

# The Doctrine of Election 3. Its Grand Original

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## Transcript

### The Doctrine of Election

#### 3. Its Grand Original

The decrees of God, His eternal purpose, the inscrutable counsels of His will, are indeed a great deep; yet this we know, that from first to last they have a definite relation to Christ, for He is the Alpha and the Omega in all covenant transactions. Beautifully did Spurgeon express it: "Search for the celestial fountain, from which the divine streams of grace flow to us, and you will find Jesus Christ the well-spring in covenant love. If your eyes shall ever see the covenant roll, if you shall ever be permitted in a future state to see the whole plan of redemption as it was mapped out in the chambers of eternity, you shall see the blood-red line of atoning sacrifice running across the margin of every page, and you shall see that from the beginning to the end one object was always in view—the glory of the Son of God." It therefore seems strange that many who see that election is the foundation of salvation, yet overlook the glorious Head of election, in whom the elect were chosen and from whom they receive all blessings. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:3, 4). Since we were chosen in Christ, it is evident that we were chosen out of ourselves; and since we were chosen in Christ, it necessarily follows that He was chosen before we were. This is clearly implied in the preceding verse, wherein the Father is expressly designated "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now according to the analogy of Scripture (i.e., when He is said to be "the God" of any one) God was "the God" of Christ first, because He chose Him to that grace and union. Christ as man was predestinated as truly as we were, and so has God to be His God by predestination and free grace. Second, because the Father made a covenant with Him (Isa. 42:6). In view of the covenant made with them, He became known as "the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob;" so in view of the covenant He made with Christ, He became His "God." Third, because God is the author of all Christ's blessedness (Ps. 45:2, 7). "According as He [God] hath chosen us in him" means, then, that in election Christ was made the Head of the elect. "In the womb of election He, the Head, came out first [adumbrated in every normal birth, A. W. P.], and then we, the members" (Thos. Goodwin). In all things Christ must have the "preeminence," and therefore is He "the Firstborn" in election (Rom. 8:29). In the order of nature Christ was chosen first, but in the order of time we were elected with Him. We were not chosen for ourselves apart, but in Christ, which denotes three things. First, we were chosen in Christ as the members of His body. Second, we were chosen in Him as the pattern which we should be conformed unto. Third, we were chosen in Him as the final end, i.e., it was for Christ's glory, to be His "fullness" (Eph. 1:23). "Behold my servant, whom I uphold: mine elect, in whom

my soul delighteth" (Isa. 42:1): that this passage refers to none other than the Lord Jesus Christ is unmistakably plain from the Spirit's citation of it in Matthew 12:15-21. Here, then, is the grand original of election: in its first and highest instance election is spoken of and applied to the Lord Jesus! It was the will of the eternal three to elect and predestinate the second person into creature being and existence, so that as God-man, "the firstborn of every creature" (Col. 1:15), He was the subject of the divine decrees and the immediate and principal object of the love of the co-essential three. And as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son—considered as God-man—to have life in Himself (John 5:26), to be a fountain of life, of grace and glory, unto His beloved Spouse, who received her being and wellbeing from Jehovah's free grace and everlasting love. When God determined to create, among all the myriad creatures, both angelic and human, which rose up in the divine mind, to be brought into being by Him, the man Christ Jesus was singled out of them, and appointed to union with the second person in the blessed trinity, and was accordingly sanctified and set up. This original and highest act of election was one of pure sovereignty and amazing grace. The celestial hosts were passed by, and the seed of the woman was determined upon. Out of the innumerable seeds which were to be created in Adam, the line of Abraham was selected, then of Isaac, and then of Jacob. Of the twelve tribes which were to issue from Jacob, that of Judah was chosen, God elected not an angel to the high union with His Son, but "one chosen out of the people" (Ps. 89:19). What shall those say who so much dislike the truth that the heirs of heaven are elected, when they learn that Jesus Christ Himself is the subject of eternal election! "Jehovah is the first cause and the last end of all things. His essence and existence are of and from Himself. He is Jehovah, the self-existing essence: the fountain of life, and essential blessedness—'The King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, who alone hath immortality, dwelling in that light to which no mortal eye can approach.' And throughout a vast eternity the eternal three enjoyed boundless and incomprehensible blessedness in the contemplation of those essential perfections which belong to the Father, Son, and Spirit, the everlasting Jehovah: who is His own eternity, and cannot receive any addition to His essential happiness or glory by any or all of His creatures. He is exalted above all blessing and praise. The whole creation before Him, and as viewed by Him, is less than nothing and vanity. If any should curiously inquire, what was God engaged in before He stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth? The answer is: the blessed, co-equal, and co-essential three, Father, Son, and Spirit, had a mutual in being and society together, and were essentially blessed in that divine eternal life, in the mutual interests or propriety they have in each other, in mutual love and delight—as also in the possession of one common glory. But as it is the nature of goodness to be communicative of itself, so it pleased the eternal trinity to purpose to go forth into creature acts. The ever blessed three, to whom nothing can be added or diminished, the spring and fountain of whose essential blessedness arises from the immense perfections in the infinite nature in which they exist—in the mutual love they have to each other—and their mutual converse together—were pleased to delight in creature fellowship and society. The eternal Father predestinated His co-essential Son into creature being and existence, and from everlasting He wore the form and bore the personage of God-man. The creation of all things is attributed in Scripture to divine sovereignty: 'Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created' (Rev. 4:11). Nothing out of God can move Him: or be a motive to Him; His will is His rule, His glory His ultimate end. 'For of Him (as the first cause), and through Him (as the preserving cause), and to Him (as the final cause), are all things' (Rom. 11:36). God in His actual creation of all, is the end of all. 'The Lord hath made all things for himself' (Prov. 16:4), and the sovereignty of God naturally ariseth from the relation of all things to Himself as their Creator, and their natural and inseparable dependence upon Him, in regard of their being and well-being. He had the being of all things in His own will and power, and it was at His own pleasure whether He would impart it or not. 'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the

world' (Acts 15:18). He comprehends and grasps all things in His infinite understanding. As He hath an incomprehensible essence, to which ours is but as the drop in a bucket, so He hath an incomprehensible knowledge, to which ours is but as a grain of dust. His primitive decree and view, in the creation of heaven and earth, angels and men, being His own glory, and that which gave foundation to it and was the basis to support it, was Jehovah's design to exalt His Son as God-man, to be the foundation and corner-stone of the whole creation of God. God had never gone forth into creature acts, had not the second person condescended by the assumption of our nature to become a creature. Though this took place after the fall, yet the decree concerning it was before the fall. Jesus Christ, the fellow of the Lord of hosts, was the first of all the ways of God" (S. E. Pierce). Nowhere does the sovereignty of God shine forth so conspicuously as in His acts of election and reprobation, which took place in eternity past, and which nothing in the creature was the cause of. God's act of choosing His people in Christ was before the foundation of the world, without the consideration of the fall, nor was it upon the foresight and footing of works, but was wholly, of grace, and all to the praise and glory of it. In nothing else is Jehovah's sovereignty so manifest: indeed the highest instance of it was in predestinating the second person in the Trinity to be the God-man. That this came under the decree of God is clear, again, from the words of the apostle: "Who verily [says he in speaking of Christ] was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:20) and who is said to be laid "in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious" (1 Pet. 2:6). This grand original of election, so little known today, is of such transcendent importance that we dwell upon it a little longer, to point out some of the reasons why God was pleased to predestinate the man Christ Jesus unto personal union with His Son. Christ was predestinated for higher ends than the saving of His people from the effects of their fall in Adam. First, He was chosen for God Himself to delight in, far more so and infinitely above all other creatures. Being united to the second person, the man Christ Jesus was exalted to a closer union and communion with God. The Lord of hosts speaks of Him as "the man that is my fellow" (Zech. 13:7), "mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth" (Isa. 42:1). Second, Christ was chosen that God might behold the image of Himself and all His perfections in a creature, so that His excellences are seen in Christ as in no other: "Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person" (Heb. 1:3), which is spoken of the person of Christ as God-man. Third, by the union of the man Christ Jesus with the everlasting Son of God, the whole fulness of the Godhead was to dwell personally in Him, He being "the Image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15, 19). The Man Christ Jesus, then, was chosen unto the highest union and communion with God Himself. In Him the love and grace of Jehovah shine forth in their superlative glory. The Son of God gave subsistence and personality to His human nature, so that the Son of God and His human nature are not merely one flesh as man and wife (which is the closest union with us), nor one spirit only (as is the case between Christ and the Church: 1 Cor. 6:17), but one person, and hence this creature nature is advanced to a fellowship in the society of the blessed Trinity, and therefore to Him God communicates Himself without measure (John 3:34). Descending now to a lower plane, the Man Christ Jesus was also chosen to be an Head to an elect seed, who were chosen in Him, given a super-creation subsistence, and blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings. If God will love, He must have an object for His love, and the object must have an existence before Him to exercise His love upon, for He cannot love a non-entity. It must therefore be that the God-man, and the elect in Him existed in the divine mind as objects of God's everlasting love, before all time. In Christ the Church was chosen from everlasting: the one the Head, the other His body; the one being the bridegroom, the other His bride: the one being chosen and appointed for the other. They were chosen together, yet Christ first in the order of the divine decrees. As, then, Christ and the Church had existed in the will, thoughts, and purpose of the Father from the beginning, He could love them and rejoice in them. As the God-man declares "Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.. . for thou lovest me before the foundation of the

world" (John 17:23, 24). The Son of God being, before all time, predestinated to be God-man, He was secretly anointed or set up as such, and His human nature had a covenant subsistence before God. In consequence of this, He was the Son of man in heaven before He became the Son of man on earth; He was the Son of man secretly before God before He became the Son of man openly and manifestly in this world. Therefore did the Psalmist exclaim, "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for Thyself" (80:17); and therefore did Christ Himself declare, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" (John 6:62). "God, out of His eternal and infinite goodness of love, and purposing Christ to become a creature, and communicate with His creatures, ordained in His eternal counsel that person in the Godhead should be united to our nature and to one particular of His creatures, that so in the person of the Mediator the true ladder of salvation might be fixed, whereby God might descend to His creatures and His creatures ascend unto Him" (Sir Francis Bacon). "Christ was first elected as Head and Mediator, and as the Cornerstone to bear up the whole building; for the act of the Father's election in Christ supposeth Him first chosen to this mediatory work and to be the Head of the elect part of the world. After this election of Christ, others were predestinated 'to be conformed unto His image' (Rom 8:29) i.e., to Christ as Mediator, and taking human nature; not to Christ barely considered as God. This conformity being specially intended in election, Christ was in the purpose of the Father the first exemplar and copy of it. One foot of the compass of grace stood in Christ as the center, while the other walked about the circumference, pointing one here and another there, to draw a line, as it were, between every one of those points and Christ. The Father, then, being the prime cause of the election of some out of the mass of mankind, was the prime cause of the election of Christ to bring them to the enjoyment of that to which they were elected. Is it likely that God, in founding an everlasting kingdom, should consult about the members before He did about the Head? Christ was registered at the top of the book of election, and His members after Him. It is called, therefore, 'the book of the Lamb'" (S. Charnock). That passage of Scripture which enters most fully into what we are here contemplating is Proverbs 8, at which we will now glance. There are many passages in that book wherein the "wisdom" spoken of signifies far more than a moral excellency, and something even more blessed than the personification of one of the divine attributes. In not a few passages (1:20, 21, for example) the reference is to Christ, one of whose titles is "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). It is as such He is to be regarded here in chapter 8. That it is a person which is there in view is clear from verse 17, and that it is a divine person appears from verse 15; yet not a divine person considered abstractedly, but as the God-man. This is evident from what is there predicated of Him. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old" (v. 22). The speaker is Christ Himself, the alone Mediator between the Creator and His creatures. The words "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way" tend to hide what is there affirmed. There is no prefix in the original Hebrew, nothing there to warrant the interposed "in," while the word rendered "beginning" signifies the first or chief. Thus it should be translated "the Lord possessed me: the beginning (or Chief) of his way, before his works of old." Christ was the firstborn of all God's thoughts and designs, delighted in by Him long before the universe was brought into existence. "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was" (v. 23). "Our Redeemer came forth of the womb of a decree from eternity, before He came out of the womb of the virgin in time; He was hid in the will of God before He was made manifest in the flesh of a Redeemer; He was a lamb slain in decree before He was slain upon the cross; He was possessed by God in the beginning, or the beginning of His way, the Head of His works, and set up from everlasting to have His delights among the sons of men" (Prov. 8:22, 23, 31), (S. Charnock). "When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth" (vv. 24, 25). Christ is here referring to His being "brought forth" in God's mind, being predestinated into

creature existence before the world was made. The first of all God's intentions respected the union of the Man Christ Jesus unto His Son. The Mediator became the foundation of all the divine counsels: see Ephesians 3:11 and 1:9, 10. As such the triune Jehovah "possessed" Him as a treasury in which were laid up all His designs. He was then "set up" or "anointed" (v. 23) in His official character as Mediator and Head of the Church. As the God-man He had a virtual influence and was the Executor of all the works and will of God. "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him" (v. 30). It is not the complacency of the Father in the Son considered absolutely as the second Person, but His satisfaction and joy in the Mediator as He viewed Him in the glass of His decrees. It was as incarnate that the Father said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17), and it was with the foreordained God-man, who had a real subsistence before the divine mind, that He was delighted in by Jehovah before the world was. In His eternal thoughts and primitive views, the man that was His fellow became the Object of God's ineffable love and complacency. It was far more than that Jehovah simply purposed that the Son should become incarnate; His decree gave Christ a real subsistence before Him, and as such afforded infinite satisfaction to His heart. So little understood is this blessed aspect of our subject, and so important do we deem it, that some further remarks thereon seem called for. That Christ is the firstborn or head of the election of grace was prefigured at the beginning of God's works, in fact the creation of this world and the formation of the first man were on purpose to make Christ known. As we are told in Romans 5:14 "which is the figure of Him that was to come." In his creation, formation, and constitution as the federal head of our race, Adam was a remarkable type of Christ as God's Elect. In amplifying this statement it will be necessary to go over some of the same ground that we covered in Spiritual Union and Communion, but we trust the reader will bear with us if we here repeat a number of the things. There is a certain class of people—despising all doctrine, and particularly disliking the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty—who often exhort us to "preach Christ," but we have long observed that they never preach Christ in His highest official character, as the Covenant-Head of God's people, that they never say one word about Him as God's "Elect, in whom my soul delighteth!" Preaching Christ is a far more comprehensive task than many suppose, nor can it be done intelligently by any man until he begins at the beginning and shows that the man Christ Jesus was eternally predestinated unto union with the second person of the Godhead. "I have exalted one chosen out of the people" (Ps. 89:19): that exaltation commenced with the elevation of Christ's humanity to personal union with the eternal Word—unique honor! The very words "chosen in Christ" necessarily imply that He was chosen first, as the soil in which we were set. When God chose Christ it was not as a single or private person, but as a public person, as Head of His body, we being chosen in Him as the members thereof. Thus, inasmuch as we were then given a representative subsistence before God, God could make a covenant with Christ on our behalf. That He did so enter into an eternal compact with Christ in this character as Head of the election of grace is clear from, "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant" (Ps. 89:3)—adumbrated in the covenant He made in time with him who was typically "the man after his own heart," for David was as truly shadowing forth Christ when God made a covenant with him as Joseph was when he supplied food to his needy brethren, or as Moses was when he led forth the Hebrews out of the house of bondage. Let those, then, who desire to preach Christ, see to it that they give Him the preeminence in all things—election not excepted! Let them learn to give unto Jesus of Nazareth His full honor, that which the Father Himself hath given to Him It is a superlative honor that Christ is the channel through which all the grace and glory we have, or shall have, flows to us, and was set up as such from the beginning. As Romans 8:29 so plainly teaches, it was in connection with election that God appointed His own beloved Son to be "the firstborn among many brethren." Christ being appointed as the masterpiece of divine wisdom, the grand prototype, and we ordained to be so many little copies and

models of Him. Christ is the first and last of all God's thoughts, counsels, and ways. The universe is but the theatre and this world the principal stage on which the Lord God thinks fit to act out some of His deepest designs. His creating of Adam was a shadow to point to a better Adam, who was to have an universal headship over all the creatures of God, and whose glories were to shine forth visibly in and through every part of the creation. When the world was created and furnished, man was brought forth. But before his formation we read of that renowned consultation of the eternal three: "And God said, Let us make man in our image" (Gen. 1:26). This respected Christ, the God-man, who was from all eternity the object and subject of all the counsels of the Trinity. Adam, created and made after God's Image, which consisted of righteousness and true holiness, was the type, for Christ is par excellent "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). The formation of Adam's body, by God's immediate hand, out of the dust of the ground, was a figure or shadow of the assumption of human nature by the Son of God, whose humanity was formed immediately by the Holy Spirit: as Adam's body was produced from the virgin earth, so Christ's human nature was produced from the virgin's womb. Again; that union of soul and body in Adam was a type to express that most profound and greatest of all mysteries, the hypostatical union of our nature in the person of Christ: as it is justly expressed in what is commonly called the Athanasian Creed, "As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." Again; as Adam's person comprised the perfections of all creatures, and was suited to take in all the comforts and pleasures they could afford and impart, so the glory of Christ's humanity excels all creatures, even the angels themselves. The more attentively we consider the person and position of the first Adam the better may we discern how fully and fittingly he was a figure of the last Adam. As Adam, placed in paradise, had all the creatures of the earth brought before him and was made to have dominion over them all (Gen. 1:28), thus being crowned with mundane glory and honor, so in this too he accurately foreshadowed Christ, who hath universal empire and dominion over all worlds, beings, and things, as may be seen from Psalm 8, which is applied to the Saviour in Hebrews 2:9, where sovereignty over all creatures is ascribed to Him, the earth and the heavens, sun, moon and stars magnifying Him. For though He was for a little while abased beneath the angels in His humiliation, yet now in His exaltation, He is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. Moreover, though the God-man, the "fellow of the Lord of hosts," went through a season of degradation before His exaltation, nevertheless His glorification was foreordained before the world began: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me" (Luke 22:29); "It is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead" (Acts 10:42). That Christ had both a precedency and presidency in election was also shadowed forth in this primo-primitive type, for we read, "And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him" (Gen. 2:20). Yet mark the perfect accuracy of the type: when God created Adam, He created Eve in him (and in blessing Adam— Gen. 1:28—He blessed all mankind in him); so when God elected Christ, His people were chosen in Him (Eph. 1:4), and therefore they had a virtual being and subsistence in Him from all eternity, and consequently He was styled "the everlasting Father" (Isa. 9:6 and cf. Heb. 2:13); and consequently in blessing Christ, God blessed all the elect in Him and together with Him (Eph. 1:3; 2:5). Though Adam came forth "very good" from the hands of his Maker and was given dominion over all the creatures of the earth, yet we read "but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him." Consequently, He provided a suitable partner for him, which being taken out of his side was then "builded" (Gen. 2:22 margin), brought to, and welcomed by him. In like manner, though Christ was the beginning of God's way, set up from everlasting, and delighted in by the Father (Prov. 8:22, 23, 30), yet God did not think it good for him to be alone, and therefore He decreed a spouse for Him, who should share His communicable graces, honors, riches, and glories; a spouse which, in due time, was the fruit of His pierced side, and brought to Him by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit. When Eve was formed

by the Lord God and brought to Adam so as to effect a marriage union, there was shadowed forth that highest mystery of grace, of God the Father presenting His elect and giving them to Christ: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me" (John 17:6). Foreviewing them in the glass of the divine decrees, the Mediator loved and delighted in them (Prov. 8:31), betrothed them unto Himself, taking the Church as thus presented by God unto Him in a deed of marriage settlement and covenant contract as the gift of the Father. As Adam owned the relation between Eve and himself saying, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23), so Christ became an everlasting husband unto the Church. And as Adam and Eve were united before the fall, so Christ and the Church were one in the mind of God prior to any foreviews of sin. If, then, we are to "preach Christ" in His highest official glory, it must be plainly shown that He was not ordained in God's eternal purpose for the Church, but the Church was ordained for Him. Notice how the Holy Spirit has emphasized this particular point in the type. "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. 11:7-9). Yet as Adam was not complete without Eve, so neither is Christ without the Church: she is His "fullness" or "complement" (Eph. 1:23), yea, she is His crown of glory and royal diadem (Isa. 62: 3)—the Church may be said to be necessary for Christ as an empty vessel for Him to supply with grace and glory. All His delights are in her, and He will be glorified in her and by her through all eternity, putting His glory upon her (John 17:22). "Come hither, I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife. . . descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Rev. 2 1:9-11) In His character as God's "Elect" Christ was shadowed forth by others than Adam. Indeed it is striking to see what a number of those who were prominent types of Christ were made the subjects of a real election of God, by which they were designated to some special office. Concerning Moses we read "Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath" (Ps. 106:23). Of Aaron it is said, "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. 5:4). Of the priests of Israel it is recorded, "The sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him; and to bless in the name of the Lord" (Deut. 21:5). Regarding David and the tribe from which he came, it is written, "He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; but chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.... He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds" (Ps. 78:67, 68, 70). Each of these cases adumbrated the grand truth that the Man Christ Jesus was chosen by God to the highest degree of glory and blessedness of all His creatures. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27). This expression "The Book of Life" is doubtless a figurative one, for the Holy Spirit delights to represent spiritual, heavenly, and eternal things—as well as the blessing and benefits of them—under a variety of images and metaphors, that our minds may the more readily understand and our hearts feel the reality of them, and thus we be made more capable of receiving them. Yet this we are to know: the similitude thus made use of to represent them to our spiritual view are but shadows, yet what is shadowed forth by them has real being and substance. The sun in the firmament is an instituted emblem in the nature of Christ—He being that to the spiritual world which the former is to the natural—yet the former is but the shadow, and Christ is the real substance, hence He is styled "the Sun of righteousness." So when Christ is compared to the light, He is the "true Light" (John 1:9), when compared to a vine, He is the "true Vine" (John 15:1), when to bread, He is "the true Bread," the Bread of life, that Bread of God which came down from heaven (John 6). Let this principle, then, be duly kept in mind by us as we come across the many metaphors which are applied to the Redeemer in the Scriptures. So here in Revelation 21:27 while allowing that "the Book of Life" is a figurative expression, we are far from granting that there is not in

heaven that which is figured by it, nay, the very reality itself. This expression "the Book of Life" has its roots in Isaiah 4:3, wherein God refers to His chosen remnant as "every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem," and it is this which explains the meaning of all the later references thereto. God's eternal act of election is spoken of as writing the names of His chosen ones in the Book of Life, and the following things are suggested by this figure. First, the exact knowledge which God has of all the elect, His particular remembrance of them, His love for and delight in them. Second, that His eternal election is one of particular persons whose names are definitely recorded by Him. Third, to show they are absolutely safe and secure, for God having written their names in the Book of Life, they shall never be blotted out (Rev. 3:5). When the seventy returned from their missionary journey, elated because the very demons were subject to them, Christ said, "But rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20 and cf. Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23), which shows that God's election to eternal life is of particular persons—by name—and therefore is sure and immutable. Let us now particularly observe that this election-register is designated "the Lamb's Book of Life," and this for at least two reasons. First, because the Lamb's name heads it, His being the first one written therein, for He must have the preeminence; after which follows the enrollment of the particular names of all His people—note how His name is the first one recorded in the New Testament: Matthew 1:1! Second, because Christ, is the root and His elect are branches, so that they receive their life from Him as they are in Him and supported by Him. It is written "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). Christ is our life because He is the very "Prince of life" (Acts 3:15). Thus, the divine register of election in which are enrolled all the names of Christ's members, is aptly termed "the Lamb's Book of Life," for they are entirely dependent upon Him for life. But it is in connection with the first reason that we would offer a further remark. It is called the Lamb's Book of Life because His is the first name in it. This is no arbitrary assertion of ours, but one that is clearly warranted by the Bible, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me)" (Heb. 10:7). The speaker here is the Lord Jesus and, as is so often the case (such is the fullness of His words), there is a double reference in it: first to the archives of God's eternal counsels, the scroll of His decrees; second, to the Holy Scriptures, which are a partial transcript of them. In keeping with this twofold reference is the double meaning of the word "volume." In Psalm 40:7 "volume" is unquestionably the signification of the Hebrew word there used; but in Hebrews 10:7 the Greek word most certainly ought to be rendered "head"—kephale occurs seventy-six times in the New Testament, and it is always rendered "head" except here. Thus, properly translated, Hebrews 10:7 reads "at the head of the book it is written of me." Here, then is the proof of our assertion. The Book of Life—the Divine register of election—is termed the Lamb's Book of Life" because His name is the first one written therein, and He who had Himself scanned that roll said, as He entered this world, "at the head of the book it is written of me." A further reference to this Book was made by Christ in "In thy book all my members were written" (Ps. 139:16). The Psalmist was referring to his natural body, first as formed in the womb (v. 15), and then as being the subject of the divine decrees (v. 16). But the deeper reference is to Christ, speaking, as the antitypical David, of the members of His mystical body. "The substance of the Church, whereof it was to be formed, was under the eyes of God, as proposed in the decree of election" (John Owen). Should an exercised reader be asking, How may I now be assured that my name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life? We answer, very briefly. First, by God's having taught you to see and brought you to feel your inward corruption, your personal vileness, your awful guilt, your dire need of the sacrifice of the Lamb. Second, by causing you to make Christ of first importance in your thoughts and estimation, perceiving that He alone can save you. Third, by bringing you to believe in Him, rest your whole soul upon Him, desiring to be found in Him, not having your own righteousness, but His. Fourth, by making Him infinitely precious to you, so that He is all your desire. Fifth, by working in you a determination to please and glorify Him.

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