

SERMON V.

*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world :
that we should be holy, &c.—VER. 4, 5, &c.*

IN the third verse the Apostle premiseth a general proposition, which he afterwards breaks into particulars. His scope being to shew how all blessings depend both upon God's election before all worlds, and how likewise upon Jesus Christ, 'who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things (or places) in Christ;' so saith the third verse. If you observe it, in those words there is the *act* of blessing, 'Who hath blessed us;' and there are the *blessings* themselves wherewith we are blessed.

I shewed before, both out of the coherence of these words with those that follow, ver. 4, and other scriptures, that the time when God bestowed all these blessings upon us in Christ was when he chose us, even before all worlds. To which accords that in 2 Tim. i. 9, 'He hath called us according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the world began.' That *grace* there is all one with these *blessings* here, they being all wrapped up in that one expression of grace. And that which is called a *gift* there, is called a *blessing* us here. And if you look into Gen. xxvii. 37, you shall find that to bless is all one with to give, (though it be not actually given till afterwards.) For so we read, that when Isaac speaks to Esau of his blessing of Jacob, he says, 'I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I *given* to him for servants,'—Jacob was but a poor man then, but Isaac had blessed him, and so had given him all these things,—'and with corn and wine have I sustained him,' or 'supported him,' as it is in the margin.

Now, what is here in the third verse expressed in the general, the Apostle cometh to explain particularly in the verses following.

There are two things, as I said before, in that third verse. There is the act of blessing, and there are the blessings wherewith God hath blessed us. Answerably in this 4th and 5th verses, the Apostle distinctly mentioneth, first, the act of blessing to be in electing and predestinating of us, 'according as he hath elected us,' so ver. 4; 'and predestinated us,' so ver. 5. And then he mentions two particular blessings with which in election and predestination he hath blessed us, holiness, ver. 4, and adoption of children, ver. 5, and all this in Jesus Christ. And so you have the coherence of these words.

I. *According as he hath chosen us in him.*—Those words, 'he hath chosen us in him,' have bred more controversy than any so few words almost in the whole Bible, and do therefore require some time to open them.

First, some say this choosing us in him implies that God chooseth us, as foreseeing us to believe in Christ, because by faith it is we are in Christ, and by faith only. And therefore this phrase, choosing us in him, namely in Christ, noteth out the state of the person of a believer, that he is in Christ, or one with Christ by faith. And so in God's choice we are considered as

believers, according to this opinion; and this is one great place alleged for election to be out of faith foreseen. For, say they, no man is in Christ till such time as he believeth; and God chooseth us in Christ; therefore he chooseth only foreseeing them to be believers on Christ.

In a word or two, to confute this opinion, that this should not be the meaning of the place; and to take only such arguments as the text itself affords, (for that is proper to an exposition.)—

First, therefore, If the meaning were that God chooseth men as believers in Christ, or, which cometh all to one, chooseth upon faith foreseen, he should not choose persons, but graces; the principal object in God's election should be propositions, not persons; whereas in this verse, and all the three next verses, the primary object is the persons of men, 'He hath chosen us in him,' and so on, ver. 5, 6. God chooseth not propositions, as 'He that believeth shall be saved.' That proposition indeed is the consequent of election, and so declared to us, because it makes election visible to us. God declareth that, and such like propositions, to be true; but still the object of his choice is the person; for it is out of love, pure love. Nor did Christ die for propositions, but for persons.

Secondly, Again, the apostle had said in the verse before, ver. 3, that 'God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ;' and then he subjoins here, 'according as he hath chosen us in him,' so making this of election one instance of a 'spiritual blessing' in ver. 3. Now, I ask this question, Whether is a man blessed with faith in Christ, yea or no, as one of those blessings wherewith we are said to be blessed in him? If they say, Yes; then a man must be supposed to be in Christ before he hath faith, (in some sense or other,) for faith itself is one of the blessings comprehended in that *all* of blessings. And so, if all be given us *in Christ*, then faith also, as we are considered already chosen in Christ; yea, otherwise, at the time when we have the blessing of faith given to us, we are considered out of Christ actually when it is first given us, if that is it which makes us to be first in Christ, according to the apostle's scope of it there. There must therefore be some sense or other intended whereby we are in Christ before we have faith. That is the second argument.

And then, *thirdly*, the apostle saith, he chose us in him 'that we should be holy and without blame before him in love,' &c.; and the same reason will carry it that he as well intends that he chose us to this end, *that we should believe on him*. And the reason lies in this: look as he doth not choose because we are holy in love, or that he foreseeeth we will be holy in love, but he chooseth us that we should be holy and without blame in love; in like manner it may be said, he chooseth unto faith, for there is the same reason of the one that there is of the other. Besides that faith may be considered as a part of sanctification, 1 John v. 1, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God,' &c. In 2 Thess. ii. 13, both faith and holiness are put in the like relation as to election, and we are said to be ordained to the one, as to the other; and therefore if we are chosen *to be holy*, (as here,) as being a fruit of election, then *to believe* also is a like fruit of election; for observe but the words there, and compare them with these here. It is there said, 'He hath appointed us unto salvation through justification and belief of the truth.' Holiness, you see, and faith are put both together, as being graces unto which we are alike ordained. And Acts xiii. 48, 'As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.' So that this is not the meaning of the words; and that is the first interpretation.

The Popish divines and interpreters give another exposition: 'He hath

chosen us in Christ'—that is, say they, for the merit's sake of Christ, foreseeing his death and passion. And yet the best of them that say it, put but a *forte*, an 'it may be,' upon it, as I remember Suarez doth.

Now this cannot be the meaning neither. We read, indeed, that we have redemption through the blood of Christ: so ver. 7, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, and the forgiveness of sins.' But we nowhere read that we have election through the blood of Christ; no, not in the whole Book of God. Why? what is the reason of it? Because election is the first foundation of our salvation—it is the first act of God's going forth in intentions to save us, and hath no cause but the 'pleasure of his will,' so the text saith, ver. 5; and 'the praise of the glory of his grace,' so ver. 6. Hence, therefore, although the merits of Christ are the cause of our salvation, yet they are not the cause of our being ordained to salvation. They are the cause that purchaseth all things decreed unto us; but they are not the cause that first moved God to decree these things unto us; for if they were, there should be a derogation from God's free grace in the first act of it—he should not be free in it; for merit, you know, hath an obligation in it. Had God chosen us for Christ's merits, his election had not been of free grace. But having chosen us, and that out of his free grace, he ordained these merits as the cause of our salvation; which being thus a free gift of grace themselves, and the fruit of his grace, and nowise the cause or motive thereof, therefore now salvation, though merited, cometh to be altogether of free grace, because the foundation of it is such. And so you have this second interpretation taken away.

There is a third interpretation which some of our divines do give—

As, 1. That we are said to be elected in Christ—that is, to be in Christ in time to come. We are not elected, say they, as being in Christ when elected, or by election put into Christ, but elected to be in Christ in the fulness of time. And therefore—

2. They join this 'elected in Christ' with the words that follow, 'that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.' So as the meaning of this interpretation tends only to this, that Jesus Christ is the great instrument to convey all the blessings to us which God hath decreed for us; that he is the great means indeed that God hath ordained, and the cause of all things that God hath appointed us unto. But he hath nothing to do with what concerneth the act of election itself. This 'in him' hath not relation so much to the act of God's choosing, as either to the blessings to be conveyed by him, which God hath chosen us unto; or else to shew that our future being in him is the *terminus* of that act of election. And so the whole that this place holds forth is no more in effect but what that in 1 Thess. v. 9 says, where you read that 'God hath appointed us to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.' Mark it, the apostle there says, not that Jesus Christ, as God-man, hath any influence into the act of ordaining, but comes in only as a means subserving that act, to accomplish and bring about those ends which God in his decrees did pitch upon. The salvation God appointed us unto, he ordained us to obtain by Jesus Christ. So, then, 'he hath elected us in Christ to be holy'—that is, say they, in the fulness of time to be in him, and to be made holy in him, and he is to be the cause of our holiness. This is the other sense of his choosing us in Christ.

And, to explain their meaning, in the decrees of election there are two things to be considered—

1. *The act itself*, which is immanent, and remaineth in God himself, and floweth from himself from all eternity.

2. *The terminus, or the things that are decreed to be, or to be brought to pass.* Or, to express it in the same terms which I used and observed out of the third verse, there is the *act of blessing* itself, and there are the *blessings* wherewith we are blessed.

Now, when it is here said, that we are elected in Christ, that same 'in him' refers not, say they, to the act itself, as if it had any dependency on him, but only has relation to the things ordained by that act. And so they say that Christ is the foundation of election in this sense, that the *terminus electionis*, the things unto which we are elected, he is appointed in election to be the cause of. In a word, that God hath ordained that we should have them all in Christ, but *hath not in Christ ordained us, and them to us.*

So that now this is the great and universally-acknowledged glory given to Jesus Christ on all hands, that though God wholly and entirely reserveth to himself the glory of the act of choosing us, yet all the things that he chooseth us to, his Son (as God-man) is the cause of. He cometh in between election and the things, and we are ordained to have them all in him, even to obtain faith, grace, heaven, and all in Christ, as the deserver and purchaser of them. And it is a great glory that is given to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that God should set him up as the great engine to work all by. This, I say, is the third interpretation.

But though this be most true, and is one great part of the meaning of these words, yet this is not all, or the whole, as I shall prove by these three or four reasons; which, when I have done, I will shew you what I apprehend is to make up the full and clear scope and meaning of them. I shall only mention what reasons the text affordeth.

First, therefore, if you interpret the words, 'he hath chosen us in him,' that is, *to be* in him, you put in 'to be,' which is not in the text. Whereas this is the plain reading of the words, 'he hath chosen us in him;' and therefore if there be a sense wherein it may be absolutely said, as referring to the act of election itself, that we were chosen in him, without putting in any such words, it would be much fairer.

Secondly, it is said, 'he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.' Who, therefore, would not refer this 'in him' unto 'before the foundation of the world,' as well as that the act of choosing us to have been before the foundation of the world: and so God chose us then in him? Whereas if that had been the meaning, he only chose us to be in Christ in future times which were to come after the foundation of the world, the expression 'in him' should have come in after those words, 'the foundation of the world,' as well as the thing itself doth. But 'he chose us in him before the foundation of the world;' so as 'in him' seemeth to refer as well to 'before the foundation of the world,' as to God's choosing us before the foundation of the world.

Thirdly, whereas it is said, that 'in him' referreth to the words following, 'that we should be holy and without blame,' &c., we see here is a mighty *chasma*, a great gulf between these two, 'choosing us in him,' and 'that we should be holy:' for here is 'before the foundation of the world' comes between. If, indeed, the Apostle had said, 'he hath chosen us before the foundation of the world, in him that we should be holy,' &c., or 'that we should be holy in him,' there had then been some colour for it. But he saith plainly, 'he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.' 'In him' cometh in before 'the foundation of the world.' So that it seemeth this 'in him' referreth to the act of choosing.

Fourthly, and then again there is this fourth great reason for it: he had

said in the third verse, 'he hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ,' and then in the fourth and fifth verses he instanceth in election and predestination. *Sicut elegit*, as if he had said, for example's sake, or for explanation's sake, to give you an instance, 'according as he hath elected us in him.' Now, mark it by this coherence: either election is taken for the act of blessing us, as I said before, or for a blessing wherewith God hath blessed us. And if either of both, it is enough for the thing in hand; it must be in Christ, and this before the foundation of the world. And so we were elected in Christ then, as well as justified in Christ in the fulness of time.

And then, *Fifthly*, I find that other scriptures do back this interpretation, that 'in him' should have relation not only to the things decreed us, as the cause of them, but have reference to the act itself of choosing. And this not only that scripture I before mentioned, 2 Tim. i. 9, 'He hath given us grace in Christ before the world was,' but also that in the third of this Epistle, ver. 11, 'according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ.' Mark it: 'in Christ' cometh in that place not only for the thing purposed, but in relation to the purpose itself; and this purpose is eternal, 'according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ.' So that 'choosing us in him,' the meaning is not only, *to be in him* in the fulness of time, or that he should be the cause of all the things unto which we are chosen only; but the choice itself, in some sense or other, is in him,—that is, the act itself,—'according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ.'

And then, for those places that are quoted to interpret it, which I before mentioned, as that in 1 Thess. v. 9, 'He hath appointed us to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,' which, say they, is all one with this of the Apostle here, 'he hath elected us in him,' &c.; it is plainly not all one, and that for two reasons. For, 1. in that place of the Thessalonians there cometh in, 'to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ;' but not so here. Had he said so here, that 'he hath chosen us to obtain election,' or 'to be holy in Christ,' then I confess it had been plain; but he only saith 'he hath chosen us in him,' and then cometh in, 'that we should be holy before him in love;' and those words, 'before the foundation of the world,' come between both.

And then, 2. there is a great deal of difference between God's doing a thing *in* Christ and *through* Christ, *ἐν Χριστῷ* and *διὰ τὸν Χριστόν*. It is Zanchie's observation, that when God is said to do a thing in Christ, it usually notes out some one of those immanent acts of God's towards us, that passed between him and Christ for us when they were alone, before we existed, and Jesus Christ was a Common Person representing us all, and God gave all to Christ for us; as it is said, 'the grace that was given us in Christ before the world was.' But the things that God doth 'through Christ,' which is the phrase in the Thessalonians, are usually some transient acts of God's towards us, or those things which he actually performeth and applieth to us through Christ. So that God redeemeth through Christ, justifieth through Christ, and saveth through Christ; but he chooseth in Christ. So that to choose in him, is not all one with that which the Apostle saith, 'he hath ordained us to obtain salvation through Christ.'

SECTION.

But now the question is, In what further sense we are said to be chosen in him; so that the act of choosing should be referred to 'in him,' and we to be in him at our election; and what subserviency Christ, considered as God-man, should be of to the act itself of electing us.

I shall endeavour to answer to, and to explain this, first, *negatively*; secondly, *affirmatively*. I will shew you, 1. What influence or subserviency he hath not; and, 2. I will shew you what he hath.

1. I will shew you what he hath not. He was not the cause of God's electing us, for the Apostle, in the 9th verse of this first chapter, saith that it was 'according to the good pleasure of his will, which he had purposed in himself.' What is the cause of all God's purposes towards us? Himself. There is no other cause. And in the same verse it is also added, 'according to his good pleasure,' &c. God, as he is the first being, so he and his own will are the first movers of himself. So that this, 'he chose us in Christ,' imports not that Jesus Christ was the cause of our predestination, (taking him as God-man, as here he is meant.) And I will give you this great reason for it; for he could not be the cause of our predestination who himself was predestinated. In 1 Pet. i. 20, it is plainly said of Christ, that he was pre-ordained before the world was founded. He himself was chosen as well as we; therefore he could not be the cause of our election. And both he and we being elected by one simple and entire act, the predestination, therefore, of one could not be the cause of the predestination of the other. And as Christ was not the cause of election for the substance of the act, so nor was he the cause of it for the persons elected. Jesus Christ, as God-man and Mediator, did not choose so much as one man. It was God that elected all those that are elected. 'Thine they were,' says Christ to his Father, 'and thou gavest them me.' And it were a much more fond conceit to think that God chose such to be saved as he foresaw the human nature of Christ would love and choose. This were to make the Divine will conformed to that of the human nature; whereas, 'Not my will, but thine be done,' said Christ unto God the Father.

This, therefore, is not the meaning, that Christ as God-man is the cause of the act of our election, as it was in God.

2. Affirmatively. The meaning is this, that Jesus Christ in election was the Head of the elect. He was from the first considered and ordained by God as a Common Person, to represent us. He undertook for us then, and so in him we were chosen, as in a Head. This is the sense that holy Baines giveth of it: To note out, saith he, the order of election, namely, that Christ was chosen first as a Head, and we in him; though both at the same time, yet, for priority of nature, he as a Common Person and a Head was first elected, and we in him.

For the clear understanding of this, I will, *first*, give you two cautions, to prevent a misunderstanding of it; and, *secondly*, explain how it might be that Christ should be considered as a Common Person in the act of election.

First, *For the cautions*:—

1. Learn to distinguish between being elected *with Christ*, and being elected *in Christ*. To be elected with Christ, is to be elected at the same time he was, for matter of time, for all was from eternity; but to be elected in Christ is with this difference, that Christ at God's first act of election was considered as a Common Person, a Head and Root, and we all as in him. This is common both to Christ and to us, that we were elected with him, and he with us, for matter of time. But this is proper to Christ, that we were elected in him, he not in us.

To explain this to you both out of Scripture, by his type Adam, and also by a similitude, that may convey it to your understanding.

First, by Scripture. So, Gen. i. 27, 'God created man, in his own image created he him (that is, Adam); male and female created he them.'

God in creating Adam created all mankind, as in blessing Adam he blessed all mankind. Yea, the creation of Adam was all the creation that the rest of mankind had. For though they exist by generation successively, yet in him were they created virtually, and then only. Thus in choosing Christ, God looked upon him as a Common Person, as a second Adam, and chose us in him. And therefore you shall find in 1 Cor. xv. 47, that God speaks of Christ and of Adam as if there had been but those two men in the world. 'The first man,' says he, 'and the second man.' Was there but a first man and a second man? Yes; but these two men stood for all the rest. Or, in a word, Jesus Christ was not only a Common Person in his dying for us, but in his being chosen also, (as I shall shew by and by,) and so we were elected in him. This is the meaning of it.

For the similitude which I spake of, I shall take it from amongst men. Suppose that a kingdom were now to be new set up, and a king to be chosen, and they meant so to choose him as they would choose his posterity, his eldest sons that should be after him, and that for ever. Now when they have made this covenant with this first man, the first king: We take you for our king, and your eldest son, and the eldest sons of all your posterity after you to the end of the world. In this case it may be said, that at the same time they chose his sons *with him*; and not so only, but that they chose his sons *in him* also. Why? Because he was the first, and they are considered as in his loins. What saith Christ? 'Here am I, and the children that thou hast given me.' And so God said to him, Here thou art, and in thee all my elect. I appoint thee as a root to as many men as I choose together with thee; but I choose them *in thee*. When God first said, Let there be a tree; for order of time both root and branches came up together, the branches were created with the root, and the root with the branches; yet the branches in the root, and not the root in the branches. Boast not thyself, as if thou wert chosen alone, and he alone, and that then thou wert given to him to be in him for time to come. No, that place I may allude unto in Rom. xi. 18, 'Boast not thyself, for thou bearest not the root, but the root thee;'—Thou bearest not Christ, he was not chosen in thee, but thou in him, and for him.

2. The second caution is, that you take heed how you understand it, as if that Christ alone were distinctly chosen, and that our persons were not as distinctly chosen too. Yes, both Christ and we too were distinctly and particularly thought of, and so individually elected. The meaning, I say, of this our being elected in him, is not as if he only had been distinctly and by name chosen, and we all but confusedly, and in gross, and as in his election only. God did not choose in the general, as a kingdom doth choose the children of a king that come after him, and are involved in him, in a general notion only, so as their distinct choice is of the king himself alone. No, the Scripture saith, 'God knoweth who are his;' he knoweth the very persons fully and particularly; yea, and distinctly viewed them when he elected them. And notwithstanding he thus chose us as distinct persons from Christ, yet still our election was in Christ. As suppose a kingdom, that chooseth a king and his children, should know by way of prophecy what manner of men all his sons to come would be, and how many he should have, and yet should choose him and them; though, I say, they did distinctly know all their persons and natures, yet still they chose them in him as the head of the family. Now, Christ is the head of all the family of them that are named, both in heaven and earth.

The second thing to be spoken to is, *How Jesus Christ may be rightly con-*

sidered to be a Common Person when he was chosen.—Some divines yield that he was chosen to be a Common Person when he should take up man's nature, and that we were chosen then to be by him represented. They acknowledge that he was a Common Person in his death, representing us, and is now a Common Person in heaven, and sits there as in our stead, representing us. But, say they, in the act of choosing, how should he be considered as a Common Person, in that he did not then exist as God-man? He might indeed be ordained to be a Common Person after he did exist as God-man, but how in election was he, or could he be such, he being as then only the Son of God, and not man?

To solve this difficulty, lay we out these few things together :—

1. That the person of the Son of God, who was ordained this Common Person, he was with God then, he was then existent. So, Prov. viii. 30, 'Then,' says Wisdom, namely Christ, 'I was by him,' &c. And the Evangelist John saith, 'He was in the beginning with God,' that is, from everlasting (as I shall shew afterwards.)

2. This Son of God that then existed (consider him as one that was to become man) was the object of election, as well as the manhood which was chosen to become one with God. That Divine person was, by an act and decree of God's will, pitched upon and singled out to assume our nature, and to sustain the person of a Head before God in the meanwhile.

3. At, or in the act of election, this Son of God, as he actually existed at the passing of that act of election upon himself, so he actually and solemnly undertook to be a Head and Common Person representing us, and to that end to assume our nature. And this is in order of nature to be supposed before our election, though coexistent together from eternity.

4. Upon this he was in repute such with God the Father. He was a Common Person in God's esteem, and that justly. So, Prov. viii. 23, 'I (namely, Christ) was set up from everlasting, ere ever the earth was,' &c. ; I was set up, that is, in esteem with God for such. Now this cannot be understood of Christ, as he was the second Person only. But God did set him up from the beginning, as bearing and sustaining the person of God-man, (to which manhood he was chosen and undertook to assume,) and as a Head to his members, before God, who reputed him such. And of him considered as such are those words spoken ; for so only he is called Wisdom, as there he is. For Christ is not called the Wisdom of God essentially taken, for that is one of his attributes, and not a person. But he is called God's Wisdom *manifestative*, that is, as ordained to manifest God's wisdom unto us, he being to be 'God manifest in the flesh.' And such a person or relation as he then thus actually undertook, such did God then, and from that time, repute him to be, and actually entitled him by, as between himself and his Son. Therefore, in John xvii. 5, (observe the phrase there,) 'Glorify me,' says Christ to God, 'with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.' What glory was that? He doth not mean his glory as he was simply second Person, because he had that glory now, and therefore needed not to beg it. Nay, he could not beg it, it was too much for him so to beg, for so he is equal with God. Therefore it must be the glory of the mediatorship. 'Which I had before the world was;' that is, in thy repute; thou accountedst me thus and thus glorious in respect of the glory ordained me by my undertaking to be man and the Mediator of the Church. And this is plain, if you compare it with ver. 24, for there he speaks of that glory which was given him, which can be no other than the glory of the mediatorship.

So then, Jesus Christ, the second Person, being existent, and undertaking

to be a Common Person and a Mediator for men, God did reckon him as such. He was in his account, at the choosing of him, as a Common Person and Head, and as a Mediator, too. And, indeed, there was this great advantage of our Mediator's being God, that thereby he was not only present at, and privy to the making of all God's decrees ; but was also by, to undertake for all that concerned his part in it which God should decree, and to enter upon the title and relation of our Head and Mediator then. And there is this reason why Christ must needs have been a Head to his members before his assuming our nature, or ascending up to heaven, (which I see not how it can be answered :) because otherwise Jesus Christ had not been a Head to the fathers under the Old Testament ; for he had not as then taken a human nature ; and yet was actually a Common Person for forgiving their sins, by virtue of that atonement he had engaged to perform for them ; which was such in God's repute existing before him in Job's time, ' Deliver him, I have found a ransom,' Job xxxiii. 24. And upon the account thereof God did as really and actually forgive the sins of the Old Testament as he did, Rom. iii. 25. Now, if he was a Head then, and they actually members of him, then he might be so, virtually and representatively, from everlasting, through his undertaking of it ; and this in as just a sense as he is said to be the ' Lamb slain from the beginning of the world.'

Why may not the promise of the second Person, then passed unto God, give as full, yea a fuller subsistence of those things which God decreed and which he undertook for, before God his Father, as God's promise, which was written in the Old Testament, gave to the fathers' faith then, in respect unto which Christ was as then already slain? God the Father, who was then present, had a certain assurance that Christ his Son, that gave his promise for performance, would and should perform it ; and Christ, as Son of God, who was God, having promised, I may say of both, that Christ's word then was as good as his bond, and the Father's assurance that he should perform it as good as if he had already seen it done, and his calling things that are not, as certain as if they were. And I may apply one and the same effect of the Apostle Paul equally to both. If of God the Father giving Christ his promise before the world began, it must be said, ' God that cannot lie,'—and so it is, and was as firm and sure as if done and fulfilled, and this because he is God, as Tit. i. 2, it is expressly there said, ' in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began,'—I may invert it, and say for the same reason, that that promise which Christ made the Father to undertake the mediatorship in man's nature before the world was, and to do all he did in the fulness of time ; that Christ's promise then must have been, and was reputed as sure and steadfast by God the Father as if it had been already done. And God the Father might as certainly build upon it to do anything that was to be done, depending upon what Christ undertook to do then, as if Christ had already performed all that promise and undertaking ; and this upon as equal reasons, for Christ was God then, as well as the Father, and could no more lie than he ; for they both are equals, John x. 30, and all the terms of both sides are equal, ' before the world was,' &c. I might likewise urge that which followeth in the 10th verse of this 1st chapter to the Ephesians ; there you have an *ἀνακεφαλáωσις*, a gathering together again unto one head, both of Jew and Gentile. Why a gathering together unto one head? (for so the word signifieth.) One reason may be, because in election they were in Christ as a Head before. But I leave the discussing that till I come to the 10th verse.

So that, to conclude this point, that we are said to be 'elected in Christ,' the meaning of it is summed up in these particulars:—

1. That Jesus Christ was the Head of election, and of the elect of God ; and so in order of nature elected first, though in order of time we were elected with him. In the womb of election he, the Head, came out first, and then we, the members. He is therefore said in predestination to be the first-born of all his brethren : Rom. viii. 29, 'Who hath predestinated us,' says the Apostle, 'to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.' Nay, in Col. i. 15, he is said to be the 'first-born of every creature.' How is that spoken of him ? I have shewed it elsewhere to be plainly meant of Christ as God-man. Otherwise he is not said to be the first-born in respect of every creature. God would never have condescended so low, speaking of the eternal generation of his Son, as to compare him therein with creatures. But, saith he, he is the first-born of every creature, and 'the Head of the body, the Church,' as it followeth, ver. 18.

2. That God in that act of election looked not at us apart and singly as in ourselves, so as by one act to choose us, and by another act to give us to Christ. But, as we say of the soul, *infundendo creatur, et creando infunditur*, it is by one and the same act of God's both created and infused into the body, and so subsists not one moment apart ; so God in the act of choosing us gave us to Christ, and in giving us to Christ he chose us. And thus, he never considering us apart, but as members of Christ and given to him in the very act of choosing ; hence our very choice itself is said to be 'in him.' And so, on the other side, in the first view and purpose God took up concerning Christ, and in electing him, he looked not at him apart, as a single person in himself, but as a head to us his body, chosen in him, and with him. So that the meaning is not, that Jesus Christ, the second Person in the Trinity, was chosen by one act to be man, and then to be a Common Person by another. But at the very same instant that he was chosen the one, he was chosen the other ; under that very consideration, to be a Common Person ; which he then actually undertook. It was in this as in the creation of Adam, his shadow ; who, when he was first made, was not made as a single man, he was made a living soul, 1 Cor. xv. 45. What is that ? To be a public person, to convey life to others, as well as to have life personally in himself. That is the meaning, as appears by the following words, 'the last Adam,' that is, Christ, 'was made a quickening spirit ;' that is, not to himself, but to others. So that the very first view that God in election took of Christ, was not of him only as a single person considered, but as a Common Person representing others. In a word, as in the womb head and members are not conceived apart, but together, as having relation each to other, so were we and Christ, as making up one mystical body unto God, formed together in that eternal womb of election. So that God's choice did completely terminate itself on him and us ; us with him, and yet us in him ; he having the priority to be constituted a Common Person and root to us : for that is the relation wherein we stand unto him, and in that relation we were first chosen.

3. And then the third thing which this phrase implieth, and which will make up the meaning of it, is this : that as God's decree gave us a subsisting beyond things merely possible to be,—that is, which God could make, but never decreed to make,—so we, by reason of this election of us with Christ, in this transaction, in this respect we came to have a further *representative being* and existence in Christ from everlasting, by virtue of his being their

considered as a common Head. So that in this did Jesus Christ subserve God's decree. I will, saith Christ, represent them ; they are all virtually in me ; and do thou, O Father, reckon them as having a subsistence in me. Jesus Christ, I say, did give thereby a subsistence to us, such as Adam, when he began to be, did give unto all mankind ; they were all virtually in him. Now, make but the supposition that Adam had existed from everlasting, as Christ did, (the person, I mean, who took this title and relation on him,) and then how this might be is easily understood.

I will only add to this last thing mentioned the great ends and advantages that this subserviency of Christ unto the act of election was of, in his actual undertaking to be a root of a new ordained being to us, at that instant.

1. By means of this, our virtual or representative subsisting, or being looked at as in Christ, and as one with him, in and from God's first choosing us,—by means of this, God could then from everlasting make a covenant of grace, and also make that covenant sure unto us. A covenant, we know, is an agreement between two parties upon terms. Now, we then not existing in our single selves, though God might have taken up a purpose to do this or that for us, and in us, yet it could not be called a covenant unless we were some way extant before him ; and the covenant of grace should otherwise not have been a covenant until men did believe. To help this, therefore, God chose us in Christ, and he represented us, standing before God in our stead, and offering to undertake to work in us all the terms that God should require on our part ; as this here, 'to be holy before him in love,' &c. And so a covenant was as truly struck between God and us, through Christ's representing us, as the covenant of works was between God and us, as considered in Adam. And hence it is that Christ, by the prophet Isaiah, is called 'our covenant.'

2. Hence, likewise, secondly, it comes to pass that God might, upon this covenant, then give and bestow upon us all spiritual blessings, as we were thus considered in Christ. Had God chosen us in ourselves only and apart, then indeed he might have purposed them all unto us, but could not have been said, as then, to have *given* them unto us, or to have blessed us with them as then. But when as through Christ's actual undertaking this relation as then unto us, that we came to be considered in him as a Common Person, God might in him bless us with all these spiritual blessings, in the sense before given ; even as Adam was created a Common Person, and so we considered virtually and representatively in him, God might and did bless us with all earthly blessings in him, as we before observed. God did purpose them unto Adam and us afore, by a bare decree, but could not have been said to bless us with them, unless he who should represent us was himself existent, and so we virtually and representatively in him, which was not until his creation ; I speak of Adam. But now the Son of God, then actually existing, did voluntarily, and by God's appointment, personate us, that thereby all blessings, and the promises of them, might be virtually given us, by being then given to him for us, as that phrase, 2 Tim. i. 9, imports, 'the grace that was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.' Even as a grandfather may give a portion to his son's child yet unborn, by giving it to his son, whom he makes his heir and executor—he personally subsisting before, and his child in him.

3. The third advantage is, that hereby our salvation had a sure foundation given it in election, not only in God's eternal love and purpose, (the foundation of the Lord remains sure, he knows who are his,) but further also, this

his first choice of us was a founding us on Christ, and in and together with choosing us, a setting us into him, so as then to be represented by him. So that now we are to run the same fortune, if I may so speak, with Christ himself for ever, our persons being made mystically one with his, and he a Common Person to us in election, as Adam was in his creation. Other men, as likewise the angels that fell, were ordained to be *in themselves*,—to stand or fall by themselves,—but we were, by a choice act of God's, culled out of the lump, and chosen in Christ, and not in ourselves apart. Hence they (the other mentioned) stood upon their own bottom, and in a single and naked relation unto God; and so, God dealing with them but as mere single creatures, according to that law that passeth between the Creator and the single creatures, they fell and perished. But we were considered in Christ from the first, and therefore, though we fall, we shall rise again in him and by him; for he is a Common Person for us, and to stand for us, and is for ever to look to us, to bring us to all that God ordained us unto; and so this foundation remains sure. We are chosen in Christ, and therefore are in as sure a condition, as for final perishing, as Christ himself.

4. There is a fourth end or subserviency of it, that God, looking on us thus represented in Christ, and bearing that relation to him, and he to us, God and Christ together might from that time delight in us, as you have it Prov. viii., and have a complacency between themselves beforehand in us. But of this when we come to the sixth verse.

There are two other things that go to make up this interpretation of these words, 'chosen in him,' yet fuller, which are added by some. I shall but name them now:—

1. That we were chosen in Christ as the pattern unto whom we should be conformed. God set him up as the pattern, and drew us, as so many little pictures, by him and his image. 'He hath predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son,' Rom. viii. 29. That is the first—'in him, as the pattern of us.

2. 'In him;' say some, this phrase noteth out *habitudinem causæ finalis*; said Anselm, long since, that he was the end of all those whom God chose. And therefore, whereas some copies have it *ἐν αὐτῷ*, others have it barely *αὐτῷ*, which accordingly may be read, 'to him. I shall meet with these two in the next verse, therefore I will no longer insist on them here.

I will now give you (for all this is but a doctrinal discourse to open the words) some useful observations.

Obs. 1.—Learn to give Jesus Christ his full honour, which God his Father hath given him. It is a mighty honour, that he is the cause of all the grace and glory that you have, and shall have. But that he should be the common Head, set up in election, too, before the world was, this honoureth him much more—this setteth another crown upon his head; and it is pity he should lose any honour that may be given him. Saith he, John xvii. 5, 'Glorify thou me with thy own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was'—that is, that glory which then, considered as God-man, I had in thy repute and estimation, and which thou thyself gavest me between me and thee, and which thou respectedst me for; accordingly, even as bearing that person of Head and Mediator, which, ere it be long, I shall visibly wear in heaven, give it me now in the sight of angels and men.

Now, since God thus glorified Christ then, do you likewise glorify him in your hearts with that glory which he had before the world was; part of which you have heard what it was, namely, that which is proper to the text,

(for it would take up many sermons to lay it all open.) Men are afraid to derogate from God, whilst they give to Christ ; but if we make God the sole cause of predestination, there is no danger of giving this honour unto Christ in the act of choosing us, that God (as the text hath it) should choose us in him. This is the Father's honour, that his will was the womb wherein lay both Christ and we too. But this is the Son's honour, that the Father set him up from everlasting as a Common Person for us to be chosen in him. He chose us in him, and never once considered us out of him.

2. *Observation*, or rather *Instruction*.—Let God the Father have the glory of the act, in that he is the fountain, the first mover in, and the sole cause of it. His will and good pleasure did cast it, for the substance of it, and singled out our persons, and ordained Christ a Head, and us in him. And remember, that as this election is unto this great privilege, to be in Christ, and one with him, (of all the highest, and fundamental to all other ;) so that it is election, a choice, wherein others were left. God passed by, not only multitudes of persons whom he could have made, but did not, but also a vast number of those whom he did ordain to be. And were you so chosen in Christ, as that God never purposed you a being but as in Christ, and then gave you this subsistence in Christ, never casting a thought upon you out of him ; then reckon of no other being but what you have in Christ. Reckon not of what you have in honours, or what you are in greatness or parts, but reckon of what you were in him before this world was, and of all the spiritual blessings wherewith he then blessed you ; and likewise of what you are now in him, by an actual union, as then by a virtual and representative one. 'Of him,' namely God, 'you are in Christ,' saith the Apostle, in the fore-named place, 1 Cor. i. 30. Consider but the reference of the words to what was said before, and you will find that there is no being true and real to be valued by us but in Christ. 'Of him you are.' That phrase hath an emphasis in it ; it is *verbum substantivum*, relating to other things that seem to have a being, but *are not*. So ver. 27, 'God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty ; things which are not to bring to nought the things which are.' There are other things spoken of, that 'are,' and 'are mighty,' and great things in the world's eye, as honours, wisdom, strength, &c., ver. 26 ; but glory not of these, says the apostle, as having any being. 'Of him you are in Christ,' 'that, according as it is written, He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord,' ver. 31. Here is your being, and all the being you have ; and, says he, reckon of no being else ; glory in nothing, but only in this, that you are in Christ. For God chose you in him ; the being you had was in him before the world was.

And so much for that, which indeed is the greatest difficulty I am like to meet with in this chapter, or in this epistle.

II. Now, *in the second place*, as it is said, God hath chosen us in Christ, so the time when is specified next, *Before the foundation of the world*.

There are two senses which divines, with whom I have met, do give of these words. And I love still to give the largest sense that will hold.

First, say they, 'before the foundation of the world' signifies as much as from eternity. Why ? Because before the world was, there was nothing but eternity. If you look past the world, you put your head up into eternity. And to make good this interpretation they cite John i. 1, where, when the Evangelist would express that Christ was eternal, he says, 'he was in the beginning.' And if he were in the beginning, at that very instant when the world was made, certainly he was from everlasting. Therefore, further to confirm this, Prov. viii. 23, Wisdom says, 'I was set up from everlasting ;

from the beginning, ere ever the earth was.' These three phrases, you see, are equivalent, and all one.

The second interpretation that I have met withal, in the works of some who are yet alive, and which Mr Baines likewise hath, is this, that those words do note out the order of God's decree; namely, that God chose us in Christ in his own purpose, before the foundation of the world was laid in his decree or purpose; speaking herein of God after the manner of men. Not but that God thought of all at once; for all his works are known to him from the beginning. But because he did subordinate one thing to another; and so he did intend and make the world for his elect; and in that sense he chose Christ before them, and them before the world. They were 'set up,' as the phrase is, first and primarily, in his aim and intention, and the world subordinately unto them.

And there is a reason or two for this interpretation; for otherwise, where it is said, 1 Pet. i. 20, that God did 'pre-ordain Christ before the foundation of the world,' if the meaning were only this, before the world began to be, and not before the world was in God's purpose too, then there were no special thing said of God's ordaining Christ: for in that sense he likewise ordained the world before the world was; that is, he pre-ordained it to be ere it did actually exist. But, say they, this phrase importeth a special love from God unto Christ, in that he thought of him before he thought of the world, and ordained the world merely for him.

The other reason is, that otherwise it were incongruous to compare things in a like state with things in a different state. When therefore the Apostle speaks of God's decrees, and of our election in comparison of the world, he means the world as it also was in God's decrees. And perhaps it may be one reason why the word 'predestination' and 'foreknowledge' are used in Scripture only of God's decrees about man, and not about the world. I shall only add a scripture for the confirmation of this, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 'Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world; all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' Mark here the order of things; God ordained Christ for himself, 'Christ is God's.' He ordained you for Christ, 'you are Christ's.' And he ordained the world for you, 'Apollos, Cephas, and the world, all are yours.' So that the world was ordained both for you, and for Christ, and for God himself also.

I will give you an observation or two upon this place, and so pass on to the next.

Obs. 1.—First, therefore. If it be taken thus, that God chose you from eternity, you see then that God's love is everlasting. Do you therefore value it by the eternity of it, as Christ doth, John xvii. 24, 'Thou,' says he, 'lovedst me before the foundation of the world.' Christ, you see, makes a great matter of it, and why should not we? If a man were in love with a maid when she was a child, and his love towards her grew up together with her, it endears his love the more unto her. It is true of love, as it is of wine, that the older it is the better it is.

Obs. 2.—Secondly. Let God's love have the same valuation with you that the love of God himself had of you. You see, according to the interpretation given, that he chose you before he purposed to make the world; he preferred you to all the world. We speak not, as I said before, of the priority of time,—for all things came up at once before God,—but of what his aim and intention primarily pitched upon. The world was but cast in, as he saith, Matt. vi. 33. All other things shall be superadded. Have you the same valuation of God, and of his love? This David had. 'Whom,'

says he, 'have I in heaven but thee? and there is none to me on earth in comparison of thee.' Value God and his love more than all the world, though there were millions of them. He valued you before the world, and therefore is beforehand with you in his love. He not only loved you from everlasting, (whereas your love is but of yesterday,) but in the valuation of it, he loved you before all worlds, and preferred you to all worlds: though you loved the world first, before you loved him. 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,' 1 John ii. 15. Why is not the love of the Father in him? Because the Father loved us before the world was. And were a man's heart taken with the love of the Father, certainly he would prefer it before all the world; for the love of God the Father preferred him before all the world. Overlook we this world, no matter what becometh of it, or of us in it. We look not, says the Apostle, at things temporal. Look we to the other world, unto which God hath chosen and predestinated us.

Obs. 3.—A third observation or instruction. See the reason why all things in this world do further God's decree of election. 'All things work together for good to them that love God.' In God's purpose and intention you came first up before the world, as you may see in that Christian inventory, 1 Cor. iii. 22, (the place before cited;) all things are yours, Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, things present, things to come, life, death, and all are yours. And good reason why. God chose you before them all, and so plotted the business, that all things in this world should be so marshalled as to further and subserve the decree of election. He appointed that thou shouldst be poor, another rich; thou low, another honourable; one man to be deformed, another beautiful; one man to have these and these crosses and afflictions in the world, and another few or none at all. And all this variety is to further their salvation in a several way; all is subordinated unto election. God ordained our being and condition of living in this world, in subordination to that other world. James saith he chose the poor of this world. But how? Not as first foreseeing them poor, and so pitching on them for salvation; but having chosen their persons nakedly and simply considered, he ordained they should for the most part be poor, so to glorify his grace the more, (which is the end of election.) And so he ordained whose children we should be, which yet is the original of our being. This was not plotted first, and then we chosen to salvation; but we were chosen to salvation, and then God allotted or destinated the several times we should live in, who should be our parents, and what our conditions; and all as means subordinate to election, so to illustrate his grace the more. And therefore care not what thy parentage or what thy condition is here. Thou wert by God considered as that which he meant to make thee, even a brave and glorious creature, ere ever the consideration of what thy condition here should be came in; this estate of thine here being but the way unto that thy country and inheritance.

Obs. 4.—In the fourth place. See here the reason why nothing in this world can separate a man from the love of God. What says the Apostle, Rom. viii. 38? He makes a mighty challenge, he challengeth angels and men, dominions and principalities, &c., all things in this world, and in the world to come: and 'I am persuaded,' says he, 'that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God.' Why? He loved us before all worlds. That is a good reason. Should my covenant, says God, of night and day be lost? Let this world run into confusion; let heaven and earth cease to keep their laws; yet my covenant with you shall not cease. Why?

I chose you before all worlds. Here is the reason: 'Hills shall remove, and mountains depart; but my kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed,' Isa. liv. 10. Why? Because my kindness was before the mountains, and before the hills were brought forth, (as Wisdom speaks, Prov. viii.)

Obs. 5.—Fear not the ruin of kingdoms, nor of the world, for your being depends not on either of them; God chose you before all worlds. Let kingdoms totter, and mountains be thrown into the midst of the sea, 'we have a kingdom that cannot be shaken,' Heb. xii. 28.

And thus much for the time of our election.

III. For the end unto which God chose us. The Apostle saith it is, *That we might be holy and unblameable before him in love.*

By 'holiness' here is meant, either that imperfect holiness of grace which we have in this life, or that perfect holiness which we are ordained to in the world to come. It is evidently meant of both.

First, Of that perfect holiness in the world to come, and this principally. For, saith the Apostle, he hath chosen us to be holy and blameless. The word signifieth such an innocence as no man can justly carp at; ἀμόμους, such as a captious Momus cannot take exceptions at; nay, such as God himself, who is more curious than man, shall find no fault with, or blame in; 'before him.' Therefore it must needs be meant of perfect holiness, which he hath ordained us unto in heaven; and, as I take it, is the same with that in the fifth chapter of this same epistle, ver. 27. Christ will 'sanctify and cleanse his church,' which is for the present but imperfectly holy, 'that he may present it to himself glorious, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it may be holy, and without blemish.' It is the very same thing that here we are said to be ordained to in the end. And God will do this, to the end that he may look upon us with pleasure. Our imperfect holiness is indeed holiness before him in truth and sincerity; but it is not holiness before him *without blame*. It is not such as he can fully and perfectly delight in. So that this is the meaning of the place, that God hath ordained unto all those whom he hath chosen a perfect holiness, and that they should be blameless before him; which one day they shall certainly be. Paul, in Phil. iii. 12, wisheth that he might 'apprehend that for which also he was apprehended of Christ Jesus?' What is that? A perfection in grace. God, says he, gave me to Christ, that I might be perfectly holy. For, says he, ver. 14, 'I press towards the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,' 'if by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.' He endeavoured to be as perfect as the just shall be at the resurrection, so ver. 11; for that is it for which God gave him unto Christ. Christ took us to bestow this upon us; and God ordained us unto this. God is so perfect in himself, and in his contrivements, that he looketh and pitcheth upon the perfection of his works at first. When we were chosen by him, we came not up sinful before him, or imperfectly holy as we are here; but God looked at the utmost end, what he would make us at the last; and so presented us unto Christ. Now Christ upon that presentation was so taken with our beauty, that never since can he absolutely delight in us, until he hath sanctified us and cleansed us, and made us perfect, having neither spot nor wrinkle, as at first we were presented to him.

Secondly, As he hath ordained us to perfect holiness in the world to come, to be blameless before him, so he hath ordained us to holiness in this life, or else we shall never come to heaven, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 'He hath chosen us unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit.' You must run

through sanctification of the Spirit, or you shall never come to heaven. You must be pure in heart here, or else you shall never see God. This is the least intended of the two.

But you will say, How can our holiness here be called unblameableness?

I answer, Yes, in some sense it may be so called; namely, that evangelically it is such; for you are perfectly holy in desire. You pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. It is the desire of every good soul to be unblameable. Again, you may be said to be unblameable, because if you sin you make it up again by repentance. So that you see, how by holiness and unblameableness are meant both holiness here and hereafter.

Accordingly 'before him' hath a double sense:—

1. If you understand the holiness mentioned of imperfect holiness here, the meaning is, that true holiness is not before men, it is before God, who approveth of sincerity only; such as your father Abraham was to you an example of, Gen. xvii. 1, 'Walk before me, and be upright.' That expression there is all one with this holiness before God here. If the heart be upright or sincere before God, that is all one as to be holy before him. In Col. iii. 22, servants are bidden to do their masters' service as before God, &c. But I cannot stand upon this now.

2. If that holiness be understood of the holiness of glory, as principally, if not only, it is, then 'before him' hath two meanings, and both good.

The one is this: God hath ordained us to be holy in his presence for ever, and there for ever to enjoy him, and delight ourselves in that enjoyment. 'In thy presence,' saith the Psalmist, 'there is fulness of joy,' &c.

Or, secondly, the meaning is this: that as we might delight in God, and enjoy his face and presence, so he might delight in us, we being perfectly holy before him, or in his account. The end of his choosing us was, that we might be in his presence, and he delight himself in us, and glory in his creatures as made thus holy and thus happy by him. *Dulce est amare, et amari*,—It is a sweet thing to love, and be beloved again. God, though he loved his children, yet could not rest in that love, nor heighten it to a delight in them, till he had made them blameless in love before him; till he had made them perfectly holy like himself.

And then lastly, 'in love' is added, as meant of perfect holiness in heaven, where there is no faith, nothing but love. And if you take it of imperfect holiness here, so all the principles of true holiness are nothing but love. 'Faith worketh by love.' So that the words may well bear both these senses.

I shall now give you some observations out of the words, as taken in either sense:—

Obs. 1.—If this holiness here be meant of perfect holiness, (as certainly it is,) see then what heaven is. It is perfect holiness and perfect love to God. To be holy before him in love, this is the foundation of the glory in heaven. If I should spend millions of years in describing heaven unto you, I could say no more, but only open these three things couched in the text, perfect holiness in God's presence, and enjoying and loving of him, even as we are beloved of him. This is heaven, and this is that which God hath pitched upon to bring us to. This is the chief thing in election, in which work of God's he looks to this unblameableness in holiness and love before him, as the end of it.

Obs. 2.—In the second place, whereas the Apostle in the next verse saith, 'He hath predestinated us to the adoption of children;' and in this verse foregoing it he saith, 'He hath chosen us to be holy before him in love,' so

putting holiness before adoption ; this is the reason of it : adoption is a privilege of ours, and does indeed contain all the privileges we have, as I may so speak, for ourselves ; but holiness is that which is for God—it is to please and glorify him, and therefore it is justly here put before the other. From whence we may observe—

That it is God's first aim that we should be holy before him. Let it therefore be our great care too. That which was first in God's eye, let it be chiefly in ours. Though we be ordained to adoption and glory, yet we were first chosen to be 'holy before him in love.'

Art thou imperfectly holy ? Comfort thyself with this, that though thou beest now full of blame, and men may lay many things to thy charge ; yet God hath chosen thee to be one day holy and without blame before him. Yea, thou mayest comfort thyself against imperfect holiness in this, that when God chose thee, that first view he took of thee, that first idea wherein thou wert represented to him, was as he meant to make thee, even perfectly holy ; such thou camest up before him in his first intention about thee, even clothed with all those jewels and embellishments which he meant one day to bestow upon thee. What is the reason that God is willing to pardon us, and that he pleaseth himself in us now ? He knows that though we be sinful now, yet it will not be long ere we shall be perfectly holy before him. Christ cleanseth us, to 'present' us to himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle.'

And on the other side, if it be meant of imperfect holiness, as the means to the end, there may these observations be raised from that :—

Obs. 1.—Without holiness here, there is no happiness to be expected hereafter. Without God's mercy we cannot be saved ; and without holiness we are not under mercy, 1 Pet. i. 2, He hath chosen us to obedience of the truth. And without purity or holiness no man shall see God.

Obs. 2.—The ground of all true obedience is love : 'To be holy before him in love.' Faith works by love. As no duty is pleasing to God without faith, so neither without love. It was not the reason why God chose us, but the end unto which he chose us. He hath ordained us to be holy before him in love.

Obs. 3.—There remains one observation more, that is general to both interpretations, namely, that the foundation of God's love is not loveliness in us. Though in our love we cannot love a creature (as, not a child) until it is and hath a being,—and not then neither, unless we see something lovely in it which may draw out our affections towards it,—yet God can resolve to love such creatures as he can make thus and thus lovely, and so ordain them to be holy before him, that he may delight in them. He can therefore take things possible, in respect of being,—that is, which he can, or hath in his power to make and create,—and he can aforehand resolve thus and thus to love them ; which we cannot do. And the reason of this is, for that his love is only from his own will, as our being his creatures also is ; and so the first objects of election may be *res creabiles, non tantum quæ actu creatæ sunt et existunt*,—things that are looked upon by him but as yet to be created, not only those that are supposed actually to exist.