to prevent.

TWO DISCOURSES

ON THE

Doctrine of Election.

EPHESIANS—CHAP. i. VERSES 4 & 5.

According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

THE plan of redemption is suitable and sufficient for the salvation of sinners ; it is consistent with the dignity and glory of its author ; and in all its parts, were we capable of tracing them, such as to encourage hope and demand gratitude. It contemplates man in his defiled, guilty and helpless condition, and makes provision adequate to his necessities, and suitable for his deliverance.....It holds forth a Saviour, in whom the divine and human natures are mysteriously united. Through this union, he stands related to God, the glorious being offended, and to man, the offender. He fulfils the demands of a law, suited both to our nature and condition as men, while the unity of his person gives the obedience infinite worth and efficacy. Cloathed with the prophetic, priestly and kingly offices, he is furnished and qualified for the performance of whatever our case requires. The discharge of the duties proper to these offices, embraces all things necessary to our salvation. Herein the law of God is magni-

fied, his justice glorified, and his mercy illustriously displayed, through the obedience of so dignified a person as the Son of God, and through the gifts of grace bestowed on men in him. In him is justice satisfied ! In him the enemies of man are conquered ! In him are treasures of grace laid up for the end of being communicated to men, for the productive increase and perfection of the heavenly life !

The work is all divine....the plan is gracious in all its parts..... It bears the marks of its heavenly origin....it rises infinitely above human contrivance, and calls us to admire and adore its author.

Since, then, it is of this description, we might be led to conclude, that the counsel of God respecting it, was equal in duration with its author, or that it was eternal. We might expect nothing else than to find that it would exhibit marks of his sovereignty and independence. Unmoved by any external circumstance, does the eternal Jehovah direct and govern the concerns of the universe. " Who knoweth the mind of God, or who, being his counsellor, hath taught him ? He is of one mind, and who can turn him ? " Often indeed must we say, when we look upon the mazes of infinite contrivance, that " we cannot see him, yet judgment is no less before him ; on that account we are therefore called to trust in him." The wheels of his sovereign administration always move towards the point which he has determinately fixed, however, to us, they may seem to diverge ; and the consummation will reflect the glory of the whole, and of all its parts, upon the author. Those things which we sometimes presumptuously imagine to be spots and blemishes in the divine government, will no doubt then appear most expressive of his glory.....What we now adore in silence, if we are admitted to the fellowship, we will no doubt forever admire as excelling in glory : for, " now we see through a glass darkly, but then shall we see face to face."

When we attempt the illustration and proof of the doctrine of my text, we are called indeed to advance with fear and trembling. It is involved in mystery, which perhaps eternity itself will not fully unfold to the most advanced grade of human intelligence: yet, while we profess to know but a part, and a small part of God's ways, we cannot esteem it our duty to remain inattentive to our progress in the knowledge of the truth, since we believe that this is a rational as well as an appointed means of the enlargement of the human mind, and by the blessing of Christ, the means of qualifying it for heavenly felicity. Circumscribed by the letter of revealed truth, humbly looking for the direction of the spirit of wisdom, we attempt the arduous, and we hope, useful task. While we advance with humble confidence, as far as revelation enlightens our way, and fix our faith upon it, we will not be charged with transgressing the bounds of duty; since we promptly subscribe to the general concession, that to go beyond this, is to travel forbidden ground.

The doctrine of my text is the eternal purpose of God to save a portion of mankind, sinners, through his free and sovereign grace.

That this is a doctrine which was taught by Christ and his Apostles, it requires violence to the human mind, and determinate discredit of the divine testimony, to deny....while the most moderate share of common understanding, accompanied with a proper regard to the veracity of the witness, (who, in this case, is God) will enable us to discover and embrace the important truth, however involved in mystery, or however contrary to the supposed interests or bias of the corrupt and distempered mind. In the twentieth chap. of Mat. after Christ had asserted his right to the exercise of sovereignty in the distribution of his gifts, he subjoins this declaration, significant of the issue of the gospel dispensation...."Many are called, but few are chosen." The calls of the gospel are

not to be considered as establishing a claim against God, for the possession of the heavenly inheritance, with all to whom they come : so far from this, that the gift of that depends on the choice or election of him that calls you.....those who are so chosen among the called, are denominated the elect. Matthew, xxiv. 22. " For the elect ~~take~~ those days shall be shortened." Rom. viii. 33. " Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect." And, xi. 7. " Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for ; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." And, II. Tim. . 9 we are said to be called "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." These passages of scripture tend to the confirmation of the general doctrine of my text, and are of such easy application to the point, as to need no illustration.

In an humble attempt to illustrate and prove this doctrine, I shall call your attention....

I. To the several clauses of my text, which I shall endeavor to explain ; and having raised observations from them, to illustrate and prove:

II. I shall endeavor to answer objections :

III. Shew its dignity and importance as a doctrine in the Christian system :

IV. Point out the effects which the rejection of this doctrine will have upon the above system :

Lastly, improve the subject.

This method recalls our attention to the illustration of the several clauses of my text, together with the proof of the several propositions which the observations raised from them may contain.

"According as he hath chosen us."

These words are so closely connected with the preceding verses, that the relative "he" has for its antecedent, "God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ," mentioned in the beginning of the third verse. The Apostle had, in this third verse, been rendering praise to God the Father, for the unspeakable benefits of the new covenant gifted to them in Jesus Christ. The words of our text contain an enumeration of the benefits of this gracious dispensation. In this he begins at the source, the eternal purpose of God appointing some to glory.....*"He hath chosen us."*

The Apostle in this expression, includes with himself, the members of the church at Ephesus, they being visibly the subjects of holy grace. Visible holiness justifies Apostles, Ministers, and Christians, in reckoning such as possess it, the chosen of God, and heirs of glory; because the judgment of man can only be founded on external evidence. There were, no doubt, many real Christians in this church. The Apostle might with propriety, include the whole church, as our blessed Lord, speaking of the future dignity of his disciples, Mat. xix. 28, thus addresses them....*"Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel;"* although he well knew that Judas would never arrive at that honor.

It is evident from these words, that the election of God respects the persons, and not the qualities of men. *"He hath chosen us."....Us,* who have been rendered the subjects of saving grace by the calling of his holy spirit.

This view of the words gives us the following proposition, viz. that the decree of God, concerning the salvation of sinners, is not a general purpose, by which he has determined to save all who may believe, or perform good works, but a particular designation of certain individual persons to salvation, and the means thereof, who were viewed as sinners when he chose them.

It cannot be consistent with the glory of God, to suspend any of his purposes, upon conditions to be performed by his creatures. Were this the case, men would be free agents, in a sense by no means consistent with the relation of the creature to the Creator.... They would be free from every degree of subjection to the authority of God, and from all accountability to him as a sovereign. Besides, in this, is contained a commitment of power which God could not, in consistency with his dignity, grant to any of his creatures, viz. the execution of the designs of his infinite mind, in which there must necessarily exist the most perfect consistency to creatures liable to all the possibility of mutation, which the idea of creature admits. This idea of dependence of divine purposes on the will of the creature, subjects the divine will to that of being wholly dependent on him, which, God forbid, that the meanest understanding blessed with revealed light, should admit.

But, admitting that men are free agents in the full latitude of the licentious supposition, and that divine purposes are suspended on conditions to be performed by them, the consequences reflect dishonor on the divine character. If men are free agents in the sense above considered, then they may fulfil or not, the condition at pleasure; and a possibility at least exists, that the purposes of God may fail of accomplishment, through the inattention or obstinate non-compliance of his creatures; and in this case, though God had purposed to save many, none might be saved. Were this a part of the plan for accomplishing the salvation of sinners, even with the Almighty, an uncertainty must exist as to the extent and influence of the Redeemer's purchase, until the general convocation at the day of judgment, when all should stand numbered before him. Such suppositions as the above, exhibit their patrons as introducing a familiarity with God, at once criminal and dangerous. Psalms, l. 21. "Thou thought-

lest I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."

After this analysis of the negative part of the proposition above stated, in which its impiety is exposed, the affirmative part claims our attention.

The scriptures nowhere teach us, that God hath chosen faith, repentance, or any good quality in men whatever. Their constant language is, that persons are appointed heirs of life eternal. "Whom he did fore-know," says the Apostle, Romans, viii. 29. "he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, and whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Now, the text reads not, that he predestinated those whom he fore-knew would be conformed to the image of his son to eternal glory, but, that he had predestinated the persons whom he took knowledge of, as heirs of salvation, to this and the other means of it, viz. calling and justification. This view of the words (which is the only consistent one) attributes to God, not only the glory due to the wisdom and benevolence of his designs, but also, that arising from the execution, and the certain happy issue.

The word here rendered predestinate, is derived from *Pro* signifying *before*, and *Orizo*, to *mark out or ordain*, and in its meaning, is very pointed and emphatical, viz. to mark out, or ordain before hand. The simple *Orizo* is used, Acts xvii. 31. in reference to the designation of Christ to the office of a judge. "He will judge the world by that man whom," *Orise*, "he hath ordained," or by a decree fixed. The same original word is translated Rom. i. 4. "declared to be," in reference to the sonship of Christ. Now, in each of these forms of translating it, the word retains its force, and has the same derivation...before hand ordained, or declared to be. Nay, there is greater em-

phasis in it than can be expressed in our language. If I may attempt to shew its force, I will say that it means, to "set bounds before hand." In this sense of the words, God is exhibited as setting bounds to men before their existence, in which he will certainly contain them until the completion of all his purposes concerning them.

Our Saviour calls upon his disciples to "rejoice, because their names were written in heaven." In this he addresses them in a manner the most pointed, assuring them that their salvation was certain: and the reason which he assigns for this is, that "their names were written in heaven;" which words strongly represent God's determination to save them: but had faith been the object of divine choice, and not the persons of the disciples, Christ would certainly have called them to rejoice, because God had determined to save all believers. The disciples might have doubted whether they merited that character, and in that case, could derive very little or no consolation from his words. Without any room left for a doubt, Christ fills at once the cup of consolation, informing them that "their names were written in heaven"....that they had a personal interest in the inheritance of blessedness....were recorded as heirs by the infinite donor, and could not of course fail of entering on the possession.

The Apostle, in writing to the Philippians, iv. 3. exhorts an eminent minister of Christ, whom he calls a true yoke-fellow, "to help those women who labored with him in the gospel, with Clement also, and other fellow-laborers, whose names are in the book of life." The judgment of the Apostle, that their "names were in the book of life," was no doubt, a judgment of charity, drawn from the purity and zeal of their practice; but it was drawn from justifiable principles....the temper and conduct which the religion of Jesus inspires. He was well convinced that these were persons whose salvation had been fixed and deter-

mined in heaven, since such fruit could not appear unless a supernatural change had passed upon them ; and this change effected, abundant evidence was given, that the persons on whom it had taken place were the objects of electing love. The term "the book of life," denotes something unchangeably established. We do not suppose that any such book is really written in heaven as a book of remembrance : the language is figurative. An allusion is had to the usage among men, of committing matters of great importance to writing, that there may be a certainty to supply the defects of the mind, and renew recollection. In conformity to this, and in order to the confirmation of our faith in his certain knowledge of, and his unremitted attention to us, God has condescended to represent himself as enrolling our names in a book of life. When, then, the scriptures inform us of "names written in the book of life," they convey to us an absolute certainty, that God has purposed to make the persons bearing them, the heirs of life :....and as names are mentioned as the matter of record, it is a wide departure from their meaning to say, that men are chosen because of the qualities they may possess ; because a name points out a person, but by no means the qualities of that person....For instance, Peter, James and John were pious men, and eminent disciples of Jesus Christ. Would any man therefore say, that all who have borne those names ever since, possessed the same virtues, and were also disciples of that honorable master ?

It is also plain from this and similar passages of scripture, that some are spoken of as having their "names written in the book of life," in contra-distinction to others whose names are not inserted there. Rev. xx. 15. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." From which it is manifest that the decree of God respecting the salvation of sinners is not indeterminate and general, resting (as some suppose) on conditions in the power of the creature ; for if it

rested thus, how could any be distinguished as having their “names written in the book of life,” from others, who in future might fulfil the same condition, and become entitled to the same benefit?

If it be objected by any that God performs the act of recording names, as men arrive at the fulfilment of the condition, and that therefore this reasoning is inconclusive, I refer them to the Apostle Paul, writing to the Romans, ix. 11, 12 & 13 verses, where he speaks of the descendants of Abraham, in Jacob and Esau : “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger, as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” This declaration concerning Jacob and Esau was delivered before either was born, to the end that it might be manifest that “the purpose of God must stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.”....Or, in other words, that the purpose of God might not appear to rest on the works of the persons, but on the determination of his own judgment, and the exercise of his sovereign will concerning them.

Hence, it follows as a necessary consequence, that, since God’s purpose of election is founded in his own good pleasure, abstracted from every consideration of property or quality in man, no date can be given to his determinations ; they are all co-eternal with himself.

The truth is, the scriptures always speak of faith and sanctification as fruits and effects of election, and not as the cause. The Apostle Paul, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians, ch. ii. after having given a distressing picture of the bold and daring impiety of some, whose crimes he mentions as an evidence, and the cause of God’s having forsaken them, “of his sending them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie,” &c. and at the

13th verse, rejoices over the Thessalonians, when he considers their piety and zeal as testifying their favorable standing in the account of their heavenly father. "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by our gospel," &c. In which the Apostle determines the character and state of the Thessalonians, the "chosen of God." 2dly. The means by which this end should be accomplished, "through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth." Here the order of the work of salvation is plainly stated: the election of God is the source, and this election secures the application and use of the means which infallibly obtain the destined end. Acts, xiii. 49. when Paul and Barnabas were rejected by the Jews, and agreeably to prophetic direction, turned to the Gentiles, opening to them the hope which the gospel offered them, the Gentiles "were glad, and glorified the word of God, and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." Here the success of the Apostle's preaching is bounded by the ordination of heaven respecting the persons who composed his auditory: those of them "believed who were ordained to eternal life." The reverse of this is very properly inferred, viz. that those who were not ordained to eternal life, believed not. Faith, therefore, no where exists, but when it is produced by the Holy Spirit, making application of means to the heart of a sinner, chosen of God to eternal salvation.

2dly. I observe that this choice or election of God, contains a definite number of persons, which can neither be encreased nor diminished.

This is consistent with the perfections of Deity: it is well confirmed by divine testimony. That there should be a determination with the Deity to save some of mankind, and that he

should be ignorant or doubtful with respect to the individuals to whom his grace and salvation should be extended, consists not with the infinity of his power and knowledge : the latter comprehends not only the things that do exist, with the various circumstances attendant on their existence, and relations in which they may in future be placed, but also embraces whatever is possible as its objects : the former equally extended, moves and governs all things, by the direction of infinite wisdom, so as invariably to maintain the proper and necessary connection between the counsels of God, and the ends which are their object. It can never then, in consistency with these attributes, be alledged, that God's knowledge comprehends the heirs of salvation, and that any of those can fail of obtaining it, without the impiety of robbing him of that omnipotence which essentially belongs to him. Isaiah xvi. 10. "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Our blessed Lord, in that intercessory prayer which he offered up with pious ardour peculiar to himself, recognizes this doctrine. "I pray for them.....I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." Through the whole of this most affectionate address to the Father, it is manifest that our Lord had in view a beloved, selected number, whom he then, even then, gathered in his arms, and carried in his bosom to the throne of mercy, and plead, as their high priest, their deliverance from ruin. As the father of this blessed family, he intercedes for the children of his care, to the exclusion of those who belonged not to him by special gift in the covenant of redemption. Psalms xxii. 30. "A seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." And, Isaiah liii. 10. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days," &c. In these passages Christ is regarded as the parent of a spiritual seed, which, in the different periods of the world, should be born to him by the spirit, as the fruit of his me-

mediation for them, and as the accomplishment, to him, of the promissory part of the covenant.

In the eighth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, when the prophet, speaking of the great declension of piety among the people of Israel, of the sore judgments which should be laid upon them, thus addresses God.....“ Behold I, and the children whom the Lord hath given me; are for signs and for wonders in Israel,” &c. Here Isaiah seems to represent himself, and the few in Israel, who had received the truth in the “love of it,” and were in reality related to God in Christ Jesus, as being signs or tokens for God, of his grace, and objects of wonder and astonishment to men. These were given to the prophet as fruits of his labors with that people ; though it were a very limited view of these words to confine them to him ;...they are certainly to be understood as the words of Christ, as the prophet here typically represents him. In Hebrews ii. 13. the above words are quoted by the Apostle, and applied directly to Christ. “Behold I, and the children which God hath given me.” Here, then, we have prophetic language explained and applied by an inspired author, in which, Christ is represented as presenting himself and the children which the Father had given him to the Father, as the obedient subjects of his grace, and as the heirs of his glory ; where the elect of God are distinguished from his enemies by the endearing appellation of children.

In the sixth chapter of John, at the 37th verse, our Lord, having in the 36th charged some with unbelief after having seen him, informs them, that their rejection of the Saviour would not lessen the designed effects of his mission ; “ For,” says he, “ all that the Father hath given me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Here, the gift to Christ, of a specific number, is expressed in these words : “ All that the Father hath given me”.....and the certainty of the salva-

tion of all comprehended in the gift, is confirmed in language, at once the most authoritative and expressive....“ shall come to me ;” while their continuance in an estate of favor with him is attested in the latter clause.....“ him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” In John x. 26. Christ assigns the reason why the Jews remained in unbelief, notwithstanding they had been witnesses of those works, through which, proof of his divinity was given. “ Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.” In the 27th verse he gives the characteristics of his flock....“ They hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” In the 28th verse he mentions his grace....“ I give unto them eternal life.” And at the 29th verse the Father’s gift to Christ is again mentioned.....“ My Father which gave them me is greater than all ; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” In this passage, there is a manifest distinction made between the elect and the reprobate part of mankind : the latter believed not. Why ? Because they were not of Christ’s sheep....because they were not put under his care as appointed of the Father to eternal salvation. Again, “ My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.” Why do they hear Christ’s voice ? Because he opens their ears to the voice of him their charmer, and their hearts to the impressions of his love. “ I know them.” How did Christ know them ? Because the Father had given them to him as a reward of his sufferings in procuring salvation for them.

A strict attention to the passages above cited, certainly, in a clear and satisfactory manner, evinces that the decree of election is definite and particular ; since they not only signify a special gift to Christ, which includes fully the idea of appointment in God the Father, but also hold up to our view the regard, attention and exercise of the power of God, as jointly engaged to secure the end proposed, viz. their advancement to glory.

But, in the uniform idea of a gift are the elect spoken of in all these quotations, by which, a reference is unquestionably had to the covenant of redemption, and to the promise of the Father made to Christ in that solemn transaction, as is plainly seen in the above....“ A seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted unto the Lord for a generation.” “ He shall see his seed,” &c. Now, I ask, is it supposable, that God the Father made such a grant to Christ without a determination to fulfil it; or is it conceivable, that in a transaction so important, the grant was so general and indeterminate as that no bounds were affixed to it? I mean, was the promise to Christ so vague as not to define whether one, a thousand, or a myriad should be saved by him? If there was no fixed number in the promise, then it follows, that Christ was uncertain whether his precious blood, when shed, would save more than one single individual soul. This, but nothing else, to him was certain. At such a consequence the human heart must shudder....Such a thought tarnishes the divine perfections....Such a supposition beclouds the glory of Jehovah in an instance of its brightest radiance, even where beams of sovereign mercy break forth toward a guilty world. If, then, a seed was given to Christ in the covenant of grace, it must be concluded that a number was fixed, and that all the individuals composing it were pointed out.

Our Lord, speaking of false prophets, and of the prodigies which should be done by them, says, “ They shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect.” That is, if any power could prevail against the purpose of election, this might be thought likely to succeed. Here, then, is asserted the impossibility of cutting off any of the elect from the end (eternal life) to which they are appointed. It is here established, beyond all manner of doubt, that of whatever extent the election of God is, it will not be lessened by any power external to himself; and the supposition that the number should be either increased or diminished impi-

ously insinuates, that God, through ignorance, did not know it; through carelessness did not fix it; through weakness failed of accomplishing his designs; or, through inconstancy and caprice, had changed them.

When we reflect that many in the world believe and teach a doctrine contrary to that maintained above; and from which is thrown back, in the face of Jehovah, all the baseness and insult, contained in the above inferences, who can forbear to ask....Why sleeps the thunder of Omnipotence?....Why darteth not terrific vengeance, peal on peal, on those guilty heads that dare thus exalt themselves against God, or level his character with that of the meanest of his creatures?....Who that fears God, does not deprecate the deserved wrath, and plead their forgiveness?

We conclude this particular with words sufficient, without any comment, to satisfy every honest mind. “The foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal....The Lord knoweth them that are his.”

The last observation which I make from this clause of the verse, is, That none can fail to become partakers of that salvation to which they are chosen.

This observation has been anticipated in the last; but, since it is a quarter from which many ill-directed weapons have been thrown against the unshaken foundation of this radical doctrine in the christian system, permit me to pay it proper attention.

The decree of God respecting the salvation of some, partakes of the nature of his decrees in general; and these are all absolute, and of course unchangeable. Psalms xxxiii. 11. “The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.” If it should be objected here, that the Psalmist refers to some particular purpose, when he predicates concerning it, that it “standeth forever,” let it be recollected, that al-

though the scriptures speak of separate purposes that we may the better understand their meaning, yet, it were impious to suppose that these were indeed separate in the divine mind. The conceptions of that infinite mind are neither various nor manifold; for the one implies instability, the other succession in its operations, each of which is inconsistent with the Deity. All the counsels of which the scriptures speak are in the eternal mind one single and undivided act. "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said it, and will he not do it. Hath he spoken it, and will he not make it good. I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. With him is neither variableness nor shadow of turning." Such is the truth and unchangeableness of the divine character. The choice of any, if the nature of God be of this description, infallibly insures the attainment of the end contemplated in the act of choosing. In a passage above cited, a chain of effects is mentioned as proceeding from divine predestination as the cause, and as concerned with the same persons as the subjects which comprehend the whole work of salvation from its beginning until its issue; and the agency in producing them is ascribed wholly to God. "Whom he did fore-know, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, and whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." What room, then, is left to doubt of the salvation of any of God's elect? Or what arguments are wanting to confirm the faith of the people of God in the steadfast faithfulness of him that hath promised. I have given you the word of God to the confirmation of this already. An oath for confirmation is the end of strife with man. Will the oath of God satisfy the doubting or unbelieving on this head?.....Hebrews vi, 17, 18, he condescends to give even this, "God willing, more abundantly, to shew unto the heirs of his promise (viz. his chosen) the immuta-

bility of his counsel, hath confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

We have shewed already, that all God's elect will, in their appointed time, be effectually called ; and this is enough to prove, that all such are actually justified. Romans iii, 25, 26, the Apostle Paul expressly declares, that " God hath set forth his son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood ; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past : " for this end, " that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." The righteousness of Christ was a perfect righteousness ; it answered to all the demands of the law, both preceptive and penal. God the Father, who applies or imputes it to men, is a being whose every act is perfect. If then the righteousness by which the sinner is justified, is infinitely perfect, if it be God who imputes it, and on account of it justifies the ungodly, with what heart-felt extacy may saints exult with the Apostle : " who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? it is God that justifieth ! who is he that condemneth ? " Shall such a righteousness as has been mentioned, be imputed, and shall it be inadequate to the ends of its imputation ? Shall God, in the exercise of his justice, justify the sinner, and again condemn him ? No, the righteousness imputed, the perfections of him who justifies, and the terms of the everlasting covenant, all evince that the gates of hell shall not prevail against such a soul.

I might load pages with testimony to the establishing of this point, and employ arguments almost innumerable were it necessary. What has been said will be enough with every honest and thoughtful mind ; to say more, would betray too unfavorable an opinion in me of the religious information of my hearers.

II. The second consideration which the passage offers to our attention, is the manner of the choice....“ *He hath chosen us in him.*” i. e. *in Christ.*

Some suppose that the words “in him” signify the same with through him, and expose the passage, by this means, to the danger of being injuriously perverted. To be chosen through Christ implies, that Christ was the moving or instrumental cause of election; which favors the conception, that God, having foreseen that Christ’s merits would procure our salvation, for the sake of that merit appointed him to save some. The merits of Christ are indeed the instrumental cause or the means of our salvation, but can bear no such relation to God’s purpose of election, since this would render the will of God subservient to the means by which it accomplishes its own determinations, and represents the merits of Christ as the cause of election. No where in scripture is it said that we are chosen through Christ, though we are said to have redemption through his blood, and the forgiveness of sin, and to be saved by him. The decree of election is therefore the cause of the redemption of Christ, and the latter the means by which the former is discovered to the world. If Christ’s atonement were the cause of election, then salvation had not been of free and sov'reign grace; for in that case, an obligation would lay on God the Father to choose sinners, as well as to confer on them the benefits of salvation;....and it could not be said, as is said by the Apostle, that he has “predestinated us according to the good pleasure of his will, and to the praise and glory of his grace.”

The words may perhaps be better understood if we arrange them thus: “He hath chosen us in choosing him;” which certainly is the scriptural notion of this doctrine. Jesus Christ was chosen or predestinated to the office of a Mediator, in which he was considered in the relation of a sponsor or representative of

men.....As the covenant head he transacted our concerns. The Apostle Peter, in his first epistle, i. 19, 20. speaking of the inestimable price of redemption....the blood of Christ, whom he compares to a "lamb without blemish and without spot," states, that "he was foreordained before the foundation of the world." Christ and his spiritual seed were contemplated in the divine mind, and predestinated in the same act, each to their proper end; the former to the fulfilment of the office of Mediator, the latter to salvation. Psalms lxxxix. 3, 4. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant; thy seed will I establish forever;" and at the 19th verse Christ is called "one chosen out of the people." In these words, the everlasting establishing of the elect, here called the seed of David, (who in this instance is evidently held up as a type of Christ) is confirmed by an oath to Christ, and the matter of the oath is, "thy seed will I establish forever." That we are chosen in Christ, therefore signifies, that the Everlasting Father, in choosing him the head, chose also the members of the body of which he is the head, by giving them to him, or stating them in him.

In the fifth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans, a lengthy parallel is drawn between Christ and Adam, in relation to the effects of the perfect obedience of the former, and the disobedience of the latter....the parallel is closed with these words: "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." And elsewhere it is said, "As in Adam all did die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." It is impossible to affix any rational meaning to this and such like passages, but by contemplating each of these persons in a representative capacity. From Adam the representative of all mankind, sprung the whole human family, partakers of the qualities of his nature, and liable to the consequences of his actions. Christ was constituted head of the elect, and from him were to spring a spiritual progeny, who should in due time

be rendered like him, and who, from everlasting, by their union to him, were entitled to an eternal inheritance. The decree of election has therefore Christ the representative of man, together with all who were given him in the everlasting covenant, as a reward of his mediatorial obedience; for its object; and all the latter were considered as members of his mystical body when the Father chose them. This is indeed mysterious, yet it is the doctrine of the scriptures; let us, therefore, patiently wait for the discovery of his glory therein; since Christ hath told us that there is a day when (if we are his chosen) "we shall know that he is in the Father, we in him, and he in us."

Again, it is said that this election in Christ was "before the foundation of the world."

By "before the foundation of the world," we are certainly to understand eternity. Whatever preceded the reckoning of time must be eternal. The reckoning of time commenced with creation: before this there was no arrangement of events, as to priority or succession....eternity admits of no succession....The partitions of time cannot enter that unknown abyss.

That God's purpose concerning our salvation, is an eternal purpose, is expressly asserted in Ephesians iii. 1. "That the manifold wisdom of God might be known by the Church, according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." The same original word, which is here used to express the eternity of God's purpose, is used, Rom. xvi. 26, to express the eternity of God; which clearly shews, that the passage is not to be taken in a limited, but in the most extensive meaning. "We speak," says the Apostle, I. Cor. ii. 7. "the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory." And again, II. Tim. i. 9. we are said "to be saved, according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world

began," Here the "purpose and grace" are said to be "given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, where Christ is represented as acting the part of a surety for us before we existed. He received, in that capacity, the treasures of grace comprehended in the purpose, which he bestows in the administration of the covenant, upon the proper objects, at the appointed seasons. The benefits of redemption were in the hands of Christ, that is, made over to him before the world. Now if there were a necessity of this at all before the world, or before our existence, it must be presumed that the same necessity existed for their being so from eternity. The original words in the last quoted passage translated "before the world began" are very expressive....*pro chronon aionion*, before always existing times, or time without division or succession. We are certainly, then, to conclude, that whatever is dated by the Spirit of God, before creation, is eternal.

Acts xv. 18. "Known unto God are all his works, even from the beginning."

To know, sometimes, but rarely, signifies a bare acquaintance with a thing, without any relation to purpose, or affection concerning it. Often, too, it is to be understood as comprehending both. The image of a thing in the mind, without any determination to realize the conception, by the actual formation of the thing, concerning which it is formed, is a naked and visionary conception, and is only the offspring of vain and limited minds.—By this kind of knowledge, you easily see that no good is effected. When, then, we are told, that "all God's works," even those conceived by us to be future, "are known unto him, even from the beginning," we must conclude that they are so, as to an agent in the performance of them: as to one engaged about the completion of his designs: as to one who hath in his power the means, and has the ability of using them to the accomplishment of the destined end. This idea of knowledge only

consists with worthy conceptions of the eternal mind. Wherever, then, knowledge or fore-knowledge of events is ascribed to God, you are always to understand the purpose as included ; by this, the means are so governed as to bring forward the event in its proper season. Lay aside this notion of divine knowledge, and you introduce to moral agents the system of chance, or the uncontrollable laws of natural necessity.

As God never began to exist, so, he never was without determination as to the manner in which he should dispose of his creatures. He, being the infinite and eternal being, cannot but comprehend all things ; and every of his counsels must be co-eternal with himself. Justly may we exclaim, " Oh the highth and the depth, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are thy judgments, and thy ways past finding out."

Again, the words suggest to us the end for which he hath chosen us, viz. " That we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

In this end for which sinners are elected, is comprehended the imperfect purity of this life, and the perfect holiness of the life to come. Holiness may be defined to be an habitual devotedness of the soul to God. It necessarily supposes a supreme regard of divine excellency, a real love to the law of God, and delight in that course of obedience which it prescribes. This definition of holiness by no means requires an entire freedom from sin in order to its existence : it only supposes the predominance of pious habits, exercises and affections, and a train of conduct, justly representing the gracious estate of the soul....It shews itself by continued struggles against sin, and arduous endeavors to advance toward perfection.

From this clause of my text, I make the following observations, viz. That the holiness, which I have briefly described, is mentioned as the effect, and not as the cause of election.

If it were true, that God hath chosen men because of foreseen holiness, our text would assume a different shape. It would read, "He hath chosen us, because we were or would be holy," which would be a choice of qualities, separated from their subjects, or a choice of men, nonentities, since these could not exist without his agency in producing them.

That the decree of election respects the production of holiness in the objects of it, is plain from various passages of scripture. Ephes. ii. 10. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." These words of the Apostle called the attention of the Ephesians from themselves, as the authors of their good works, and from boasting on that ground, to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, and from this agent, as the immediate cause of their reformation, to the love of the heavenly Father, who had "before ordained" that this should be their happy condition. In II. Thessalonians ii. 13. the Apostle with gratitude mentions the grace of God in choosing sinners to holiness of life....."We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Here, the choice is of the persons of the Thessalonians to salvation, but through a fixed means....the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth. For the end of accomplishing this work was the Holy Spirit expressly commissioned, and in reference to it is called the Spirit of Holiness. When Christ, comforting his disciples, promises to send him, he assures them that "he will guide them into all truth." In this work of the divine Spirit, God is glorified by the discovery of his gracious designs to a guilty world. The work of regeneration is a work capable of performance only by an infinite agent ; and it cannot be conceived that the opera-

tions of the wise God are performed in a rash, casual, or unpremeditated manner: they are, therefore, such as have originated from the eternal counsels of his infinite mind.

“ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself.”

This clause has special relation to the preceding part of my text....It is introduced for the purpose of illustrating the manner in which the great objects of election are secured. Why hath God made choice of any, and distinguished them from the rest of men by the production of holiness in them, each in his proper season? The answer is, that “ he hath predestinated them to the adoption of children,” &c. In their election he conferred on them a title to an heavenly inheritance, advanced them to the dignity of adoption into his family, and thereby constituted them heirs to himself, and joint heirs with Christ. That any should be admitted to this relation and these privileges, who should be destitute of holiness, were inconsistent with the thing intended, and with the perfection of him that had appointed it. God, therefore, predestinated those, and those only, whom he had chosen, that they should be holy, to the adoption of children; or the Apostle, having stated God’s choice of some, and the manner in which he hath determined to distinguish them from others, by the holy qualities to be implanted in them, here makes an elegant transition to the glorious dignities to be conferred on them....the sum of which is comprehended in adoption.

Adoption, to which we are said to be predestinated, is that gracious act of God the Father, by which we are actually received as his children, and obtain a right to the benefits of the covenant of grace.

The manner in which we are predestinated to the above honorable relation is “ by Jesus Christ, unto himself.”

Jesus Christ is God's only begotten son ; the same in nature and essence, equal in eternity and glory with the Father. The chosen of God are united to Christ so that they are contemplated by the Father as one with him, and in this sense are called "joint heirs with Christ." Their union to Christ is specified by their being partakers of the "divine nature," and of course, their tempers are assimilated to those of him, whose brethren and sisters they are. This relation to the Son, as it supposes similarity of temper and disposition, for it is said, that the elect are predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, so it includes the filial temper which endures submission to the Father's will. The will of Christ was devoted to the direction of his Father's.... his brethren are constrained to submission to the same. To be united to Christ is at once an unspeakable honor to men, and a means whereby Christ is honored...." Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God ;" and those upon whom his honor is bestowed are the "seed that shall serve him, they shall be accounted unto the Lord for a generation." That these glorious ends, from eternity fixed in God's immutable decree, might be accomplished, "God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive" or be made partakers of "the adoption of sons."

This union is mentioned by the indwelling of the spirit of Christ, by whom the virtues and graces of christians are nourished and promoted, and through whom they are sealed unto the day of redemption. In consequence of this relation to Christ, so constituted and maintained, the Apostle, in Ephesians i. 11. mentions with joy the accomplishment of the eternal purpose of grace, in the dispensation of the gospel, in the fulness of time, in Christ Jesus, and recognizes *his* title to the eternal inheritance in common with the believing Ephesians....." In whom" viz. in Christ, "we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after

the counsel of his own will." He represents himself and believers as already entered upon an inheritance, (which form of right or possession, is only proper to those in the relation of children) and the reason of their being so enriched is stated, "being predestinated according to the purpose of him," &c. Sinners in Christ are therefore predestinated to adoption, and these are heirs to an eternal inheritance "according to the good pleasure of his will."

In these words is expressed the first cause of all the blessings that are offered or bestowed on the happy number who shall finally be admitted to the heavenly inheritance, viz. the will of God. Indeed the words imply a high degree of complacency, combined with that free act of his sovereign will, by which he was moved to appoint sinners to salvation....Micah vii. 18. "He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy."

All the acts of the infinite mind are to be referred to this as the sole cause. It may be said of God with strict propriety, that all motives of action exist within himself. He is the source of all perfection....in him is every excellence in an infinite degree....whatever is called perfection in any of his creatures, is only a spark of excellence communicated to them by him, whose creatures they are. Knowledge, righteousness, holiness, every attribute of the creature are only as the pale image of reflected light, compared with the essential light and glory of him from whom they emanate. To suppose, then, that God is moved to choose or refuse, by the agency of motives external to himself, (which motives must originate in the creatures) admits the consideration, that God has given powers capable of advancing beyond the extension of his own, and of course, that he must become the creature of beings of his own formation. The eternal mind is taught wisdom at the school of his creatures, and his determining faculties are governed by the disposition, condi-

tion, or situation of beings limited in all their powers ; limited too by him over whom a control is claimed, through our misfortune, our worth, or our success. Blasphemous the supposition ! What heart so strong, as not to shrink with horror and tremble at its own impiety, on a moment's admission of the thought, that the divine will is governed in its choice by any thing else but its own determining powers. No, no ! individuals may sail on the ocean of prosperity, or may sink into the deepest abyss of sorrow..... Nations may rise into greatness, and encrease their political importance by wealth, conquest, or wisdom in counsel, or may sink into poverty, ignominy, or abject slavery..... Worlds may revolve in their orbits, and as parts of the system of the universe beautify and adorn the whole, or they may sink into their original chaos, or be blotted out of creation, yet, in midst of all, Jehovah, acting on the eternal and infinitely wise plans of his all-comprehensive mind, remains unchanged..... He receives no new impulses from any, nor from every change. The truth is, all these things occur in fulfilment of what he had determined before he formed them, even from eternity. " I declare," says God, " the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." The haughty king of Babylon, forgetting that God ruleth over all, and exalting himself against him, was visited in judgment, was reduced to the condition of the brute, and by this painful discipline was convinced that God was king over all the earth..... When restored to understanding, he exclaims, " He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say unto him, what doest thou ?" " Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel were gathered together to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." The innumerable animate beings which every where throughout the uni-

verse employ their active powers for ends the most divine, in pursuits the most dissimilar, are all engaged in the accomplishment of the decrees of heaven. In the highest Seraph, in the lowest reptile, in all the grades of being, the hand of God, with unerring power, is executing the counsels of his will...each of these, in their proper station, are ministering to his good pleasure. Through this subserviency of all things to the will of God, the consummation of them cannot fail of being truly glorious. These general notions of infinite sovereignty, apply with strict propriety to the work of our redemption. Says God, Romans ix. 15. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion; so then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." In our first creation, he made us according to his will...he made us after the image of his own likeness. Here was a work of God marked with sovereignty, and admitted to be done in a manner consisting with his dignity and glory: but we have defaced his workmanship...we have become polluted...we are destitute of every principle of moral rectitude, and liable to the curse of the law, which is death. Our restoration to the divine favor requires that we be "created anew" that we "be born again." By whom is this work to be performed? It is a work of God alone. Is there no room for the exercise of sovereignty in this? Every real christian will answer yes! "Of his own will begat he us." "Us hath he quickened who were lately dead in trespasses and sins." "By the grace of God I am what I am," &c. "As the potter hath power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor," so doth God form us at his pleasure, whom and whenever he will; and in this, as in many of his ways, he giveth not account of any of his matters.

TWO DISCOURSES

ON THE

Doctrine of Election.

EPHESIANS....CHAP. i. VERSES 4 & 5.

According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

YOUR attention is now recalled to the subject, in consideration of which, we had progressed some length in the former part of the day.

In pursuing the plan already established, there remains for discussion the following particulars.....

I. Answering objections.

II. The dignity and importance of election, as a doctrine in the christian system.

III. The evil effects that result from the rejection of it.

Lastly, improving the subject.

Agreeably to this method, our attention is first called to the objections made against the doctrine.

To this doctrine it is objected, that it consists not with the liberty of the human will.

That this objection is ill directed against the doctrine of election, will appear from a view of the nature of human liberty.

Let it be taken as an original position, that the will of every creature is necessarily under certain limitations ; for it cannot be admitted, that God, in the formation or disposal of any creature, can consistently grant to it a liberty of entering on his own prerogative, or of acting in opposition to his own will and pleasure ; did God give such a liberty, no such thing as sin could possibly exist, since the grant on the part of God would amount to an exculpation of the offender.

Man, in his original condition, bearing the unsullied image of his Creator, was placed in circumstances suited to his dignity. The rich provisions of an earthly paradise were sufficient for gratification, delight and support, and were calculated to inspire sentiments of worship and adoration. The liberty of Adam was plainly stated.....“ Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” It is plain that his liberty consisted in eating of the fruit of all the trees ; for this he had his Creator’s special permission and instruction....the limitation related to one of them. The event indeed proved that he had power to eat of the fruit prohibited.....the prohibition itself implied this ; and the estate of man being an estate of trial, required it. His choice was now to be governed by his own prudence ; to the exercise of which, in his choice, he received the most solemn warning.....thus fairly dealt with, did our first father enter on a probationary estate. The laws of that estate did not admit on the part of God, a determinate communication of power, whereby his standing would have been secured ; for then the first estate of man had been better than that of angels

....they were liable to fall, as the event proved : nor was it consistent with the idea of probation, that God should secure his standing, as this supposes a preparation, through improvement, and testimony of fidelity, for a higher estate, even an heavenly one. Man then perfect, in the possession of the divine likeness, transgressed the limits of his liberty, in eating the forbidden fruit, and his ruin ensued of course. From this, it is clearly discovered, that the liberty of the creature cannot be different from, nor opposed to the will of the Creator. Those who plead for a liberty more extensive than this, or different from it, plead for indulgence in sin, and are ministers of licentiousness.

The present condition is such, that sin is only chosen : nor does this proceed from any absolute, but from a natural necessity. Sin is our delight. To God's will is our will opposed. Our natures are wholly sinful, and all our actions of course are such. That we cannot choose nor perform what is good, nor renew our own natures, may, with equal certainty be inferred. If this then be true, (and it will require an high degree of wickedness of heart to deny it) it follows that those who teach the doctrine of predestination are the only proper asserters of human liberty. They teach, that though man be lost through his own sin and folly, yet God has purposed so to meliorate their condition, as to render many of them, even on earth, capable of complying in some degree with the requisitions of his will, and, by progressive improvement, for a full compliance in an heavenly estate.

Objection 2. It opens a door for licentiousness, since the sinners may say.....*If I am chosen to salvation I shall be saved, do what I may; if not, I shall be condemned, so that endeavors cannot profit.*

That this doctrine does not relax obligation to duty I hope to establish by convincing arguments. The sentiment abstractly considered, viz. if any are chosen to salvation, they will certain-

ly be saved ; if not, they will as certainly be condemned, is admitted to be true. Children of men, are ye not guilty in the account of God ? Do not your own hearts condemn you as such ? Are ye not naturally propense to evil, and averse to good ? Are ye not condemned already ? Yes....ye are as prisoners, on whom sentence is passed....prisoners, held in bonds until the day of execution. Can ye satisfy, by any performance, or by any suffering, the demands of God's law, a law unchangeable in its nature ? Can ye escape or divert the demands of infinite justice, that knows not to dispense with the punishment of crimes ? If an almighty and merciful agent interpose not in your case; if the divine spirit apply not the remedy which the gospel proposes, ye perish of course !....Ye perish justly ! Yet in this rejoice, that in case of his interposition in your behalf, your salvation is equally certain.

Though this be an important reality, it will not follow that diligence in seeking salvation is useless : so far from this, that the very reverse is true. In the preceding discourse, I have endeavored to shew, that election includes in it a purpose, that all the chosen shall be powerfully persuaded, and effectually enabled to discharge their duty.....“ They are chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” To govern the human heart, and direct its motions, will by all be admitted, to be within the limits of almighty power.....“ He turneth the hearts of men as the rivers of waters, whithersoever he will.” That this change may be effected by him, without violence to the human will is also possible. That his operations should be performed by means suited to rational agents, and worthy of him, the infinitely wise author of the gracious work, must certainly be concluded. The duties of religion, which have severally a relation to the revealed will of God, as to the manner, the direction, the motives and issue of their performance, are of this description. What can be conceived more conducive to salvation than

an earnest attention to the word of God, which teaches the manner in which it is obtained, and exhibits motives to excite our diligence in seeking after it? What better calculated to produce a sense of our dependence, or of God's greatness, than the duty of prayer? What means more rational for the amendment of our lives and conduct, than an acquaintance with the law of God, as a rule of duty? It might easily be shewed that all the instrumental duties of religion, considered as means, have as necessary a connection with salvation as the instruction of an experienced mechanic, and the diligence and industry of an apprentice, are to the acquaintance of the latter with a particular branch of architecture, as the diligence and prudence of the former to the filling of his barns and coffers. This, then, is the channel, these the means whereby God executes his will respecting those who are the appointed heirs of salvation. When, then, we are invited or commanded in the word of God, in general terms, to strive or labor for the salvation of our souls, since we can only ascertain that we are chosen, by the above mentioned means, for it is God's only means of discovering this, who does not feel an interest in the fulfilment of his duty? Or who can fail to conclude, that in case of his neglect, he will with certainty be taught that he is a vessel for dishonor? It is the will of God, nay, his determination, that sinners be saved; but it is to his will that they be saved in this way.

They who offer the above objection, in effect say, that they may inherit heaven though they continue to be enemies to God... though they be all pollution, or in other words, that their natures need no reform. While the Apostle exhorts.... "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure," they rest at ease in sin, and expect the assurance of their election and calling before they take on themselves any concern. Assured christians do not relax their efforts, because they know that they are appointed to salvation....this in their estimation, were more than their

souls were worth. How then, can they plead for idleness, whose case is involved in doubtfulness, and whose souls, each worth more than a world, are exposed to the damnation of hell.

When Paul, with his companions, were in danger of shipwreck, an angel assured him that neither he, nor his companions should be lost. He communicates the gladdening certainty to his partners in difficulty and danger: but did he become negligent or presumptuous, because of the divine intimation.....No! When the sailors would have left the ship, and committed themselves to the boat, as the most prudential measure for securing their lives, in their apprehension, Paul declares, “except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.” How could the Apostle say so, after he was assured of their safety? Because their safety was predicted on condition of their presence in abiding by the ship. They regarded his declaration, and came safe to land. With strict propriety may we also say, that except we diligently discharge our duty, we cannot obtain eternal salvation. If the hope and trust that God worketh, and will work in us, to will and to do of his good pleasure, do not excite our earnest endeavors to obtain salvation, in vain will we employ other arguments.....all other will be like music to the adder, or addresses to the dead, who sleep equally sound, whether thunders roar or midnight silence reigns.

Certain cases occur where divine foreordination is admitted by all, or at least is denied by few. That man's days are determined; that the number of his months are with God; that he hath appointed our bounds that we cannot pass, is so often realized within the observation of the living, that all are constrained to admit the truth. Under the influence of this persuasion, can we point out any examples of wilful negligence, or designed exposure of human life. We know that the moment of our dissolution is fixed in the counsels of God. Why do we prudently

guard against dangers, or in a dastardly manner shrink in a season of peril? Why do we carefully provide, and duly receive our food? Will not heaven complete our span without any such trivial efforts on our part to prolong it? We would seldom be successful, did we attempt to persuade any to make the dangerous experiment of neglecting life, or exposing it to danger. The purpose of heaven then, in this instance, is far from begetting carelessness or inattention in any. Why? Is it because that whether our days be few or many these are the destined means of completing the period of human life? Do we act such a part in the hope that our days may be many? Then does the doctrine of election encourage hope, afford similar arguments for diligence, and hold out similar prospects of success. Seek to become acquainted with the mind of God concerning you, by a faithful discharge of duty, trusting to his grace as your only helper and ground of hope.

Objection 3. That God hath chosen a particular, number does not consist with the general invitations of the gospel.

If this objection has any force, it bears upon the Armenian system with equal force to that which it exerts against the Calvinistic. Since the former admit that all men will not be saved, they can never with consistency make the above objection; for whether you commit the efficient power of salvation to God or to the will of man, the case is not materially altered, since to the latter supposition the Armenian hypothesis is subjoined, viz. that God knows or foreknows who will accept, and who will reject the offered grace. May it not be asked with equal propriety.....Is it not mockery to offer grace to those by whom, as is known to God before the offer, it will be rejected? As, is it not mockery to offer it to those to whom he hath not determined to communicate saving grace, and to render partakers of salvation? If the objection must be made, it will apply with increased force against

the divine conduct, in admitting any into life who shall not finally be saved. Why is God so cruel as to call into existence those unhappy members of the human family, whom he foresees will be, or foreordains to be forever miserable? If none were called into life but those who shall be saved, then the condition of man were meliorated by the introduction of sin, since, in reality, there would exist an absolute certainty, in that case, that all the human family would be saved. The Deity would appear the rewarder of vice with blessedness, only proper to true piety and virtue. In the first estate of man, in which he was perfectly holy, his happiness was exposed to danger, and the event proved his liability to fall the victim of his own caprice; and shall guilt and pollution be transformed into instruments of certain peace, tranquility and safety.

The gospel is a dispensation of hope. It holds forth to a world condemned already, the pleasing declaration, that with God there are forgivenesses for some. This grace is manifested by distinguishing some as objects of it, from others whom, for the glory of his justice, he leaves to themselves, that they may receive the wages of their impieties....In the salvation of the former, his mercy and love conspicuously shine; in the punishment of the latter, his power and justice are gloriously illustrated. In the accomplishment of the grand designs of heaven, thus signified in the gospel, it pleaseth God to employ the preaching of the word, as a principal means; in this, salvation is offered on gracious terms....the only terms on which the salvation of sinners is possible. These are such as are in their own nature suitable for all, since all are by nature in the same sinful and guilty condition....the provisions are also sufficient for all....the proposals are made to all. Of this common family, God renders some, whom he pleases, the subjects of his special calls, even the calls of his Spirit, and confers on them saving gifts, through which he sanctifies them, and qualifies them for future glory. In confor-

mity to this, the gospel dispensation is compared to "a net cast into the sea," which gathereth of every kind, which, when full, they drew to the shore and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away : and to "tares and wheat, which grow together until harvest, when the master gathereth the tares to be burned, and layeth up the wheat in his barn." Now, that God should exalt to an heavenly estate such as accept his offers, and such as are sanctified by the means of his grace, and that he should exclude the residue, as negligent of his grace, and as abusive of his mercy, are acts no more inconsistent with his general tender or proposal of mercy, than the act of the fisherman, by which he casts away the bad fish, after he had taken them in common with the good. You might as well upbraid the fisherman for casting his net, under the persuasion that he would take fishes unfit for use, and afterwards for casting such away, as the Deity with publishing terms of reconciliation to all, while he glorifies none but such as are holy, and of course fit for heaven. As well might you censure the farmer for sowing his field, while he was convinced that some tares would deform his harvest and embarrass his reapers, or for not giving them a place in his barn with his wheat. None are deprived of any quality, disposition or power, which naturally belong to them : but instead of this, have means afforded and encouragements given them for the improvement of every moral faculty, of which they are possessed. Did they embrace the offer, did they believe in the Saviour, and devote themselves to his will, their salvation were sure ; but the reverse being the case with many, their condemnation is just as it is certain. Should it be objected, as is often done, that they are destitute of power to comply thus far, let it suffice for an answer, that the fault is with themselves. "God made man upright, man hath sought out wicked inventions."...Is it the office of a law-giver to bestow upon the subjects the power and ability to obey ? Unquestionably it is not...it is indeed his office to make just and equita-

ble laws. Is it not just, is it not reasonable, that God should require faith and trust in the righteousness of another, of one under a sentence of condemnation, and having no righteousness of his own, in order to his forgiveness and restoration.....It certainly is. This being so, who can arraign the divine procedure, in making an offer, and requiring our acceptance of it in a form so rational. That he chooses to give grace to some, while he takes nothing away from others, surely will not give occasion for impeaching his conduct or designs. In this he asks you, "May I not do what I will with my own....to thine eye evil, because I am good?" While a voice from heaven calls, "Look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be ye saved." Sinners attend, and strive to discover the object presented, even the crucified Saviour: though ye know not whether ye are chosen or not, yet, ye know that some, even an innumerable multitude are; ye know that all these will comply with the terms of the offer; ye know that God enables them to do this by his Spirit blessing them through their endeavors; and ye have reason to hope that he may savingly bless you: in a contrary course, ye are assured that hope is forbidden.

Objection 4. The doctrine of particular election impeaches God with partiality.

Did I believe that this objection was well directed against the doctrine, few considerations would have equal weight with me, in determining me against it. Yet I know not whether such objectors are more justly charged with ignorance than impiety. Did the consideration, that God chooses whom he will to salvation, justify the charge of partiality, mercy would cease to be an attribute of the divine nature, or its glory must labor under the dark eclipse which the censure justified would produce; for in order to escape the above reflection, he must either accept and pardon all or none. Did God confer saving benefits on all, then indeed, the adversaries would be compelled to silence....no par-

ciality would in that case be alleged ; yet such a dispensation would justify reflections on the divine character, not easy to be removed. In that case he would appear to angels, and even to men, a rewarder of sin, since man was liable to death eternal when perfectly holy, and by the supposition above, had made heaven sure, by sinning against him that reigneth therein. Nor would man, in case all were saved, be sensible of the magnitude of the evil from which he was delivered, since no examples of suffering the wages of sin would be exhibited, and of course they would be unprepared to render glory to God for the deliverance obtained.

The justice of God (an attribute of necessary exercise, since its exercise is due as a debt which he owes to offenders and to the obedient) must lie concealed ; nay his nature could not be conceived to possess it, since, though sin exists, no instances appear, through which he indicates, by punishing it, that he ruleth in righteousness, and rewardeth every one according to his works.....Says Dr. Young, " A God all mercy is a God unjust."

Again : on the supposition that none were saved, which would also suppress every suspicion of partiality, the divine nature would appear under characters of cruelty ; nor should we ever learn that mercy was one of its amiable perfections. If to pardon one criminal, and condemn another, be partiality, then all the guilty under the government of God must necessarily be punished ; for justice must necessarily be exercised, as is shewed above. In this case, mercy could have no field for its exercise, since all guilty and necessitous persons, in a moral sense, must be punished, and those who are not of this description, if there are any such, do not need it.

The truth is, that mercy, that attribute of Deity which offers hope to man, contains in its nature the idea of sovereignty and independence as to its exercise : that is, that God may or may not exercise it, without the charge of injury to any being.

Its acts are gracious, the performance of which none can claim. Who can say, who dare affirm that God was obliged or bound to pity or to save any of us. The gifts of mercy all proceed from the goodness of God, the motives to the exercise of which, exist alone in the divine mind : it contemplates and requires misery in the objects of it, but not as the cause, only as the condition of its exercise, as the quality which renders its gifts suitable. The very definition of the word *mercy*, and the manner in which it is displayed in the divine being, viz. on the principles of sovereignty and independence, and its exercise is not possible on different principles ; for if there be obligations external to himself, binding him to shew mercy, then, what is called mercy, obtains the name of justice ; I say, if this be the true notion of this attribute, then, as soon as we hear that God has mercy for men we meet the conviction, that it has its particular objects. None can claim it ; God shews it therefore to whomsoever he will. “ I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,” is a declaration that asserts the divine right to sovereignty, while it sheds the rays of hope upon a guilty world.

To conclude this objection with an answer which might have sufficed without any other, let it be considered, that it is founded on a mistaken conception of the proper meaning of the word *partiality*.

Partiality supposes an attachment to a person or persons, founded on real or imaginary worth or excellence, through the influence of which, one is inclined to favor some rather than others, at the expense of justice and propriety : but how can this apply to God in the case of his electing and saving some of men, while others are left to themselves and perish. In no instance can worth or excellence be found among natural men. “ The Lord looked from heaven.” And what did he discover? “ That there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Enmity, guilt, and

corruption make up the human character....nothing in man, then, can be the moving cause to God of electing any. In the gospel, he shews that the virtues of men are not the reasons of his choice. Christ came to "save sinners." "To save that which was lost." Is it then partiality to forgive and reinstate some into his favor, as justly condemned as others, whom he leaves to perish?.... May he not thus shew his compassion for the miserable, that he may appear a mild governor, while he may punish others in proportion as they are guilty, to illustrate the glory of his justice?

Objection 5. This doctrine represents God to be the author of sin.

Do we then, presumptuously charge the Almighty with our impiety, while we assert the freeness and sovereignty of grace, as exhibited in the doctrine of election. God forbid! We do not teach that God is the cause of sin, even in the most remote sense. He neither infuses the disposition, nor does he move any to the commission of it. So far is he from commanding any to sin, or from approving of it, that he expressly forbids and strictly punishes it. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity. He is not tempted to sin neither tempteth he any one." To holiness he appoints sinners; he implants its principles, and promotes their increase....he permits sin; he appoints its punishment. Psalms lxxxi. 11. 12. "Israel would have none of me, so I gave them up to their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels." Acts xiv. 16. "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." By *permission*, I mean, that he does not prevent men from complying with the inclinations of their corrupt natures; which he would certainly do, were it not consistent with his will, that they should act a particular part, in order to the illustration of the divine glory. He directs the progress of sin, and bounds it by certain limits. "The wrath of man shall praise thee, and the re-

mainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." Such is the part which God acts with respect to sin ; and surely none can say that this will justify the charge contained in the above objection, viz. that he is its author.

Of all events which have occurred, since years were numbered, the crucifixion of the Son of God is the most important, as a means of illustrating the glory of the divine perfections, and the most interesting, as bringing life and immortality to men. That it was a purpose of God, that this should take place, may be inferred from the greatness of the ends that were to be accomplished by it.... That it was a matter of divine foreordination, the early prophetic declarations concerning it, fully proves ; as well as many express declarations of scripture. Acts 2. 23. "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Did the foreordination of heaven excuse the treachery, the avarice, or the cruelty of Judas ? Did it form any part of an apology for the timidity or injustice of Pilate ? Did it release any of the multitude, who, as devouring wolves, ravened for his blood, and who sported with his dying agonies, from the charge of murder ? Did the commandment, "thou shalt not kill," find no charge against so malicious, deliberate and preconcerted a murder ? Did any of the accomplices from the traitor Judas to the centurion who presided at his execution, ever assign as a reason of their conduct, that God's will was, that so it should be ? Had they gone upon this principle of action, viz. the will of God, and on this one solely, then indeed innocence might have been presumed. But instead of this, you behold all the furious train of corrupt passions exasperated, and heightened to uproar against him, and vented on him with the expectation of blotting out his name and memory. The decree of heaven, then, in this instance cannot be conceived to have had any influence on the minds of those who crucified the Saviour ; from which it may be presum-

ed, that the same takes place in every instance with the wicked, in fulfilling the designs of heaven.

Our Lord warns his disciples, that "in this world they would suffer tribulations." Would any say, that the persecutors of the church of Christ were free from blame on that account. With what cruel jealousy and envy did the hearts of the brethren of Joseph burn when they sold him to the Ishmaelites....they had contrived his murder, and afterwards let him down into a pit, that he might perish through hunger ; when an opportunity occurred of selling him a slave. They little thought that the divine hand, by invisible, though uncontrollable power, was directing their impiety in the very channel of his promotion. The means of exciting their vengeance against their brother, was his dream. Their aim in selling him was to prevent his future advancement. Was this cause sufficient to justify their outrage ? Or, did these designs in any degree palliate their offence ? No. When they afterwards prostrated themselves before Joseph and sought forgiveness, Joseph told them, "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is at this day, to save much people alive." In the history of this event, you find no reference had to the decrees of heaven, until the issue, where Joseph mentions it as an argument to allay their fears. In those instances, you find that the actors have labored under no conceived restraints....they were moved, as the wicked always are, by the impulses of disordered passions, raised to tumult by evil motives...." While man deviseth his own way, the Lord directeth his steps."

III. Our attention is now called to the dignity and importance of election, as a doctrine in the christian system.

It may justly be considered as the source of the gospel dispensation. The appointment of the Son of God to the mediatorial office is contained in it, as one of its essential parts. In the

second Psalm, the Saviour is represented as publishing the counsel of God respecting himself....“I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.” “Thou art my son, this day,” viz. the day alone proper to God, eternity, “have I begotten thee.” The subsequent verses contain the matter of the decree, in which, those who should be saved by him, are mentioned, in the form of a promise. “I will give the heathen for an inheritance,” &c. The title of sonship here given to Christ, and given from eternity, as it is that personal character of the second person of the trinity, by which he is held forth an object of worship, evidently establishes his appointment to the office of a Mediator. In the fulfilment of his prophetic office is revealed by him the whole contents of the holy scriptures. Did the prophet teach or foretell?....It was by his immediate inspiration. Did the Apostle publish, defend, or enforce his doctrines?....It was by the immediate impulses of the spirit of Christ. Isaiah lxi. 1. “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek,” &c. Since, then, we have shewed above, that Christ and the elect were chosen by the same act of the divine will, and since it appears from these passages, that that act of the Father constituted him a mediator, from whom, as such, we have received the gospel; it follows, that the gospel flows from election as its proper source. Let it not be objected to this, that Christ might have published the gospel without any decree of God respecting the salvation of sinners, since this is saying nothing less impious than this, that God acts without plan or design....that he may amuse himself by publishing refined systems, without having any object.

In the first intimation of merciful designs to fallen man, God expresses his determination respecting saving some of men, in terms which shew that the gospel is nothing else than a description of the plan of salvation, as formed in the divine mind, an

epitomy of which the doctrine of election is.....“ I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” This declaration is directed to Satan, under the appellation of serpent, the substance of which, related to him and the woman, to his seed, and to her seed. The seed of the serpent are fallen angels and reprobate and wicked men : that of the woman is Christ and those who should be saved by him ; between these God declares his purpose to put enmity.....the event has followed. What persecutions, slanders and calumnies have been directed against the followers of Christ, by the wicked, in all the periods of his church ; and under how severe trials and sufferings have the pious advanced to their victory and triumph ? Every clause of this verse contains an expression of a divine purpose absolutely fixed, and is justly called an epitomy of the gospel. All that the gospel contains, may be considered as the account of the plan, in which the conflict between those parties is carried on ; and the victory of those to be born again in Christ Jesus to be completed. Had not, then, the purpose of election been confirmed in the divine mind, it may safely be presumed, that the plan had never been revealed. This reasoning is strengthened from a view of the degree of eminence which the gospel holds, as a means of bringing to pass the salvation of sinful men....It is called the “power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth.” It is the instrument or channel of conveying or communicating saving power to men. Now, let me ask, whether it be credible that God hath instituted such a means of exerting power, without a determination to employ it ?....It is not ! As little credible is it, that the means should have been instituted, had he not appointed to give it efficacy. That you read and hear the gospel....that it is revealed, is the strongest argument that the doctrine of my text is true....the gospel cannot be referred to another source.

This doctrine holds the first rank in the system of religion, since, in the salvation of sinners, the glory of mercy is attested by the glorious sovereignty with which the exercise of it is represented. It commits to the Deity the origin, the progress and the issue of our salvation. The divine glory encreases in its splendor to every renewed heart, as it advances towards perfection, and encreases in capacity of discerning and contemplating the freeness and sovereignty of grace. To this they flee as to a strong hold, abandoning all self-confidence....humbled to the dust and ashes of true contrition, by the means of sovereign grace, they soar aloft, as on eagles' wings, lose sight of earth and converse with heaven.

Here we behold an infinitely wise plan concerted, the length, the breadth, the height, & the depth of which are determined. We behold an infinitely wise agent employed in the execution, and the work advancing in a regular tenor. In vain do adverse powers attempt to thwart him in his designs...In vain are artifice and cunning employed to divert him from his course. His all-comprehensive mind surveys every part of his dominion, and discerns every adverse circumstance, while his almighty arm bends the most contrary principles into subserviency to his will...the most stubborn opposition vanish at his nod. His enemies are either won to his cause, scattered at his rebuke, or sunk into ruin at his stroke. If doctrines are important, in proportion as they display the divine glory, and as they are calculated to humble and amend the human heart, then will I challenge human scrutiny to point out another equally answerable to those ends, with the doctrine of my text. In short, I know not how any man can teach the doctrine of justification, which the Apostle tells us is of free grace, who does not refer it to this, as the fountain from whence it flows. Since the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed for justification, could not have been fulfilled, or could not have answered that end, had not Christ received the appointment to a mediato-

rial office from the everlasting Father, and been constituted the surety of the elect, as is asserted in this doctrine. With as little propriety can any of the doctrines of grace be taught while this is rejected. Little are many aware, while they vent their rage upon this article of christian faith, and the supporters of it, that they unhinge the whole system, and subvert the very doctrines which they profess to maintain. Think of this, and may your hearts be made to tremble at your daring unbelief.

IV. I proposed to point out some of the effects resulting from the rejection of this doctrine.

The rejection of this doctrine necessarily blots out the covenant of grace from the system of religion.

The great end of that covenant will be admitted by all to be the manifestation of God's glory in the salvation of sinners. God's own glory is the primary end of all his actions. The events produced by the acts of the divine mind, are the means by which the supreme end is brought to pass ; so that the first cannot be promoted without the second : that is, God's glory cannot be manifested without the intervention of the destined means. The divine glory, therefore, was to be illustrated in the salvation of sinners, as the chiefest end of that work ; and the work itself, in its origin, progress and issue, was the plan concerted for the accomplishment of the design. A covenant form was adopted, in the establishment of which, the end was stated, the means proposed, and the terms laid down by the everlasting Father, and agreed to by the Son and Spirit. The Father proposes to prepare for the Son a body ; in allusion to which, the Son says..... "A body hast thou prepared me." He promises to protect and aid him in the performance of the work. Isaiah xlii. 6. 7. "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and I will hold thine hand, and will help thee." He promises and gives him a spiritual seed, who should be exalted to glory with himself. Isaiah

liii. 10. 11. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands; he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied," &c. In these promises, the faithfulness of the Father was pledged to the Son, for the accomplishment of them: and the consent, on the part of the Son, to fulfil the duties prescribed, gave to these promises the form and force of an engagement....in short, the promise and consent of the parties gave the whole the nature of a contract....the parties became mutually bound, the one to perform the work, the other to render the compensation. Now, to a transaction of this kind, the reciprocity is essential. Remove the obligation on the one part, and you dissolve the contract. But if God did not choose any particular number of sinners to salvation, on the proposal made to Christ respecting their redemption, then he could not have engaged, by promise, to give him these as a reward of his work; (for a covenant necessarily supposes a definite statement of the terms) but if they were not given to him, then there was no condition on the part of the Father; and if no obligation on the one part, then there was no covenant. The rejection therefore of this doctrine is a fatal intrusion on the work of redemption.....It takes away its foundation stone, and subverts the whole superstructure. The man, whose faith rests not on this foundation, builds upon deceitful sand, and erects an airy edifice, which will neither stand the rushing torrent nor the boisterous tempest. It will fall in the trying season!!....The ruins will be dreadful in proportion as its top was high.

If the scriptures teach no such doctrine as I have endeavored to establish and illustrate, then, even the probability of the salvation of any of our race is destroyed.

That the work of salvation should be performed in any way without a previous purpose, which would embrace its various

parts, and comprehend its issue, cannot be conceived. Were this wanting, the whole system were thrown into the discordant jumble of casuality and accident. If the plan and the execution belong to God, then must the doctrine of my text be admitted to be true. If this be not taught in the scriptures, then must the business of salvation belong to other beings. Does it fall upon ourselves? If it does, then am I warranted in saying, that no individual of our race will be saved. Our natures are as averse to the holy obedience which the law requires, as they are unable to perform it. Deadness, as to things spiritual, is universally prevalent. By what attonement will our actual transgressions obtain forgiveness, should it even be granted that original sin, as is alleged by the enemies of this doctrine, were destroyed. That we live, or can live, free from sinning, is the phantom of minds deluded by their own pride and selfishness. The government of the heart is a work infinitely surpassing human strength. Though we call our minds our own, yet few things are less in our power, or under our controul. The most pleasing pictures cannot engage them long....The most sublime devotion cannot engross its attention, nor set limits to its licentious wanderings....“Our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know them.” What some politely call ability, is impotence in the extreme. The new birth is a miraculous work. Our Lord plainly intimates that its nature is mysterious, and the production of it equally beyond our power and comprehension: if so what figure will be made by man in attempting the performance....When will he begin?....What will be the materials?....How will he proceed?Where will he end? The Epicurean doctrine of chance is not more absurd or ridiculous than the supposition that even an individual should be saved in this way. If therefore, human minds are to lay the plan, and to manage the process, I aver with confidence, that we all must perish. The teachers of the doctrine contrary to that of my text, though they open the bays of charity,

and would admit into the haven of rest, mankind, with very few exceptions, have not been aware that they have been instrumental in directing their thousands from the road of peace and safety ; of leading them from the path of truth ; of letting them loose in the field of chimerical fancy, and thus of preventing many from obtaining the praise of life eternal.

I might proceed to mention many consequences of the most pernicious nature, arising from the overthrow of the doctrine of election ; but let the above suffice, since I have already exceeded the lawful limits of two discourses, and let me only detain you now with a short improvement of what has been said.

IMPROVEMENT.

Be exhorted to exercise spiritual caution in determining your articles of faith. Do not admit your feelings to rise against scripture testimony, nor to assume the place of judgment : this has been an intrusion, if I am not mistaken, which has been fatal to many. The accommodation of our feelings, in making out the system of religious doctrines, is legalizing our corruptions ; since in that case, they are made the model of our faith and practice. If religion be calculated to any useful end, it is that of reformation and improvement. It contemplates our race in a vicious and disordered condition. It points out and enforces every rational means of reformation. On our part it is incumbent to use every means in our power, on the prescribed plan, to accommodate our habits, thoughts and feelings to the principles which it contains. That our hearts should be reluctant to embrace doctrines humiliating to ourselves, tending to God's glory and enforce holiness, may and ought always to be presumed. While we examine for ourselves the christian system, we should determinately oppose our feelings. We should promptly admit, as true, what God has been pleased to reveal, making it a matter of immediate attention, to regulate all our powers by that unerring rule, and to

conform to what it requires. He who seeks grace to conduct him in this process will seldom be unsuccessful ; while he who pursues a contrary direction will seldom fail to err.

Again : Let the constant expectation be maintained, that in a religion revealed from heaven, mysterious and secret things are to be looked for.

Did not the scriptures contain doctrines too sublime for human reason, and state facts beyond our comprehension, their authenticity might be suspected....“ As far as is the heaven above the earth, so far are God’s ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts.” The sublime and mysterious nature of religious doctrines, so far from being a reason of rejecting them, that they stand recommended as important in proportion as they are of this description. On these are impressed the distinguishing characters of divine majesty and glory, the satisfactory contemplation of which is reserved for the highly improved, the heavenly estate of glorified spirits. You cannot look attentively on creation without being involved in mystery. Ask yourselves what are the constituent qualities of a single blade of grass ? Whence happens it that it is so dissimilar to earth its parent, while it springs and derives all its nourishment from her ? How is the food which you receive conveyed through the various parts of your bodies, and how does it supply it with various fluids ? How does it become converted into hair and nails, into bones and flesh ? How was an union between your souls and bodies constituted, and how is it maintained ? How happens it that an act of the mind, which is a thinking substance, gives motion and activity to the body, in the form and manner of the determination ? When these and other innumerable difficulties, with which we are daily conversant, are removed by the strength of any human understanding, then will I consent that a mind equal to this task reject those doctrines which it cannot comprehend.

Ask yourselves is the doctrine of election a doctrine of the Bible? If it be, it is enough; receive it heartily: and though you cannot comprehend it in all its parts; though God's way in accomplishing the great designs couched in it, to you may be "in the sea, his paths in the deep waters and his footsteps unknown," be still assured, that "judgment is before him, therefore trust thou in him." O Lord, it is but little that we know of thee! Give us hearts to adore and admire what we cannot comprehend! Give us patience to wait for the more satisfactory discoveries of thy glory, while we humbly seek acquaintance with thee on earth, until we behold thee face to face.

Again: Let this doctrine eradicate every self-righteous principle, and enforce upon the mind the freeness and sovereignty of grace.

The salvation of sinners is a work to which God alone is competent; and the doctrine of my text most plainly teaches that by him the plan is laid, that the execution belongs to him, and that to him the glory of all is most reasonably due. The loss, under which we labor, hath proceeded from our own misconduct. This loss we have just reason to deplore, while of God we have no cause to complain, though his final condemnation were universal. If such a sentence and the actual infliction of the punishment denounced would not admit of complaint, what expectation of release can be indulged by the criminal, if grace be not offered? What plea dare he make, in case of the offer, but that of his guilt and unworthiness, and those of free and undeserved mercy? Shall any, under pretensions of ability to fit themselves out for the abodes of glory, raise their superb crests against heaven and provoke the thunder of Omnipotence? How shocking the thought, that while none can be justified but by the imputed righteousness of Christ, many are struggling on the ladder of legal obedience, whose steps lead down to the lowest

hell. In no instance is it more strictly true, that "before honor is humility," than in that of the sinner's advancement to an estate of fitness for the enjoyment of God. He who never wore the sackcloth and ashes of real penitence, never enjoyed communion with God.....He that never was acquainted with his own poverty and wretchedness never felt the restraints of saving grace, nor the bonds of love divine engaging him to a willing obedience.

Again : This doctrine is the believers support in temptation, and their consolation in distress and trial.

How stable is the confidence of that soul whose trust is wholly in God....who has escaped from every other foundation of trust, as sandy and deceitful, and has placed his hope in the Eternal Mind. Such an one, instead of viewing the enemies that surround or encounter him, or those events that are generally considered unfavorable to peace, to piety, or to the rewards of the latter, as fatal or overwhelming, contemplates them as ministers of providence, who, however deep or cruel their designs may be, or however dark the gloom under which divine counsels may be hid from view under them, are over-ruled and directed by the divine hand so as to bring forth the glory of God, and the good of all that are in Christ Jesus. To them that are the chosen and called of God, the poison of the serpent is not only innocent but salutary ; the sword of persecution, the efforts of wicked spirits employed for their ruin shall be converted into instruments of preparing them for, and advancing them to heavenly felicity. Instead of feeling alone when struggling in the heat of the christian conflict, they find their exertions rendered successful, and their victories advancing in regular order in the strength of the God of Jacob. Let friends fall from their bosom into the arms of silence, let peace be hidden under storms of adversity, let disease and torture bring them to the gates of death, the single reflection that God, in all these things, is executing the counsels

of his will, doing what is his pleasure, satisfies the breaking and desponding heart, and begets resignation. He that rests on the foundation laid in this doctrine for the sinner's safety, is alone secure from danger. He alone can be the acceptable worshiper. He alone can look with confidence upon death and eternity, and hope for blessedness.

May the God of grace establish and confirm your hearts in the stedfast belief of this doctrine, and enable you to commit your souls to him, in reliance on his free and sovereign grace, and may the grace of God rest upon you.....Amen.

FINIS.